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## Systems of Succession in Rus' and Steppe Societies

The social anthropologist David Sneath has written that “aristocratic power and statelike processes of administration emerged as the more significant features of the wider organization of life on the steppe”, not “kinship society”<sup>1</sup>. His strategy has been “to rethink the traditional dichotomy between state and nonstate society and to approach the state in a different way — in terms of the decentralized and distributed power found in aristocratic orders. Viewing the state as a form of social relation rather than a central structure avoids the evolutionist dichotomy between state and nonstate society, and it makes it possible for us to conceive of a ‘headless state,’ a configuration of statelike power formed by the horizontal relations between power holders, rather than as a result of their mutual subordination to a political center”<sup>2</sup>. Sneath’s formulation may provide a better understanding of the interrelationship of the early Rus’ princes as “horizontal relations between power holders” in contrast to seeing a “mutual subordination” to the prince in Kiev or to the “political center” Moscow in the later Rus’ principalities. The term *headless state* may seem an oxymoron since centralization is one of the main characteristics of a state, but as Michael Hoffman pointed out in his study of pre-pharaonic Egypt, the centralization is usually done by an elite<sup>3</sup>. Even in a centralized monarchy, where vertical power relations dominate, horizontal power relations among the aristocracy still exist. Aristocratic power relations tend to come to the fore when there is no, or only a weak’ center or head, but tend to be submerged, or at least not as obvious, when there is a strong center or head<sup>4</sup>. The polity called by some

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1 Sneath D. *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society, and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia*, Columbia University Press (New York, 2007), 1.

2 Sneath D. *The Headless State*, 1–2.

3 Hoffmann M. *Egypt before the Pharaohs: The Prehistoric Foundations of Egyptian Civilization* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 345: “If there is one distinctive characteristic of the transition to complex societies [civilizations] it is the emergence of groups of people able to concentrate vast amounts of power in their own hands. In the end, all of the panoply of the state — its temples religions, public ceremonies, art, trade, architecture, wars, literature, and even its social and economic systems — can be seen as corollary in the centralization of power. At the vortex of centralization as the very personification of power, inevitably stands an elite.”

4 Examples of this tendency abound in the historical record; e.g., the minority of Louis XIV was dominated by horizontal aristocratic power in an unresolved way that led to the Fronde, but Louis XIV, or rather his ministers, were able to get the aristocracy to accept the imposition of a vertical monarchical power upon them.

historians “Kievan Rus” did have a capital (Kiev), and insofar as someone occupied the capital seat it focused the attention of, and was competed for by, those princes who were in the line (or lines) of succession and by a few who were not. Yet, there was no central government. Instead there were several local governments — in Chernigov, Smolensk, Murom-Riazan’, Novgorod, Pereiaslavl’, Polotsk, Rostov-Suzdal’, Volodimir-Volynsk, Tmutarakhan’, and Kiev itself.

My working hypothesis is that the early Rus’ principalities constituted themselves into what Sneath calls a “headless state”, or if one finds it difficult to call “headless” a state that has a head in Kiev, then we might term it an aristocratic state with a *primus inter pares* head<sup>5</sup>. The social order within that aristocratic state was one in which a member of each aristocratic branch from each generation attempted to serve as prince in Kiev, but it also provided a means for determining succession in each of the local princely jurisdictions. This succession system, although set up many decades after the aristocratic state was initially established, provided the structure that held the disparate principalities together<sup>6</sup>. The only other unifying practice was allegiance to the Orthodox Church through the metropolitan of Kiev, which, as we will see, was not a criterion for establishing legitimacy of rule.

Although later chroniclers and historians refer to a ruling dynasty of Rus’ as the Riurikids (Riurikovichi), the chronicles and other sources before the 15<sup>th</sup> century never do<sup>7</sup>. The *Povest’ vremennykh let (PVL)*, for example, recounts the time elapsed from the flood to the accession of Emperor Michael of Byzantium, then “отъ първаго лѣта Михаила сего до първаго лѣта Ольгова, Русьскаго князя, лѣтъ 29” (“twenty-nine years passed between the first year of Michael’s reign and the first year of Oleg, Prince of Rus”)<sup>8</sup>. In doing so, the *PVL* chronicler makes no mention of Riurik, which would be odd were he seeing Riurik as the founder of a dynasty. In the ensuing recounting of the years elapsed for each of the rulers, bring-

5 But see V.A. Rogov who denies the ruler of Kiev was *primus inter pares*, because he occupied a “special state status” (особый государственный статус). Rogov V.A. К вопросу о развитии княжеской власти на Руси. *Древняя Русь. Проблемы права и правовой идеологии*. Ред. Г.В. Швеков. М., 1984, 62.

6 The idea that succession in the early Rus’ principalities rose to the level of a system has been questioned (see below), but if one goes by dictionary definitions, system is exactly what is being described in our sources.

7 Our main sources of information about the early Rus’ principalities are chronicles: the *Povest’ vremennykh let* (hereafter, *PVL*; also known as *The Tale of Bygone Years* or *Primary Chronicle*), with entries from 852 to 1114; the *Kievan Chronicle*, with entries from 1115 to 1199; the *Novgorod I Chronicle*, with entries from 854 to 1447; and the *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, with entries from 1200 to 1292. For the text of the *PVL*, see *Povest’ vremennykh let: An Interlinear Collation and Paradosis*, 3 vols., compiled and edited by Donald Ostrowski, associate editor David J. Birnbaum (Cambridge, MA [= *Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature*, vol. 10]: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 2003); on-line version with corrections: <http://hudce7.harvard.edu/~ostrowski/pvl> (hereafter *PVL: An Interlinear Collation*). For the text of the *Kievan Chronicle*, see *Полное собрание русских летописей (ПСРЛ)*, 43 т. (СПб/Петроград/ЛМ, 1841–2004 гг.), 2 (1908 г.), стбл. 280–715. For the text of the *Novgorod I Chronicle*, see *ПСРЛ* 3 (2000 г.). For the text of the *Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, see *ПСРЛ* 2 (1908 г.): 715–938. The chronicles can be supplemented to a limited extent with evidence from saints’ lives, sermons, a few documents, coins, inscriptions, graffiti, birchbark letters, and patericons.

8 *PVL: An Interlinear Collation and Paradosis*, 18,11–18,12.

ing it down to the death of Iaroslav (1054), he is unconcerned about supplying any dynastic connection. His primary concern is to explain who the Rus' were who attacked Constantinople *s.a.* 866 (860 in Byzantine sources) and *s.a.* 907, not with establishing a genealogical legitimization of dynastic rule.

We find no attempt in the *PVL* to connect the later princes genealogically with the earliest princes. The last mention of Riurik is *s.a.* 882 when Oleg announces that Igor' is Riurik's son. The last mention of Oleg in the *PVL* is *s.a.* 945, the year of a second treaty with Byzantium, in relation to the first treaty, and its last mention of Igor' also is *s.a.* 945, the year of his death. Its last mention of Sviatoslav is *s.a.* 1044 when the remains of his sons Iaropolk and Oleg were transferred to the Church of the Holy Virgin in Kiev<sup>9</sup>. Even later, when one would expect the chroniclers to be predominantly concerned with the Volodimirovichi (that is, the descendants of Volodimir Sviatoslavich [980–1015], who converted the Rus' to Christianity), one finds few attempts at establishing dynastic connections through genealogy beyond the father and sometimes the brother or the grandfather<sup>10</sup>. The genealogical connection of Iaroslav Volodimirovich (1019–1054) with the throne of Kiev is treated the same way with no special emphasis given to Volodimir's role as Christianizer: “Ярославъ же сѣде Къевѣ на столѣ отъни” (“Iaroslav sat in Kyiv on the throne of his father”)<sup>11</sup>. In describing Vsevolod Iziaslavich's ascension to the throne of Kiev *s.a.* 1079, the *PVL* chronicler states that he “сѣде Къевѣ на столѣ отъца своего и брата своего” (“sat in Kyiv on the throne of his father and his brother”)<sup>12</sup>. In describing the Sviatoslavichi princes Oleg and David being invited by Sviatoslav Iziaslavich and Volodimir Vsevolodovich to Kiev *s.a.* 1095, the *PVL* chronicler has them being called “на столѣ отъць нашихъ и дѣдъ нашихъ” (“to the throne of our fathers and our grandfathers”)<sup>13</sup>.

*The Kievan Chronicle* also uses phrasing 18 times in similar situations. *S.a.* 6654 (1146), when Iziaslav set out against Igor, he claims to want to attain “столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“the throne of my grandfather and my father”)<sup>14</sup>. Likewise, *s.a.* 6658 (1150), “Изяславъ же въ Къевѣ сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего...” (“Iziaslav sat in Kiev on the throne of his grandfather and his father...”)<sup>15</sup>. *S.a.* 6658 (1150), Iziaslav said to Viacheslav: “Поѣде сяди же на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“Go, sit on the throne of your grandfather and your father”)<sup>16</sup>. *S.a.* 6659 (1151), Viacheslav “сѣде на столѣ дѣда

9 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 155,5–6.

10 On the late establishment of the cult of Volodimir, see Francis Butler, *Enlightener of Rus': The Image of Vladimir Sviatoslavich across the Centuries* (Bloomington, IN, 2002).

11 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 142,19–20. The Laurentian copy adds “и дѣдни” (“and grandfathers”).

12 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 204,8–9.

13 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 230,23–24.

14 *ПСРЛ* 2: 323 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 47).

15 *ПСРЛ* 2: 416 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 149).

16 *ПСРЛ* 2: 418 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 151).

своего и отца своего” (“sat on the throne of his grandfather and father”)<sup>17</sup>. *S.a.* 6663 (1155), Iurii “сѣде на столѣ отецъ совихъ и дѣдъ” (“sat on the throne of his fathers and grandfathers”)<sup>18</sup>. *S.a.* 6667 (1159), Rogvolod “сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“sat on the throne of his grandfather and his father”) in Polotsk<sup>19</sup>. *S.a.* 6668 (1160), Rostislav M’slavich “сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“sat on the throne of his grandfather and his father”)<sup>20</sup>. *S.a.* 6677 (1169), M’sislav Iziaslavich “сѣде на столѣ Ярославли и отца своего и дѣдъ своихъ” “sat on the throne of Iaroslav and of his father and his grandfathers”<sup>21</sup> (NB: Iaroslav was M’sislav’s great great great grandfather [6 generations]). *S.a.* 6682 (1174), Roman Rostislavich “вниде въ Кыевъ и сѣде на столѣ отца своего и дѣда” (“entered Kiev and sat on the throne of his father and grandfather”)<sup>22</sup>. *S.a.* 6682 (1174), Riurik Rostislavich “вниде въ Кыевъ ... и сѣде на столѣ отецъ своихъ и дѣдъ своихъ” (“entered Kiev... and sat on the throne of his fathers and his grandfathers”)<sup>23</sup>. *S.a.* 6682 (1174), Iaroslav Iziaslavich “вниде ... въ Кыевъ и сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“entered ... Kiev and sat on the throne of his grandfather and his father”)<sup>24</sup>. *S.a.* 6682 (1174), “Святославъ въѣха въ Кыевъ и сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“Sviatoslav went into Kiev and sat on the throne of his grandfather and his father”)<sup>25</sup>. *S.a.* 6683 (1175), “Романъ же сѣдевъ Кыевъ на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“Roman then sat in Kiev on the throne of his grandfather and his father”)<sup>26</sup>. *S.a.* 6684 (1176), Mikhalko “сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“sat on the throne of his grandfather and his father”) in Vladimir<sup>27</sup>. *S.a.* 6688 (1180), Riurik “въѣха въ Кыевъ въ день недѣльныи и сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“entered Kiev on Sunday and sat on the throne of his grandfather and his father”)<sup>28</sup>. *S.a.* 6688 (1180), David in Smolensk “сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“sat on the throne of his grandfather and his father”)<sup>29</sup>. *S.a.* 6698 (1190), “Володимѣръ сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“Volodimir sat on the throne of his grandfather and his father”)<sup>30</sup>. *S.a.* 6702 (1194), Riurik “сѣде на столѣ дѣда своего и отца своего” (“sat on the throne of his grandfather and his father”)<sup>31</sup>.

