Symbolic Gestures of Dependence as Part of Medieval Homage Ritual

S. B. Kulayeva

When studying medieval homage, one first of all notes the symbols of dependence. Needless to say, a relation formalized by the symbolic act of homage was not confined exclusively to establishing one person's dependence on the other. An equally important role in this relationship was assigned to the reciprocal vows of the seigneur and the vassal, to the principle of vassal military service, and to the bond of partnership and alliance. However, dependence and subjection determined the original character of the vassal's connection to the seigneur (conventionally defined as a 'vertical link') and the images meant to formalize this relation symbolically.

The great variety of symbols of dependence corresponded to the diversity of situations for establishing one person's power over another. A study of gestures formalizing homage proves most fruitful if two complementary types of sources are used concurrently: texts and iconography.

Basic features of medieval homage were constituted by a voluntary self-commendation on the part of a vassal to an overlord, accompanied by an oath of fealty and service. In response, a seigneur stated his readiness to accept the man (vassal) and promised him patronage and protection. A well known vassalage oath from the year 802 conveys this dialogue as follows: . . . *Fidelis sum, sicut homo per dictum debet esse domino suo* (I am faithful [to you] as a man ought to be toward his lord according to the established law).[1] This formula was included in the text of an oath designed for Charlemagne's subjects to confirm their readiness to serve Carolingian sovereigns faithfully. In fact, what was at stake there was a universal acceptance of the institution of vassalage, which required such a powerful medium as a public oath by the entire population. The concept of *homo* (man) used in the formula could be replaced with the words *vassus* (vassal) or *fidelis* (faithful), but could also be complemented with these two notions. The concept *homo* played a central role in homage phraseology. The document of 802 renders the essence of the vassal's connection to the seigneur through declaring himself to be his lord's *man*. By calling himself a *man* (*vassus*, *fidelis*) of someone, a person thus acknowledged his dependence on the lord

[1] "Capitularia missorum specialia (802)", in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Capitularia regnum francorum* I, ed. A. Boretius (1883), 102.

and stated his awareness of his obligations and the peculiar character of his attachment to the lord.

Let us consider one of the best known gestures used to formalize the ritual of homage: pressed together hands of a vassal placed between the hands of a seigneur. Owing to its expressiveness and specificity, this symbol became a universal sign of vassalage.

The fourteenth-century Heidelberg manuscript of the *Sachsenspiegel* provides a wealth of material illustrating various homage situations and the gestures used on those occasions. A peculiarity of this source is that images of actual gestures and poses always go in tandem with a written commentary, which enables one to correlate lexical formulas and the names of the rituals with their visual forms. Accordingly, each time the commentary uses the word *Mannschaft* (homage), a picture shows a symbolic gesture of joined hands, even though situations requiring homage were as diverse as iconographic variants of the gesture.

In a number of cases an artist used a peculiar technique that allowed him to render multiple relations between the lord and the vassal. One image could combine several interrelated actions, with the effect that the same person could be depicted with more than two hands. Whether it was three, five or ten hands depended on the number of actions to be represented. To indicate a certain time span, an added hand would point to the sun or the moon. In many cases, property-connected relations were of importance, so "extra" hands pointed to certain objects or land estates. Not infrequently, a third hand holds an important symbolic object. In some instances, multiple hands of one vassal served to indicate a multitude of people represented by this person.

The quantity and variety of scenes characterizing the lord-vassal relationship in the *Sachsenspiegel* notwithstanding, the central symbolic element remained unchanged: the outstretched and pressed together hands of a vassal signaling voluntary self-commendation and acknowledgement of dependence. By accepting the vassal's hands into his own, the lord in turn expressed the vassal's admission under his seigneurial protection. An image of this reciprocal gesture appears in the manuscript each time the text uses the words *Herr* and *Mann* (fig. 1).

This symbolic gesture became a distinctive feature of homage. Images illustrating this gesture leave no doubt that the event depicted is nothing but homage, the person extending clasped hands is the vassal, while the one who is accepting the other's hands into his own is the seigneur. This sign of submission of one person to another was complemented and stressed by the vassal's kneeling pose.

The image in question shows the seigneur seated on an elevation and the vassal bending his knee before him. This posture, though stressing reverence and acknowledging the seigneur's power, is an expressive but not crucial feature of homage symbolism. Some hold an opinion that homage symbolism consists

of two equally important elements: the hand gesture and the kneeling pose.[2] Iconographic evidence, including a number of homage images from the *Sachsenspiegel*, shows that while the hand gesture was indeed indispensable for making the homage ritual visual, the postures of both the seigneur and the vassal were not determined as rigidly. Along with a vassal bending his knee or both knees before a seated seigneur we find images presenting a standing vassal extending his hands toward the standing seigneur.

