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**The Monomashichi and Mstislavichi rivalry
for control of Pereyasavl' during the reign of Yaropolk
Vladimirovich in Kiev (1132–1139)**

At unrecorded dates Yaroslav the Wise allocated patrimonies to all his sons: first he gave Novgorod to his eldest son Il'ya but as he died soon after without an heir he gave it to Vladimir, the next son in seniority¹. Vladimir died in 1052 thus also predeceasing his father². Consequently, at the time of his death Yaroslav had five surviving sons. The “Tale of Bygone Years” (*Povest' vremennykh let*) reports that at some unspecified date before his death he bequeathed domains to these sons according to his so-called ‘testament’. Thus, to the eldest, Izyaslav, he gave Kiev and Turov, to Svyatoslav he gave Chernigov, to Vsevolod he gave Pereyasavl', to Igor' he gave Vladimir in Volyn', and to the youngest Vyacheslav he gave Smolensk. The chronicler adds that Yaroslav forbade his sons to trespass onto each other's domains or to evict one another³. That is, their domains were to be their patrimonies.

Yaroslav gave no explicit instructions concerning who Izyaslav's successor would be in Kiev. Nevertheless, the narrative account (*skazanie*) of SS Boris and Gleb gives testimony in support of the view that Yaroslav designated his three eldest surviving sons to succeed him to Kiev in rotation. According to the *skazanie* Yaroslav

left as heirs to his father [Vladimir] and recipients of his own throne [Kiev], his sons Izyaslav, Svyatoslav, and Vsevolod. And he organized them in a suitable manner: [he appointed] the eldest Izyaslav to Kiev, Svyatoslav to Chernigov, and Vsevolod to Pereyasavl'. The remaining [two sons] he sent to other domains⁴.

1 *Novgorodskaya pervaya letopis' starshego i mladshogo izvodov*, ed. by A. N. Nasonov (Moscow and Leningrad, 1950), 161 (NPL).

2 NPL: 16.

3 “Lavrent'evskaya letopis',” (Lav.) *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey* (PSRL) 1, second edition (Leningrad, 1926), column (col.) 161; compare (cf.) under the year (s.a.) 1055: “Ipat'evskaya letopis',” (Ipat.) *PSRL* 2, second edition (St. Petersburg, 1908), cols 150 and 151. Concerning Izyaslav's domain of Turov, see M. Dimnik, “The ‘Testament’ of Iaroslav ‘The Wise’: A Re-examination,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 29, 4 (1987), 379, 383–384.

4 *I ostavi v nasled'niky ottsa svoiego. i priim'niky prestola svoiego. siny svoia. iziaslava. sviatoslava. i v'sevoloda. oupraviv im iako zhe be lepo. iziaslava kyieve stareishago. a sviatoslava ch'rnigove. a v'sevoloda pereiaslavli. a prochyia po inem volost'm.* (*Uspenskii sbornik XII–XIII vv.*, ed. by S.I. Kotkov (Moscow, 1971), 62; Dimnik, “The ‘Testament’,” 376–378, 385).

To judge from the evidence that Yaroslav designated only the so-called triumvirate, that is, his three eldest surviving sons to succeed him to Kiev, he envisioned a peaceful order of succession. This is confirmed by his alleged statement to Vsevolod:

If God grant that you [Vsevolod] succeed your brothers upon my throne justly and without the exercise of violence, may you lie beside my tomb where I lie when God takes you from this world, for I love you more than your brothers⁵.

According to this testimony Yaroslav's two youngest sons, Igor' and Vyacheslav, were debarred from ruling Kiev.

These texts and later conduct of the princes also reveal, in our view, that the brothers were expected to occupy Kiev according to genealogical seniority, that is, according to the ladder, rota, or lateral system of succession. Thus, provided that each brother lived until his turn came to rule after the death of his elder brother, Svyatoslav and after him Vsevolod would succeed Izyaslav. After Vsevolod's death, succession would pass to the next generation, that is, to Izyaslav's sons. The eldest Izyaslavich would be succeeded by his brothers according to genealogical precedence. After they died they would be succeeded in a similar manner by the Svyatoslavichi and then by the Vsevolodovichi. After that, succession would pass to the next generation of Izyaslavichi and so on. Any son of a prince who failed to occupy Kiev was debarred, that is, he became an *izgoi*. This stricture served as a control to limit the number of potential candidates: it identified possible successors and pruned ineligible candidates from each dynasty. According to this system of succession, if our interpretation is correct, one or two members in each family of Yaroslavichi would be given the opportunity to rule the common patrimony of Kiev in rotation. Yaroslav evidently hoped to obviate succession rivalries and to secure peaceful transitions of power to Kiev⁶.

Thus we see that Vsevolod, who was the third in seniority among his brothers at the time of Yaroslav's death, was designated as one of the three successors to Kiev and received the third most desirable domain, Pereyasavl'. It lay to the east, across the Dnepr from Kiev, and was an important principality because it was part of the so-called kernel of Rus' along with Kiev, Turov, and Chernigov. It was also located on the important trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks. Vsevolod, who ruled Pereyasavl' until his death in 1093, bequeathed it to his only surviving son Vladimir Monomakh, and the latter in turn bequeathed it to his eldest son Mstislav.