17 *ПСРЛ* 2: 418 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 153).

18 *ПСРЛ* 2: 478 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 215).

19 *ПСРЛ* 2: 496 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 234).

20 *ПСРЛ* 2: 504 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 244).

21 *ПСРЛ* 2: 535 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 283).

22 *ПСРЛ* 2: 568 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 324).

23 *ПСРЛ* 2: 571 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 327).

24 *ПСРЛ* 2: 578 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 336).

25 *ПСРЛ* 2: 578 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 337).

26 *ПСРЛ* 2: 600 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 363).

27 *ПСРЛ* 2: 602 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 365).

28 *ПСРЛ* 2: 616 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 381).

29 *ПСРЛ* 2: 616 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 381).

30 *ПСРЛ* 2: 666–667 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 440).

31 *ПСРЛ* 2: 681 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 458).

Hilarion's *Sermon on Law and Grace* (*Слово о законе и благодати*), thought to have been written in the 1050s, refers back only to Volodimir's father and grandfather: "великаго кагана нашае земли Володимера, вьнука старааго Игоря, сына же славнааго Святослава ("the great kagan of our land Volodimir, the grandson of old Igor '[and] the son of blessed Sviatoslav...")<sup>32</sup> as does the *Memorial and Encomium for Prince Volodimir of Rus'* by the Monk Iakov: "князю рускому Володимеру, сыну Святославию, внуку Ирогеви" ("Prince Volodimir, son of Sviatoslav and grandson of Igor")<sup>33</sup>. The Kievan Chronicle, on the other hand, does delineate two 5-generation lists. The first is for Iurii Dolgorukii when he first becomes grand prince in Kiev *s.a.* 6657 (1149): "сына Володимира Мономаха внука Всеволожа правнука Ярославля Володимира пращюра великаго Володимира хривившаго всю землю Рускую" ("son of Volodimir Monomakh, grandson of Vsevolod, great grandson of Iaroslav, and great great grandson of Volodimir the Great, who christianized all the Rus' land")<sup>34</sup>. The second is for Riurik Rostislvich *s.a.* 6707 (1199) when he laid the foundation for a stone wall below the church of St. Michael at the Vydubitsii Monastery where his great great grandfather had built the church 111 years earlier: "Сеи же богомудрии князь Рюрикъ пятый быст от того якоже пишеть о правѣднемъ Иевѣ от Аврама Всеволодь бо роди Володимера, Володимеръ же роди Мъстислава, Мъстислав же роди Ростислава, Ростислав же роди Рюрика и братью его" ("This God-wise Prince Riurik was the fifth [generation] from that [Prince Vsevolod], as it is written about the righteous Job [who was the fifth] from Abraham: for Vsevolod begat Volodimir, Volodimir begat M'stislav, M'stislav begat Rostislav, and Rostislav begat Riurik and his brothers")<sup>35</sup>. The chronicler draws an explicit parallel with the five generations between Abraham and Job. But even more significantly for our discussion here, he makes no reference, allusion, or mention in any way to the Riurik who supposedly founded the dynasty, even more telling because of the prince who he is extolling has the same name. Yet when a connection with Riurik could be made with the addition of just one more generational antecedent, no attempt is made to do so before the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. The description in the *PVL s.a.* 862 of the calling of Varangian Rus' by the Chuds, Slovenians, Krivichians, and Ves' would seem to assume on the part of the chronicler a pre-existing aristocratic social order among them:

Изыгнаша Варягы за море, и не даша имъ дани, и почаша сами въ собѣ владѣти. И не бѣ въ нихъ правды, и вѣста родъ на родъ, и быша усобицѣ въ нихъ, и воевати сами на ся почаша. И рѣша: "Поищемъ сами в собѣ кнѣзя, иже бы владѣлъ нами и рядилъ

32 *Das Metropolitan Ilarion Lobrede auf Vladimir den Heiligen und Glaubensbekenntnis*, ed. Ludolf Müller (Wiesbaden, 1962), 100.

33 Зимин А.А. Память и похвала Якова мниха и Житие князя Владимира по древнейшему списку. *Краткие сообщения Института славяноведения*, 37 (1963), 67, 72.

34 *ПСРЛ* 2: 383–384 (cf. Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 115).

35 *ПСРЛ* 2: 709 (cf. Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 490).

по ряду по праву”. И идоша за море къ Варягомъ, къ Руси. Сице бо зъвахуть ты Варяры Русь, яко се друзии зовуть ся Свее, друзии же Урмани, Англяне, инии и Гъте, тако и си, Ръша Русь, Чюдь, Словѣне, Кривичи и Вься: “Земля наша велика и обильна, а наряда въ ней нѣтъ. Да поидѣте кнѣжити и владѣть нами”. И избраша ся труие братия съ роды своими, и пояша по собѣ вьсю Русь, и придоша къ Словѣномъ първое. И сърубиша городъ Ладогу и съде старѣишии в ЛадозѣРюрикъ, а другыи, Синеусъ, на Бѣѣозерѣ, а третии, Труворъ, въ Изборьсцѣ<sup>36</sup>.

They drove the Varangians beyond the sea and, not giving them further tribute, set out to govern themselves. There was no law among them, clan rose against clan, and they began to war one against the other. They said, “Let us seek a prince who may rule over us and judge us justly according to the law.” They went overseas to the Varangians, to the Rus’. These particular Varangians were known as Rus’, just as some are called Swedes, and others Normans, Angles, and Goths, for they were thus named. The Chuds, the Slovenians, the Krivichians, and the Ves’ then said to the Rus’, “Our land is vast and abundant, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and govern over us.” They thus chose three brothers, with their clan, and took with them all the Rus’ and they came to the Slovenians. First, they built the town of Ladoga and the oldest, Riurik, located himself in Ladoga; the second, Sineus, in Beloozero; and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk.

The text does not explicitly say Riurik was a prince (i.e., an aristocrat with ruling charisma), but it implies it with the phrase “Поищемъ сами в собѣ кнѣзя” (“Let us seek a prince”). The *PVL* uses the term *родъ* to apply to those among the Chuds, Slovenians, Krivichians, and Ves’ who rose up against one another. This term, depending on context, can mean *family*, *kin*, *kind*, *sort*, or *clan*. If we understand the use of the term here as *clan*, then it may be comparable to the Pecheneg group as described by Horváth: “These clans were no longer social units based on ties of kinship but the nuclei of territorial organization directed by a clan aristocracy. Power lay in the hands of noble clans which were separate from the common people...”<sup>37</sup>. Sneath defines the Mongol *oboq* similarly as a term that is used “to describe sets of related and unrelated ruling houses or lineages with a number of subjects” rather than “people” (*gens*) or tribe<sup>38</sup>. Understanding the term *родъ* in the same way in its second usage in this passage might not be prohibitive, since the respective kin/clan of the three brothers did form the nucleus of separate territorial organizations. In this way it also helps to explain how “all the Rus” could have come with the three brothers. The *PVL* is less likely referring to a mass migration of a people or tribe than to the move of an aristocratic lineage or house with their non-related subjects.

This decision by the Chud, Slovenians, Krivichians, and Ves’ clans to establish some means of government bears similarities with an example Sneath cited of the

36 *PVL: An Interlinear Collation*, 19,14–20,7.

37 András Pálóczi-Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians: Steppe Peoples in Medieval Hungary*, trans. Timothy Wilkinson (Budapest, 1989), 14.

38 Sneath D. “Imperial Statecraft: Arts of Power on the Steppe”, *Imperial Statecraft: Political Forms and Techniques of Governance in Inner Asia, Sixth–Twentieth Centuries*, ed. David Sneath (Cambridge: Mongol and Inner Asia Studies Unit, University of Cambridge, 2006), 15.

forming of a new “state” (*törö*) on September 20, 1640, in western Mongolia “by the most powerful lords of the eastern Eurasian steppes”<sup>39</sup>. Like Sneath’s “powerful lords”, the Chuds, Slovenians, Krivichians, and Ves’, after freeing themselves from the Varangians, at first, tried, according to the *PVL*, to rule themselves. Failing that, they chose three brothers, part of an external aristocratic lineage or house to rule over them, or (if one does not wish to take the account in the *PVL* at face value) an external aristocratic lineage or house imposed itself on these lineages or houses.

In addition, as Jonathan Shepard pointed out, we find little evidence of “symbols or regalia or of monarchy in pre-Mongol Rus’” and no “regalia in the sense of divinely charged instruments of sovereignty bestowed on a ruler in an ecclesiastical inauguration ritual definitively and irrevocably transforming his status”<sup>40</sup>. Nor do we find, according to Shepard, any “regular use of, or depiction of the ruler as having an orb, sceptre and crown...” (395). I might add to that list the absence of local coinage for circulation by the Kievan prince; the few coins that were minted seem to have been for ceremonial, commemorative, or gift-giving purposes only. Shepard’s observations lend support to the hypothesis that the early Rus’ principalities were ruled by an aristocracy, not a monarchy, let alone a dynasty.

The names of the princes in the lines of succession to the throne of Kiev also underscore the lack of concern for dynastic legitimacy, but of an inheritance going back only one or two generations. Mostly they are non-Christian Slavic names, such as Sviatoslav, Sviatopolk, Iaroslav, Iaropolk, Iziaslav, and so forth. The earliest prince (besides the mid 9<sup>th</sup>-century figure) to be named “Riurik” is Riurik Rostislavich who appears in the *PVL s.a.* 1086 in Peremyshl’ and is from a minor branch of the aristocracy excluded from rule in Kiev<sup>41</sup>. According to the philologists A.F. Litvina and F.B. Uspenskii, a son could not be named after a living relative but only after the closest deceased relative, first vertically then horizontally along the family tree<sup>42</sup>. Princes not in the line of succession such as the Rostislavichi may have had slightly more leeway in naming their sons. By the time of the later Rus’ principalities (after ca. 1240), the ruling families had begun to adopt Christian names — such as Aleksandr, Andrei, Dmitrii, Iurii, Ivan, Mikhail, and Vasilii — and to replace the non-Christian Slavic names of the early Rus’ princes, so they did not use the name “Riurik” either for a ruler or anyone in the line of succession.

39 Sneath D. *The Headless State*, 181. He says the resultant polity “would seem impossible in terms of the Weberian model of the ideal-typical bureaucratic state” in that, although “[i]t had laws, rulers, and subjects ... it was to have no capital, no center, and no sovereign.”

40 Shepard J. “Rus’”, *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus’ c. 900–1200*, ed. Nora Berend (Cambridge, 2006), 394–395.

41 *PVL: An Interlinear Collation*, 206, 12–13.

42 Литвина А.Ф., Успенский Ф.Б. Варьирование родового имени на русской почве. Об одном из способов имянаречения в династии Рюриковичей. *Именослов. Заметки по исторической семантике имени*. Ред. Ф.Б. Успенский. М., 2003, 136–183; Литвина А.Ф., Успенский Ф.Б. Выбор имени у русских князей в XI–XVI вв. *Династическая сквозь призму антропонимики*. М., 2006.