It is peculiar that the gesture of 'joined hands' is original to the Middle Ages. As far as I know, this gesture was not used in antiquity nor medieval Byzantium nor other periods whose cultural influence is so often felt in the iconographic and legal systems of the medieval West. Apparently its origin is to be sought in conjunction with the development of the new – feudal – relations among the peoples of Western Europe. On the basis of written sources, one can assert that this gesture was known as early as the sixth to eighth centuries and was described in Latin as *junctis manibus se commendare* (to commend oneself by joining hands), that is, in exactly the way homage was described throughout the Middle Ages. One of the earliest, ninth-century, testimonies regarding military homage recounts both the vassal's gesture and his acknowledgement of submission, rendered in direct speech probably meant to stress the active position of the person vowing homage:

> *Mox, manibus junctis, regi se tradidit ultro*
> *Et suum regnum, quod sibi jure fuit.*
> *"Suscipe, Caesar, ait, me nec non regna subacta,*
> *Sponte tuis memet confero servitiis."*[3]
>
> (Instantly, hands joined together, he commended himself to the king,
> Along with the kingdom that belonged to him by law.
> "Caesar, accept me and the kingdom under my rule,
> I voluntarily commit myself to your service.")

The symbolic self-commendation gesture by a vassal was crucial for the ritual of homage, while the reciprocal gesture of a seigneur supplemented and augmented the meaning of the relationship about to start. Written sources usually omit the description of the seigneur's gesture, limiting themselves to reporting the clasped hands of the vassal, apparently as a key symbol of classical homage. Some believe that the expression *junctis manibus* (having joined hands) should be interpreted as a description of the complete exchange of gestures by the vassal and the lord, so that the single formula *junctis manibus* would denote the clasped hands of the vassal placed between the hands of the seigneur.[4] In other words, the expression *junctis manibus se commendare* is understood as identical

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[2] J.-C. Schmitt, *La raison des gestes dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1990), 295-297 (hereafter Schmitt, *La raison des gestes)*.

[3] R. Boutruche, *Seigneurie et féodalité*. I. *Le premier âge des liens d'homme à homme* (Paris, 1959), 336.

[4] Schmitt, *La raison des gestes*, 295-297.

to what is known as *immixtio manuum* (the clasping of hands), a conventional name for the double homage gesture. There can be no doubt that *immixtio manuum* designates exactly this reciprocal gesture: hands of the vassal between the hands of the lord. It is difficult, however, to agree that the verb *se commendare* (to commend oneself) or *se tradere* (to entrust oneself) in combination with a definition of how exactly one commends oneself – *junctis manibus* (that is, commends oneself by pressing together hands) – can refer to both the lord and the vassal.

In contrast to the formula of *immixtio manuum*, the expression *junctis manibus se commendare* obviously implies only the symbolic gesture of self-commendation, leaving the lord's reciprocal gesture open to question. A charter from the Abbey of Cluny (1159) describes this gesture in exactly the same words as those used in the oldest testimonies: . . . *et jam dicto patri junctis manibus se commendavit* (and joining hands commended himself to the aforesaid father).[5]

It is generally characteristic of homage descriptions to refer primarily to the actions and role of the vassal, while the lord is usually less talked about. The concepts of *homo* and its derivatives *hominium* and *homagium*, basic for the relationship of vassalage, are the best example. In contrast, the status of the lord or the seigneur is rarely reflected in the lexical formulas referring to the act of homage. In the examples considered earlier the lord is called *Herr* or *Caesar* or *pater*, depending on the actual role and social status of the person being paid homage.

No wonder that images also focus primarily on the vassal's gesture. This does not, however, deprive the reciprocal gesture of the lord of its own meaning. The same gesture of self-commendation, known from the formula *junctis manibus se commendare*, could have been reciprocated in various ways, most of which are not reflected in written descriptions but are easily traceable in pictorial material.

