

# Dobronega/Maria Vladimirovna

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The last of Vladimir's children to marry was his most likely his last child, his daughter Dobronega. As with the majority of royal daughters, Dobronega's birth was not recorded in the *PVL*, but there has been much discussion ever since, not only of her birth date, but also of her parentage.<sup>1</sup> Of more concern at present is the date of her marriage, which is discussed in regard to the circumstances surrounding this fascinating dynastic marriage.

Under the year 1030 the *PVL* records the death of Bolesław Chrobry and a subsequent revolt and a period of chaos in Poland.<sup>2</sup> However, Bolesław Chrobry died in 1025, and this entry is actually referencing the death of his son and heir, Mieszko II, who died in 1034.<sup>3</sup> Despite getting the details wrong, or, rather, not quite right, this was an important event for Rus' due to Poland's proximity, and it was recorded when the chronicle was created years later. The heir to the throne was Mieszko's son Casimir, who had fled to Saxony with his mother at Bolesław's death.<sup>4</sup> His mother was Richeza, the niece of the German emperor Otto III, and thus her family was quite powerful. In 1039, Casimir decided to reclaim his kingdom, which had in the meantime been taken over by rebellious nobles, and embarked on a plan to retake Poland bit by bit from the groups that had divided it.<sup>5</sup>

Rus' at the time preferred a stable Poland on its western border, and attempted to aid Casimir to this end. This is recorded in the Russian chronicles in multiple instances over the course of the 1030s and 1040s. The first recorded instance

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<sup>1</sup> This is dealt with briefly in the section on Vladimir Sviatoslavich. For more information, see the book by E. V. Pchelov. At stake is whether she is the daughter of Anna Porphyrogenita or of another wife of Vladimir, perhaps a German princess. Pchelov, *Genealogiia drevnerusskikh kniazey*, 207–8.

<sup>2</sup> *PSRL* 1, 149–50.

<sup>3</sup> Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, eds., *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, n158. Though it may have began earlier than 1034, because Mieszko initially had to abdicate in 1031 to his brother Otto, but regained the throne at Otto's death in 1032, only to die insane in 1034.

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, *Gesta principum Polonorum*, 81. Casimir did not stay the whole time in Saxony, but traveled to Paris, joined the Benedictine order, enrolled at the monastery of Cluny in France, and only returned to Saxony after receiving a papal dispensation to marry. N. I. Shchavaleva, ed., *"Velikaia khronika" o Pol'she, Rusi i ikh sosediakh XI-XIII vv.* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1987), 69.

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous, *Gesta principum Polonorum*, 81.

of Rusian aid to Poland is in 1041, when Iaroslav attacked the Mazovians.<sup>6</sup> The Mazovians occupied a position on the northeastern corner of Poland and had at one point been subject to the Poles. They were also one of Casimir's most significant foes upon his return to Poland.<sup>7</sup> The *Gesta* records that Casimir was quickly able to bring the majority of Poland under his rule, and after doing so, married a Rusian noblewoman<sup>8</sup>—Iaroslav's sister Dobronega/Maria (her name is discussed below).<sup>9</sup> The Polish *Great Chronicle* records that "to make peace in the Polish lands, he [Casimir] married a daughter of the Rusian prince."<sup>10</sup> Only after that did Casimir go on to put down the other tribes, excepting only the Mazovians, who continued to rebel. The question of the relative reliability of the two chronicles is an open one, however the *Great Chronicle* has one mark in its favor on this issue, and that is its own surprise at the move. The quote from above begins, "in a surprising move,"<sup>11</sup> which suggests that the Polish chronicler, writing in the early thirteenth century from a time of more frequent Rusian-Polish warring, was surprised at Casimir's alliance with Rus'. This subtle note may lend enough credibility to the *Great Chronicle* for its interpretation that the marriage to Dobronega occurred before Casimir's reconquest of the Polish tribes, trumping the *Gesta*'s assertions.

This brings us the issue of the date for this marriage. Both the *Gesta* and the *Great Chronicle* are largely undated, especially in these early sections, and thus cannot be of much assistance in attributing an actual calendar date to these events. The date for the *PVL* entry in which Iaroslav sends his sister to marry Casimir of Poland is 1043, listed after the Rusian attack on Constantinople,<sup>12</sup> but this is after Iaroslav has made his first attack on the Mazovians in 1041.<sup>13</sup> A generally reliable source from the German Empire, *Annalista Saxo*, records the marriage as taking place in 1039, immediately after Casimir returns to Pol-

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<sup>6</sup> *PSRL* 1, 153.

