Questions related to *dignity* emerged in the forefront of debates in Russia in the 2000s. On the one hand, the authorities from the mid-2000s on started to claim that Russia had been humiliated by certain other countries and thus needed to ‘get off its knees’ — a position in which it found itself after the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, leaders of the opposition tried to claim that when President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev swapped places as a result of an agreement in 2011, they humiliated broad urban educated masses because they did not even ask the opinion of the people, treating them like cattle or an empty space. Blatant forms of electoral fraud during the 2011 parliamentary elections pointed to the same conclusion, and many people went onto the streets in the protests against this humiliation of their dignity. However, if the powers that be spoke about the dignity of the country, the opposition spoke about the dignity of individuals.

This book examines different everyday and theoretical perceptions of group and personal dignity in the course of Russian history and contemporaneously. The first article, by Boris Maslov, analyses the influence of ancient Greek and Roman perceptions of *dignity* on the earliest old Russian translations of texts mentioning these phenomena, and how these ancient roots were reappropriated during modernity — both in Western Europe and in Russia. The second article, by Kapitolina Fedorova, concentrates on the analysis of everyday usage of key terms related to dignity in contemporary Russian, taking advantage of the new opportunities for linguistic analysis provided by the recently created National Corpus of the Russian Language. The third article, by Oleg Kharkhordin, identifies three main theoretical understandings of dignity in Russia: a) as a quality of high rank or estate, b) as positive qualities or merits that distinguish this or that entity from others, c) as being created in the image and likeness of God. This article offers two reasons for the specificity of Russian perceptions of dignity. The first is the influence of Berdiaev and Dostoevsky, who both relied on the patristics of Eastern Christianity to stress the centrality of interest in God’s ‘image and likeness’ as a distinguishing feature of Russian spirituality. The second is the particular importance of dignity in the sense (b) mentioned above, which although it derives from the way Greeks talked about dignity, as Pericles does in Thucydides, cannot be translated into e.g. French or English by words related to French *dignité* or English *dignity*.