Let us consider the two most wide-spread ways in which the lord could accept the extended joined hands of the vassal. One of them we have already seen in the *Sachsenspiegel*: the lord locks the hands of the vassal within those of his own. This gesture is peculiar not only as a symbol of the protection and patronage promised by the lord to his *man*, but also as a symbol which to a certain degree removes the element of humiliation from the relationship that is being initiated. The seigneur's gesture can be said to ennoble the relationship of dependence formalized by a symbolic act of homage. Only after this reciprocal gesture on the part of the seigneur entered the canon did homage became a ritual establishing mutual relations and obligations.

We are, however, presently rather concerned with the principle of dependence conveyed by the vassal's gesture of extended joined hands and some other gestures. From this point of view, the second variant of the lord's recipro-

[5] A. Bruel, *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny* (Paris, 1870-1903), vol. 4, no. 324.

cal gesture is more interesting. Some images show the seigneur receiving the vassal's hands with one hand rather than placing them between his two hands. The earliest evidence for this kind of gesture as part of the homage ritual dates back to the early ninth century. In a manuscript containing various grammatical texts is a fragment entitled *De octo partibus orationis* (On the eight parts of speech). An initial of this text consists of two symbolic figures, in combination representing the letter "P" (fig. 2). This image has been analyzed by students of medieval iconography a number of times: François Garnier treated it as an illustration of the grammarian's idea of a noun and a verb as a basis for language, while his colleague Yannick Carré interpreted it as an erotic picture.[6]

It appears, nevertheless, that what we see in this particular case is a scene of homage of sorts, even though here, perhaps, commendation should rather be interpreted in a broader sense, as it was understood in the Early Middle Ages. This example is valuable for a student of medieval homage because it displays both the symbolic gesture of joined hands and the other important element of homage – a kiss. A kiss is known to have frequently complemented the symbolic gestures of the homage ritual; in some instances, a kiss served as the key symbol defining the nature of the relationship to be established. As an example of such homage let us recall the formula *fecit hominium per manum et osculum* (paid homage with a hand and a kiss).[7] Notably, even though researchers such as H. Mitteis, Y. Carré, F. L. Ganshof, and others have dated the appearance of the symbolic kiss as a part of the homage ritual to the late eleventh and early twelfth century, the image in question suggests that a symbolic kiss constituted part of homage as early as the ninth century.

Particularly remarkable is the figure performing the traditional role of the seigneur receiving homage. With one hand he clenches the wrists of the clasped hands of the person paying homage, while in the other hand he holds some instrument resembling a knife or a dagger.

The paradox of this scene is that a peace treaty symbolized by a kiss is here combined with a manifest threat on the part of the seigneur. One should also note in this case the gesture of the hand receiving homage, different from that discussed earlier, wherewith the lord promised protection and patronage (two palms embracing the hands of the vassal). In this image, the lord's gesture of holding the vassal's hands with one hand bespeaks subjection. One can also note other examples of only one hand used to receive homage when the relations set up by the homage had a particularly harsh character. This is the gesture typical of images of homage paid to the devil.[8]

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[6] F. Garnier, *Le langage de l'image au Moyen Âge: signification et symbolique* (Paris, 1982); Y. Carré, *Le baiser sur la bouche au Moyen Âge: rites, symboles, mentalité XI – XV ss.* (Paris, 1992), ill. 58.

[7] H. Mitteis, *Lehnrecht und Staatsgewalt. Untersuchungen zur mittelalterlichen Verfassungsgeschichte* (Weimar, 1933), 499 (hereafter Mitteis, *Lehnrecht und Staatsgewalt*).

[8] *Bible moralisée.* Vienna, Austrian National Library, codex Vindobonensis 2554, fol 51.

Outstanding in this image is also the passivity of the vassal's gesture: instead of being stretched out in a resolute manner to stress voluntary self-commendation, his hands are languidly pressed together in the lord's hand.

In order to better understand the original meaning of the gesture of clasped hands of a person paying homage, let us take a look at the history of its origins. Most likely, this symbolic gesture derives from that of a captive compelled to extend his hands towards the conqueror to have them tied. In this sense some images of the Last Judgement are of interest, where symbols of power and subjection are not a supplementary element but a principal subject. The power of a lowly nature, which humiliates those subject to it, that is, the power of the devil, is opposed here to the sublime power of God. For an example, let us consider a miniature from the first half of the thirteenth century from the Psalter of Margaret of Burgundy (fig. 3). In the upper register we observe the supreme judge carrying out the first division of humans into the just and sinners. An angel is leading one of the just by the hand and thus guiding all the others. Sinners find themselves in the devil's power, symbolized by a rope loop placed around their necks binding them together. The end of the rope is in the devil's hands.