<sup>7</sup> Anonymous, *Gesta principum Polonorum*, 83–85.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 80–81. When the *Gesta* records that he brought the majority of Poland under his rule it excludes the Mazovians and Pomeranians, who were still in revolt and were dealt with in separate expeditions sometime after the initial conquering and after Casimir's marriage.

<sup>9</sup> *PSRL* 1, 154–55.

<sup>10</sup> Shchhaveleva, ed., *Velikaia khronika*, 70. The description of Dobronega as "daughter" of the Rusian prince is an interesting feature of this text. Some modern historians have wondered if she was indeed a daughter of Iaroslav, rather than his sister. This view gains endorsement here, but is generally considered incorrect.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>12</sup> *PSRL* 1, 154–55.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

and.<sup>14</sup> Lambert of Hersefeld uses this date of 1039 to record the marriage of Dobronega and Casimir, and moves forward from this date to record the birth of their children.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the date of the marriage is in controversy in the primary sources, and this has only been complicated in the secondary sources.<sup>16</sup> The issue is made more confusing by the fact that the modern editors of the *Gesta* went so far as to include in a footnote a marriage date of 1041 and birth dates of 1039 for Bolesław and 1040 for Władysław.<sup>17</sup> The confusion of the primary sources does not permit certainty, but the evidence of two Latin chronicles for the 1039 date, the 1041 attack on the Mazovians recorded in the *PVL*, and the evidence of the Polish *Great Chronicle* leads me to support the 1039 date for the marriage, prior to Casimir's reconquest of Poland, and certainly prior to the joint attacks on the Mazovians.

This is supported by the likelihood that Iaroslav would not have made the 1041 raid on the Mazovians "by boat,"<sup>18</sup> and thus most likely up the Bug, without either Mazovian provocation or an agreement with the Poles. Mazovian provocation is possible, but unlikely, as Casimir was at that time firmly in Poland and attempting to consolidate his power, which meant diminishing Mazovian power. Instead, Iaroslav, in fulfillment of the agreement sealed by the dynastic marriage of his sister to Casimir, could have attacked the Mazovians on their rear front, in support of an assault of Casimir's. Though the *Gesta* is undated, the next listing after Casimir's marriage is an attack he made on the Mazovians.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, after a brief listing of the defeat of the Mazovians and their leader "Mieclaw" at the hands of Casimir, the *Gesta* moves on to the Pomernians.<sup>20</sup> This is, however, where the Russian chronicles are able to fill in some gaps. Various Russian chronicles list Russian attacks on the Mazovians in 1041,

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<sup>14</sup> George Pertz, ed., *Annalista Saxo*, vol. 6, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores* (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Avlici Hahniani, 1844), s.a. 1039.

<sup>15</sup> V. Cl. Lud. Frid. Hasse, ed., *Lamberti Hersfeldensis Annales*, vol. 5, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores* (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Avlici Hahniani, 1844), s.a. 1039.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, Baumgarten complicates the issue and adds a hypothetical 1038 marriage date based on the 1039 birth of Bolesław. Baumgarten, "Généalogies," table I.

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, *Gesta principum Polonorum*, 82n1.

<sup>18</sup> *PSRL* 1, 153.

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, *Gesta principum Polonorum*, 83.

<sup>20</sup> The *Great Chronicle* is equally unhelpful here as it devotes only a small part of a passage to the campaign against the Mazovians. It also says that the Mazovians were aided by many groups, including Rusians, though the editor rightly contradicts the statement. Shchaveleva, ed., *Velikaia khronika*, 70, n13.