By the late 15<sup>th</sup> – early 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Moscow was expanding and consolidating its control over the other Rus' principalities, churchmen constructed long genealogies for the Muscovite grand princes going back to Volodimir Sviatoslavich. For example, *s.a.* 6897 (1389), we find described in the Nikon Chronicle of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century the following 11-generation lineage for Grand Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich (1363–1389), upon his passing away: “внукъ Ивановъ, правнукъ Даниловъ, праправнукъ Александровъ, препраправнукъ Ярославль, пращуръ Всеволожь, прапращуръ Юрьевъ, препрапращуръ Володимеровъ Всеволодичя Ярославичя Владимиричя, великаго новаго Константина, крестивышаго Русскую землю...” (“grandson of Ivan, great grandson of Daniil, great great grandson of Aleksandr, great great great grandson of Iaroslav, great great great great grandson of Vsevolod, great great great great great grandson of Iurii, great great great great great great grandson of Volodimir, [who was] son of Vsevolod, the son of Iaroslav, the son of Volodimir, the great new Constantine who baptized the Rus' land...”)<sup>43</sup>. Even here, the chroniclers do not go two generations further to connect with Volodimir's father Igor' or with Igor''s father Riurik.

The Muscovite churchmen do, however, create a fictive genealogy for Riurik as being descended from Prus, a kinsman (*сродник*) of Augustus Caesar, the first Roman emperor<sup>44</sup>. Likewise, Sigismund von Herberstein, ambassador from the Holy Roman Empire, who visited Muscovy in 1517 and 1526 reported: “The Russians boast that these brothers [Riurik, Sineus, and Truvor] derived their origin from the Romans, from whom even the present prince of Russia asserts that he is sprung”<sup>45</sup>. Herberstein's statement appears to be an allusion to the Prus story. With the establishment of the central authority of Moscow, justification of the legitimacy of that central authority as a monarchy was needed.

Although the Rus' principalities were almost completely in the forest zone, they did share certain characteristics with steppe polities. The relationship between succession in the Rus' principalities and steppe societies, however, is unclear even to the extent some scholars have questioned whether there is any connection or influence of one upon the other. Other scholars have questioned to what extent a “system” as such existed in Rus. The present article, from this point on, looks at those similarities and differences in regard to succession, posits an influence of steppe systems on Rus', and attempts to define some of the specifics of that influence. At the end I will draw conclusions of succession in the Rus' in relation to Sneath's “headless state” theory.

43 *ПСРЛ*, 11: 108.

44 For *The Tale about the Vladimir Princes*, see Дмитриева П.П. *Сказание о князьях владимирских*. М., Л., 1955. For a discussion of theories concerning the complex of texts connected with *the Tale*, see my *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier* (Cambridge, 1998), 171–175.

45 Sigismund von Herberstein. *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii. Synoptische Edition der lateinischen und der deutschen Fassung letzter Hand Basel 1556 and Wien 1557*, ed. Hermann Beyer-Thoma (Munich, 2007), 38–39.

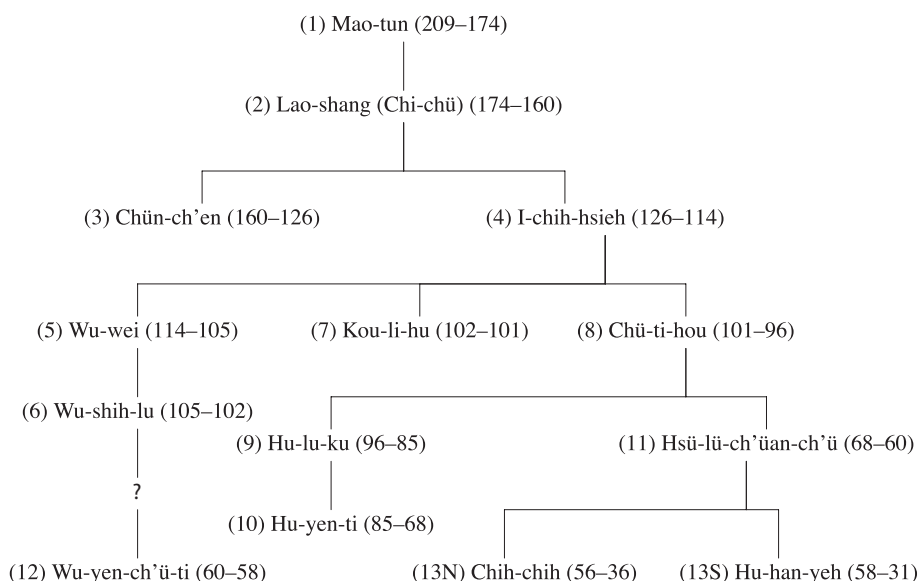


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The anthropologist Thomas Barfield has stated that one of the main functions of a system of succession is to avoid civil wars and conflict. He pointed out succession to *Shan-yü* (leader) of the Hsiung-nu in the eastern Eurasian steppe proceeded through ten orderly successions (with three minor exceptions) from 209 B.C. to 59 B.C. at which time a civil war occurred over the succession of Wu-yen-ch'ü-ti (see table 1). When resolved, the Hsiung-nu went through another 100 years of orderly succession until a second civil war occurred. According to Barfield, the Hsiung-nu began with a father-to-son lineal succession. When the son in any particular instance, was too young, then lateral succession to the father's next eldest brother occurred<sup>46</sup>.

Table 1. Succession of Hsiung-nu Shan-yüs 209 BC–31 BC

(after: Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 43)

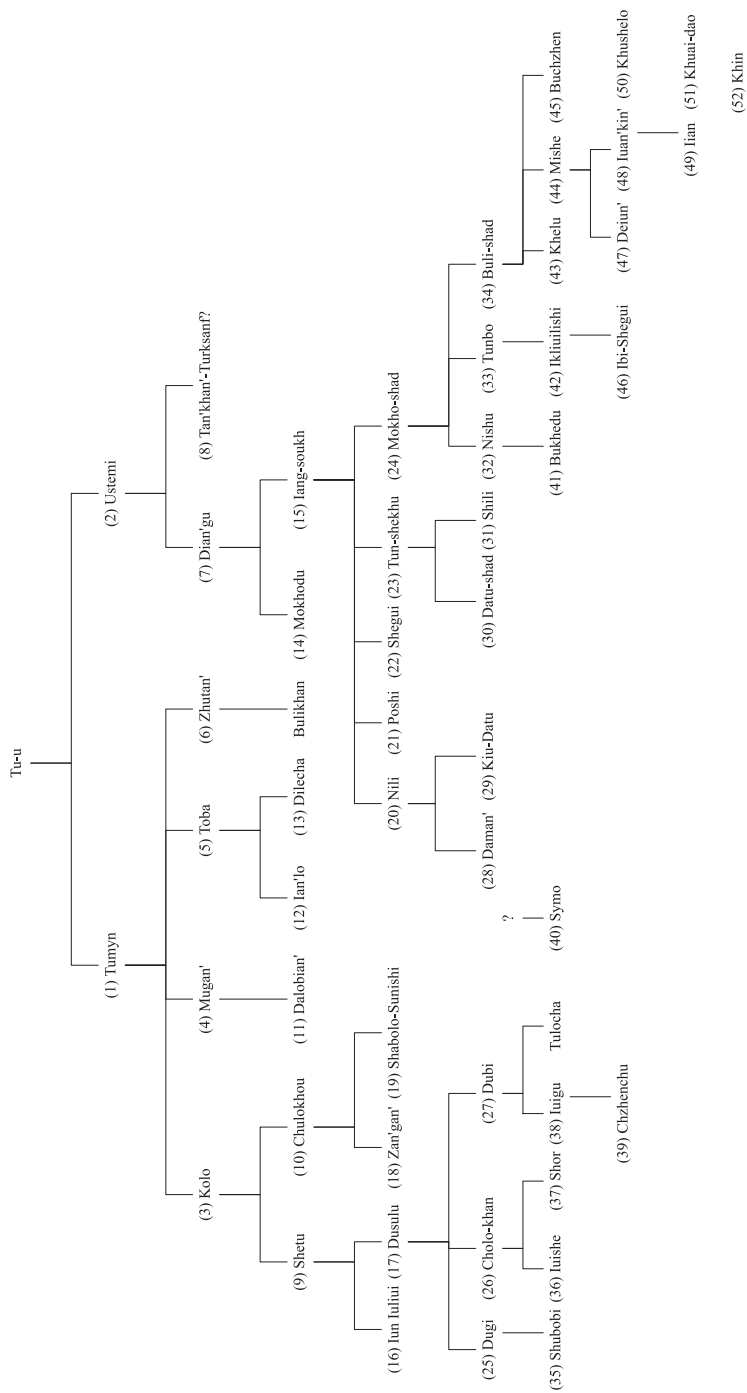


In contrast, the Turkologist Lev Gumilev concluded that, among the Turkic peoples of the western Eurasian steppe in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., the practice of lateral succession within families and clans down to the fourth brother was common. When the fourth brother died, then the eldest son of the eldest brother took his turn as leader (see table 2)<sup>47</sup>. These systems — (1) agnatic primogeni-

46 Barfield T. *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 41–42; for a genealogical chart, see *ibid.*, 43.

47 Гумилев Л.Н. Удельно-лестничная система у Тюрков в VI–VIII веках (К вопросу о ранних формах государственности). *Советская этнография*. 1959, № 3, 11–25; Гумилев Л.Н. *Древние Тюрки*. М., 1967, 56–60; for genealogical charts, see *ibid.*, С. 459–461.

Table 2. **Ashin Dynasty (550–660)** (after: Гумилев, *Древние Тюрки*, 459–461)



ture — vertical, then horizontal: father to son, then to brother only when no son, and (2) agnatic seniority — horizontal, then vertical: brother to brother, then to eldest son of first brother — were the two general models for the order of succession that could be followed.

Whether there was a system of succession in the early Rus' principalities and, to the extent there was one, its operation as well as how long it lasted, has been in dispute among historians. According to S.M. Solov'ev, V.O. Kliuchevskii, Myhailo Hrushevs'kyj, and George Vernadsky, a system of genealogical seniority to the throne of Kiev developed in the Rus' principalities of the early 11<sup>th</sup> century (see table 3). Genealogical seniority allowed accession to the throne by cousins of the same generation. In addition, each son was assigned a subordinate principality in a hierarchical relationship, such that when the father died, according to them, each son moved up one step to the next highest principality<sup>48</sup>. This system has been called the “rota” or “ladder” (*лествичная*) system whereby each of Iaroslav's sons was given a city as his seat in a hierarchical order, but significantly the term “ladder ascent” (*лествичное восхождение*) first appeared in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century *Nikon chronicle*<sup>49</sup>. Such a system is not described in any contemporary primary source. Historians have based their claim on the *PVL* chronicle adumbration of the *Testament of Iaroslav Volodimirovich* in which Iaroslav wrote to his sons:

Се же поручаю въ себе мѣсто столь старѣишему сыну своему и брату вашему Изяславу Киевѣ; сего полслушайте, якоже послушасте мене, дать вы будеть въ мене мѣсто; а Святославу Чьрниговъ, а Всеволоду Переяславль, а Вячеславу Смоленськъ<sup>50</sup>.