Sinners are stretching out their hands, but their faces are turned back, and their poses unequivocally manifest the involuntary character of their captivity. Below, in the scene of 'Weighing the souls,' the same symbol is repeated in such a way as to highlight the theme of dependence and captivity: the rope not only fastens the sinners together; it also binds each sinner's hands. Symbolically, the hopeless enslavement of these souls could hardly be expressed with greater clarity.

It is important to bear in mind that as regards imagery the symbolism of a captive was akin to the symbolism of vassalage throughout Middle Ages. An example is a fourteenth-century miniature reproducing the model of a courtly relationship between a knight and his lady (fig. 4). One of the foremost characteristics of the theory of courtly love was the enamoured knight's attitude towards his lady, as if she were his feudal seigneur. This cultural notion was reflected in multiple literary compositions as well as images, not infrequently presenting the vassal knight as paying homage to his lady. This, apparently, is also the subject of the miniature we are looking at. A peculiar feature of the image is that the Lady is fastening the hands of the enamoured knight with a belt. An ancient symbol revived in the lyric love images, the theme of 'voluntary captivity' here takes on a new and irregular tinge.

As a sign of forceful subjection, the scenes of homage may represent the vassal with a rope on his neck. The story of Theophil, who acknowledged the devil's power over himself, should be considered precisely as homage. A fourteenth-century manuscript illumination shows Theophil extending his pressed together hands toward the devil; a rope on his neck ends in the devil's hands (fig. 5). Once again, the rope, even though placed on the dependent's neck rather than onto his hands, appears as an element of homage. In this case, too, there can be no doubt that this symbol was employed here to highlight the theme of

humiliating dependence, of the devil's forceful and shameful authority over Theophil.

We also find the rope mentioned as a symbol of voluntary yet harsh submission in the oldest written sources. A Cluny charter of the ninth century provides the following description of an ancient homage: . . . *corrigium ad collum meum misi et manibus in potestate Alariado. . . se tradidit* (I placed the rope on my neck and commited [myself] to Alariado's power).[9] One other document, of 1127, also brings up the voluntary "self-commendation by the neck" (apparently, by means of a rope): *flexis genibus . . . se ipsum per gulam tradidit* (having knelt, he commended himself by the throat).[10]

As has already been said, every document and text describing classical homage makes use of the Latin formula *junctis manibus se commendare.* Some of the written sources omit the word *junctis*. Researchers have sometimes regarded the two formulas, the *manibus se commendare* and the *junctis manibus se commendare,* as equivalent, that is, suggested that both formulas denoted the same familiar gesture of clasped hands. I, however, believe that the omission of the word *junctis* in a number of texts is no accident. It should be mentioned that the hands are not called 'joined' in special cases of 'non-classical' homage, that is, that unrelated to military service. One can assume that a gesture of two disjoined hands of the commended person existed, reciprocated by the seigneur's gesture of acceptance, also performed with parted hands.

Written sources yield definite testimony for the existence of a specific homage of serfdom used to establish submission and service of the persons of lowly origin. This specific form of homage was named *hommage servile*. This term was introduced into historical writing by Pierre Petôt (1927),[11] but in one or another form it had been used already by medieval persons. An old French document of 1244 calls this symbolic act *Homenages des servens*, as contrasted to *Hominages des chevaliers.*[12]

Documents of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries also use other expressions to designate this 'lowly homage': *homagium rusticale* (rustic homage) or *homagium corporis* (homage of body). A document of 1231 speaks of the relations established *per homagium corporis et servitutis* (through a homage of body and service), while in a document of 1355 we again encounter the contrast of *Homagia nobilia et rusticalia* (noble and rustic homage).[13] The expression *homagium corporis* acquired specific meaning owing to the existence in the Middle Ages of a peculiar personal status defined with the expression *homo de corpore* (serf).

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[9] A. Bruel, *Recueil des chartes de l'abbaye de Cluny* (Paris, 1870-1903), vol. 1, no. 30.

[10] M. Garand, *Essai sur les Institutions Judicaires du Poitou sous le Gouvernement des comtes indépendants, 902-1137* (Poitiers, 1910), 172.

[11] P. Petôt, "L'hommage servile," *Revue historique de droit* (1927): 69-107 (hereafter Petôt, "L'hommage servile").

[12] Ch.-D. Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, (Niort, 1883-1887), vol. 4, 216.

[13] *Ibid.,* 219-220.

