

Yaroslav the Wise

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Yaroslav I, Grand Prince of Rus', known as **Yaroslav the Wise** or **Iaroslav the Wise** (Old East Slavic: Ярославъ Володимировичъ Мъдрѣи, *Jaroslavŭ Volodimirovičŭ Mōdrii*; Old Norse: *Jarisleifr*;^[1] Russian: Яросла́в Му́дрый, *Yaroslav Mudry*; Ukrainian: Ярослав Мудрий, *Yaroslav Mudriy*; c. 978 – 20 February 1054) was thrice grand prince of Veliky Novgorod and Kiev, uniting the two principalities for a time under his rule. Yaroslav's Christian name was George (Yuri) after Saint George (Old East Slavic: Гюрьгі, *Gjurĭgi*).

A son of the Varangian^[2]^[3] Grand Prince Vladimir the Great, he was vice-regent of Novgorod at the time of his father's death in 1015. Subsequently, his eldest surviving brother, Sviatopolk I of Kiev, killed three of his other brothers and seized power in Kiev. Yaroslav, with the active support of the Novgorodians and the help of Varangian mercenaries,^[4] defeated Svyatopolk and became the Grand Prince of Kiev in 1019. Under Yaroslav the codification of legal customs and princely enactments was begun, and this work served as the basis for a law code called the *Russkaya Pravda* ("Rus Truth [Law]"). During his lengthy reign, Kievan Rus' reached the zenith of its cultural flowering and military power.^[4]

Contents

- 1 Rise to the throne
- 2 Reign
 - 2.1 Power struggles between siblings
 - 2.2 Scandinavian allies
 - 2.3 Campaign against Byzantium
 - 2.4 Protecting the inhabitants of the Dniper from the Pechenegs
 - 2.5 Establishment of law
- 3 Family life and posterity
- 4 Grave
- 5 Legacy
- 6 Ancestors
- 7 See also
- 8 References
 - 8.1 Bibliography
- 9 External links

Rise to the throne

Yaroslav the Wise

Grand Prince of Kiev and Novgorod



Forensic facial reconstruction of prince Yaroslav I the Wise by Mikhail Gerasimov.

Reign 1019–1054

Predecessor Sviatopolk the Accursed

Successor Iziaslav I

Prince of Rostov?

Reign 978–1010

Prince of Novgorod

Reign 1010–1019

Born ~978

Died 20 February 1054 [aged ~76]
Vyšgorod

Burial Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Kiev

Spouse Ingegerd Olofsdotter of Sweden, later Irene-Anna (a daughter of Olof Skötkonung)

Issue see the main article

Full name

Yaroslav Vladimirovich

Dynasty Rurikid

Father Vladimir the Great



The only contemporary image of Yaroslav I the Wise, on his seal.

The early years of Yaroslav's life are shrouded in mystery. He was one of the numerous sons of Vladimir the Great, presumably his second by Rogneda of Polotsk,^[5] although his actual age (as stated in the *Primary Chronicle* and corroborated by the examination of his skeleton

Mother Rogneda of Polotsk (according to the *Primary Chronicle*)
Sign



in the 1930s) would place him among the youngest children of Vladimir. It has been suggested that he was a child begotten out of wedlock after Vladimir's divorce from Rogneda and marriage to Anna Porphyrogenita, or even that he was a child of Anna Porphyrogenita herself. Yaroslav figures prominently in the Norse sagas

under the name **Jarisleif the lame**; his legendary lameness (probably resulting from an arrow wound) was corroborated by the scientists who examined his remains.

