

RUSSO-POLOVTSIAN DYNASTIC CONTACTS AS REFLECTED IN GENEALOGY AND ONOMASTICS

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The description of Polovtsian-Russian contacts — embodied not only in constant lesser and greater military conflicts but also in peace treaties, military-political alliances, inter-dynastic marriages, family ties, and finally, simply in personal relations — occupies in the oldest Russian chronicles devoted to the pre-Mongol period a significant place. The breadth of coverage is barely less than that devoted to the history of the Riurikid clan itself.

However, the modern reader of the Russian chronicle, having become interested in the history of Russo-Polovtsian interactions, comes up against two partly discouraging, partly disorienting circumstances. On the one hand, this history, for all its eventfulness, gives the impression of something monotonic and undifferentiated: over the course of a century and a half Polovtsian invasions and answering campaigns of the Russian princes are recorded in the sources so frequently that it is difficult to detect any indication of intensification or weakening of military conflict. One is struck by the similarity of those events which fall at the boundary between the 11th and 12th centuries and those which occur a bit more than a century later. In the first as in the second of the indicated periods, we learn about the alternating success of Russians and Polovtsians in battles not far from Pereiaslav', about the capture of Russian princes by the nomads, about the fact that another prince marries his son to a Polovtsian woman, about flight — successful or unsuccessful — of yet another Riurikid to the Polovtsy...

On the other hand, in the chronicle accounts, one can but infrequently locate some information about everyday practice which made up the substance of these contacts. It is rare to encounter a reference as to how on the eve of the murder of the Polovtsian prince Itlar' he was invited to change his footwear in a warm hut and breakfast with a certain Ratibor, in order then

to set off to Vladimir Monomakh. Likewise, a tale according to which the guard assigned to the captive Igor' Sviatoslavich in the Polovtsian camp carried out its orders and released the prince to participate in a falcon hunt. In most such cases, all our suppositions about the organization of the Polovtsian part of the court of the Russian prince, who was married to a Polovtsian, about the language spoken between two cousins — one of whom was a nomad heir, the other a Riurikid — are impossible to support with any direct evidence from the sources. There is definitely a lack of information suited to our modern perception concerning the daily aspects of the Russo-Polovtsian interactions; neither is the distinctive cyclical nature, the almost pathological stability of the contacts with the nomads, entirely illusory.

Nonetheless, the onomastic material and history of Russo-Polovtsian marriages offer a possible, if partial path to escaping some of these limitations. The study of the Russian names of Polovtsian rulers recorded in the chronicles along with the genealogical connections of the two dynasties gives rise to a series of observations, some entirely expected and in a certain sense superficial, but others by no means obvious and requiring multi-layered commentary. The history of the appearance of these anthroponyms, juxtaposed with the history of inter-dynastic marriages, of itself suggests a tentative, if somewhat vague but distinctive periodization of Russo-Polovtsian contacts.

We note, for example, that, unlike modern scholars, the first chroniclers never call the Polovtsian rulers "khans," but rather call them princes (*kniaz'ia*) just as they do their own dynasts. While by this measure from the Russian perspective the Polovtsy seem to have been treated identically with, for example, the Pechenegs, at the same time there is a fundamental difference. In fact, the Riurikids married only Polov-

tsian princesses among all the numerous nomads with whom they dealt. Even the people called the Chernye Klobuki, who from a certain period settle in Rus' and play a very important role both in the struggle with external enemies and in the civil strife of the princes themselves, were not granted such an honor.¹ Thus, it was only the Polovtsy whom the Russian princes considered in a specific sense to be equal partners with them: all the rest of the steppe world was suited for negotiations and treaties, but not for sealing those treaties with marriages.

Lacking their own written tradition, the Polovtsy in a certain sense were fortunate in the Russian historical narrative: they appeared in Rus' not long before the compilation of those redactions of the *Povest' vremennykh let* which have come down to us in chronicle compilations.² Thus the Polovtsian invasions affected directly the authors of the chronicles but at the same time never were treated by them as an inescapable and unknown evil. This was a new threat, which was necessary physically to endure, internalize and situate in a picture of the world, in world history. Thus it was no accident that the Polovtsy appear in the chronological framework of the annals with a significant degree of anticipation long before Rus' had to confront them in reality. For example, in recounting the creation of Slavic writing — that is, an event from the 9th century — the compiler of the *Povest' vremennykh let* introduces the Polovtsy as an ideal type to illustrate precisely what a nomadic people is and how the migration of peoples generally occurs: "The Ugrы passed by Kiev over the hill which is now called the Ugrian hill, and on arriving at the Dnieper, they pitched camp, for they were nomads like the Polovtsians. The Ugrы had come from the East and struggled across the great mountains (which were called the Ugrian mountains) and began to set upon those who lived there" (*PSRL*, I, col. 25; II, col. 18).

As far as events are concerned in which the Polovtsy figure directly, the first stage of their interaction with Rus' begins with entirely peaceful negotiations, but quickly gives way to a series of destructive defeats which the nomads inflict on the Russian princes. When Sviatoslav Iaroslavich succeeds in gaining a victory over them at Snovsk (*PSRL*, I, col. 172; II, col. 161; II, pp. 189–90), the chronicler embroiders on the event itself with a whole series of characteristics which elevate its significance, such as a speech by the prince to his soldiers. It is no accident that this speech echoes a fragment of a speech by the ancestor and namesake of this prince, Sviatoslav Igorevich, prior to his victorious battle against the Byzantines (Litvina and Uspenskii 2006, pp. 436–37).

On the whole one can say that in the 60s and 70s of the 11th century the Riurikids had but learned how to

oppose the Polovtsy when they immediately attempted to make use of the "atomic energy" of nomad clans in their own internal family conflicts. To do so could be dangerous, especially at the beginning. One of the Russian princes, Roman Sviatoslavich, perished, killed by his own Polovtsian allies after a military failure (*PSRL*, I, col. 204; II, col. 195–96; II, 18). Yet this is the first and last instance: thereafter it was only for the Riurikids to kill Polovtsian princes who had entered into peaceful negotiations of alliance with them.