1043, and 1047.<sup>21</sup> The *Nikon* and *Tver* chronicles both include the interesting detail that in the 1043 attacks Iaroslav and Casimir fought jointly against the Mazovians and their leader “Moislav’,”<sup>22</sup> clearly the same leader described in the *Gesta*. Moislav’ is mentioned later in the *PVL*, when he is defeated by Iaroslav in 1047 and subjected to Casimir.<sup>23</sup> The 1047 attack on Moislav’ and the Mazovians is the only instance in the *PVL* in which a Rusian ruler defeats someone and then subjects the loser to another ruler. In general this is unique, and betokens some relationship between the two parties. When the evidence of the *Nikon* and *Tver* chronicles about the joint 1043 attacks, also against Moislav’, are added to the equation alongside the universally acknowledged 1041 attack on the Mazovians, it demonstrates that Iaroslav was working to a purpose against the Mazovians. That purpose seems clearly linked to the dynastic marriage of his sister to Casimir of Poland—the subjection of the Mazovians to Casimir’s rule. As such, a date for the marriage of Dobronega and Casimir must come before the first of Iaroslav’s attacks on the Mazovians in order to give the attack a purpose.

The marriage of Dobronega and Casimir is the first time that the *PVL* records some of the terms of a dynastic marriage, in this case an exchange of property in which Casimir hands over eight hundred people who were taken when Bolesław invaded Rus’ on Sviatopolk’s behalf.<sup>24</sup> Though at this point it would be twenty years after Bolesław’s attack, some of the people may have been alive or could have had children.<sup>25</sup> More likely, the villages in which the people lived were handed back to Rus’. The other side of this exchange could be two-fold. The first aspect is the already discussed alliance against the Mazovians and the agreement to subject them to Casimir’s rule, rather than Iaroslav’s, which may have been a pricey deal for Casimir. The second factor derives from the *Gesta*’s description of Dobronega as a wealthy woman when she comes into the marriage,<sup>26</sup> implying perhaps that she brought a large dowry with her, though

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<sup>21</sup> *PSRL 1*, 153–55, which contains only the 1041 and 1047 raids; *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei: Tom IX. Letopisnyi sbornik, imenuemyi: Patriarshei ili Nikonovskoi letopis’iu*, (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul’tury, 2000), 82–83, which contains all three raids; and *Rogozhskii letopisets / Tverskoi sbornik*, vol. 15, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kultury, 2000), 148–150, which also contains all three.

<sup>22</sup> *PSRL 9*, 82; and *PSRL 15*, 149.

<sup>23</sup> *PSRL 1*, 155. The *Tver’* chronicle also calls Casimir Iaroslav’s “ziat” in this 1047 entry. *PSRL 15*, 150.

<sup>24</sup> *PSRL 1*, 155.

<sup>25</sup> Children are specifically mentioned in other Rusian chronicles. *PSRL 15*, 149.

<sup>26</sup> Anonymous, *Gesta principum Polonorum*, 81.

there are no specifics.<sup>27</sup> Either way, this is an interesting dynastic marriage in regard to its treatment in the Russian chronicles, as so many of the marriage's repercussions are recorded there, where Russian women are so rarely mentioned.

The last detail to mention in regard to Dobronega is her name. The first recorded instance of her carrying the name Maria is in a letter from Pope Benedict IX to Casimir and his wife.<sup>28</sup> Maria was likely the name given to her in Poland and Dobronega was her Russian name.<sup>29</sup> Scholars have often believed the most common reason for change of name in medieval sources is because of religious conversion, but this was not always the case. In this particular situation, Dobronega was a Slavic name given to her at her birth and Maria a Christian name given to her at baptism, as her father Vladimir was also named Basil and her brother Iaroslav was also named George. Thus there is no need to speculate on an existing breach between Poland and Rus' in terms of religion.

The marriage of Casimir and Dobronega set the tone for Russian-Polish relations for the next hundred years. Over that time, two of their children ruled Poland, Casimir's sister married a Russian prince, and several of their grandchildren married Russian princes and princesses. Close ties between the two countries, especially between certain branches of the Riurikids, began with this marriage, and the future Piast rulers of Poland had one Russian foremother, if not many, to look back on.

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<sup>27</sup> Pchelov also reads this as recognition of a large dowry brought into the marriage. Pchelov, "Pol'skaia kniagina - Mariia Dobronega Vladimirovna," 32.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 33. Shchhaveleva, in the commentary to the Polish *Great Chronicle*, also notes this origin, but it is not in the original text. Shchhaveleva, ed., *Velikaia khronika*, 70n10.

<sup>29</sup> Pchelov, "Pol'skaia kniagina - Mariia Dobronega Vladimirovna," 33.