In his youth, Yaroslav was sent by his father to rule the northern lands around Rostov but was transferred to Veliky Novgorod,^[6] as befitted a senior heir to the throne, in 1010. While living there, he founded the town of Yaroslavl (literally, "Yaroslav's") on the Volga River. His relations with his father were apparently strained,^[6] and grew only worse on the news that Vladimir bequeathed the Kievan throne to his younger son, Boris. In 1014 Yaroslav refused to pay tribute to Kiev and only Vladimir's death, in July 1015, prevented a war.^[6]

During the next four years Yaroslav waged a complicated and bloody war for Kiev against his half-brother Svyatopolk I of Kiev, who was supported by his father-in-law, Duke Bolesław I Chrobry of Poland.^[7] During the course of this struggle, several other brothers (Boris, Gleb, and Svyatoslav) were brutally murdered.^[7] The *Primary Chronicle* accused Svyatopolk of planning those murders,^[7] while the saga *Eymundar þáttur hrings* is often interpreted as recounting the story of Boris' assassination by the Varangians in the service of Yaroslav. However, the victim's name is given there as *Burizaf*, which is also a name of Boleslaus I in the Scandinavian sources. It is thus possible that the Saga tells the story of Yaroslav's struggle against Svyatopolk (whose troops were commanded by the Polish duke), and not against Boris.

Yaroslav defeated Svyatopolk in their first battle, in 1016, and Svyatopolk fled to Poland.^[7] But Svyatopolk returned in 1018 with Polish troops furnished by his father-in-law, seized Kiev^[7] and pushed Yaroslav back into Novgorod. Yaroslav at last prevailed over Svyatopolk, and in 1019 firmly established his rule over Kiev.^[8] One of his first actions as a grand prince was to confer on the loyal Novgorodians (who had helped him to gain the Kievan throne), numerous freedoms and privileges. Thus, the foundation of the Novgorod Republic was laid. For their part, the Novgorodians respected Yaroslav more than they did other Kievan princes; and the princely residence in their city, next to the marketplace (and where the *veche* often convened) was named Yaroslav's Court after him. It probably was during this period that Yaroslav promulgated the first code of laws in the lands of the East Slavs, the *Russkaya Pravda*.

Reign

Power struggles between siblings

Leaving aside the legitimacy of Yaroslav's claims to the Kievan throne and his postulated guilt in the murder of his brothers, Nestor the Chronicler and later Russian historians often presented him as a model of virtue, styling him "the Wise". A less appealing side of his personality is revealed by his having imprisoned his youngest brother Sudislav for life. Yet another brother, Mstislav of Chernigov, whose distant realm bordered the North Caucasus



Depiction of Yaroslav the Wise from Granovitaya Palata.

and the Black Sea, hastened to Kiev and, despite reinforcements led by Yaroslav's brother-in-law King Anund Jacob of Sweden (as *Jakun* - "blind and dressed in a gold suit"),^[9] inflicted a heavy defeat on Yaroslav in 1024. Yaroslav and Mstislav then divided Kievan Rus' between them: the area stretching left from the Dnieper River, with the capital at Chernihiv, was ceded to Mstislav until his death in 1036.

Scandinavian allies

In his foreign policy, Yaroslav relied on the Scandinavian alliance and attempted to weaken the Byzantine influence on Kiev. In 1030, he reconquered Red Ruthenia from the Poles and concluded an alliance with King Casimir I the Restorer, sealed by the latter's marriage to Yaroslav's sister, Maria. In another successful military raid the same year, he founded Yuryev (today Tartu, Estonia)^[10] (named after Yury, Yaroslav's patron saint) and forced the surrounding province of Ugaunna to pay annual tribute.



Coins of Yaroslav and his descendants represent the trident.

Campaign against Byzantium

In 1043, Yaroslav staged a naval raid against Constantinople led by his son Vladimir of Novgorod and general Vyshata. Although his navy was defeated in the Rus'-Byzantine War (1043), Yaroslav managed to conclude the war with a favourable treaty and prestigious marriage of his son Vsevolod I of Kiev to the emperor's daughter. It has been suggested that the peace was so advantageous because the Kievans had succeeded in taking a key Byzantine possession in Crimea, Chersonesus.

