

HISTORY OF UKRAINE

Period Prior to Kyivan State|

Period of Statehood (879-1360)|

Period of Lithuanian & Polish Rule (1360-1599)|

Cossack Period (1599-1712)|

Decline of Ukrainian Statehood & Culture (1712-1783)|

Ukrainian Renaissance (1783-1913)|

Ukraine-1914 Onward

Ukraine or "The Ukraine"

I. PERIOD PRIOR TO KYIVAN STATE.

During the Miocene Period in Tertiary Age of Cenozoic Era, some 12 million years ago, most of Ukraine was covered by sea. At the end of this period the seas receded to the approximately present day coasts of Black, Azov and Caspian seas to form one big sea. The climate was very hot and humid, lush vegetation covered the ground and there were all kinds of large animals and birds.

Then, during the Pliocene period, some 6 million years ago, the climate began to cool. Many plants and animals disappeared and only those, which could adapt to lower temperatures, such as woolly mammoths and rhinoceroses, remained. Later the ground froze up and soon ice sheets covered most of the northern part of Ukraine. That was the Pleistocene Period in Quaternary Age of Cenozoic Era, about 1 million years ago, Commonly known as the Ice Age.

When the ice retreated, life started to reappear. Traces of human habitation in Ukraine, dating back at least 30 thousand years, became evident during geological excavations. Primitive stone tools, carvings from mammoth tusks, arrow heads made from flint stone, earthenware, bronze tools and weapons and gold jewelry found in different layers of earth enabled geologists to reconstruct the way of life of early man.

At first, during Old Stone Age (Paleolithic Age), humans did not have domestic animals, could not make utensils and relied exclusively on hunting and fishing. Then, gradually, during Middle Stone Age (Mesolithic Age) they began to make stone tools and weapons.

Later, during Late Stone Age (Neolithic Age), they began to make utensils from earth, kept domestic animals for milk and meat, constructed dwellings and cultivated the soil.

During the Bronze Age, about 3000 BC, and Iron Age, about 1000 BC, metal agricultural implements and weapons came into use; crafts and commerce began to develop.

From 7th century BC Greeks started to colonize the coast of the Black Sea. They traded wine, oil, and textiles, silver and gold wares and utensils with local tribes for grain and hides but they also engaged in slave trade. They introduced Greek Culture and many tribes adopted Greek customs and religion. The Greek historian Herodotus documented information about Ukraine of this period.

There were numerous tribes in Ukraine, some nomadic, some agricultural; most of the time at war with each other. The oldest known main inhabitants of Ukraine were Cimmerians. They were replaced in 5th century BC by Scythians, who ruled till 2nd century BC; Sarmatian tribes then replaced them. Later in 1st century AD the tribesmen of the dominant horde were called Alanis.

These tribes, mainly of Iranian origin, were conquered in 2nd century AD by German tribe called Goths from Baltic region. About 370 AD, the first Asian horde of Huns, on their way to western Europe, defeated and expelled Goths from Ukraine. They were followed in 5th-6th centuries by the Bulgars and Avars.

The exact origin of Slav people is unknown, but it can be assumed that they existed for a long time before they were mentioned in historical records by Romans in 1st century AD. A very strong Slav tribe called Wends developed in 4th century; their settlements extended from central Ukraine up to Baltic Sea. When in the 6th century they moved to Southwest Germany, Antes became the dominant tribe in Ukraine.

At different times they were fighting with and against Goths, Huns, Avars, Greeks and Slovyans. Although ruled by princes, they also had people's councils and tribal elders.

According to legends, Kyiv was founded in the 5th century by three brothers Kiy, Shchek and Khoriv and their sister Lebid; later Kyiv was reigned by princes (or chieftains) Askold and Dyr.

At end of 7th century AD, Khazars established themselves on Caspian steppes, which somewhat shielded Ukraine from other Asian hordes. Also in the 7th century Greeks left Black Sea shores, thus causing a considerable gap in the documented history of Ukraine. Khazar control of the steppe was breached in the late 9th century by the Magyars, who later were replaced by Pechenegs and then by Polovetsians as dominant tribes.

ABRIDGED HISTORY OF UKRAINE - PART TWO.