How then did the princes attempt to control or regulate this new and threatening force? They turned to the universal dynastic means for taking control of the world. Starting at the end of the 11th century, the Riurikids began to enter into marriages with the Polovtsian princesses. The first one to do so apparently was Oleg Sviatoslavich of Chernigov,³ the brother of the murdered Roman, thereby laying the foundation for the reputation of "cumanophiles" which his heirs, the Ol'govichi, enjoyed in Rus' over a century and a half.

In general, the end of the 11th and first decades of the 12th centuries — the era of the grandsons of Iaroslav the Wise — marked a new era in Russo-Polovtsian relations. The Riurikids finally learned how to defeat the Polovtsy and actively began to establish family ties with them and enter into marriages. Vladimir Monomakh, who above all was known for his battles with the pagans, on separate occasions arranged for two of his sons, Iurii Dolgorukii (*PSRL*, I, cols. 282–83) and Andrei Dobryi (*PSRL*, II, col. 285), to marry Polovtsian women.

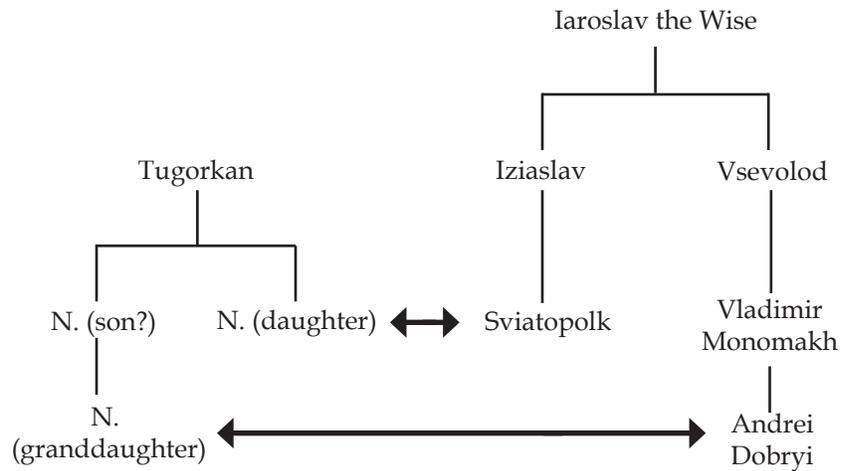
In the marriage strategy of the Riurikids with respect to the nomads, already at that time the most important principle of checks and balances was put in place — each branch of the princely family thus tried to secure for itself the military support of the nomads. Looking ahead, we can say that this principle gave a definite rhythm to the marriages, and to depart from that rhythm, to refuse to marry steppe princesses, in a certain sense amounted to rejecting pretensions to clan seniority. When Monomakh married his son Iurii Dolgorukii to a Polovtsian woman (one who was still a minor, it seems), this marriage was part of a significant peace treaty. On the Riurikid side participated three cousins (Vladimir, Oleg and David), and on the Polovtsian side several princes who were leaders of different clans. Moreover, Vladimir married his son to one Polovtsian princess at the same time that his cousin and constant opponent, Oleg Sviatoslavich, hastened to organize an analogous marriage with a Polovtsian woman for one of his own sons who was not yet of age (*PSRL*, I, cols. 282–83).⁴

In this period the attention of the chronicler (and, it goes without saying, the Riurikids themselves)

was drawn to Polovtsian names and, even more interestingly, to Polovtsian genealogies. As is well known, one of the characteristic features of Russian naming practices for people is patronymics. In other contexts, the old Russian hagiographer or preacher was capable of providing patronymics even for Biblical personages, whose genealogy understandably was considered to be of primary importance: for example, the designation of Jesus, son of Sirach as Iisus Sirakhovich in the “Chronicle” of Geogios Harmatolos (Istrin 1920, I, p. 204; see B. A. Uspenskii 2002, pp. 51–52; on old Russian patronymics, see also F. B. Uspenskii 2002, pp. 65–110). As far as the chronicle itself goes, in the frequency of the use of patronymics the Polovtsy unquestionably are “silver medalists.” Of course the princes themselves are more frequently named with their patronymics, but the Polovtsian rulers in that regard are only slightly behind the Riurikids. This indicates that the chronicler – mentioning, for example, Kozel Sotanovich, Kodechi and Kaban Urusovich, Begbars Akochaevich, Kobiak Kardyeuevich, K[o]za Burnovich, Kotian Sutoevich – knew perfectly well the immediate genealogy of the steppe peoples and it was for him not merely an item of current interest. It was important for him to indicate precisely who was involved in the next invasion of Rus’ and who was responsible for the next victory or defeat of the Riurikids. The Russian princes themselves apparently were even better informed; and in any event, the text of the famous “Testament” of Vladimir Monomakh is saturated with information about patronymics.

It is necessary to stress that the patronymic form in *-ich/-ovich* does not always reflect directly the name of the father. From the philological standpoint, it is precisely the onomastic characterizations of the Polovtsy, supplementing the Slavic material itself, which make it possible to discern that universality of morphological devices that create a distinctive linguistic continuum including patronyms (i.e., specification with reference to the father), clan names, indications of a specific ethnos or geographical location. Moreover, the drawing of firm boundaries between the component parts of this continuum is not always possible. Be that as it may, evidently from the standpoint of genealogy, neither the Poles, with whom many dynastic marriages were concluded, nor even the Byzantines interested the Rus’ to the degree that the Polovtsy did.