The first appearance of the term *homo de corpore* is seen in the late eleventh century. Its wide dissemination in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was due, in all likelihood, not to the novelty of a *homo de corpore* type of relation to the lord but rather to the need to define this relationship more precisely. Earlier documents, when defining the *homo de corpore* type of relationship, characterized it primarily as a relationship of personal dependence (1180): *servos nostros, ancillas, quos homines de corpore appellamus. . . manumittimus et ab omni jugo servitutis absolvimus* (we manumit our serfs and female servants whom we call *homines de corpore* and absolve them from the yoke of enslavement and service).[14] This form of stringent, and in fact humiliating, dependence was certainly very far from the principles of conscious service typical of knightly homage.

A frequently recurring expression *fecit hominium sicut homo de corpore*[15] (paid homage as a serf) suggests the existence of a specific ritual and, first and foremost, of a peculiar hand gesture, different from that discussed earlier. This expression reads as a contrast to the homage ritual performed in the Carolingian epoch by vassal warriors: *sicut homo* (*vassus*) *domino suo* (I am faithful [to you] as a man ought to be toward his lord according to the established law). I believe, in the case of *hommage servile*, that the person named *homo de corpore* would make the gesture of two disjoined hands.

The gesture of parted hands was undoubtedly familiar in the early Middle Ages. On the basis of ample iconographic evidence one can state with certainty that parted extended hands (usually in combination with a kneeling pose) symbolized religious submission. In other words, this was a gesture of prayer. Apparently, traditional servile homage may to a certain extent have been modeled after this ancient gesture of submission and recognition of the supreme authority.

This is how a document of 1170 to 1180 from Flanders pictures the situation of a free woman's voluntary self-commendation to the lord's power when she was compelled to pay a special kind of homage because of her marriage to a serf. The gesture is described as follows: *. . .et, ut servientem suum renitentem in virum accipere et habere merereturr, oblatis ei in servitium manibus* (and, so as to be able to accept and keep his dependent servant as a husband, she proffered her hands in the lord's service).[16] This Latin formula makes it clear that entering a relationship of personal dependence and service was signified by a gesture of extended, most likely parted, hands. The pictorial evidence corroborates the suggestion that servile homage consisted of the gesture of two parted hands extended towards the seigneur, who took them into his own, also parted, hands.

A French miniature of the thirteenth century (fig. 6) shows a standing seigneur receiving homage from two serfs kneeling in front of him and stretching out their hands towards him. The gesture of the second kneeling person is

[14] T. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus* (reprint Leiden, 1976), 494.
[15] Petôt, "L'hommage servile," 73.
[16] *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* (Hannover, 1826-1913), vol. XXIV, 625.

doubtless a gesture of two parted hands. It is more difficult to judge the gesture of the first kneeling figure and the reciprocal gesture of the lord: all we see is that the serf's hands are between the hands of the seigneur, but there is no telling whether the serf's hands are parted or not. The gesture of the second serf is at any rate sufficient to assert that extended parted hands symbolized self-commendation and established a lowly person's dependence on his superior.

The gesture of extended parted hands was not, however, confined to establishing the harsher forms of dependence. A late thirteenth-century miniature depicts the count of Toulouse, accompanied by twelve consuls, in the act of paying homage to the king of France (fig. 7). This is the only image I am aware of so far that displays the vassal's parted hands taken into the seigneur's parted hands. Even though the vassal is surely a noble person, the gesture of parted hands, the same as in the lowly non-military homage, is not accidental. In this case, the count is a representative of the city of Toulouse standing, along with his compatriots, for the rights and privileges of their native town. This is why the symbolic gesture of this vassal is expressly civil and non-military. This is a gesture that unites the count with the other, not necessarily noble, citizens of Toulouse.

Much more often than the parted hands of both the vassal and the seigneur, written and pictorial sources present homage wherein the vassal proffers the lord one hand, and the seigneur responds with a gesture resembling a handshake. In written sources we most often encounter indications of a handshake in the descriptions of the servile homage, rendered in the words *fidem dare* (to give faith). There is, however, no certainty as to whether a handshake stood for homage as such. Rather, a handshake could have complemented homage and been perceived as a constituent element of the ritual. This is related to the emergence within the servile homage of the relations of fealty expressed in the concept of *fidelity* (fealty) and, in some cases, even *fides* (faith). In this situation *homo de corpore* becomes a personal status which does not simply make a person dependent but also implies a certain trust based on a personal relationship.