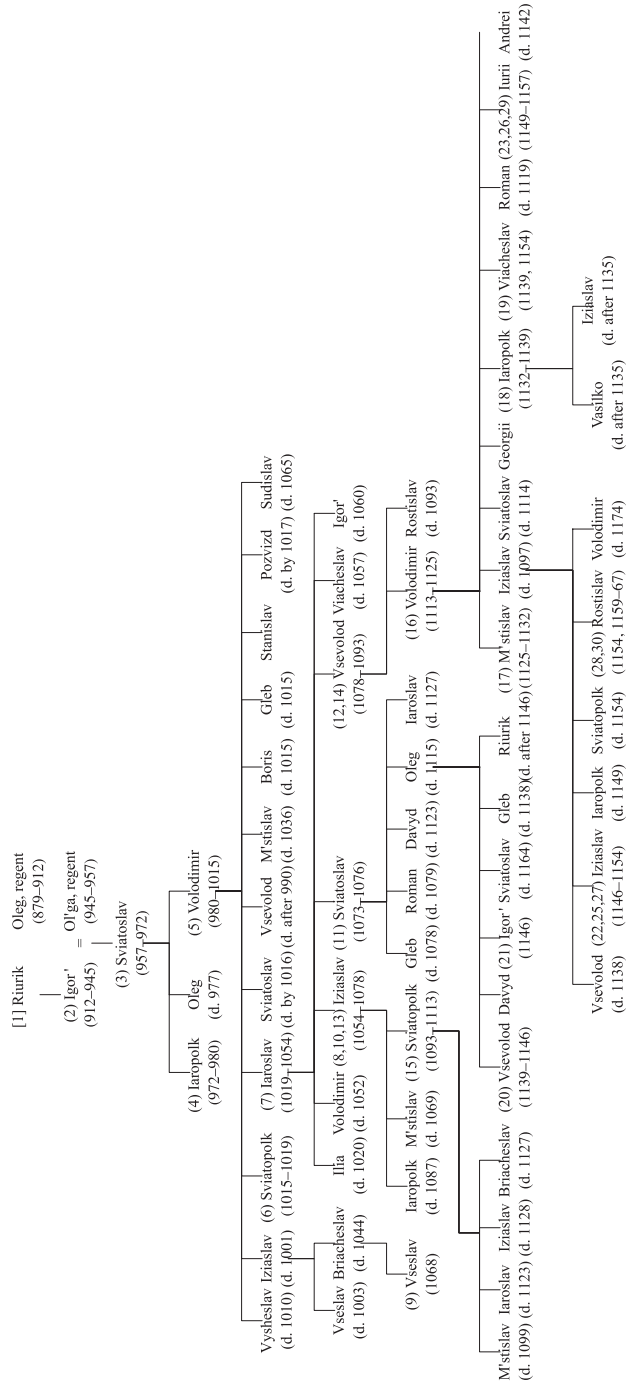
I bequeath the throne of Kiev to my eldest son, your brother Iziaslav. Heed him as you have heeded me, that he may take my place among you; to Sviatoslav, Chernigov; to Vsevolod, Pereiaslavl'; and to Viacheslav, Smolensk.

48 Соловьев С.М. *История России с древнейших времен*, 29 тт. в 15 кн. М., 1959–1966. Т. 2, 343–349; Соловьев С.М. О родовых отношениях между князьями древней Руси, *Московской учений и литературный сборник*. Т. 1. М., 1846, 203–215; Ключевский В.О. *Курс русской истории. Сочинения в восьми томах*. М., 1956–1959. Т. 1, 175–176; Грушевський М.С. *Історія України-Русі*. 2nd ed. (Львов, 1905; rpt., New York: Klyhospilka, 1954). Т. 3, 193–199; George Vernadsky. *A History of Russia*, 5 vols. (New Haven, 1943–1969), vol. 2: *Kievan Russia*, 179–180; for genealogical charts, see *ibid.*, 425, 429.

49 *ПСРЛ*, 10: 26 (s.a. 1196).

50 *PVL: An Interlinear Collation*, 161,13–161,19. *The Novgorod I Chronicle* of the Younger Redaction adds “а Игореві володимиръ” (“and to Igor', Volodimir[-Volynsk]”) before «а Вячеславу Смолинськъ» (“and to Viacheslav, Smolensk”). That reading does not appear in the *PVL* (except as a marginal gloss in one copy from the 15<sup>th</sup> century). *The Tale of Boris and Gleb* (*Сказание о Борисе и Глебе*) has the statement that Iaroslav “left as heirs to his father and recipients of his own throne, his sons Iziaslav, Sviatoslav, and Vsevolod according to the rule that Iziaslav, the eldest, [went to] Kiev, Sviatoslav to Chernigov, and Vsevolod to Pereiaslavl'. The remaining he sent to other districts [volost'].” *Успенский сборник XII–XIII вв.*, сост. О.А. Князевская, В.Г. Демьянов, и М.Б. Ляпон; ред. С.И. Лотков. М., 1971, 62; Бугославський С. *Україно-руські пам'ятки XI–XVIII вв. про князів Бориса та Глеба*. К., 1928, 160. Müller has argued that *the Tale* is secondary in relation to the *PVL* (Мюллер Л. Летописный рассказ и Сказание о святых Борисе и Глебе. Их текстуальное взаимоотношение. *Russia Mediaevalis* 10 (2001), 22–33.

Table 3. Succession to the Throne of Kiev (after: Kollmann, “Collateral Succession in Kievan Rus’”, 386–387)



Nothing appears in the *PVL*'s version of Iaroslav's *Testament* about brothers moving up to a "higher" principality when a senior brother died. Kliuchevskii, nonetheless, identified a number of instances in the 11<sup>th</sup> century where such a moving-up occurred<sup>51</sup>. The *Testament* does instruct the younger sons to "heed" Iziaslav "as you have heeded me." But that is only a plea for familial deference, not a call for the imposition of a vertical power relationship. Just before that statement in the *Testament* is the admonition to "remain at peace, brother heeding brother"<sup>52</sup>.

In 1970, A.D. Stokes questioned whether there was any system before or after Vłodimir Sviatoslavich. He doubted that a prince reputedly as intelligent as Iaroslav who was given the sobriquet "the Wise" could have proposed a system as unwieldy as the "rota" system described in the *PVL*<sup>53</sup>. In 1981, Helmut Rüss devoted a 17-page section of his "Das Reich von Kiev" to the Kievan "Seniorat" from 1054 to 1169, but did not address the issue whether there was a system of succession or not<sup>54</sup>. In 1981, Pritsak described the outlines of a system attributed to Iaroslav, who "[a]s the successor to the Khazar *kagan* traditions... opted for the steppe system of succession whose primary goal was to keep the empire together"<sup>55</sup>. As it was applied in Rus', according to Pritsak, "the supreme throne in Kiev was reserved for the senior members of the entire dynasty" with four thrones available. Chernigov and Pereiaslavl' "were reserved for the two heirs-apparent" while Smolensk and Vłodimir-Völynsk "were fully subordinate" (3). Iaroslav's system "did not develop fully in Rus'", according to Pritsak, in part because "the two youngest sons... were the first to die" (3); thus, leaving their descendants outside the system, or *izgoi*. The result, according to Pritsak, was "political separatism" in which certain sub-dynasties ruled in their respective domains but had no legitimate entry to the top dynastic throne in Kiev (3–4).

In 1982, John Lind observed that in the Novgorod I Chronicle, when someone is described as going from Novgorod to Kiev, before 1132 they are said to go to "Kiev", but after 1132, they are said to go to "Rus'", as though Novgorod were no

51 Ключевский. *Курс*. Т. 1, 173–174. In addition, when the prince of Chernigov David Sviatoslavich died in 1123, his brother Iaroslav moved from being prince of Murom-Riazan' to replace him. *ИСП/12*: 286. In 1088, Sviatopolk Iziaslavich moved from being prince of Novgorod to being prince of Turov. *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 207, 21–22. In 1095, David Sviatoslavich moved from being prince of Novgorod to being prince of Smolensk. *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 229, 16–17.

52 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 161, 12–13.

53 Stokes A.D. "The System of Succession to the Thrones of Russia, 1054–1113," *Gorski vijenac: A Garland of Essays Offered to Professor Elizabeth Hill*, edited by R. Auty, L.R. Lewitter, and A.P. Vlasto (Cambridge, 1970), 268–275.

54 Rüss H. "Das Reich von Kiev", *Handbuch der Geschichte Russlands*, 6 vols. in 14, ed. M. Hellman (Stuttgart, 1976–2004) 1, 323–339.

55 Pritsak O. "Kievan Rus' and Sixteenth–Seventeenth-Century Ukraine", *Rethinking Ukrainian History*, ed. by Ivan L. Rudnytsky (Edmonton, 1981), 2. Pritsak later commented that in the Khazar system, which was adopted in Rus', "only [the] two eldest brothers have the right to rule." Pritsak O. "The Pověst' vremennyx lét and the Question of Truth", *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium*, ed. Tore Nyberg, Iorn Piö, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, and Aage Trommer (Odense, 1985), 163, n. 9.

longer part of Rus'. Lind sees it as the year "Novgorod assumes independence from the Kievan body politic [and] it no longer considers itself part of Rus'"<sup>56</sup>. Likewise, from the point of view of Vladimir-Suzdal', reference begins to be made to princes going to Rus' rather than to Kiev when in 1152 Iurii Dolgorukii goes to fight his nephew, Iziaslav<sup>57</sup>. Lind concluded, as a result, that the same change in terminology in both Novgorod and Vladimir-Suzdal' "was somehow linked with the authority of the Kievan Prince, which in turn is connected to the system of succession as it had operated since Jaroslav [Vlodimirovich]"<sup>58</sup>. Lind sees the emphasis on "brotherhood" (братия) and "Rus' brotherhood" (братия русции) in the chronicles as an attempt by the chroniclers to maintain some unity among the princes. In the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century, according to Lind, with the beginning of the use of the term *Rus'* in the narrow sense to mean "the state governed by the Jaroslavič dynasty; with the Prince of Kiev as its nominal head over the Princes of Černigov and Pereiaslavl', all three together forming the ruling body... lies in this breakup of the Jaroslavid 'Brotherhood'"<sup>59</sup>. That narrowing of the sense of *Rus'*, however, began to be made earlier and wider than the evidence Lind cited. As Henryk Paszkiewicz had previously listed examples in the chronicles of a distinction being made between local towns and Rus': Galicia and Volynia were not Rus' (beginning 1018); Novgorod was not Rus' (beginning 1132); Rostov, Suzdal', and Vladimir-on-the-Kliazma were not Rus' (beginning in 1146); Riazan' and Murom were not Rus' (beginning 1147); Smolensk was not Rus' (beginning 1148); and Polotsk was not Rus' (1140)<sup>60</sup>. Lind's insight was to see that the term *Rus'* was being equated here only with the towns whose princes were in the line of succession to the throne of Kiev. Indicative of the relationship is the designation "land" (земля) to those places where the princes are no longer part of the Kievan succession system: Suzdal' land, Polotsk land, Novgorod land, and so forth<sup>61</sup>.

56 Lind J. "The 'Brotherhood' of Rus'. A Pseudo-Problem concerning the Origin of 'Rus'", *Slavica Othiniensia*, 5 (1982), 70. Cf. *ИСПЛ* 3: 207.

57 *ИСПЛ* 1: 338.

58 Lind J. "The 'Brotherhood' of Rus'", 71.

59 Lind J. "The 'Brotherhood' of Rus'", 75.

60 Paszkiewicz H. *The Origin of Russia* (London, 1954), 7–10.

61 This narrow meaning, however, was not the only way the term Rus' land (Русская земля) was used at the time. See Halperin C.J. The Concept of the Russian Land from the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries, *Russian History*, 2 (1975): 29–38, where he discerned "two geographical meanings, either the area of Kiev in the narrow sense [i.e., Kiev, Chernigov, and Pereiaslavl' (Novgorod-Seversk?)] or all East Slavdom in the broad sense, as well as its two religious meanings [i.e., Christian and pagan]" (33). Cf. Насонов А.Н. "Русская земля" и образование территории древнерусского государства. *Историко-географическое исследование*. М., 1951, 216–220, where he argues that the narrow geographical meaning (Kiev, Chernigov, Pereiaslavl') came first. D.S. Likhachev and Alexander Soloviev, argue the opposite (Лихачев Д.С. *Повесть временных лет*. Т. 2, 239–240; Soloviev A. Der Begriff 'Rußland' im Mittelalter, *Studien zur älteren Geschichte Osteuropas* (Graz and Cologne, 1956), 149–150. Cf. Plokhy S. *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cambridge, 2006), 33–38; Halperin C.J. "The Concept of the Ruskaia zemlia and Medieval National Consciousness from the Tenth to the Fifteenth Centuries", *Nationalities papers*, 8, no. 1 (1980), 75–86; and idem, "Novgorod and the 'Novgorodian Land'," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 40 (1999), 345–364.