Of course, as soon as Polovtsian women married



Russian princes, they were baptized. At the same time, the “Russian side” apparently very carefully calculated the degree of consanguinity with these new brides and their relatives, thereby attempting not to violate canonical rules forbidding marriages between close relations. Sviatopolk Iziaslavich and Andrei Dobryi married an aunt and niece (respectively, the daughter and granddaughter of the Polovtsian prince Tugorkan) (*PSRL*, I, cols. 231–32; II, cols 216, 285), but the degree of consanguinity between these princes themselves was sufficiently distant that the ban on marriages with brides who were too closely related was not in this case violated.

A century later Vladimir Igorevich of Novgorod-Seversk and Yaroslav, son of Vsevolod “Large Nest,” were married to an aunt and her niece, but again the degree of consanguinity between these Riurikids was absolutely acceptable for such a marriage. If the Russian princes themselves were relatively closely related, then it was necessary to emphasize that their Polovtsian wives were not related. In part precisely for this reason it was important for the chronicler to indicate not only who was the father, but also who was the grandfather of each of the Polovtsian women: “In the same year and month, Vladimir and David and Oleg went to Aepa and to the other Aepa and concluded a peace, and Vladimir took as a bride for Iurii, Aepa’s daughter, Osen’s granddaughter, and Oleg took as a bride for his son Aepa’s daughter, Girgen’s granddaughter” (*PSRL*, I, cols. 282–83). The author of the text shows that the newly-acquired Polovtsian brides taken by Oleg and Vladimir Monomakh were not sisters and came from different families, although the names of their fathers were identical.

Characteristically, however, neither the native or baptismal names of the Polovtsian brides themselves are ever specified in the chronicles of the pre-Mongol period. No less significant is the fact than in the first,

earliest phase of military conflicts with the Polovtsy the Russian chronicle indicates the names of these nomadic leaders but not their patronymics. One might tentatively suggest that at the moment the Riurikids began to marry Polovtsian women, the text begins to record genealogical information about the nomads, although obviously the meaning and import of this information is by no means limited to the matrimonial sphere.

The next stage in the relations of the Russian dynasty with the Polovtsian elite begins when individuals of mixed blood appear—Polovtsian grandsons and nephews—in the paternal line belonging to the Riurikid clan. The marriages concluded earlier bore their natural fruits. Such individuals of mixed blood included, as is well known, Andrei Bogoliubskii and Sviatoslav Ol'govich of Chernigov, and many other princes. In the sequence of civil conflicts of the 1140s and 1150s which broke out in Rus', the majority of them eagerly availed themselves of their maternal uncles ("wild uncles", *dikie ui*), and these with equal eagerness provided support. Simply stated, the Polovtsy loved their Russian grandsons and nephews more than their newly-made sons-in-law—one can fight with a son-in-law, but one must support nephews, grandsons and granddaughters. More precisely, one can note that the Polovtsy held in rather high regard their blood relations, established through the female line, viewing the children of sisters and daughters to a significant degree as members of their own clan.

Most importantly, thanks to the Polovtsy the value of such connections also increased for the internal dynastic politics of the Russian princes themselves. As a dynasty that was increasingly androcentric, the Riurikids ruled for more than six centuries on the basis of succession in a single patrilineal blood line. Power could pass from brother to brother, from father to son, from uncle to nephew (but only if the latter was the son of a brother, not of a sister!). Various branches of the clan descending from a common ancestor could succeed one another on the most prestigious princely seats. Marriages frequently were concluded between distant relatives, representatives of one and the same dynasty. However no ruling privileges could be inherited through women in the 11th and 12th centuries. It was not impossible that under the influence of Polovtsian examples, the Riurikids to a certain degree were able to emphasize connections via the female line. A tradition developed within which young Russian princes began to enlist the help of the brothers of their Russian mother who was born a Riurikid princess, this process similar to the way that representatives of the clan enlisted the support of brothers and other relatives of their Polovtsian mother.

It is noteworthy that in describing princely conflicts

in this period there is a growing frequency in the chronicles of the term *sestrichich* (i.e., "the son of a sister, nephew from a sister"), which is used to characterize internal clan relations of the Russian princes themselves (cf., for example, *PSRL*, I, col. 315; II, cols. 327, 367, 471). Thus, one of the representatives of the house of Chernigov, Sviatoslav Ol'govich, constantly turns for support to his maternal uncles, the Polovtsian leaders related to him through his mother, at the same time that another prince, Sviatoslav Vsevolodich, successively allies either to *stryi*, his paternal Russian uncles, or to his *ui*, maternal Russian uncles who are ready to support him as their *sestrichich*.

On the whole, it is as though the Russian princes work out with the help of the Polovtsy several strategic models which in the future would be used in their internal and external affairs. Among them, for example, is the model of synchronic contracting of several dynastic marriages which can create triple unions of the fathers of the newlyweds and simultaneously operate on the principle of checks and balances, immediately leveling the matrimonial advantages of several dynastic lines. As mentioned already, the marriage of the young Iurii Dolgorukii with a Polovtsian woman took place simultaneously with the wedding of his third cousin, the son of Oleg of Tmutorokan'. In his turn, having attained his majority, Iurii simultaneously marries off two of his daughters to junior members of two powerful Russian princely families, those of Chernigov and Galich, so to speak to a degree replicating the actions of his father and father-in-law on Russian soil (*PSRL*, II, col. 394).

One can even more broadly suggest that such a model of dynastic marriage involving Polovtsians was approved when relations were established between the parents of the bride and groom. These brides and grooms were not necessarily minors, but at the moment of the wedding, they are not the main parties involved in negotiating the contract. A similar model can be designated as the negotiation by the father of the bride directly with the father of the groom (*svat*↔*svat*), which in itself is universal for dynastic practice (Litvina and Uspenskii 2013a, pp. 308–25), but in Russian practice becomes fully operative only from the time of the Polovtsian marriages.