5 The English translation was taken from S.H. Cross and O.P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (trans. and ed.), *The Russian Primary Chronicle (Laurentian Text)* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), 174; see also Lav., col. 216; Ipat., col. 207.

6 For variant interpretations of the 'ladder' or 'rota' system, see E. Sokol, "Rota System", *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*, vol. 31 (Academic International Press, 1983), 183–188; and J. Martin, *Medieval Russia 980–1584* (Cambridge, 2011, second edition), 30–31.

Immediately after Mstislav's death the Kievans invited his younger brother Yaropolk to be their prince. He arrived on 17 April 1132 from Pereyaslavl'⁷. The citizens evidently agreed to choose him as their prince just as they had been in accord when they had invited his brother Mstislav and his father Vladimir Monomakh. This evidence confirms that in a peaceful succession to Kiev, even though presumably both Monomakh and Mstislav had designated Yaropolk as Mstislav's successor contrary to the rota system stipulated by Yaroslav the Wise, he still needed to be officially invited by the townspeople. In Yaropolk's case the succession proceeded peacefully since he belonged to the Kievans' preferred dynasty. This smooth transition of power boded well for Yaropolk for fostering friendly relations with the townspeople.

One of his first administrative duties was to appoint his successor to Pereyaslavl', the patrimonial domain of the Monomashichi. According to genealogical seniority his younger brother Vyacheslav of Turov was the rightful candidate. Yaropolk, however, ignored the traditional rota system of seniority and summoned his nephew Vsevolod, Mstislav's eldest son, to come from Novgorod and rule Pereyaslavl'. We are told that he did this just as he had pledged to do to Mstislav. The chronicler explains that this was in keeping with the agreement that they had made in obedience to the directive of their father Monomakh who had given Pereyaslavl' to both Mstislav and Yaropolk⁸.

The chronicles do not give the text of Monomakh's directive to Mstislav and Yaropolk. They also fail to report when he gave that instruction. Nevertheless, we may conjecture that he issued it after 1117, that is, after he summoned Mstislav from Novgorod to occupy Belgorod an outpost of Kiev. Unfortunately for the historian, the chroniclers give only a vague description of Monomakh's alleged directive. This ambiguity raises a number of questions. Was Mstislav to retain control of Belgorod after moving to Pereyaslavl'? Were the two brothers to be co-rulers and live in Pereyaslavl' at the same time, or were they to rule the town separately one after the other? Was each brother to look upon the town as his patrimonial domain? Why did Monomakh give the family's patrimony to two sons rather than just to one, namely, to Mstislav, his eldest son? Why did he choose Yaropolk rather than another of Mstislav's brothers to share ownership? Finally, did he intend the town to become the stepping stone for its prince to Kiev? Let us see if the chronicles and circumstantial evidence give us answers to these queries.

7 See s.a. 1133, *Ipat.*, col. 294; s.a. 1132, *Lav.*, col. 301. Concerning Yaropolk's career, see also O.M. Rapov, *Knyazheskie vladeniya na Rusi v X-pervoy polovine XIII v.* (Moscow, 1977), 141.

8 *Lav.*, col. 301; cf. s.a. 1131, "Moskovskiy letopisniy svod kontsa XV veka," (Mosk.) *PSRL* 25 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1949), 32.

What do the chronicles tell us for certain concerning Mstislav and Yaropolk's rule in Pereyasavl'? First, they report that the two did not live in Pereyasavl' at the same time. Under 1125 a number of chronicles state that Yaropolk came to Pereyasavl' after Mstislav left it to become prince of Kiev⁹. This reveals that Yaropolk had not been living in the town with Mstislav and that they ruled it separately one after the other and not as co-rulers. Second, to judge from Yaropolk's appointment of his nephew Vsevolod to Pereyasavl', this suggests that the town was to become the patrimony of Mstislav's sons. Third, succession to Kiev is not mentioned. Monomakh's directive deals solely with rule in Pereyasavl'.

Nevertheless, other historians have interpreted Monomakh's directive differently. According to them, before his death Monomakh made a 'testament' (*ryad*) in imitation of the 'testament' that Yaroslav the Wise had made, and designated his immediate successors to Kiev. In their opinion Monomakh instructed that he was to be succeeded by Mstislav, who was to be succeeded by his brother Yaropolk, who was to be succeeded by Mstislav's eldest son Vsevolod. Monomakh and Mstislav's objective was to confirm on Mstislav's descendants the sole right of ruling Kiev, Pereyasavl', and Novgorod¹⁰. Given the discrepancy in the interpretations of Monomakh's directive, let us see if we can determine the correct reading of it.