In 1987, Martin Dimnik concluded that the ladder system in which, upon the death of any ruling prince, “all the princes [below him in order] moved up the political ladder from a less important town to a more important one”, as described by Solov’ev, Kliuchevskii, Hrushev’skyj, Vernadsky, and other historians, “did not exist”<sup>62</sup>. A few years earlier Dimnik pointed out that no resident family of princes sat in Kiev. Instead, by the late 11<sup>th</sup>–early 12<sup>th</sup> century, what he called four “houses” were in competition with each other to place members on the “golden throne”: the Ol’govichi (House of Chernigov), the Rostislavichi (House of Smolensk), the Vsevolodovichi (House of Rostov-Suzdal’), and the Iziaslavichi (House of Volyn’ and Galicia)<sup>63</sup>.

In 1990, Nancy Shields Kollmann asserted there was a system of succession in the early Rus’ principalities. She described it as “a collateral system” and that in theory the succession went four brothers deep before passing on to cousins (the sons of the younger brothers of the first ruler) before passing to the eldest son of the first ruler. In practice, however, as Kollmann pointed out, the succession rarely went that deep. Younger brothers tended to die off before the turn of all three of them (when there were four brothers) came to succeed: “rarely did any one generation possess more than three legitimate collateral heirs” (380)<sup>64</sup>. In contrast to Stokes, Kollmann wrote, “historians generally assume that the system described by Solov’ev and Kliuchevskii worked, but they emphasize the severe internecine tensions that undermined it” (379). She argued that “[w]hen internecine quarrels broke out, as they frequently did, they indicate ambitious kinsmen’s impatience with the rules of succession, not the absence of such rules” (379). Instead of “chaos”, she sees “strain and competition within a recognized succession system...” (382). She described the agreement of Liubech in 1097 (see below) as “assuring the territorial claims of established lineages” and thus “as a self-regulating measure to adjust, but not abandon familial inheritance patterns” (382). Kollmann conjectured that the taking over of the throne by M’stislav Volodimirovich in 1125 upon the death of his father Volodimir Monomakh in place of the legitimate heirs according to the principles of collateral succession, Iziaslav (d. 1128) and Briacheslav (d. 1127) Sviatopolkovichi, as possibly representing “a growing clan tolerance for sovereign inheritance within, not across, lineages” (383). Kollmann drew her evidence mostly from 11<sup>th</sup>- and first half of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century successions to the throne of Kiev. In 1992, Tolochko proposed that the system of succession evolved. According to him, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the throne of Kiev went to the senior prince of the dynasty calculated by the collateral system of succession. In the

62 Dimnik M. The “Testament” of Iaroslav ‘The Wise’: A Re-examination”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 29 (1987), 369–386 at 386.

63 Dimnik M. *Mikhail, Prince of Chernigov and Grand Prince of Kiev 1224–1246* (Toronto, 1981), 2–7, 12–13, 158–161.

64 Kollmann N.S. “Collateral Succession in Kievan Rus’”, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 14, no. 3/4 (1990), 377–387; for a genealogical chart, see *ibid.*, 386–387.

12<sup>th</sup> century, the throne went to the person in possession of Kiev, which was frequently decided by armed conflict.<sup>65</sup>

By 1994, Dimnik returned to the question and stated “a type of ‘ladder’ or ‘rota’ system of succession to Kiev” existed, but again that Solov’ev had not described it correctly<sup>66</sup>. According to Dimnik, “Yaroslav’s intention... was to rotate supreme political authority in the land among his three eldest sons and, after their deaths, among their families” (25). Dimnik based this claim on Iaroslav’s granting his eldest three sons “plots of land in Kiev” so that whichever brother was prince, the other two would “have free access to the town to visit their monasteries” that they built on their respective plots (24). In regard to any prince who was barred from ruling in Kiev because his father had not ruled there, that did not prevent him from ruling as prince in another town that his father had ruled in (25).

In 1995, Pritsak described a trifurcated system under Vłodimir Sviatoslavich in which one group of four sons was in the succession cycle whereas the other sons were not and were given areas only for maintenance. The three spheres that Pritsak identified were: (1) Vłodimir’s own domain (“home-hearth”); (2) the “four seats-appanages” that were given to sons who were on the ladder of succession (Novgorod, Rostov, Murom, and Vłodimir-Völynsk); and (3) provinces that previously were independent states and were now given to the sons not on the ladder (Polotsk, Turov, Derevlian land, and Tmutorakan’). The four sons who were on the ladder were Iaroslav (the oldest surviving son of Vłodimir’s first legitimate wife), Boris, Gleb, and Pozvizr (the three sons by the “Bulgarian woman” who was supposedly the daughter of the Bulgarian ruler Boris II)<sup>67</sup>. Pritsak based this conclusion on the *PVL* evidence from 1010 when Vysheslav Vłodimirovich died. Iaroslav moved up from Rostov to take his place in Novgorod. Boris moved from Vłodimir-in-Völynsk to take Iaroslav’s place in Rostov. Pozvizr moved from Murom to take Boris’ place in Vłodimir, and Gleb took Pozvizr’s place in Murom (see table 4). Thus, Pritsak argued that a ladder system preceded Iaroslav’s system but for only some of Vłodimir’s sons, not all, and in four appanages only.

Also in 1995, Janet Martin outlined a dynamic succession system “that the members of the Riurikid dynasty recognized and” that morphed with each new generation. In her view, it was not “a fully formed, comprehensive system [that] was introduced at a single stroke by Iaroslav or any other prince.” Instead, it “evolved” along “with the growth of the dynasty and the expansion of the state...”. According to Martin, agreements reached and resolutions made in one generation were accepted by members of the next generation, but “[t]he issues they faced, generated by the growing size of the dynasty periodically prompted a need to refine the rules of succession.” Even the resort to war “resulted in the enunciation of a

65 Толочко А.П. *Князь в древней Руси. Власть, собственность, идеология*. К., 1992, 77–96.

66 Dimnik M. *The Dynasty of Chernigov 1054–1146* (Toronto, 1994), 24–25.

67 Pritsak O. “The System of Government under Volodimer the Great and His Foreign Policy”, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995), 573–593.



Table 4: Succession of Volodimir Sviatoslavich's Sons (after Pritsak, "System", 580)

Appanage	988	ca. 995–988	1010
1. Novgorod	Vysheslav	Vysheslav	Iaroslav
2. Polotsk	Iziaslav	Iziaslav	Iziaslav
3. Turov	Sviatopolk	Sviatopolk	Sviatopolk
4. Rostov	Iaroslav	Iaroslav	Boris
5. Derevlian land	Sviatoslav	Sviatoslav	Sviatoslav
6. Volodimir	Vsevolod	Boris	Pozvzd
7. Tmutorokan'	M'stislav	M'stislav	M'stislav
8. Murom	Boris	Pozvzd	Gleb

clearer, more precise, and more elaborate definition of the principles guiding the division and transfer of power<sup>68</sup>.

In 1996, Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard questioned the existence of a system of succession: "It is a common mistake to suppose that there was a fixed political 'system' from which the unprincipled princelings occasionally (or regularly) deviated.... Iaroslav's successors had to improvise, adapting custom, precedent and precept to contingencies as they arose. There were *ad hoc* arrangements, false starts, compromises and accommodations, and ingenious devices through which to dress innovation as tradition"<sup>69</sup>. For them, the notion of the existence of a system was merely a façade to cover special cases that had no general application. They also claimed that no "political culture for an expanded, sedentary dynasty" formed under Iaroslav or his predecessors.

In 2004, Peter Golden pointed to systems of succession similar to that in the early Rus' principalities among other "golden kin", including the Maori in New Zealand and Aztec in Meso America. Although acknowledging that the Turkic steppe system of lateral succession may have influenced the early Rus' system, he questioned whether we can attribute any lateral or collateral system of succession to borrowing between cultures. Instead, he argued "it may just as easily be explained as one means of dealing with this question, analogues for which may be found in societies well-removed from the steppe" (251) and that "[i]nstead of seeking direct sources of 'borrowing,' we should, rather, view these institutions as part of a broad pattern of political culture in Eurasia, with many areas of mutual exchange" (250). Thus, it may have been more a case of similar societies coming up with a similar solution to the same problem each faced<sup>70</sup>. In *Muscovy and the*

68 Martin J. *Medieval Russia 980–1584* (Cambridge, 1995), 27.

69 Franklin S. and Shepard J. *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200* (London, 1996), 248.

70 Golden P.B. "'Ascent by Scales': The System of Succession in Kievan Rus'", *Eurasian Context, States, Societies, Cultures: East and West: Essays in Honor of Jaroslav Pelenski*, edited by Janusz

*Mongols*, I had addressed the issue of cultural borrowing and stated that we can begin to speak of the influence of one culture on another when three criteria are met:

(1) that the institution or practice existed in the source culture; (2) that its existence in the source culture coincided in real time with its appearance in the target culture; and (3) that a mechanism for its transference from the source culture to the target culture was operative. Such a mechanism could involve military invasion, governmental administration, trading relations (since ideas follow trade routes), literary or educational access, etc. Without all three of these criteria being present, we should not even consider cross-cultural influence unless we have some other overriding evidence that leads us to think so (for example, a ruling elite's trying to impose their ideas about a defunct culture onto the state they are ruling)<sup>71</sup>.

An institution or practice may differ structurally in the target society but be functionally the same as in the source society. But its structures and functions in the target society may also tell us something about its structure and functions in the source society.

In 2006, Shepard dismissed the notion of any system in the early Rus' principalities: "There were no effective legal or ceremonial means for determining succession, leading to frequent scrambles for power among the descendants of Vladimir"<sup>72</sup>. Also in 2006, Janet Martin reassessed the notion that the succession went four brothers deep in any generation. Instead, she suggested that it went only three brothers deep with the fourth brother being equivalent in rank with the oldest son of the oldest brother. Thus, either the fourth brother or his oldest nephew could serve next after the third brother<sup>73</sup>. She called this "the hypothetical 'three-prince limit' principle and its corollary" (276). She agreed with Kollmann that the succession was not "chaotic" since conflict was limited "to a relatively small number of princes" and "that even in situations of violent inter-princely conflict over the throne, some universally accepted principles were functioning to limit or select the competitors" (270). Martin tended to draw her evidence from 12<sup>th</sup>-century successions to the throne of Kiev (see table 3). Acknowledging that the princes of the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century did not adopt the "three prince rule", Martin suggested "that princes of junior generations... were basing their bids for the throne on this concept" (279). Although no cases of four brothers surviving to succeed each other in turn occurred in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as Martin pointed out, four brothers, the sons of Volodimir Monomakh, did succeed to the throne of Kiev, and the eldest nephew, Iziaslav M'sislavich, did precede his youngest uncle,

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Duzinkiewicz, Myroslav Popovych, Vladyslav Verstiuk, and Natalia Yakovenko (New York, 2004), 229–258.

71 See *Muscovy and the Mongols*, 34–35.

72 Shepard. "Rus'", 393.

73 Martin J. "Calculating Seniority and the Contests for Succession in Kievan Rus', *Russian History/ Histoire Russe* 33, nos. 2/3/4 (2006), 272–281. This principle had previously been described by Kliuchevskii as part of "mestnichestvo arithmetic" (see below).

Iurii Dolgorukii, on that throne. But that is not entirely a clean case. Since two Olegovichi cousins, Vsevolod and Igor', also preceded Iurii, other considerations probably came into play.