This third stage of Russo-Polovtsian contacts, when among the Riurikids Polovtsian sons-in-law, Polovtsian grandsons and Polovtsian nephews all act simultaneously, has yet one more characteristic feature: the Russian princes can temporarily or permanently flee to the Polovtsian camp, to the nomads, without thereby severing their connection with their own dynasty. At the end of the 1140s Rostislav Yaroslavich flees to the Polovtsy from the throne of Riazan' in the face of a military threat from his relatives, the sons

of Dolgorukii. Moreover, he has a specific target of his flight—he going to a certain Eltuk, which allows one to suppose that he was related to that Polovtsian chieftain either by blood or marriage (*PSRL*, II, cols. 338–39). It is no surprise that somewhat earlier the people of Chernigov suspected their prince Vsevolod Ol'govich of having similar intentions, since he was half Polov-tsian (*PSRL*, II, col. 301).

In the 1150s there was a completely indecent episode of dynastic history when the widowed princess Riurikovna not only fled to the Polovtsy but did so in order to marry there the Polovtsian prince Bashkord (*PSRL*, II, cols. 500–01). On the whole the marriage strategy of the Rurikids toward the Polovtsy was very one-sided: the princes eagerly married Polovtsian women but never, insofar as one can determine from the sources, gave their daughters in marriage to Polovtsy. On the other hand, the position of princely widows in Rus' was rigidly ordained—they could not plan on a second marriage in their homeland. As far as our fugitive is concerned, through the power of her new Polovtsian husband she was able to help not only her son from the first marriage, the Russian princeling who remained in Rus', but also the brother of her late husband. One can but speculate that the princess fled to the Polovtsy with the connivance of that clan of her Russian husband — an entirely unheard of situation for Rus'.

Be that as it may, of course the departures of Russian princes to the Steppe (at the same time that other princes living among the Polovtsy had occasion to return to their hereditary seats), created along with, so to speak, “normal” dynastic marriages, an extremely close-knit milieu of cultural exchange on the highest level. That is when the written sources mention for the first time possessors of Russian names connected in one way or another with the Polovtsian world. Perhaps the best known of them was a certain Vasilii Polovchin, who figures in the account of the Hypatian Chronicle about the collaboration of Prince Sviatoslav Ol'govich with his Polovtsian relatives and allies (*PSRL*, II, cols. 341–42). It is not always possible to determine from this early example whether we are dealing with Polovtsy per se, whether they are in the nomadic milieu or at the court of Russian princes, and even more problematically, whether one of them is a Polovtsian prince of equal status with his Rurikid partners.

So it is entirely justified to ask whether our Vasilii Polovchin was a Polovtsian or whether we are dealing with a nickname, derived from a universal model, according to which a Russian craftsman who studied in Greece would be called a Greek or a Norwegian merchant who traded in Rus' would be nicknamed “Russian.” Nonetheless, it is evident that such bearers of Russian names, who more likely than not emerged

in the preceding era of Monomakh, serve as intermediaries between two ever more closely interconnected worlds, the Russian and the Polovtsian. These mediating functions become from that moment something very significant and in constant demand in Russian dynastic life.

The foregoing may seem to suggest that toward the second half of the 12th century the boundary between the Russian and Polovtsian dynasties was finally erased, that Rus' and the nomads had fused to the point of being indistinguishable. Of course this was not the case. As before, one world was separated from the other by several barriers, and the highest of them undoubtedly was the confessional one. Throughout the entire pre-Mongol period, for the Old Russian bookman the Polovtsy remained accursed, pagan and godless, and, everything considered, the explanation for this is the fact that they were just that, unbaptized.

Having accumulated already no little experience of marriages with Polovtsian women, of life among the Polovtsy, of peace treaties and exchanges of hostages with them, the Russian princes for their part apparently treated treaties with the steppe peoples in a somewhat different way than they did treaties with Christians. In the time of Vladimir Monomakh, it was possible to kill a Polovtsian prince who came to the court, one with whom Vladimir was bound by a *rota*, an oath of peace — thus perished Itlar' and Kitan (*PSRL* I, cols. 227–29). In spite of the evident closing of ties with the Polovtsy, even long afterwards it was still possible to kill a captive steppe prince who had but recently been a military ally. Apparently, in the middle of the 1180s this was how the famous prince Kobiak perished. By all accounts, it was marriage which was supposed to provide a guarantee against princely violation of oaths. Yet even that guarantee was not absolute, as we have seen in the fate of Tugorkan, who set off on a campaign against his son-in-law and perished in battle with him (*PSRL*, I, col. 232; II, col. 222).

One might note that in spite of all disagreements and conflicts which shook the extremely prolific clan of Russian princes in that century, generally in the confrontations amongst the Riurikids themselves there was, so to speak, a definite limit or inviolable boundary, in no way explicitly delineated but consciously recognized by the princely clan. Of course, as with all inviolable boundaries of dynastic custom, from time to time there were violations, ones which, however, each time were understood to be something extraordinary, scandalous, almost beyond the bounds of what was imaginable. In contrast, in relations with the nomads, there seems to have been a distinct a priori assumption that obligations could be violated, be they ones established by treaty, matrimonial ties or close personal ties.

The fourth and for us the most interesting stage in Russo-Polovtsian relations begins with the next upsurge in the intensity of the military confrontation between Rus' and the nomads. It is precisely then, in our view, that a whole group of heirs of the Polovtsian elite who have Russian names make their first appearance: Iurii Konchakovich, Daniil Kobiakovich, Roman Kzich, Gleb Tirievich, Iaropolk Tomzakovich... The number of such individuals is so noticeable that it allows one to speak about a distinctive "anthroponymic mode" of such a naming practice among the most powerful of the Polovtsian rulers.