To judge from chronicle information, Monomakh gave two sets of instructions to his sons, the one concerning Pereyasavl' is referred to under the year 1132, and the one concerning succession to Kiev is referred to under the year 1139. As already noted, in the instruction reported under the year 1132, he ordered Yaropolk to give Pereyasavl' to Mstislav's son Vsevolod, evidently because he had given Pereyasavl' to Mstislav as his patrimony. He had not bequeathed a patrimony in Rus' to Mstislav during the twenty years that the latter was ruling Novgorod. Moving Mstislav to Belgorod clearly had not been a permanent appointment since that town was an outpost of Kiev and not important enough to become the principality of his eldest son. Consequently, Mstislav was almost his only son who remained without a patrimony after Monomakh removed him from Novgorod. He had already given domains to most of his other older sons: Vyacheslav got Turov, Yury got Suzdalia, and Andrey got Vladimir in Volyn'. Monomakh therefore provided for his eldest son by giving him the dynasty's patrimonial domain of Pereyasavl'.

Nevertheless, Yaropolk also had no patrimonial domain. Therefore Monomakh designated him prince of Pereyasavl' along with Mstislav because Yaropolk had no sons who would succeed him to the town. This meant that after Yaropolk replaced Mstislav in Kiev, or died before Mstislav, Pereyasavl' would be occupied by Mstislav's sons of whom Vsevolod would be the first successor. In keeping with

9 Lav., col. 295; Mosk., 29.

10 A.E. Presnyakov, *Knyazhoe pravo v drevney Rusi* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 78–81; A.P. Tolochko, *Knyaz' v Drevney Rusi: Vlast', Sobstvennost', Ideologiya* (Kiev, 1992), 40–41; P.P. Tolochko, *Drevnyaya Rus', Ocherki sotsial'no-politicheskoy istorii* (Kiev, 1987), 112–113; V.A. Kuchkin, "Yury Dolgorukiy," *Voprosy istorii*, nr. 10 (1996), 38; A.V. Nazarenko, *Drevnyaya Rus' i Slavyane* (Moscow, 2009), 99, and others.

tradition, Mstislav's sons would rule it one after the other observing the lateral system succession. Accordingly, their uncles, Monomakh's sons who were younger than Yaropolk, were debarred from ruling Pereyasavl'. As already noted, the 1132 chronicle entry concerning Monomakh's instruction makes no reference to Kiev. The main purpose of that directive issued by Monomakh seemed to be to ensure that Pereyasavl' would become the patrimony of the Mstislavichi.

Under the year 1139 Yaropolk's younger brother Vyacheslav would refer to another instruction that Monomakh had allegedly given to his sons at an earlier date. It defined his order of succession to Kiev for them. In that year, when Oleg's son Vsevolod usurped Kiev from Monomakh's son Vyacheslav, the latter defended his occupation of Kiev with the following unique message that he sent to Vsevolod via Metropolitan Mikhail:

Brother, I have come here [i.e. to Kiev] after my brothers Mstislav and Yaropolk according to the testament of our fathers. But if you covet this throne and wish to abandon your patrimony, then, brother, I am younger than you so let it be yours. Withdraw to Vyshgorod for the time being and I shall return to my former domain, and Kiev shall be yours.

Vsevolod did as Vyacheslav requested and the latter returned to his domain of Turov. On 5 March Metropolitan Mikhail installed Vsevolod as prince of Kiev¹¹. Significantly, Vsevolod could not occupy the town according to the traditional axiom that he had the right to sit on the throne of his father because his father Oleg had never ruled Kiev. He seized control of the capital through force with the approval of the Kievans. Usurpation was an accepted means of becoming prince of Kiev provided that the townspeople welcomed the aggressor as their prince.

The reference to "our fathers" can be interpreted to mean Vyacheslav's father Monomakh and Vsevolod's father Oleg. This is the only instance in the sources in which the two princes are reported concluding this pact. *Mosk.*, the only chronicle that refers "to the testament of our fathers" is a late source with a pro-Monomashichi bias. Its report of Vyacheslav's reply is therefore suspect because it supports the Monomashichi claim to Kiev. Nevertheless, there are reasons why it cannot be interpreted to be pro-Monomashichi propaganda like other biased reporting made by Muscovite publicists. Instead, we can look upon it as an objective and reliable chronicle entry. Had the report been written by a publicist who wished to fortify the claim of the Monomashichi to Kiev, he most likely would not have referred to the authors of the testament with the ambiguous and passing reference to "our fathers". Rather, he would most likely have described the testament in some detail and identified Vyacheslav's father by name as Vladimir Monomakh in order to obviate any doubt about the identity of the father in question. Moreover, the news that Vyacheslav succeeded his brother Yaropolk shows that he acted according to a predetermined order of genealogical succession that was different from the

11 *Mosk.*, 34; s.a. 1140, *Ipat.*, cols 302–303.

system envisioned by Yaroslav the Wise. This order was approved by his younger brother Yury of Suzdalia, a militant champion of the Monomashichi right to rule Kiev according to genealogical seniority. It was also approved by the Kievans.

