

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"

II. PERIOD OF STATEHOOD (879-1360).

Prince Olekh established the Kyivan State proper in 879. He conducted military expeditions to the shores of Caspian Sea and raided Byzantine cities. Prince Ehor followed him, in 912, who not only continued external raids but also had to fight insubordinate tribes of Ulitchs and Derevlans. He died during a battle with Derevlans in 945. His wife Olha revenged his death by brutal suppression of Derevlans. In 964 she became a Christian and established her son Svyatoslav on the throne.

Svyatoslav was an able and courageous prince; he fought Asian hordes in the East and conducted raids on Bulgaria. He divided his state between his sons, then continued with his expeditions and battles. When he died in 972 during battle with Pechenegs, his sons fought between themselves, often with help from their enemies.

In 980, Prince Volodymyr defeated all his brothers and unified the country into one powerful state with Kyiv as the capital. He adopted Christianity in 988 and started to convert the population, which had up to then, worshiped Pagan gods. Force was often used against those who resisted. He produced silver and gold coins with his portrait on one side and the trident on the reverse side (The trident is Coat of Arms of present day Ukraine).

In History he is known as Volodymyr the Great or Saint Volodymyr. During his reign, pillaging Pecheneg hordes defeated the Khazars, pushed out the Hungarian hordes from the southern steppes and became a menace to the state. Volodymyr started to fortify Kyiv against them. After his death in 1015, fighting and assassinations between his sons ensued, resulting in victory for prince Yaroslav in 1019.

Yaroslav the Great consolidated nearly whole of his father's territory, defeated the Pechenegs and became one of the most powerful rulers in Europe. A church hierarchy was established, headed (at least since 1037) by the metropolitan of Kyiv, who was usually appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople. Yaroslav promoted family ties with other kingdoms, built many churches, improved Kyiv's fortifications, introduced laws and established courts.

However, in the same way as his forefathers, he divided the country between his sons, who after his death in 1054, started to fight among themselves and divide their land between their sons. This resulted in a number of small principalities which not only fought each other, but also had to defend themselves from marauding Turkish and Polovetsian hordes, who plundered the countryside.

In 1097 all princes agreed to stop fighting between themselves. In 1103 they united their forces under leadership of prince Monomakh (one of the grandsons of Yaroslav the Great) and defeated the Polovetsian hordes.

However, the constant warfare weakened the country's economic strength and caused a near collapse of cultural and political system of Ukraine.

After death of Monomakh in 1125 Ukraine remained fragmented into the numerous principalities, each having their own customs and rules, with only nominal allegiance to the Prince of Kyiv (this position was occupied by sons of Monomakh on rotational basis). Gradually Kyiv lost it's power and influence; many principalities separated. An outstanding chronicle of events was compiled in Old Church Slavonic language by Venerable Nestor in 1136.

In 1169 prince Andrey Bogolyubski conquered and destroyed Kyiv and established his capital in Vladimir near present site of Moscow, thus originating present Russian state.

The Ukrainian princes continued to struggle on against the Polovtsi. One particular battle led by Prince Ehor in 1185 was enshrined in a poem "Slovo o Polku Ehorevim" (The Tale of Ehor's Regiment).

Western parts of Ukraine - Halych (Galicia) and Volynj (Volhynia)—free from Polovetsian raids, gradually emerged as leading principalities. Prince Roman ruled there in 1199. His sons succeeded in uniting both principalities into one rich and powerful state.

About year 1220, when a new horde of Mongols and Tatars invaded Ukraine, the princes have reached some sort of accommodation with Polovtsi and fought together to expel this new horde. They succeeded at first but, toward the end of year 1240, Tatars returned and besieged Kyiv. On 16th December 1240 they conquered, plundered and ruined the city. Afterward they moved westward, plundering Halych, Poland and Hungary then in 1245 they returned and occupied eastern Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Prince Danylo (son of Prince Roman) established himself in Halych and his brother Vasylko in Volynj. Together they managed to keep the Tatars away from their principalities. Danylo founded city Lviv in 1250 as a defense site against Tatars. In 1253 he accepted the royal crown from the pope and effected a short-lived church union with Rome.

After Danylo died in 1264, his sons continued to rule in peaceful coexistence with the Tatars. In 1303 they created a separate archbishopric office in Halych, responsible to Byzantine. Earlier, in 1299 Kyivan archbishopric seat was moved to Moscow.

The dominant prince was Danylo's son Lev. He died about year 1300. His son Yuriy would again unite the Halych and Volynj principalities with Lviv as the capital. He was seen as a mighty and just ruler and the country was rich and peaceful under his rule.

After Yuriy, his two sons ruled until 1320. They both died without leaving male successors. This created an unstable situation and an internal power struggle ensued, which was exploited by neighboring countries—Poland, Hungary and Lithuania—in their efforts to occupy this part of Ukraine. Local boyars and People's Councils tried to resist by accepting princes from other dynasties and countries and by forming alliances with the Lithuanians and even the Tatars, but to no avail. In 1349, Polish king Kazimyezh managed to occupy Halych and part of Volynj. About same time, Lithuanian princes intensified their takeover of eastern principalities of Ukraine. Finally about year 1360, the Prince of Kyiv was overthrown.

Ukraine was partitioned between Poland and Lithuania with Tatar Golden Horde remaining in some parts of southern steppes and the Crimea.