The history of these anthroponyms is one way to raise the curtain on a whole array of multi-layered combinations in the interrelations among the Russo-Polovtsian elite of the last third of the 12th and first decades of the 13th century. Especially telling in this regard is the history of the contacts of Russian prince Igor' Sviatoslavich of Novgorod-Seversk and the Polovtsian prince Konchak, which is inscribed in texts of entirely different genres – in the chronicle and in the epic "Tale of the Host of Igor'." We know that Igor', as a result of an unsuccessful campaign, found himself in Polovtsian captivity in very advantageous and honorable conditions (*PSRL*, II, col. 649). We also know that at some point Konchak, the father of his future daughter-in-law, vouched for him, which indicated that Prince Konchak and Prince Igor' had agreed to marry their children some time prior to the campaign. The marriage took place, despite the military campaign of Igor' against the Polovtsy, his captivity and flight from captivity (*PSRL*, II, col. 659). Even more significant is another circumstance, which attracts less attention: apparently the friendship of Igor' and Konchak at the beginning of this unsuccessful campaign had already lasted more than a decade from the first half of the 1170s. At a certain moment, for example, the Polovtsian chiefs, Konchak and Kobiak, made a point of asking that prince to campaign with them. When the campaign ended in a defeat, Igor' and Konchak fled in the same boat from the field of battle and Konchak, apparently, was forced to hide for a time somewhere in the Chernigov lands, at the same time that his own brother was killed and sons taken into captivity (*PSRL*, II, col. 623). It is conceivable that the Russian prince and Polovtsian prince were something like sworn brothers.

What, however, is the onomastic substance of this situation?

As is known for certain from various sources, Konchak had a son named Iurii. Much later, in the 13th century, he was, according to the note of the chronicler, "the most important of all the Polovtsians" (*boliishe vsikh Polovets*) (*PSRL*, II, col. 740) and died at the hands of the Tatar-Mongols. Furthermore, our Prince Igor',

the friend and ally of his father, was baptized as Iurii (Georgii) (*PSRL*, II, col. 422). Assuredly such a coincidence cannot be called accidental – it is clear that Konchak's son was called Georgii (Iurii) precisely because Georgii was Igor'-Georgii of Novgorod-Seversk. Most likely, the Polovtsian Iurii was born in the 1170s and his naming was one of the first pledges securing the given Russo-Polovtsian friendship.

"Russian" names of a similar kind have not been the subject of special study, but modern scholars are inclined without further discussion to consider that all who bore those names are Christians (Popov 1949, p.104; Pletneva 2010, pp. 153–54; Golden 1990, p. 283; Golden 1998; Tolochko 2003, p. 129, Osipian 2005, p. 10, Pylypchuk 2013a, p. 91). We should qualify this immediately by noting that the scholars of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries refrained from such categorical assertions and proposed, in our opinion entirely correctly, that such names could appear among the Polovtsy not only as a result of baptism but in the process of a kind of cultural interaction with Russians (cf. Golubovskii 1884, p. 225; Hrushevs'kyi, II, pp. 537–38).

We would suggest that whenever the subject is the sons of Polovtsian rulers who over time inherited the property and power of their fathers, in no case is the appellation with a "Russian" name accompanied by the change of faith. What we have here is the operation of completely different cultural and political mechanisms. In fact, from the standpoint of confessional identity of "Russian" names among the Polovtsian elite, the name Iaropolk stands out. In no way could it have been given at baptism, in that right down to the 19th century it was not Christian. Yet it was a dynastic name of the Riurikid princes. If we look closely at the entire "Russian" micro-onomasticon of our nomads, it turns out that all the rest of the names – Vasili, Gleb, Davyd (?), Daniil, Roman, Iurii (Georgii) – are not simply Christian names, widespread in Rus', but the favorite Riurikid dynastic names, often the only names borne by Russian princes in the pre-Mongol period.⁵

In other words, among the Polovtsian elite there was a widespread fashion not only for Russian or Christian names, but for princely, dynastic names, and, judging from all the evidence, behind each instance of such naming stood a treaty between the Russian ruler and the Polovtsian ruler. A treaty of that kind could sometimes be sealed by an inter-dynastic marriage, sometimes by the naming of the Polovtsian heir with a "Russian" princely name, and sometimes both of them together as occurred with Igor'-Iurii of Novgorod-Seversk and Konchak, when their children married and the Polovtsian princeling received a Russian dynastic name. At the same time we call attention to the fact that the Novgorod-Seversk prince himself

had a traditional name Igor', of Scandinavian origin.

Why then did he decide to share with the Polovtsian heir his other name, Iurii? In a certain sense, he could not do otherwise. Traditional princely names were, so to speak, the inalienable property of the Riurikid dynasty. Even in Rus', among the clans close to the princes, there could be no Mstislavs, no Vsevolods, no Igors or Olegs, at the same time that there were Christian names, which, we might suggest, united princes with their subjects: rather early we meet Glebs, Daniils and Vasiliis, who are definitely not of princely origin. Furthermore, far from every Christian name was appropriate for a prince as a dynastic name. It is noteworthy that the Polovtsy acquired precisely such anthroponyms — ones very prestigious from the Polovtsian standpoint and in Russian eyes permissible to adopt beyond the bounds of the dynasty. Thus we can be sure that Christian names could be adopted by Polovtsian heirs irrespective of whether they converted.

However, what exactly compels us to deny even the possibility that such sons of Polovtsian princes as Roman Kzich, for example, were baptized? It is necessary to remember that at the end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th centuries the inter-confessional confrontation of the two worlds, Russian and Polovtsian, like the military confrontation itself, hardly diminished. The Russian chronicle of that period is full of extended invective against the godless Polovtsians. Moreover, the early Russian author in his anti-pagan inclination in no way singled out from among the other Polovtsian chiefs those possessing "Russian" names. Gleb Tirievich, Daniil Kobiakovich and Iurii Konchakovich were equally termed accursed, godless and pagan, as were the bearers of indigenous Polovtsian names. The fathers of the Polovtsian princelings with Russian names were among the most powerful of all the chiefs who fought Rus' and whose godlessness especially often and regularly was stressed in the chronicle. It is difficult to imagine that, having remained pagan, they permitted the conversion of their eldest sons who attained the most powerful position in the clan after their deaths. Moreover, there was no weakening of confessional confrontation between Rus' and the nomad world in that period when Iurii Konchakovich and Daniil Kobiakovich succeeded their fathers in power among their clansmen.