Protecting the inhabitants of the Dniper from the Pechenegs

To defend his state from the Pechenegs and other nomadic tribes threatening it from the south he constructed a line of forts, composed of Yuriev, Bohuslav, Kaniv, Korsun-Shevchenkivskiyi, and Pereiaslav-Khmelnyskyi. To celebrate his decisive victory over the Pechenegs in 1036 (who thereupon never were a threat to Kiev) he sponsored the construction of the Saint Sophia Cathedral in 1037. That same year there were built monasteries of Saint George and Saint Irene. Some mentioned and other celebrated monuments of his reign such as the Golden Gate of Kiev perished during the Mongol invasion of Rus', but later restored.

Establishment of law

Yaroslav was a notable patron of book culture and learning. In 1051, he had a Slavic monk, Hilarion of Kiev, proclaimed the metropolitan bishop of Kiev, thus challenging the Byzantine tradition of placing Greeks on the episcopal sees. Hilarion's discourse on Yaroslav and his father Vladimir is frequently cited as the first work of Old East Slavic literature.

Family life and posterity

In 1019, Yaroslav married Ingegerd Olofsdotter, daughter of the king of Sweden,^[11] and gave Staraya Ladoga to her as a marriage gift.

Saint Sophia's Cathedral in Kiev houses a fresco representing the whole family: Yaroslav, Irene (as Ingegerd was known in Rus), their four daughters and six sons.^[12] Yaroslav had three of his daughters married to foreign princes who lived in exile at his court:

- Elisiv of Kiev to Harald *Harðráði*^[11] (who attained her hand by his military exploits in the Byzantine Empire);
- Anastasia of Kiev to the future Andrew I of Hungary;^[11]
- Anne of Kiev married Henry I of France^[11] and was the regent of France during their son's minority; (she was Yaroslav the Wise's most beloved daughter).
- (possibly) Agatha, wife of Edward the Exile, of the royal family of England, the mother of Edgar the Ætheling and Saint Margaret of Scotland.



Eleventh-century fresco of Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Kiev, representing the daughters of Yaroslav I, with Anne probably being the youngest. Other daughters were Anastasia, wife of Andrew I of Hungary; Elizabeth, wife of Harald *Harðráði*; and possibly Agatha, wife of Edward the Exile.



Anne of Kiev.

Yaroslav had one son from the first marriage (his Christian name being Ilya (?-1020)), and 6 sons from the second marriage. Apprehending the danger that could ensue from divisions between brothers, he exhorted them to live in peace with each other. The eldest of these, Vladimir of Novgorod, best remembered for building the Cathedral of St. Sophia, Novgorod, predeceased his father. Three other sons—Iziaslav I, Sviatoslav II, and Vsevolod I—reigned in Kiev one after another. The youngest children of Yaroslav were Igor Yaroslavich (1036–1060) of Volhynia and Vyacheslav Yaroslavich (1036–1057) of the Principality of Smolensk. About Vyacheslav, there is almost no information. Some documents point out the fact of him having a son, Boris Vyacheslavich, who challenged Vsevolod I sometime in 1077-1078.

Grave



Sarcophagus of Yaroslav the Wise.

Following his death, the body of Yaroslav the Wise was entombed in a white marble sarcophagus within Saint Sophia's Cathedral. In 1936, the sarcophagus was opened and found to contain the skeletal remains of two individuals, one male and one female. The male was determined to be Yaroslav, however the identity of the female was never established. The sarcophagus was again opened in 1939 and the remains removed for research, not being documented as returned until 1964. Then, in 2009, the sarcophagus was opened and surprisingly found to contain only one skeleton, that of a female. It seems the documents detailing the 1964 reinterment of the remains were falsified to hide the fact that Yaroslav's remains had been lost. Subsequent questioning of individuals involved in the research and reinterment of the remains seems to point to the idea that Yaroslav's remains were purposely hidden prior to the German occupation of Ukraine and then either lost completely or stolen and transported to the United States where many ancient religious artifacts were placed to avoid