According to Vyacheslav's declaration, Monomakh had made a deal with Oleg that Monomakh's sons would all rule Kiev according to genealogical seniority beginning with Mstislav. In this way Monomakh attempted to ensure that his descendants would become the sole ruling family of Kiev. At the time that he and Oleg concluded their pact Monomakh had some seven living sons who were eligible to succeed him. The Svyatoslavichi, however, had only three princes. These were Oleg and his two younger brothers who all belonged to an older generation than Monomakh's sons. This meant that a number of the younger and more numerous Monomashichi would inevitably outlive the three Svyatoslavichi and become the ruling dynasty of Rus'. Monomakh expected each of his sons to occupy Kiev from his own patrimonial domain and not from Pereyasavl', since he had designated the latter to become the patrimony of the Mstislavichi. Monomakh's instruction to his sons concerning succession to Kiev as stated by Vyacheslav therefore confirms that he did not designate Mstislav's son Vsevolod to succeed Yaropolk to Kiev but only to Pereyasavl'.

Moreover, according to the arrangement Monomakh's sons would succeed him ahead of his genealogically eldest nephews, Svyatopolk Izyaslavich's sons, from the senior-most family of the triumvirate. Such a pact could not have been concluded by Monomakh and Oleg while Svyatopolk was ruling Kiev since he would have inevitably objected to his sons being debarred from succession. Monomakh and Oleg therefore would have formulated their agreement after Svyatopolk's death in 1113 and before Oleg's death in 1115. As has already been suggested elsewhere, Monomakh may have coerced Oleg into abjuring his rights and the rights of his dynasty to ruling Kiev when he procrastinated in granting Oleg permission to transfer the relics of SS Boris and Gleb into his church in Vyshgorod¹².

On the very day that Vsevolod occupied Pereyasavl', we are told, his uncles Yury, who was prince of Suzdalia, and the younger Andrey, who had come from Vladimir in Volyn', drove him out¹³. They objected to his occupation of the town because, they declared, "our brother Yaropolk, after his death, intends to give Kiev

12 M. Dimnik, "Oleg Svyatoslavich and his Patronage of the Cult of SS Boris and Gleb," *Mediaeval Studies*, vol. 50 (Toronto, 1988), 361–367.

13 It has been suggested that Yury was able to act with such speed because he had positioned himself with his troops in Gorodets Osterskiy to monitor developments (A. Yanovsky, *Yury Dolgorukiy* (Moscow, 1955), 70–71). Gorodets is located on the border between the lands of Pereyasavl' and Chernigov on the Oster River a tributary of the Desna (A. N. Nasonov, '*Russkaya zemlya' i obrazovanie territorii drevnerusskogo gosudarstva* (Moscow, 1951), 246.

to his nephew Vsevolod¹⁴. It is difficult to know if this was merely an assumption on their part or if it was truly Yaropolk's intention in keeping with a directive given by Monomakh. Nowhere do the chronicles explicitly state that either Monomakh, or Mstislav, or Yaropolk intended Vsevolod to succeed Yaropolk to Kiev. Nevertheless, Yury and Andrey's declaration implies that Vsevolod's succession to Kiev would be a violation of the order of succession originally stipulated by Monomakh, namely, a violation of the traditional order of lateral succession to be followed by Monomakh's sons. Thus, if at a later date Monomakh had changed his mind and decreed that the Mstislavichi would succeed Yaropolk to Kiev, then his sons and the Mstislavichi both had Monomakh's decrees to support their claims to Kiev.

Eight days after Yury occupied Pereyasavl' Yaropolk drove him out in keeping, we are told, with his promise to Mstislav. Yaropolk then summoned Vsevolod's younger brother Izyaslav from Polotsk to come and rule Pereyasavl'. Meanwhile, the two Monomashichi continued to object to having a Mstislavich ruling Pereyasavl'. Finally, Yaropolk gave in to the two malcontents and appointed their older brother Vyacheslav of Turov to Pereyasavl'. To Izyaslav he gave Turov, Pinsk, and instead of reappointing him to Polotsk he also gave Izyaslav the lesser town of Minsk in the Polotsk lands¹⁵. Meanwhile Vsevolod who had returned to Novgorod encountered fierce opposition in that town. Before answering Yaropolk's summons to go south to rule Pereyasavl' he had pledged to the Novgorodians that he would die as their prince. Since he broke his oath by going to Pereyasavl' the Novgorodians evicted him¹⁶.