In addition, the early Russian chroniclers say absolutely nothing about the conversion of any of those who possessed Christian names. If in the oldest chronicles there is no mention at all of the conversion of Polovtsian princes, might one consider that for some unknown reasons this subject escaped the attention of the chronicler (which of itself would, however, be rather strange)? However, we do have evidence

how a Polovtsian chief adopted Christianity, and it indeed provides us with an excellent possibility to understand when and why that might happen. The Polovtsian prince Basty was baptized on the eve of the battle on the Kalka, when the Polovtsy, whom the Tatars had crushed, in the face of mortal danger were compelled to flee to Rus' seeking Riurikid aid (*PSRL*, I, col. 505; II, col. 741). It is obvious that such extreme circumstances were capable of moving them to such extreme measures. According to the chronicle narrative, the Polovtsy at that time understood better than the Russian princes that this was the beginning of the collapse of the entire system of relations between Rus' and the nomad world. Therefore, in their pleas for help they brought to bear everything — reminders of kinship, unheard of gifts, and for some even baptism.

Does this mean we are saying that until the 1220s no Polovtsy who interacted with Rus' converted at all? Of course not. There was apparently an entire social circle of mediators — merchants, negotiators, former captives, slaves from the Polovtsian milieu itself or children from mixed marriages — who for one or another reason adopted Christianity, as usually happens when there are close contacts of a pagan people with Christians. We wish merely to emphasize that in the pre-Mongol period, things had not yet reached the point of the baptism of the upper elite, and the model of the "baptized ruler of an unbaptized people" right up to the era of the extraordinary dislocation of the Tatar-Mongol invasion, did not become a reality for Polovtsy who interacted with Russians. The borrowing of primarily Christian anthroponyms by the Polovtsian princes was determined by the cultural and functional status of such names among the Russian princes with whom the Polovtsy had to reach an understanding. Their use (in contrast with the majority of secular princely names) was not the exclusive prerogative of the Riurikid clan, and therefore in their eyes was an entirely permissible instrument for regulating contacts with the nomads.

Russian princely names appeared among the sons of those Polovtsian rulers who supported alliances with each other and dealt most closely, in peace and in war, with the Riurikids. In other words, the appearance of Russian names often expresses on the one hand the presence of more or less long-term alliances of the Polovtsian princes with Russians, and, on the other hand, the presence, however paradoxical that may seem, of entirely long-term alliances of steppe rulers amongst themselves.

It is an extremely interesting task to determine in whose honor were named other Polovtsian owners of these anthroponyms, not only Iurii Konchakovich. Behind the naming of Roman Kzich can clearly be seen the figure of Roman Rostislavich, whose brother Riur-

rik was married to a Polvtisan, the daughter of Beluk, an ally of Kza. The naming of Gleb Tirievich most likely is to be connected with Gleb Iur'evich, the Prince of Pereiaslavl' and Kiev, son of Iurii Dolgorukii. It is not impossible that two Glebs influenced the selection of the name Gleb for the Polovtsian—relatives of the princes who had fled to Bashkord, and/or Gleb Rostislavich, son of Rostislav Iaroslavich, who also fled to a Polovtsian encampment in the middle of his princely career.

Daniil, son of Kobiak, possibly was named in honor of one of the princes of Novgorod-Seversk, the brother of Igor-Georgii Sviatoslavich. If that latter reconstruction is accurate, then the following picture emerges: there are two Polovtsian prince-allies who in their relations with Rus' frequently acted together, Konchak and Kobiak, and there are two Rurikid brothers—Igor'-Georgii and Vsevolod-Daniil, who together both warred and made peace with the Steppe. One of the Polvtisian chiefs called his heir Iurii in honor of Igor', and the other Daniil in honor of Vsevolod (Litvina and Uspenskii 2013, pp. 126–46).

The determination of such anthroponymic donors inescapably has a certain hypothetical element; yet the very process of the sorting of possibilities is entirely productive. It allows one to see practically the entire network of Russo-Polovtsian interactions, where the internal Russian, internal Polovtsian and international interests are all closely connected with one another.

We would emphasize that in the last third of the 12th and beginning of the 13th centuries inter-dynastic marriages remained an integral component of Russo-Polovtsian relations. It is important, for example, that at that time the chronicler could state not only the clan and relationship by marriage of the Polovtsy with the Russian princes, not only the relationship of the Polovtsians among themselves, but also the internal Polovtsian relationships by marriage. For example, there appeared such designations as “Turundai, Kobiak's father-in-law” (*PSRL*, I, col. 395–96), which, of course, speaks of the growth of inter-dynastic ties.