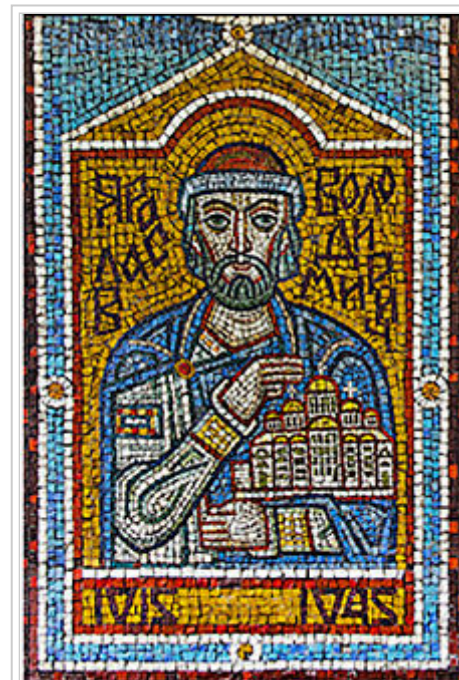
"mistreatment" by the communists.^[13]

Legacy

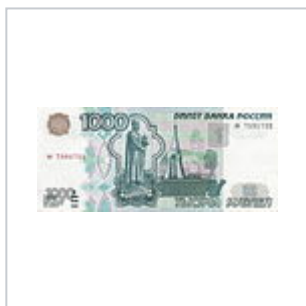
Four different towns in four different countries were founded by and named after Yaroslav: Yaroslavl (in today's Russia), Yuryev (now Tartu, Estonia) and another Yuryev (now Bila Tserkva, Ukraine), and Jarosław in Poland. Following the Russian custom of naming military objects such as tanks and planes after historical figures, the helmet worn by many Russian soldiers during the Crimean War was called the "Helmet of Yaroslav the Wise". It was the first pointed helmet to be used by any army, even before German troops wore pointed helmets.

In 2008 Yaroslav was placed first (with 40% of the votes) in their ranking of "our greatest compatriots" by the viewers of the TV show *Velyki Ukraïntsi*.^[14] Afterwards one of the producers of The Greatest Ukrainians claimed that Yaroslav had only won because of vote manipulation and that (if that had been prevented) the real first place would have been awarded to Stepan Bandera.^[15]

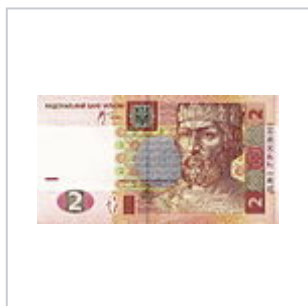
Iron Lord was a 2010 film based on his early life as a regional prince on the frontier.



Yaroslav the Wise's consolidation of Kiev and Novgorod.



Yaroslav's monument in Yaroslavl as depicted on the ₴1000 banknote



The 2 kr bill represents Yaroslav.



Yaroslav's Rock.