Thus we see that Yaropolk inadvertently initiated the first internal rivalry in the House of Monomakh, one that was to become a prolonged dispute between his brothers and nephews. Significantly, his own rule in Kiev was secure. All his brothers and nephews acknowledged him to be the senior prince of the dynasty and the rightful successor to Kiev. The disputes raged over the appointments that he made to the dynasty's patrimonial domain. Unfortunately for him, by obeying the alleged wishes of his father Monomakh, and by honoring the oath that he had made to his brother Mstislav, he violated the traditional order of genealogical succession to Pereyasavl'. According to the latter, his brother Vyacheslav, who was next in seniority in the family after him, should have occupied its patrimonial domain. To judge from Yury and Andrey's accusation they believed that, in keeping with the lateral system of succession, the prince of Pereyasavl' should be one of Monomakh's sons, and should become the next prince of Kiev. In their view, under Yaropolk's arrangement Pereyasavl' would serve as the stepping stone to Kiev for the Mstislavichi. Accordingly, the genealogically senior Monomashichi, namely Vyacheslav, Yury, and Andrey, would be denied rule in Kiev. Thus we see that by designating Pereyasavl' as Mstislav's patrimony and therewith

14 *NPL*, 22, 207.

15 *Lav.*, cols 301–302; s.a. 1131, Mosk., 32.

16 *NPL*: 22–23, 207; “Tverskaya letopis’,” *PSRL* 15 (St. Petersburg, 1863), cols. 197–198.

breaking the tradition that gave each son the right to sit on the throne of his father, Monomakh was indirectly responsible for the first internal conflict among his sons. Yury and Andrey ultimately got their way by forcing Yaropolk to break his oath to Mstislav and to hand over Pereyasavl' to their elder brother Vyacheslav. In their view he was the rightful successor to Pereyasavl' and, after Yaropolk's death, to Kiev.

The Mstislavichi lost ground at the end of this first round of squabbling. The two eldest brothers, Vsevolod and Izyaslav, had failed to secure their hold on Pereyasavl'. Moreover, by occupying the family patrimony Vsevolod had incurred the displeasure of the Novgorodians; they evicted him and thus deprived him of his northern domain. In like manner, after Izyaslav abandoned Polotsk the townspeople there were displeased with his departure and drove out the Mstislavichi from their lands. Nevertheless, as noted above, after Yaropolk removed Izyaslav from Pereyasavl' he compensated him by giving him Vyacheslav's Turov domains. Following their failure to occupy Pereyasavl' and following their evictions from their former domains, there can be little doubt that the two Mstislavichi were frustrated with Yaropolk. He had failed to fulfill the promise that he had made to their father that he would ensure their succession to Pereyasavl'. Thus, even though Yaropolk had appeased the three Monomashichi, and even though the chronicler claimed that by the end of the year 1132 Yaropolk had established peace in his dynasty, there can be no doubt that there was simmering discontent among the Mstislavichi.

Moreover, during the following year Yaropolk faced a new problem: Vyacheslav proved to be uncooperative. He was unhappy with his lot in Pereyasavl' and wished to return to Turov. Even though he was next in precedence after Yaropolk, and thus next in line to rule Kiev, he was not politically ambitious. He had been forced to occupy Pereyasavl' against his will because his younger brothers, Yury and Andrey, insisted that all of Monomakh's sons exercise their right of succession to Pereyasavl' and to Kiev. Vyacheslav attempted to flee to Turov but got only as far north as Yury's Gorodets Osterskiy. There Yaropolk intercepted him and forced him to return to Pereyasavl'¹⁷. After this failed attempt he allegedly took the unexpected course of action of riding east to distant Ryazan' where he seized control of that town. If this information is reliable the chronicler does not explain what Vyacheslav hoped to achieve with his action. In any case, it evidently failed to serve his purpose so he returned to Pereyasavl'. Yaropolk rebuked him for behaving "like a Polovtsian" and ordered him to remain peacefully in Pereyasavl'¹⁸.

17 Lav., col. 302; Mosk., 32. It has been suggested that Yaropolk gave Gorodets Osterskiy to Yury in 1132 after evicting him from Pereyasavl' and giving it to Izyaslav Mstislavich (Kuchkin, "Yury Dolgorukiy," 38).

18 "Patriarshaya ili Nikonovskaya letopis'," (Nikon) *PSRL* 9 (St. Petersburg, 1862), 158; V.N. Tatishchev, *Istoriya Rossiyskaya*, 7 vols. (Moscow – Leningrad, 1962–1968), 4, 189; 2, 145. Although Nikon is a late chronicle and Tatishchev has to be used with caution, the two sources corroborate each others' information. Moreover, since Tatishchev has the information in both redactions this suggests that it is probably reliable.

Vyacheslav refused to do as he was told and in the early part of 1134 he evicted Izyaslav from Turov and occupied it¹⁹. Izyaslav was therefore forced to find a temporary home in Minsk in the Polotsk lands. Vyacheslav's disobedience created two problems for Yaropolk: he had to find a prince for Pereyasavl' and he had to find a suitable domain for his nephew Izyaslav. Of course, he could not reappoint Izyaslav to Pereyasavl' owing to Yury and Andrey's opposition.