Marriage and the bestowing of names, undertaken either separately or together, were the active means of strengthening developing coalitions. Furthermore, the rhythm of Russo-Polovtsian marriages, which gradually developed from the start of the century, increasingly is integrated into a certain rhythm of inter-dynastic relations among the Riurikids themselves. Indeed, not only in the middle but also at the start of the 12th century we observe how the marriage of a Russian princeling with a Polovtsian became a distinct instrument for rapid tactical reaction. The princes had just fought with the nomads; now a peace was concluded with them, but that peace of itself

was not stable, and the advantages which might be gained from it unreliable unless the settlement took the form of a marriage between representatives of the recently warring clans. In similar fashion, treaty relations could be established in the 13th century as well. Just as Vladimir Monomakh, having concluded peace with the Polovtsians, married his minor son Iurii to the daughter of Aepa Osenev, a century later his grandson Vsevolod Large Nest, after a successful anti-Polovtsian campaign, arranged for his adolescent son a marriage with a steppe princess, the daughter of Iurii Konchakovich. However, the Russian dynastic semantics of these two matrimonial acts coincides only partially. Vladimir Monomakh acted simultaneously with his cousin and rival Oleg Sviatoslavich and tried to balance his own Polovtsian ties with the analogous ties of the heirs of Sviatoslav Iaroslavich. However, his grandson had to take into account the accumulated legacy of Russo-Polovtsian relations, in which the majority of powerful princely houses had succeeded in establishing family ties with the steppe peoples. Therefore, in fighting and allying with each other, by no means all of them found occasion to enlist on their side one or another group of nomads.

On the other hand, certainly one should not forget that as earlier, the struggle with the Polovtsy remained a distinctive mark of the unity of the dynasty, which compelled various branches of the Russian princely clan to cooperate. In the telling of the chronicle, that tendency can be very distinctly traced. It suffices to recall, for example, the fragment of the Novgorod First Chronicle, devoted to the concluding act of relations with the Polovtsy in the period that interests us, on the threshold of the battle on the Kalka and that battle itself (*PSRL*, III, 61–63, 264–67). In the eyes of the chronicler, the new danger that threatened—the invasion of an unknown nomadic people—to a considerable degree paled against the backdrop of the unpleasantness inflicted by the Polovtsy, the usual enemy. The death and misfortune of Polovtsian princes, with many of whom Russian princes had managed to establish family ties, is seen as punishment they deserved for their godlessness and the bloodshed which they had inflicted on the Russian land. The predation of the Polovtsian allies is represented as an evil deed hardly more oppressive than the perfidious murder of many captive princes by the new conquerors, the Mongols. In the eyes of the chronicler the very idea of alliance with the Polovtsy against this enemy which had previously not touched Rus' directly, was anything but a foregone conclusion.

Turning to the perspective from the Polovtsian side, which has left us none of its own written monuments, it is also necessary to remember, for example, that we cannot talk about the mass penetration of Russian

princely anthroponyms in the naming practices of the Polovtsian elite. The corpus of such names among the Polovtsy always remained very limited, and there was no total russification of the onomasticon. Their “own” names remained the more commonly used, however suitable Russian names might have been in other circumstances.

Although we emphasize the height of the barrier which existed between the two traditions, we cannot but note again and again the evident intensification of cultural contacts between them in the indicated period. To put it more precisely, the last decades of the 12th century and first decades of the 13th witnessed with particular clarity the appearance of an agglomeration of mutually worked out practices, ceremonies and terms, which had accumulated over the long years of interaction. We cannot always say what created that clarity – the growing closeness of the contacts themselves or the growing attention to them in the written texts. In all likelihood, one naturally drew the other with it.

Here it suffices to take even a cursory look at those ceremonial aspects of international life which traditionally interest students of the Middle Ages. For example, very telling is the precision of the spatial ordering of the sides during negotiations of a newly enthroned Russian prince with the Polovtsy. Who, in what direction, and in what order should one move – this was clearly subjected to a kind of strict regimentation, to rules almost like chess, where any departure from them was significant and could lead to frequent diplomatic failures or the breaking off of the whole process of negotiation. Diplomacy here might very quickly turn into military actions. Juxtaposition of the chronicle account with the text of the “Tale of the Host of Igor” enables one to follow by what complicated ceremonial the stay of the captive Russian princes among the Polovtsians was circumscribed, to what degree the norms of etiquette were significant in analogous situations, and how close was the day-to-day contact between the “guests” and the receiving side.

The practices of etiquette of an analogous kind originated most likely long before the end of the 12th century. Unfortunately, the sources do not always allow us to trace the process of their formation, but nonetheless we have some fragmentary data from which to extract, for example, individual details about the successful scenario for the stay of a Polovtsian as the guest of a Russian prince. However, characteristically, even in such cases there was the constant possibility of a sudden devaluation of all these ceremonially shaped procedures and the treacherous murder of a captive or guest.

The exchange of gifts, that most important part of

medieval negotiating practice, also assumed a varied and multi-layered character, which contains features of the mutual interpenetration of two cultures. Apparently, this was a development as yet unknown in the era of Vladimir Monomakh, even though, as we know, more than once he had occasion to present peace-making gifts to his nomad neighbors. At the end of the century, his heirs were no less diligent in using these ceremonial practices than their long-standing opponents the Ol’govichi, just as the one and the other could be distinctive donors of Russian princely names for the Polovtsy.

Russo-Polovtsian contacts as such did not disappear without trace after the Tatar-Mongol invasion. While it is hardly possible to trace any kind of strict chronological development, changes of no little consequence can be seen in the relations of the two elites. For the first time we learn from the chronicle of the baptism of a Polovtsian prince, clearly undertaken in order to strengthen ties with Russian allies. On the other hand, marriage as a form of inter-dynastic interaction vanishes suddenly. Matrimonial practice in the given instance is a reliable indicator of the significance of the given contacts or, more precisely, the legal power of the contracting sides. The final (after a long interval) indirect mention of such a union between a Riurikid and a Polovtsian woman is in the entry of the Galician-Volynian Chronicle under the year 6761 (1252/3), which relates how Prince Daniil Romanovich had a Polovtsian in-law named Tepak who participated with him in a military campaign (*PSRL*, II, col. 818). At the end of the 1220s the young Daniil of Galich had occasion to remind the Polovtsian prince Kotian about the relationship they had by marriage (Daniil was married to his granddaughter, the daughter of Mstislav Mstislavich), in order to use that connection in a multi-sided conflict involving not only the Riurikids but yet another group of their relatives and in-laws – the Polish and Hungarian dynasts (*PSRL*, II, col. 753).