Some chronicles report that Mikhail Iaroslavich ousted his uncle Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich from the throne of Vladimir *s.a.* 1248. Mikhail is then reported to have been killed by the Lithuanians *s.a.* 1249<sup>74</sup>. The chronicles do not report his receiving the *iarlyk* from the khan, so it may be that he is not considered to have ruled. At the time, the eldest nephew was not one of the Iaroslavichi, but one of the Konstantinovichi, Vladimir of Uglich. We do not have any case where the eldest nephew succeeded the third uncle while the fourth uncle was still alive, but we do have two cases of four brothers (uncles) succeeding to the throne of Vladimir-on-the-Kliazma in turn: (1) the sons of Vsevolod Iur'evich (Big Nest), Iurii (1212–1216 and 1218–1238), Konstantin (1216–1218), Iaroslav (1238–1246), and Sviatoslav (1247–1248); and (2) the sons of Iaroslav Vsevolodovich, Andrei (1249–1252), Aleksandr (1252–1264), Iaroslav (1264–1271), and Vasilii (1271–1277). In neither of these cases do we have evidence that the eldest nephew challenged the fourth uncle on the basis of a three-prince limit or its corollary<sup>75</sup>. Three determinations, the first of which has three sub-principles, emerge from the evidence as part of the process by which a prince can legitimately rule in a particular town. Each of these determinations (and sub-determinations) leads to the establishment of a different principle (and sub-principle):

- (1) whether his father (and grandfather?) ruled in that town (eligibility);
- (a) if so, then whether the previous prince (father or older brother) designated him to succeed (designation)<sup>76</sup>
- (b) if no one was designated to succeed, then the eldest among the brothers and sons of the previous prince (seniority)<sup>77</sup>
- (c) if the senior prince in line to succeed cedes his seniority to another prince (cession)<sup>78</sup>

74 *ПСРЛ* 1: 471; *ПСРЛ* 7: 159; *ПСРЛ* 15: 395; *ПСРЛ* 10: 136–137; *ПСРЛ* 20: 162; *ПСРЛ* 25: 141; *ПСРЛ* 27: 235; *ПСРЛ* 42: 118.

75 Although Mikhail Iaroslavich ousted his uncle Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich in 1248, he was not the eldest nephew. Nor is there evidence he was officially recognized by his brothers or by Khan Batu as grand prince.

76 *S.a.* 1146 — Vsevolod designated his brother Igor'. *ПСРЛ* 2: 320 (cf. Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 44).

77 *S.a.* 1146 — Viacheslav put hope in his seniority. *ПСРЛ* 2: 330 (cf. Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 54). *S.a.* 1195 — Riurik communicated with his brother David, who was Smolensk, "брате се въ осталася старѣиши всѣхъ в Роуськои землѣ" ("Brother, we are the seniors of all the Rus' land...") *ПСРЛ* 2: 681 (cf. Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 458).

78 *S.a.* 1151 — Viacheslav wanted to give Iurii his seniority. *ПСРЛ* 2: 428 (Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 162). *S.a.* 1171 — Andrei Bogoliubskii ceded through his son M'stislav his claim to rule in Kiev to his younger brother Gleb: «Мъстиславъ же Андреевичъ посади стрья своего Глеба Киеве на столе» ("M'stislav Andreevich put his uncle Gleb on the throne of Kiev"). *ПСРЛ* 2: 545 (cf. Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 295). *S.a.* 1174 — Riurik Rostislavich's brothers gave Kiev to him: «все братья же даша Къевъ Рюрикова». *ПСРЛ* 2: 570–571 (Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 327). *S.a.* 1177 — the Rostislavichi gave Kiev to Sviatoslav: «Ростиславичи же не хотяче губити Руськои земли и крестинско крови проливати сгадаше даша Киевь Святославу». *ПСРЛ* 2: 605 (cf. Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 368). *S.a.* 1180 — Riurik Rostislavich "състоупися емоу [Святославу] старѣишньства и Києва" ("ceded to him [Sviatoslav] the seniority and Kiev"). *ПСРЛ* 2: 624 (cf. Heinrich, "Kievan Chronicle", 389).

- (2) whether the other princes agree (self-regulation),<sup>79</sup> and  
 (3) whether the townspeople agree (external regulation)<sup>80</sup>.

The meeting at Liubech in 1097 (as mentioned by Kollmann) and a subsequent meeting at Uvetichi in 1100 do seem to be described in the *PVL* as attempts to regulate the system by the princes themselves, rather than any vertical imposition of power by the prince of Kiev. At Liubech in 1097, according to the *PVL*, “Sviatopolk, Volodimir, David Igor’evich, Vasil’ko Rostislavich, David Sviatoslavich, and Oleg his brother met”<sup>81</sup>. Sviatopolk Iziaslavich was the reigning prince in Kiev at the time (1093–1113). Volodimir was the son of Vsevolod who had served as prince in Kiev (1076–1077; 1078–1093) and therefore was in line to succeed Sviatopolk eventually. David Igor’evich was the grandson of Iaroslav Volodimirovich, who had reigned in Kiev from 1019 to 1054. David’s father, Igor’, who had been prince of Volodimir-Volynsk, died before succeeding to the throne of Kiev, so David was barred from serving as prince of Kiev. Vasil’ko Rostislavich was the grandson of Volodimir Iaroslavich, who had predeceased his father Iaroslav Volodimirovich. Vasil’ko’s father Rostislav Volodimirovich did not rule in Kiev, so he also was not eligible to serve as prince of Kiev. David Sviatoslavich and his brother Oleg were the sons of Sviatoslav Iaroslavich, who had taken the throne of Kiev by force from his elder brother Iziaslav and held it from 1073 to 1076. Both David Sviatoslavich and Oleg Sviatoslavich survived Sviatopolk Iziaslavich but were passed over in favor of Volodimir Vsevolodovich (Monomakh) and they did not succeed to the throne of Kiev. Even though that meant their descendants were supposedly barred from ruling as prince in Kiev, David’s son Iziaslav reigned as prince in Kiev three times, 1154, 1157–1158, and 1161.

This case and similar ones indicate that another mechanism in addition to the eligibility criterion of one’s father ruling as prince in a town was operational. Of the six princes that the *PVL* says assembled at Liubech, one prince was reigning

79 S.a. 1195 — Riurik Rostislavich said that all the brothers had accepted the seniority of Vsevolod. *ИСПЛ* 2: 685–686 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 463);

s.a. 1195 — “Олговичи же сдоумавше и похалиша себе рекше ко Всеволодоу, ‘аж ны еси вмѣнили Кыевъ тоже ны его блюсти подь тобою. И подь сватомъ твоимъ Рюрикомъ то в томъ стоимъ аж ны лишитися его велишь отиноудъ то мы есмы не Оугре ни Ляхове но единого дѣда есмы вноуци при вашемъ животѣ не ищемъ его, ажъ по вас кому Богу дасть” (“The Ol’govichi conferred and pitied themselves, saying to Vsevolod, ‘If you consider Kiev yours, then we will accept that. And [we will accept] your in-law Riurik as ruler there, and we will stand by this. But if you want to deprive us of it forever, then [we must remind you that] we are not Hungarians or Poles, but grandsons of a single grandfather. We will not seek it [Kiev] during our lives. But in the future [Kiev will go] to those to whom God gives it”). *ИСПЛ* 2: 688–689 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 467).

80 S.a. 1152 — “all the people of Rostov, Suzdal’, and Vladimir” took Andrei. *ИСПЛ* 2: 490 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 228); s.a. 1159 — people of Polotsk sent for Rogvolod. *ИСПЛ* 2: 496 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 234); s.a. 1175 — people of Rostov, Suzdal’ and Pereiaslav’ ask Gleb for Rostislavichi — M’stislav and Iaropolk. *ИСПЛ* 2: 595 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 356); s.a. 1175 — people of Rostov were displeased that Mikhaiklo Iur’evich and Iaropolk Rostislavich decided to give Mikhalko seniority. *ИСПЛ* 2: 596 (cf. Heinrich, “*Kievan Chronicle*”, 358).

81 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 256,24–256,27.

in Kiev (Sviatopolk Iziaslavich), one prince was in the line of succession to Kiev (Vłodimir Vsevolodovich), two princes were out of the succession to Kiev (David Igor'evich and Vasil'ko Rostislavich), and two princes' status may have been undetermined because their father had usurped the throne of Kiev (David Sviatoslavich and Oleg Sviatoslavich). These six princes decided that

each of us should guard our own domain (*otchina*): to Sviatopolk [goes] Kiev [the] Iziaslav [domain]; Vłodimir [holds the] Vsevolod [domain]; David, Oleg, and Iaroslav [hold the] Sviatoslav [domain]. [Let stand] the towns Vsevolod apportioned: Vłodimir [goes to] David; to the sons of Rostislav, Peremyshl' [goes to] Vłodar'; Terebovl' [goes to] Vasil'ko<sup>82</sup>.

According to the *Testament of Iaroslav* (see above), Kiev was the domain of Iziaslav, Chernigov was the domain of Sviatoslav, Pereiaslavl' was the domain of Vsevolod, and Smolensk was the domain of Viacheslav. Thus, Sviatopolk Iziaslavich was to hold Kiev; Vłodimir Vsevolodovich was to hold Pereiaslavl'; and David, Oleg, and Iaroslav were to hold Chernigov (see table 5).

*Table 5. Liubech Agreement of 1097*

Prince	Domain of	Town	Vsevolod-apportioned towns
Sviatopolk	Iziaslav	Kiev	David Igorevich — Volodimir — Volynsk
Volodimir	Vsevolod	Pereiaslav I'	Vasilko Rostislavich — Terebovl'
David			
Oleg	Sviatoslav	Chernigov	
Iaroslav			
—	Viacheslav	Smolensk	

No mention was made of who was to hold Smolensk, probably because the Viacheslav line had died out. The last mention in the *PVL* of that line is the death of Viacheslav's son Boris in 1078. But already upon the death of Viacheslav (1057), Smolensk went to Igor' Iaroslavich. The *PVL* does not indicate who held it after the death of Igor' Iaroslavich (1060), but in 1077, Vłodimir Vsevolodovich (Monomakh) took it over until 1095. David Sviatoslavich took it over in 1095 but seems to have relinquished it in 1097 as a result of the Liubech Agreement when

82 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 257,1–257,6. The Iaroslav mentioned here with David and Oleg was their youngest brother, who apparently did not attend the conference. Dimnik wrote: "Attendance at Lyubech was greatly expanded. The senior members of all the surviving families of the Yaroslavichi (except for Volodar' the eldest Rostislavich), and their senior counsellors, came." Dimnik, *The Dynasty of Chernigov 1054–1146*, 209. That may be so, but Dimnik does not indicate what his source is for this statement.

he and his brothers went to Chernigov. Smolensk may then have reverted to Volodimir Vsevolodovich (Monomakh), for the Hypatian line of the *PVL* reports he built a stone church there in 1101<sup>83</sup>.

In 1100, again according to the *PVL*, “the cousins Sviatopolk, Volodimir, David, and Oleg met together” at Uvetichi. At that meeting, the other three decided against granting David the “throne (*stol*) of Volodimir[-Volynsk]” because he had violated the agreement of Liubech. Here, then, is the second principle of princely succession — the other princes had to agree for any of them to rule in a town. Especially was this the case if a prince’s father had not ruled in that town.

The third principle that sometimes arose was acceptance or rejection by the townsmen of the prince designated to rule in that particular town. In the *PVL s.a.* 1068, the townsmen of Kiev freed Prince Vseslav Briachislavich of Polotsk who was being held prisoner in Kiev by the then Prince of Kiev Iziaslav Iaroslavich and declared Vseslav to be prince of Kiev<sup>84</sup>. In the *PVL s.a.* 1113, the Kievians request that Volodimir Monomakh come to Kiev “to rule on the throne of your father and grandfather”<sup>85</sup>. According to the Kievan and Laurentian chronicles *s.a.* 1146, the townsmen of Kiev rejected Igor’ Ol’govich, the brother of the previous prince of Kiev, as their prince in favor of Iziaslav, the oldest son of M’stislav who had been prince of Kiev from 1125 to 1132<sup>86</sup>. And, according to the Kievan Chronicle *s.a.* 1169, upon the death of Prince of Kiev Rostislav M’stislavich, the townsmen of Kiev, the Chernye Klobuki, and the Princes Volodimir M’stislavch, Riurik, David sent for M’stislav Iziaslavich, the oldest son of Rostislav’s older brother, although Rostislav’s younger brother Volodimir was still alive and presumably next in line<sup>87</sup>. Whether or not these events actually occurred, it is clear the chronicler viewed the townsmen’s choice as a legitimizing criterion.