In that year Yury finally persuaded Yaropolk to hand over Pereyasavl' to him, according to the chronicler, in exchange for his Rostov-Suzdal' lands "but not all of them". It has been suggested that Yury did not relinquish control of his patrimonial lands but gave Yaropolk the tribute from these lands in payment for Pereyasavl'²⁰. When Izyaslav was informed that Yaropolk had given Pereyasavl' to a Monomashich and, what is more, to Yury who, he argued rightly, had no immediate right to rule it, he was furious. He rode to Novgorod to seek help from his brother Vsevolod who had been reinstated as the town's prince. The Mstislavichi — Vsevolod, Izyaslav, and Svyatopolk — met in council and resolved to ask for assistance from their brother-in-law Vsevolod Ol'govich of Chernigov who had married their sister Maria. They evidently had little difficulty in persuading him to declare war on their uncles. Significantly, however, their main goal was not to fight for the possession of Pereyasavl' but to seize a domain for Izyaslav. Since Yury was in Pereyasavl' they proposed to capture domains in his Suzdalia. On their march to Rostov, however, the Novgorodians who had joined them quarrelled and abandoned the campaign. Their desertion forced the Mstislavichi to cancel their attack. Vsevolod returned to Novgorod and Izyaslav withdrew to Novgorod's eastern outpost of Volok Lamskiy²¹. In the autumn, after word reached Izyaslav that Yaropolk and the Monomashichi were planning a campaign against Vsevolod in Chernigov, he rode to assist his brother-in-law²².

In the autumn of 1134 Yaropolk, Yury, and Andrey marched against Chernigov but refrained from attacking it because Vsevolod, who was waiting for the Polovtsy to come to his aid, refused to come out of the town to do battle. The brothers therefore withdrew without concluding peace. After the tribesmen arrived in the winter Vsevolod, accompanied by other Ol'govichi and two Mstislavichi, Izyaslav and Svyatopolk, pillaged Yury's lands of Pereyasavl'. The chronicler reports that neither Yaropolk nor Vsevolod could cross the Dnepr River so they withdrew. Although the princes concluded an uneasy peace Vsevolod repeated his demands to Yaropolk insisting that the latter return to him the lands that his father Oleg had owned during

19 Lav., col. 302; Ipat., col. 295; N. G. Berezkhov, *Khronologiya russkogo letopisaniya* (Moscow, 1963), 50.

20 Kuchkin, "Yury Dolgorukiy," 38–39; it has been suggested that two years later, in 1136, Yury ceased paying this tribute to Yaropolk, see A. Karpov, *Yury Dolgorukiy* (Moscow, 2006), 70–71.

21 Volok Lam'skiy (Volokolamsk), one of Novgorod's vassal towns, was located on the river Lama on the borders between the Novgorod, Suzdal', and Smolensk lands. Concerning the importance of Volok Lam'skiy, see A. A. Zimin, "Novgorod i Volokolamsk v XI–XV vekakh," *Novgorodskiy istoricheskiy sbornik* 10 (Novgorod, 1961), 99–101.

22 Lav., cols 302–303; Mosk., 32; s.a. 1134: NPL: 23, 208; Berezkhov, *Khronologiya*, 50.

Monomakh's reign. If Yaropolk refused Vsevolod threatened to go to war. Later in the winter, however, Yaropolk and Yury positioned their troops in front of Chernigov threatening to attack. Once again the princes had recourse to negotiation and on this occasion their deliberations were successful. The two princes were seemingly making only token gestures of war and preferred to negotiate peace settlements. This is not surprising since it was not their war. Yaropolk was helping his brothers and Vsevolod was helping his brothers-in-law in their disputes. Finally, Yaropolk and Vsevolod concluded a satisfactory agreement and Yaropolk re-allocated domains seemingly to everyone's satisfaction. He gave Pereyasavl' to his youngest brother Andrey and to his nephew Izyaslav he gave Andrey's town of Vladimir in Volyn'. Yury withdrew to his lands in Rostov-Suzdal²³.

The chronicles seemingly allude to the reason why Yury abandoned his claim to the Monomashichi patrimonial domain without any reported protest. We are told that before he arrived in the northeast his domains were attacked by Izyaslav's elder brother Vsevolod of Novgorod. Once again he attempted to capture towns in the Rostov-Suzdal' region for Izyaslav. Commanding the forces from Novgorod, Pskov, and Ladoga he clashed with Yury's troops led by his eldest son Rostislav. On 26 January 1135 Vsevolod's troops were defeated²⁴. The threat that the Mstislavichi posed to Yury's domain in the northeast may well have helped to persuade him to hand over control of Pereyasavl' to his youngest brother Andrey so that he could return to his patrimonial domain and defend it²⁵.