Homage that included a handshake was, for instance, to be paid by a mayor of the city, that is, by a person responsible for carrying out administrative tasks. In a document from the city of Laon, dated 1261, we read: . . . *promitens fide data in manu nostra quod se in perpetuum mamburniet, geret et habebit pro homine dicte domus, et preceptori et fratribus dicte domus serviette* (promising and giving faith by our hand that he will forever be in charge of this house, will always conduct and keep himself as a person of this house and will serve the superior and the brethren of this house).[17]

One of the most dramatic symbols of stringent submission is the kiss on the foot. However, it has yet to be decided whether symbolic kissing of the foot was related to medieval homage. There are some testimonies attest to the kissing of the foot as part of homage rituals. The account of the homage paid by the Ba-

[17] Petôt, "L'hommage servile," 73.

varian duke Tassilo is one of the best known and most informative early documents describing symbolic actions accompanying the ritual of homage. Along with the classical homage gesture of the hands – *tradens se manibus in manibus domni regis Caroli in vassaticum* (committing himself as a vassal by inserting his hands into the hands of the lord King Charles) – we also find mentioned here the kissing of the foot (or, literally, of the knee): *oscula tum libans genibus predulcia regis* (grazing with sweetest kisses the King's knees).[18]

There are also other pieces of evidence regarding both the kiss on the knee and the kiss on the foot proper (*osculo pedis*).[19] Typically, a situation where one person had to kiss the foot of another, superior, person, implied the necessity of severe subordination of the inferior one. This function was specifically pertinent to homage, particularly when it concerned armed persons likely to have recently been enemies. In these cases homage served as a universal means to establish a hierarchy, when the victor compelled the defeated to become 'a man of his own.' That the kiss on the foot is described alongside the classical military homage does not mean the identical significance of these two rituals. Emperor Charles, for example, exacted from Tassilo both the homage and the kiss on the foot in order to emphasize the symbolic submission of this rebellious duke.

The iconographic reproduction of the kiss of the foot that I am aware of just confirms this suggestion. A drawing from the late twelfth century (fig. 8) depicts Richard the Lionheart (1189-1199) kissing the foot of the emperor Henry VI (1190-1197). Richard is represented prostrated at the foot of the throne, simultaneously bending his knees. The subject of this image is the period of Richard's captivity in 1193-1194. Both the emperor and Richard wear crowns on their heads, which, perhaps, is to be seen as an attempt of the painter to convey the drama of the situation when one royal figure finds himself in a humiliating dependence on another European monarch. In this particular case, the kiss on the foot is not related to the homage ritual: it has a standalone role as a means of establishing Henry VI's power and Richard's humiliation.

Comparison of the symbolic gestures of submission and dependence, as employed in homage rituals, helps to better understand the exact contents of homage and to determine the origin of the particular elements of the ritual. The study of symbols of dependence is also highly appealing in other situations that placed one person under another's power. However, their exhaustive consideration exceeds the scope of the present study.

[18] K. Schreiner, "Er küsse mich mit dem Kuß seines Mundes," in *Höfische Repräsentation. Das Zeremoniell und die Zeichen*, ed. Hedda Ragotzky and Horst Wenzel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1990), 118, no. 69.

[19] Mitteis, *Lehnrecht und Staatsgewalt*, 499.

Fig. 1. *Sachsenspiegel*. Miniature of the fourteenth century. Heidelberg, University Library.

Fig. 2. Grammatical text. Miniature of the ninth century. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. lat. 13025, f. 14.