In addition, Dimnik’s point that a prince who was debarred from ruling in Kiev could still rule in another town where his father had served as prince is an important one for understanding the system of succession in Kiev. If one thinks in terms of simply a ruling dynasty such as the Daniilovichi that took over the later Rus’ principalities, then rule in the capital city was all important. As soon as Moscow annexed almost all the other northeastern Rus’ principalities by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, then the family that ruled Moscow ruled the rest. The last independent northeastern Rus’ principality was Riazan’, which was annexed in 1521. That meant there were no independent princes ruling any Rus’ towns after that date (with the exception of Ivan IV’s appointment of Simeon Bekbulatovich as grand prince of Tver’ in 1576). But in the early Rus’ principalities, princes continued to rule in other towns, whether or not they were in line to rule in Kiev. This point

83 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 275,15b.

84 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 171,19–171,24.

85 *PVL*: An Interlinear Collation, 275,23–25.

86 *IICP/I* 2: 322–323. *IICP/I* 1: 313.

87 *IICP/I* 2: 534. *The Laurentian Chronicle* reports M’stislav’s coming to rule in Kiev *s.a.* 1167. *IICP/I* 1: 353.

supports the contention that we should not look at the princes of Kiev as a dynasty called the Riurikid. Instead, it is more accurate to see the princes ruling the various towns as an aristocracy who operated in a matrix of fundamentally horizontal power relations. That aristocracy worked within a system that included succession both to the throne of Kiev and to the thrones of other towns. What was important for princely succession was the town one's father was prince of and whether the other princes recognized one's accession to being prince of that town, and, on occasion, the determination of the local townspeople. To be sure, princes did try to take and hold towns by force, but usually in such cases the system reasserted itself as in the ouster of Sviatoslav Iaroslavich from the Kievan throne in 1076.

Scandinavian succession, in contrast, tended to be agnatic primogeniture with overtones of divine descent attributed to the ruler<sup>88</sup>. Byzantine succession was in theory by acclamation of the people, the Senate, and the army, being consistent with Roman Republic traditions. Some emperors in order to secure the succession for their eldest son would appoint them co-ruler — thus, in effect, being dynastic and following agnatic primogeniture. In Byzantium, there was no notion of divine descent on the part of the ruler but there were specific symbols of sacral monarchy<sup>89</sup>.

It is with these considerations in mind that I turn to the eastern Eurasian steppe, in particular the Mongols. Sneath pointed out that “early uses of the term *monggol* appear confusing if one is looking for a tribe in the traditional sense.” Instead, Sneath suggested that “recognition of aristocracy allows us to see that since the term *monggol* indicated a set of ruling houses rather than a distinctive *volk*, their *ulus* could bear their name whether it was large or small...”<sup>90</sup>. What Dimnik posited in terms of understanding the early Rus' princes as “a set of ruling houses” (see above) is similar to what Sneath is describing for the Mongols. While the succession system held the houses of the Rus' princes together, the Mongols' system was different. Among the Mongols, succession involved election by the *quriltai* of supposedly the best qualified male of the ruling family although we can presume that political compromises were involved in the selection process. The Mongol system has been characterized as “tanistry” by Joseph Fletcher after the Scottish clan system<sup>91</sup>. For example, when Chinggis Khan (#1) died, he was succeeded as kagan in 1229 by Ögedei (#2), his second eldest surviving son by his principle wife Börte Üjin, rather than by his eldest surviving son, Cha'adai (see table 6). When Ögedei died in 1241, he was succeeded as kagan in 1246 after a disputed election by Güyüg (#3), his eldest son by his principle wife Töregene. Cha'adai was still alive at the time of Ögedei's death, but died the following year

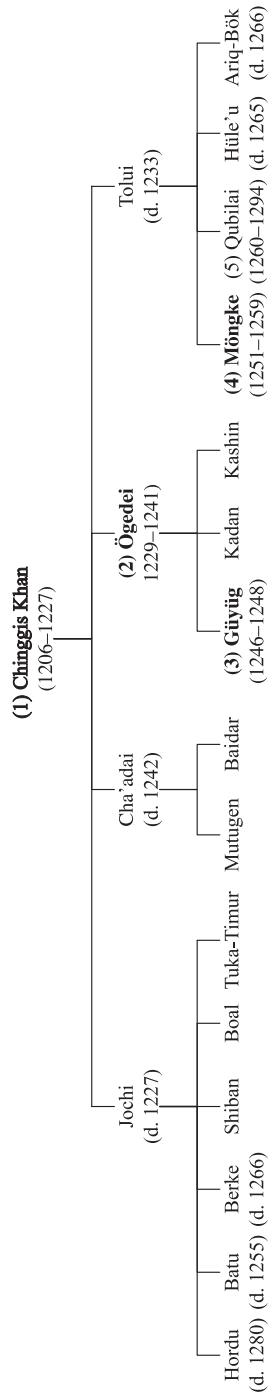
88 For Scandinavian succession, see Jenny Jochens, “Succession”, *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Phillip Pulsiano and Kirsten Wolf (New York, 1993), 621.

89 See, e.g., Byzantium A.M. *The Bridge from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (New York, 2001), 20.

90 Sneath D. *Headless State*, 168.

91 Fletcher J. “The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 1 (1986), 17.

Table 6. Mongol Succession 1227–1260



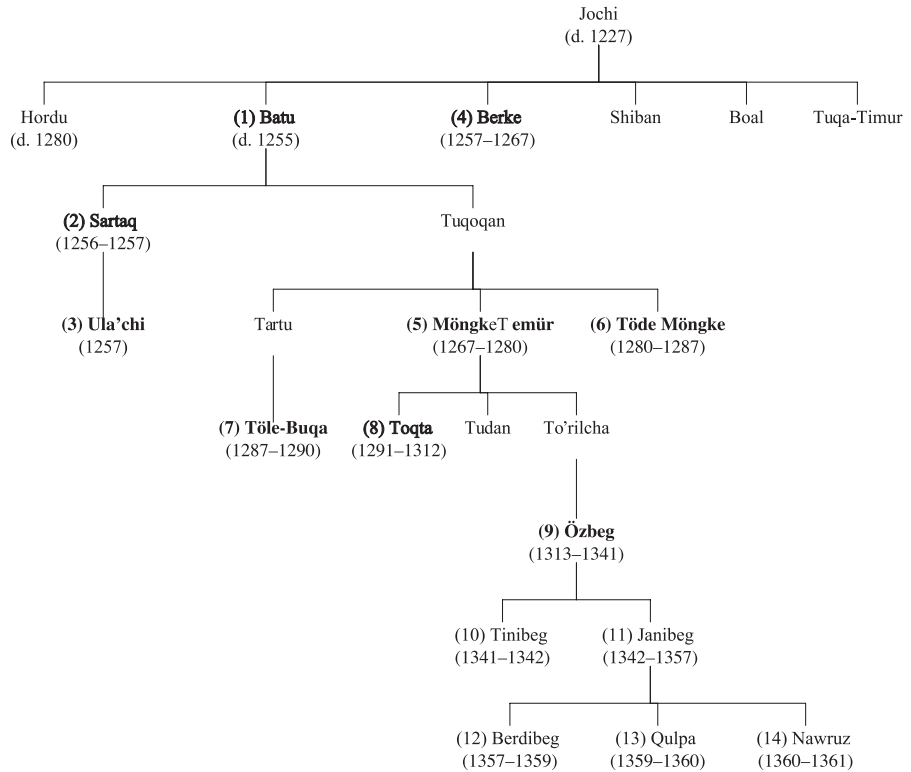


before the *quriltai* had made its decision. Upon the death of Güyüg in 1248, Möngke (#4), the eldest son of Tolui, who had never ruled as kagan, succeeded in 1251 after a disputed election. After Möngke's death in 1259, a war of succession broke out between Möngke's next oldest full brother, Qubilai, and his youngest full brother, Ariq-Böke, with Qubilai (#5) prevailing in 1260. In the Rus' system of succession, in comparison, Cha'adai would have been the presumptive heir to Chinggis while Möngke, Qubilai, and Ariq-Böke would have been out of the line of succession.

Likewise, in the *ulus* assigned to Jochi, his second eldest son, Batu (#1 in table 7), began to rule instead of his eldest son, Hordu. Batu was succeeded by his eldest son, Sartaq (#2) in 1256, rather than by his next eldest brother Berke. Sartaq was succeeded by his son, Ula'achi (#3) in 1257, rather than by his next eldest brother, Tuqoqan. Then Berke (#4), the uncle of Sartaq and Tuqoqan, and great uncle of Ula'achi, succeeded in 1257. Upon Berke's death in 1266, Möngke Temür (#5), the second oldest son of Tuqoqan, who never ruled as khan, succeeded in 1267. He, in turn, was succeeded by his younger brother Töde Möngke (#6) in 1280. When Töde-Mangü resigned in 1287, he was succeeded by Töle-Buqa (#7), the eldest son of Tartu, who in turn was the eldest son of Tuqoqan. Neither Tartu nor Tuqoqan had ruled as khan. When Töle-Buqa died in 1290, he was succeeded by Toqta (#8), the eldest son of Mangu-Temir, who did rule as khan. He in turn was succeeded after his death in 1312 by Özbek (#9) in 1313, the son of To'rilcha, who never ruled as khan, and grandson of Möngke Temür. Following Özbek's death in 1341, the succession seems for a time to conform more to the western steppe system of collateral succession. Özbek was succeeded by his eldest son Tinibeg (#10) and then in 1342 by Tinibeg's brother Janibeg (#11). When Janibeg died in 1357, he was succeeded by his eldest son Berdibeg (#12), then Berdibeg's next oldest brother Qulpa (#13) in 1359, and then the youngest brother Nawruz (#14) in 1360. Upon Nawruz's death the same year, civil war erupted throughout the Ulus of Jochi. In the Rus' system of succession, Berke (#4) would have been the presumptive heir to Batu (#1), while Mangu-Temir (#5), Töde Möngke (#6), Töle-Buqa (#7), and Özbek (#9) would have been out of the line of succession.