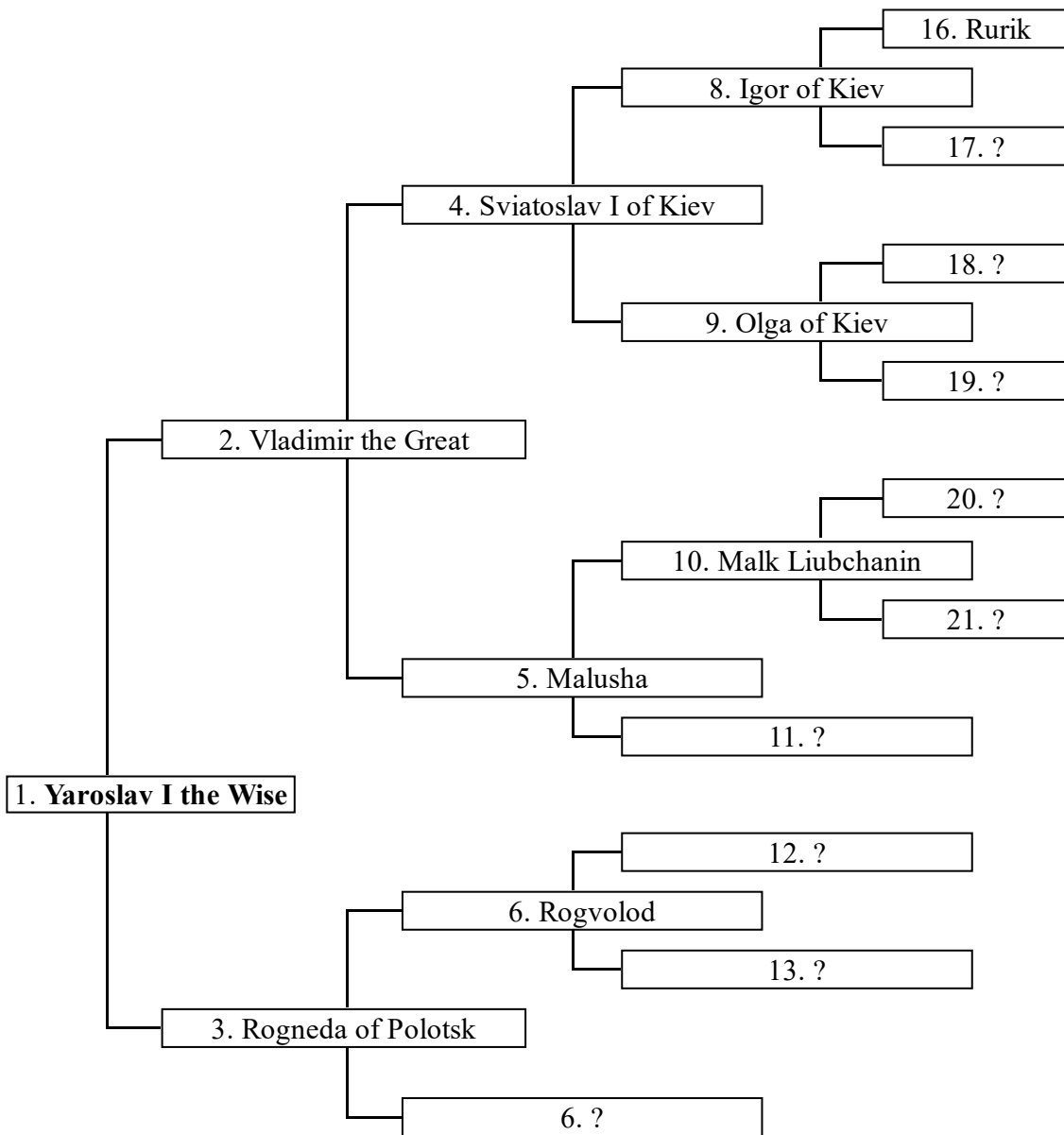
Yaroslav at the Millennium of Russia in Novgorod.



The Ukrainian Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise.

Ancestors

Ancestors of Yaroslav the Wise



See also

- List of Russian rulers
- List of Ukrainian rulers

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External links



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Yaroslav I the Wise Rurikovich Born: 978 Died: 1054		
Regnal titles		
Preceded by established	Prince of Rostov 996–1010	Succeeded by Boris Vladimirich
Preceded by Vyachelav Vladimirich	Prince of Novgorod 1010–1034	Succeeded by Vladimir Yaroslavich
Preceded by Sviatopolk I Vladimirich	Grand Prince of Kiev 1019–1054	Succeeded by Iziaslav I Yaroslavich
Titles in pretence		
Preceded by Sviatopolk I	Grand Prince of Kiev 1015–1019	Succeeded by Mstislav of Chernigov
Preceded by Vysheslav Vladimirovich	2nd in line to Grand Prince of Kiev 1010–1015	Succeeded by Mstislav of Chernigov

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