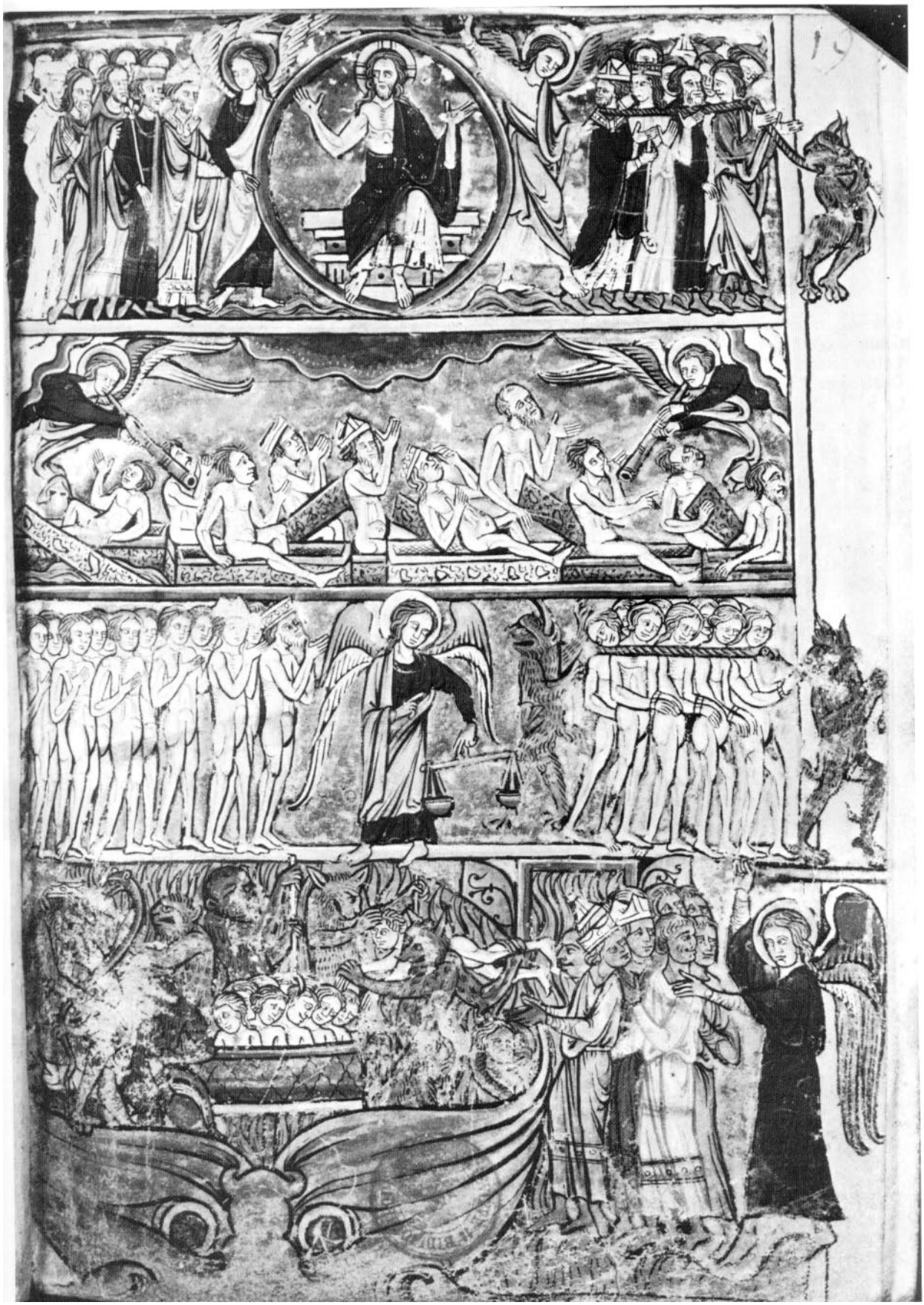

Fig. 3. Psalter of Margaret of Burgundy. Miniature of the thirteenth century.
Paris, St. Genevieve Library, Ms. 1273, f. 19.

Fig. 4. Codex Manesse. Heidelberg, University Library, Cod. Germ. 848, f. 251.

Fig. 5. Gautier de Coinci, *Les miracles de Nostre Dame*. The Hague, Royal Library.

Fig. 6. Manumittance of the two serfs. Miniature of the thirteenth century. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale.

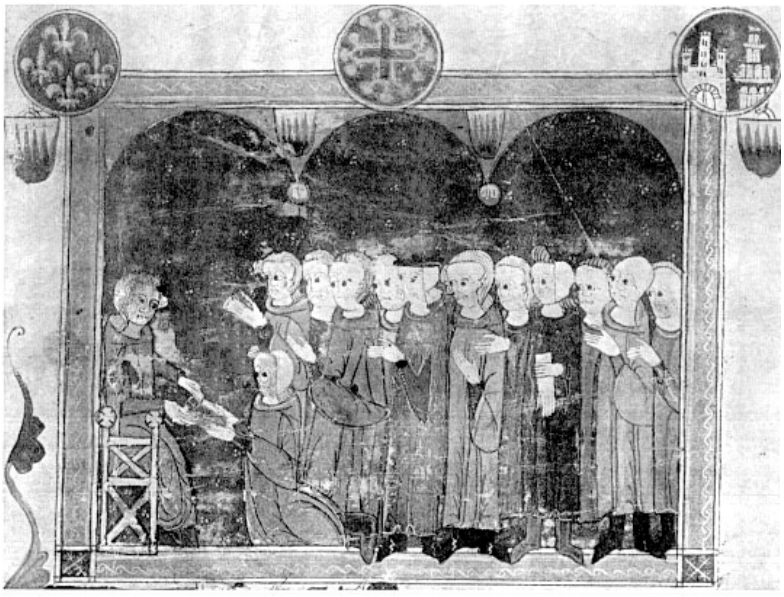

Fig. 7. The king of France receiving homage from the count of Toulouse. Miniature of the thirteenth century. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. lat. 9187.