The Mongol conquest of Rus' added a new legitimizing layer to the Rus' succession system. Shortly after the Mongols conquered the Rus' principalities, the *primus inter pares* throne for Rus' princes was switched from Kiev to Vladimir in the northeast. The Sarai khans for the most part respected the principle of lateral if not collateral succession among the Rus' princes (see table 8), but there are exceptions, and the exceptions are noteworthy. When Iaroslav Vsevolodovich, the grand prince of Vladimir, died in 1246, he was succeeded first by his surviving brother Sviatoslav, then in turn by four of his sons. The first was Andrei Iaroslavich (1249–1252), the second oldest son. Aleksandr, the eldest son, and Andrei had traveled to Sarai to have the succession decided by Batu. He sent them to Qaraqorum for adjudication where there was an interregnum under the regency of

Table 7. Succession in the Ulus of Jochi to 1361



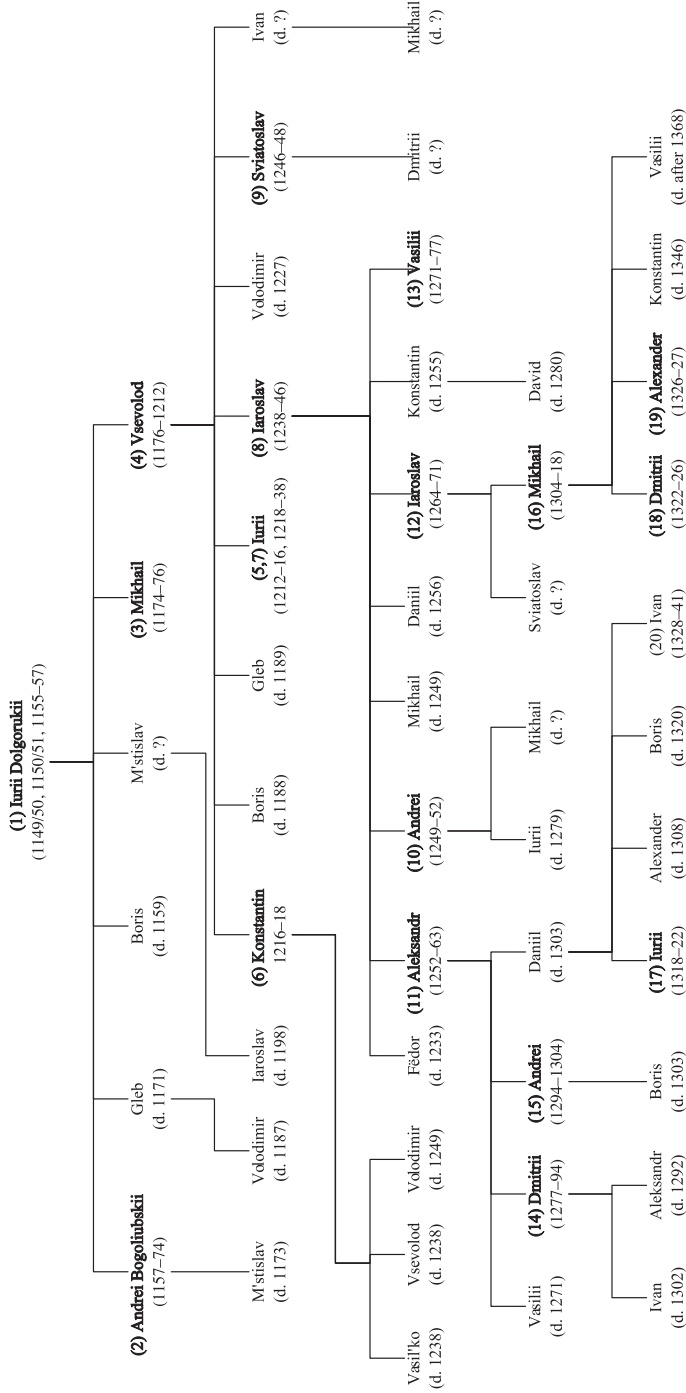
Oghul Qaimish, the widow of Qagan Güyüg. The decision apparently was that Andrei should succeed his father as grand prince of Vladimir, but that Aleksandr being the eldest should succeed as grand prince of Kiev and all Rus'. From the perspective of Qaraqorum, Kiev was still the capital of Rus'<sup>92</sup>. In 1252, Andrei was ousted by troops sent by Batu under the command of Nevriui from being grand prince of Vladimir and driven abroad. Aleksandr Iaroslavich was appointed in his place. In 1256, Andrei was back in Rus' and was appointed prince of Suzdal<sup>93</sup>.

When Aleksandr Iaroslavich died in 1264, he was succeeded as grand prince of Vladimir by his eldest surviving brother Iaroslav. When Iaroslav died in 1271, he was succeeded by the last surviving brother Vasili. Upon Vasili Iaroslavich's

92 See Ostrowski D. "City Names of the Western Steppe at the Time of the Mongol Invasion", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 61 (1998), 465-475.

93 See Fennell J.L.I., "Andrej Jaroslavič and the Struggle for Power in 1252: An Investigation of the Sources", *Russia Medievalis* 1 (1973), 49-63; Fennell J.L.I. *The Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200-1304* (London, 1983), 106-108; and my "The Tatar Campaign of 1252", *Palaeoslavica* 17, no. 2 (2009), 46-64.

Table 8. Succession to the Throne of Vladimir 1157–1328 (after: Fennell, *Crisis of Medieval Russia*, 176)



death in 1277, the succession went, in good western Eurasian steppe lateral system terms, to the eldest son of the first brother; in this case, Dmitrii Aleksandrovich, the eldest surviving son of Aleksandr Iaroslavich (the eldest son, Vasiliĭ Iaroslavich, having died in 1271). Dmitrii Aleksandrovich, in turn, was succeeded by his next eldest brother in 1294, Andrei. When Andrei Alexandrovich died in 1304, the succession went to Mikhail Iaroslavich, the oldest surviving son of Iaroslav Iaroslavich, the fourth son of Iaroslav Vsevolodovich and the third to succeed his father as grand prince of Vladimir, all the other older heirs having predeceased him, including Daniil (in 1303), the fourth son of Aleksandr Iaroslavich. Mikhail Iaroslavich gave rise to the house of Tver', but here is the exception.

Although Daniil Aleksandrovich never ruled as grand prince of Vladimir, his descendants did rule as grand princes of Vladimir. His son Iurii was given the *yarliq* to rule as grand prince of Vladimir and all Rus' by Özbek in 1313. During the rest of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the khan in Sarai tended to favor appointment of the princes of Moscow to be grand prince of Vladimir, but on occasion appointed princes from other seats. From 1318 to 1432, the khan granted the *yarliq* to rule as grand prince of Vladimir to eight Moscow princes and to four non-Moscow princes: Mikhail Iaroslavich of Tver' (1304–1318), Dmitrii Mikhailovich of Tver' (1322–1326), Aleksandr Mikhailovich of Tver' (1326–1327), and Dmitrii Konstantinovich of Suzdal' (1359–1362, 1363). According to the old system this would have meant the sons of these four non-Moscow grand princes would have been eligible to serve as grand prince of Vladimir. But, as long as the khan in Sarai controlled the succession, other than allowing Dmitrii Mikhailovich and Aleksandr Mikhailovich to succeed their father Mikhail Iaroslavich of Tver', that did not happen. The princes of Tver' and of Suzdal' would have good reason to complain that the princes of Moscow should be considered ineligible to rule as prince of Vladimir (or Kiev) according to the steppe system of succession inherited from the early Rus' principalities. Likewise, although Dmitrii Konstantinovich's grandfather was Andrei Iaroslavich who ruled as grand prince in Vladimir from 1249 to 1252, his father, Konstantin, had not so ruled. But within the Mongol system of succession, any male of the ruling house was eligible to serve as ruler.

The Daniiloviĭchi (ruling family of the Moscow principality) had maintained lateral succession until 1432 when the khan in Sarai, Ulu Mehmed, decided in favor of Vasiliĭ Vasil'evich, the oldest son of the preceding grand prince, Vasiliĭ I, over the brother of Vasiliĭ I, Iurii Dmitrievich<sup>94</sup>. Nonetheless, Iurii continued to challenge the succession of Vasiliĭ II, and, when Iurii died in 1434, his sons Vasiliĭ and Dmitrii (Shemiaka) continued the struggle until the former was blinded on the orders of Vasiliĭ II in 1436 and the latter died in Novgorod in 1453. Toward the end of this prolonged succession struggle, Vasiliĭ II, in 1449, invoked the Byzantine

94 Woodworth C. "The Birth of the Captive Autocracy: Moscow, 1432", *Journal of Early Modern History*, 13 (2009), 49–69.

principle of the ruler's establishing his successor by declaring his son co-ruler during his reign. In effect, succession became a system of primogeniture as the eldest son of the preceding ruler usually succeeded (eldest son Vasilii III succeeded his father Ivan III in 1505; eldest son Ivan IV succeeded his father Vasilii III in 1533; eldest son Fedor I succeeded his father Ivan IV in 1584; eldest son Aleksei succeeded his father Mikhail in 1645; and eldest son Fedor succeeded his father Aleksei in 1676) even when election by the *zemskii sobor* was utilized (1549–1682)<sup>95</sup>. The *zemskii sobor* took the place of the khan in Sarai by legitimizing the choice that the succession system offered. Primogeniture held true for succession to the grand-princely throne only.

In contrast the Muscovite ruling class continued to follow lateral succession within a ranking system called *mestnichestvo*. In *mestnichestvo*, one's status within society was reckoned according to one's status within one's clan, which was established on the basis of lateral succession, and upon the ranking of one's clan, which in turn was determined by genealogical proximity to the ruling family and service precedence. Kliuchevskii called the reckoning of one's status within a clan "mestnichestvo arithmetic": "The first place belonged to the oldest brother, the house master, the *bol'shak*, and the two places after him were his two younger brothers, the fourth place, his oldest son. If the *bol'shak* had a third brother, he was not able to sit either higher or lower than the oldest nephew, to whom he was equal." Kliuchevskii speculated that this equality was due to the oldest son of the oldest brother's being born about the same time as the fourth oldest brother<sup>96</sup>. That may be so, but in the two cases we have of at least four brothers surviving to succeed to the throne of Vladimir (the case of the Vsevolodovichi in 1248 and the case of the Iaroslavichi in 1271), the fourth brother in each case, Sviatoslav and Vasilii, took precedence over their respective eldest nephews, Alexander Iaroslavich and Dmitrii Alexandrovich. In 1879, F.I. Leontovich proposed that the Mongol system of clan relationships influenced the development of *mestnichestvo* in Muscovy<sup>97</sup>. Some 58 years later, V.A. Riasanovsky disputed Leontovich's claim<sup>98</sup>. But that is a subject for a different paper.

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95 Following the proposal made by Jaroslaw Pelenski, and after a comparison of the two assemblies, I concluded, that the principle of election by the *zemskii sobor* in Muscovy derived from the Mongol/Tatar principle of election by the *quriltai*. See my "The Assembly of the Land (*Zemskii Sobor*) as a Representative Institution," *Modernizing Muscovy: Reform and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, edited by Jarmo Kotilaine and Marshall Poe (London, 2004), 117–142.

96 See Ключевский. *Курс*. Т 2, 147–148.

97 Леонтович Ф.И. К истории права русских инородцев древний монголо-калмытский или ойратский устав взыскании (Цааджин-Бичик). *Записки Императорского Новороссийского университета*. Т. 28, 1879, 262–270.

98 Riasanovsky V.A. "The Influence of Ancient Mongol Culture, and Law on Russian Culture and Law", *Chinese Social and Political Science Review*, 20 (1937), 529–530.

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The entity that is usually called “Kievan Rus’” can best be understood as an aristocratic state, with horizontal power relations and virtually no vertical subordination to the center. The notion of “Riurikid” is non-existent in the sources of the time of the early Rus’ principalities. Descent from Riurik had no connection with legitimating authority of particular princes. Instead, what legitimized a prince’s claim to be able to rule in a city or town was (1) eligibility — whether his father had ruled there, (2) aristocratic self-regulation — whether the other princes accepted his claim, and (3) external regulation — whether the townsmen accepted the prince as their prince. On occasion, “2” trumped “1” in that other princes could decide to allow a prince to rule in a city where his father had not ruled. Rarely was “3” invoked, at least in the chronicles, and “1” and “2” overrode “3” as in the case of the ouster of Vseslav Brachislavich by Iziaslav Iaroslavich from the throne of Kiev in 1068.

The *PVL* does not discuss Riurik in the context of founding a dynasty but only in the context of who the Rus’ were who attacked Constantinople s.a. 866 and 907. Whereas the early Rus’ principalities were ruled by an aristocracy of princes, all of whom operated within a system of collateral succession, the later Rus’ principalities, with the help of the Mongol and Tatar khans, developed a dynastic system of succession in which, in practice, the oldest son succeeded the father, and, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was vertical subordination of other principalities to Moscow and to the Muscovite ruler. Just as Sneath’s theory of a headless state provides insights into the workings of the system of succession in the early Rus’ principalities, so too that system provides further evidence for Sneath’s theory of aristocratic relationships underlying steppe and near-steppe societies.

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