Thus we see that by the end of 1134 the dispute between Monomakh's sons and their nephews had escalated into an inter-dynastic war. Yaropolk as prince of Kiev was unable to mediate successfully between the two camps each of which demanded that he defend its rights. His job was made all the more challenging because, as already noted, each camp had legitimate authority backing its claims. On the one hand, the Monomashichi adhered to the age-old tradition according to which all of Monomakh's sons had the right to sit on the throne of their father and were thus eligible to succeed him to Pereyasavl' in the order of genealogical seniority. On the other hand, the Mstislavichi cited the authority of their grandfather Monomakh and their father Mstislav. The latter two, having recourse to the same authority vested in their office as prince of Kiev that Yaroslav the Wise had exercised, changed the traditional practice of lateral succession to Pereyasavl'. Accordingly, Yaropolk would be succeeded not by his eldest surviving brother but by Mstislav's eldest surviving son, Vsevolod. Yury and Andrey, however, saw a great danger in this arrangement. Since each son had the right to sit on the throne of his father, they claimed that the Mstislavichi would use Pereyasavl' as a stepping stone to the throne

23 Ipat., cols. 295–297; Lav., col. 303; Mosk., 32.

24 See s.a. 1134, NPL: 23, 208; cf. s.a. 1135: Lav., col. 303; Mosk., 32; s.a. 1136, "L'vovskaya letopis'," *PSRL* 20 (St. Petersburg, 1910), 105–106.

25 See s.a. 1137, Ipat., col. 300.

of Kiev which also had been occupied by their father. In this way they would debar all of their uncles, Monomakh's sons, from ruling Kiev. Understandably, the Monomashichi objected to the revised scheme and had recourse to force.

The outcome of the conflict was a compromise. Monomakh's youngest son Andrey was given Pereyasavl'. Even though he was not the rightful Monomashichi claimant to the town, the uncles were appeased in that they were able to keep the dynasty's patrimonial domain under their control and out of the hands of the Mstislavichi. Izyaslav was also pacified on being given the important principality of Vladimir in Volyn²⁶.

Although Yaropolk had placated his nephews by giving Izyaslav the principality of Vladimir in Volyn', Vsevolod Ol'govich of Chernigov remained disgruntled because Yaropolk refused to return to him the unidentified Ol'govichi lands. In August of 1135, therefore, he waged war against the Monomashichi without the Mstislavichi, solely on behalf of the Ol'govichi. He launched an unprecedented attack on Andrey and his brothers Yaropolk, Vyacheslav and Yuri. On 29 December, after scoring a brilliant victory over the four brothers, he invaded the lands of the prince of Kiev himself and threatened to lay siege to the Kievan outpost of Vyshgorod. Even so, Yaropolk remained intransigent and refused to return the domain that Vsevolod demanded. Finally, at the Lybed' River, the threat of another all-out war, the memory of his recent defeat at Vsevolod's hands, and evidently the intervention of the metropolitan to spare Christian lives prompted Yaropolk to settle for peace. On 12 January 1136 he negotiated a pact with Vsevolod and finally returned to him the domain in question²⁷.

Circumstantial evidence suggests that the region in question was Kursk and the Posem'e district which the Monomashichi would have annexed to the principality of Pereyasavl'. It was one of the few regions that changed hands periodically between Svyatoslav (d. 1076) and his heirs and Vsevolod (d. 1093) and his heirs. According to a number of historians, Mstislav had been the last Monomashich to seize control of Kursk. He probably took it from Vsevolod in 1127 as payment for not challenging the latter's usurpation of Chernigov²⁸. Thus we see that during Yaropolk's rule in Kiev the Monomashichi and Mstislavichi lost control of the principality of Polotsk after Izyaslav departed from it, and also of Kursk and the

26 As we have seen, according to the allocations Yaroslav the Wise made to his sons, Vladimir was ranked after Pereyasavl' in importance.

27 See s.a. 1136: Ipat., cols. 297–300; Lav., cols. 303–304; compare NPL: 23–24; 208–209. Berezkhov, *Khronologiya*, 136–137.

28 A number of historians believe Mstislav took Kursk in 1127 (e.g. V.V. Mavrodin, "Ocherk istorii drevney Rusi do mongol'skogo zavoevaniya," *Istoriya kul'tury drevney Rusi*, Domongol'skiy period: 1 (Moscow and Leningrad, 1948], 28; A. K. Zaytsev, "Chernigovskoe knyazhestvo," *Drevnerusskie knyazhestva X–XIII vv.*, ed. by L.G. Beskrovny (Moscow, 1975), 92, 94 and others). Cf. M. Pogodin who states that Yaropolk took Kursk from the Ol'govichi ("Mezhdousobnyya voyny 1055–1240," *Vremennik*, book 2 (Moscow, 1849), 66). See also M. Dimnik, *The Dynasty of Chernigov, 1054–1146* (Toronto, 1994), 335–336.

Posem'e region whose last reported Mstislavich ruler had also been Izyaslav. Nevertheless, after Yaropolk and Vsevolod reached a settlement in 1136 Yaropolk could sit back content with the knowledge that his brothers and nephews finally had been placated even though at a high price. In pacifying them he had broken his oath to his brother Mstislav with which he had promised to give Pereyasavl' to the eldest Mstislavich. He was no doubt also relieved that he had appeased Vsevolod of Chernigov and brought peace to the land with the return of the Ol'govichi domain, even though at the cost of losing that region for the Monomashichi.