Fig. 8. Richard the Lionheart kissing the foot of emperor Henry VI.
Bern. Municipal Library.

Images in Medieval and Early Modern Culture

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Preface

In recent years, many historians have recognized their special interest in visual sources. The 'iconic turn' has also become vital for the historical disciplines.[1]

Images were a constitutive part of medieval and early modern daily life – with regard to their function and usage as well as their contents, 'language' and perception. Communication with the help of and via pictures played an important role for all strata of society. Therefore, research into the visual system and culture of these periods has become a basic constituent of (social) historical research.[2]

We would like to thank the authors of this volume, Svetlana I. Luchitskaya and Aron Ya. Gurevich in particular, for their interest and readiness to have their approaches towards images, which they had presented at a Moscow conference and in the 2002 special volume of the journal *Одиссей. Человек в истории*: "Слово и образ в средневековой кулмуре" ("Mot et image dans la culture médiévale"), translated into English and published as a 'Sonderband' of *Medium Aevum Quotidianum*. These investigations of the visual culture of the past by Russian historical researchers are an important contribution to the international trends and efforts to include images as parts of medieval and early modern culture and sources for today's (social) historians. The articles offer a wide spectrum: from the history of gestures to various aspects and functions of images in *memoria*, political and religious life. The relevant roles that visual

[1] Concerning the 'iconic' or 'pictorial turn' see, e. g., W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory. Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, 1994); *idem*,. "Der Pictorial Turn," in *Privileg Blick. Kritik der visuellen Kultur*, ed. Christian Kravagna (Berlin, 1997), 15-40; Jan Baetens, "Reading Vision? What Contexts for the Pictorial Turn?", *Semiotica* 126 (1999), 203-218.

[2] See, e. g., Francis Haskell, *History and Its Images. Art and the Representation of the Past* (New Haven and London, 1993); Jérôme Baschet and Jean-Claude Schmitt (ed.), *L'image. Fonctions et usages des images dans l'Occident médiéval* (Paris, 1996); Gerhard Jaritz (ed.), *Pictura quasi fictura. Die Rolle des Bildes in der Erforschung von Alltag und Sachkultur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Vienna, 1996); Otto Gerhard Oexle (ed.), *Der Blick auf die Bilder. Kunstgeschichte und Geschichte im Gespräch* (Göttingen, 1997); Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, 2001) ; Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Le corps des images. Essais sur la culture visuelle au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2002); Andrea von Hülsen-Esch and Jean-Claude Schmitt (ed.), *Die Methodik der Bildinterpretation. Les méthodes de l'interprétation de l'image. Deitsch-französische Kolloquien 1998-2000*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 2002); Axel Bolvig and Phillip Lindley (ed.), *History and Images. Towards a New Iconology* (Turnhout, 2003).

culture played in the Middle Ages and the early modern period are convincingly presented and underlined. Transdisciplinarity and the necessity of contextualization and dialogue are proved to be indispensable.

We do hope that this special volume of *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* will help to intensify and strengthen the international contacts and cooperation among 'image-historians'. An increasing variety of approaches towards visual sources may, on the one hand, contribute to better understanding specific and individual matters of communication in medieval and early modern society. On the other hand, such approaches will open up possibilities for recognizing general patterns of image usage and perception – patterns of intention as well as patterns of response.[3] Analyses of micro- and macro-levels will add to each other. Their structures, contexts and networks will become clearer.

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[3] See, e. g., some contributions of leading representatives of the social history of art already in the eighties of the twentieth century, as: Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention. On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven and London, 1986); David Freedberg, *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago and London, 1989). See also the important remarks by Keith Moxey, "Reading the 'Reality Effect'," in *Pictura quasi fictura. Die Rolle des Bildes in der Sachkultur des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit,* ed. Gerhard Jaritz (Vienna, 1996), 15-22.