However, for all the weight of the Polovtsian marriage connection in this final episode, one must not forget that it was the consequence of a matrimonial union concluded several decades prior to the events described. Almost a half century elapsed between the previously mentioned information about the marriage of Iaroslav, son of Vsevolod Large Nest to a Polovtsian woman and the information about the Polovtsian marriage connection of Daniil Romanovich (which was, apparently, not especially long-lasting). Later instances of Riurikid marriages with daughters of the chieftains of this people are unknown. In other words, one can tentatively characterize the era beginning with the battle on the Kalka and ending toward the middle of the 1250s as a period of conscious dampening of the wave of Russo-Polovtsian

matrimonial treaties and the gradual weakening of Russo-Polovtsian interconnections as a whole. In that time span, after the death of Iurii Konchakovich and Daniil Kobiakovich, the chroniclers cease to mention any Russian names of Polovtsian chiefs. For reasons independent of both sides, the relations of Russians with the Polovtsy ceased to be dynastic ones.

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In a forthcoming book of essays, *Rus' in the 12th Century. On the Crossroads of Culture* (Brill), the authors will reassess that era as one of flourishing development rather than a period of impoverishment and decay as it has often been considered.

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Notes

1. Yet it is curious that in the 12th century the Polovtsian rulers themselves hardly avoided matrimonial ties with other nomads who interacted with Rus'. In any event, the Polovtsy and Chernye Klobuki are called "in-laws" (*svaty*) (PSRL II, cols. 652, 674), just as are the Polovtsy and Russian princes. This system of matrimonial alliances extending in two directions made more complicated and unstable what independently of it was a constantly fluctuating equilibrium in relations of the Rus' with the Steppe.

2. The "Tale of Bygone Years" (*Povest' vremennykh let*) is the name accepted in scholarly tradition for the historical text completed in the second decade of the 12th century and containing an account of the earliest history of Rus'.

3. The fact of this Polovtsian marriage has been taken into account by scholars, beginning with Nikolai M. Karamzin. For a discussion of the various points of view as to whether the Polovtsian woman was the first or second wife of this prince and from which of the wives the children were born, see Gurkin 1999, pp. 43–44. However, the question as to which Polovtsian princess Oleg married is not as simple as it may seem. As is known, in the chronicle there is no direct information about the Polovtsian marriage of Oleg Sviatoslavich, even though it provides the names of the Polovtsian uncles of his sons: «...и Половцемъ дикымъ . оуемъ своимъ . Тюнрако<ви?> . Wсоулокови" и бра" его Камось» (PSRL II, 334). Consequently, in the literature the father-in-law of Oleg, with certain qualifications and more often with none, is called Osoluk. The matter is complicated also by the fact that the Russian chronicle is full of graphic variants and distortions of native Polovtsian names, often making it difficult to establish whether the text is referring

to one and the same name which assumed various forms at the hand of the Russian authors and copyists or whether we have different names belonging to different individuals. For example, is Osoluk identical with the Polovtsian prince Seluk or Oseluk, who, according to the evidence of the Hypatian Chronicle, in 6636 (1126/7) helped the sons of Oleg (PSRL, II, col. 291, fn. 1, fn. a; I, col. 296)?

4. It is not excluded that somewhat later the third prince who participated in the negotiations, David Sviatoslavich, arranged a marriage for his son Iziaslav with a Polovtsian woman. Supporting such a supposition is a whole series of details in Iziaslav's biography. On more than one occasion he used Polovtsian support in his struggle for the princely throne, and after one of the battles even was able to free from Polovtsian captivity his recent opponents, Prince Sviatoslav Vsevolodich and many members of his Russian retinue, while not surrendering to the Polovtsy those who had managed to escape from them. The chronicle emphasizes that he acted together with his wife—a specific statement that of itself was somewhat unusual for our source: «Изславъ же съ женою своею . выручиста Сѣслава в Половецъ . и инѣхъ Руской дружины . многы" выручиста . и многы" добро издаваста . аче кто оу Половецъ оутечашеть . оу городъ . а тѣхъ не въдавашеть» (PSRL, II, cols. 475–76). Apparently the obligations as an ally which Iziaslav had toward the nomads did not allow him to block the seizure of Russian captives, but the prince attempted, in part in violation of those obligations, in part by means of some kind of negotiations or payment of ransom, to help his blood relatives and countrymen.

5. As is known, the dominant model of Russian princely naming practice at that time was to use two names, wherein the prince had not only a Christian name (the name of a certain saint), received at baptism, but a birth name, traditional and pagan in origin (such as Igor', Oleg, Mstislav, Vsevolod, Iaropolk, Sviatoslav, Rostislav etc.). The majority of Russian princes appear in the chronicle under their traditional name, which apparently dominated in princely civil life. In addition, beginning at a certain point, some Christian names — above all David, Roman, Vasilii, Georgii and Andrei — begin to be adopted in the Russian dynasty as clan names, since their most illustrious ancestors previously had received them in baptism (in the capacity of second, added ones). Their heirs, new members of the clan given these names, seem not to have needed yet another dynastic name. One can recall such Russian princes as David and Roman Sviatoslavich (grandsons of Iaroslav the Wise), Vasil'ko Rostislavich of Terebovl', Iurii Vladimirovich Dolgorukii and Andrei Vladimirovich Dobryi (the younger sons of Monomakh), Iurii Iaroslavich of Turov, Andrei Bogoliubskii, Roman Mstislavich of Galich and his sons, Daniil Romanovich and Vasil'ko Romanovich. All these rulers always appear in the chronicle sources exclusively under their Christian names, at the same time that their closest relatives, we repeat, as previously are remembered by their traditional names. Concerning the dual naming of Russian princes, see details in Litvina and Uspenskii 2006, pp. 111–75.

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