On 17 April 1138, after almost two years of rule, the Novgorodians deposed Vsevolod's brother Svyatoslav and once again invited the dynasty of Monomakh to send them a prince. Even before Svyatoslav's eviction from Novgorod, we are told, Vsevolod began pillaging districts in Andrey's principality of Pereyasavl'. After he was informed that his brother Svyatoslav had been taken captive by Rostislav Mstislavich's men when he was fleeing south past Smolensk, he intensified his attacks. He declared an all-out war against Yaropolk and advanced against Kiev. Nevertheless, he retreated to Chernigov after learning that Yaropolk had marshalled an enormous army against him. When Yaropolk pursued Vsevolod to Chernigov he capitulated in face of the overwhelming odds. The two therefore concluded peace²⁹. It is reasonable to assume that, as part of their agreement, Yaropolk ordered his nephew Rostislav Mstislavich to release Svyatoslav Ol'govich and to send him to his brother in Chernigov.

The chroniclers do not explain why Vsevolod and the Polovtsy initiated forays into the districts of Pereyasavl' even before Svyatoslav was evicted from Novgorod. The most likely reason for their pillaging was not because Vsevolod had a personal grievance against Andrey, but because he wished to stop the Monomashichi and Mstislavichi from imposing economic sanctions on Novgorod. It appears that, by boycotting trade and by prohibiting merchants of Novgorod from passing through their lands, Novgorod's neighbouring Monomashichi principalities were so successful in disrupting its commerce that the Novgorodians were forced to expel Svyatoslav. By evicting him they hoped to persuade Yaropolk and his allies into lifting their embargoes.

Svyatoslav's capture near Smolensk was an important coup for Yaropolk's family because it gave him bartering power with Vsevolod. His capture also gives us useful information concerning Yaropolk and his nephews. Since Svyatoslav was taken captive by men in the service of Yaropolk's nephew Rostislav Mstislavich, this is testimony that Rostislav was once again loyal to Yaropolk. That is, he had renounced his alliance with Vsevolod Ol'govich that he and his brothers had made. Circumstantial evidence shows that his brother Izyaslav, now the most senior Mstislavich, had also returned to his uncle's camp. This is confirmed by the news that his troops from Vladimir in Volyn' were numbered among Yaropolk's contingents that campaigned against Vsevolod.

29 Lav., cols 305–306; Mosk., 34; cf. Nikon. 9, 162–163. See also, s.a. 1139: Ipat., cols. 301–302.

Indeed, we may take for granted that the Mstislavichi were never hostile to Yaropolk who had assumed the role of their guardian after their father's death. Rather, the Mstislavichi had formed an alliance with Vsevolod Ol'govich against Yaropolk's brothers Yury and Andrey who refused to allow Yaropolk to give Pereyasavl' to one of the Mstislavichi. It appears that, after Yaropolk gave the patrimonial domain to his brother Andrey and appointed his nephew Izyaslav to Vladimir in Volyn', the Mstislavichi resigned themselves to not controlling Pereyasavl'. Consequently, in 1138 Yaropolk finally ruled a united dynasty.

Yaropolk died in Kiev on 18 February 1139 and was buried in the Church of St Andrew³⁰. His main political problem had been the allocation of the patrimonial domain of Pereyasavl'. In the end he failed to fulfill the promise that he had made to his brother Mstislav to give Pereyasavl' to the latter's son Vsevolod.

Yaropolk was the first prince of Kiev and senior prince of the House of Monomakh who had to deal with insubordination in his family. The younger Monomashichi had remained submissive to the prince of Kiev for as long as their father Monomakh, and their eldest brother Mstislav, were in power. One of the strongest unifying factors had been the family tie that the sons had had with Monomakh and the brothers had had with Mstislav. During Yaropolk's reign that family harmony was shattered when his brothers opposed him. Ironically, Yaropolk was not directly responsible for creating the disunity. Rather, he was the catalyst who triggered it by attempting to implement Monomakh's alleged revised plan, endorsed by Mstislav, to make Mstislav's heirs the ruling family of the dynasty's patrimonial domain of Pereyasavl'. His brothers Yury and Andrey challenged Yaropolk by rejecting his appointment of the Mstislavichi to Pereyasavl', while Vyacheslav disobeyed Yaropolk by refusing to rule the town in the name of the Monomashichi. These were the first instances of dynastic insubordination to the senior prince in the House of Monomakh.

In his dealings with his brothers and nephews over the allocation of Pereyasavl' Yaropolk has been accused of being indecisive and too ready to resolve the problem with compromises.³¹ Thus, before his death, he appeased his brothers Yury and Andrey by appointing the latter, the youngest living Monomashich, to the principality of Pereyasavl'. After failing to give Pereyasavl' to the Mstislavichi, he appeased his eldest living nephew Izyaslav Mstislavich by giving him the town of Vladimir in Volyn'; it would become his family's patrimonial domain.

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30 See s.a. 1138: Lav., col. 306; s.a. 1139: Ipat., col. 302; Berezkhov, *Khronologiya*, 52.

31 See P.P. Tolochko, *Drevnyaya Rus'*, 112–116.