

Yurii Soroka

**100 KEY EVENTS
IN UKRAINIAN
HISTORY**

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PANTICAPAEUM AS THE OLDEST CITY IN UKRAINE AND EASTERN EUROPE

Historical science considers that the European civilization emerged in the western part of Europe. That was the place where Athens and Rome appeared. Those were the sources of the first technologies and roads. Scholars and warriors of those lands left descriptions of their achievements in the chronicles. Regarding Ukraine, large cities on its territory are, as a rule, just casually mentioned. However, it was the Ukrainian terrain that happened to be the land of Panticapaeum, the oldest city in Eastern Europe. Studies provide evidence that the city was founded in 615—610 BC.

The ruins of Panticapaeum are located in the modern town of Kerch



Panticapaeum ruins

in the eastern part of the Crimean peninsula. The ancient city was founded on the mountain called Mitridat by ancient Greeks. Panticapaeum was quite a large city of the time — the built-up area was about 100 hectares. As to the name of the ancient city, it is still controversial in the scientific community. Some researchers believe that the city was called after the Pantikap River, which once flowed

there. Others prove that the name of Panticapaeum meant the “Fish Way,” because it is known that in Old Iranian *panta* meant the *way, route*, while *kapa* meant *fish*.

Panticapaeum has long been explored by archaeologists. They continue finding some surprising discoveries. For example, it is known that



Panticapaeum coins

the rulers of Panticapaeum coined their money long time ago. The first gold and silver pieces, found in the ancient city, contained an image of a lion’s head on the obverse and a square on the reverse side. These coins were stricken till the last quarter of the 5th century BC, after which the coin design was somewhat changed. They depicted a head of a bull and a hexagram star.

It is reported that since the foundation of Panticapaeum its patron had been Appollo,

like in ancient Troy. The main temple of Panticapaeum was devoted to this god. Other temples were built in honour of Aphrodite and Dionysus. In addition to temples, Panticapaeum was famous for its royal palace, a traditional square and an amphitheatre. A strong stone reinforcement system was built around the city. Nearby there was a necropolis, which consisted of a long series of burial hills, stretching along roads from the city to the steppe. From the southern side the city was surrounded with the biggest number of the burial hills, called Yuz-Oba, which is translated as *100 hills*. Beneath these hills Scythian nobility representatives were buried. Once there was an Acropolis as well, with spacious streets and squares. One could enjoy the view of luxurious temples and palaces. Today only ruins can be seen there.

The legend says that Panticapaeum was founded during the time of the Argonauts by the son of Aeeta, the king of the mythical country of Aea. He, chasing the Argonauts after stealing Medea and the Golden Fleece, arrived from Colchis at the shore of Cimmerian Bosphorus and received a permit to found a city there from the Scythian king Agaete. Another legend tells that it was in that ancient city on the territory of modern Kerch that legendary Hercules was born.



Excavations in Panticapaeum site on Mitridat mountain



Reconstruction of ancient Panticapaeum Acropolis



Terracotta Hercules from Kerch

SCYTHIAN VICTORY OVER KING DARIUS'S PERSIAN TROOPS

At the end of the sixth century before Christ the area of modern southern Ukraine suffered from the invasion of the troops of Persian king Darius the



Herodotus

First. That campaign was reported in the works by ancient Greek historian Herodotus.

In 514 the Persian army crossed the Thracian Bosphorus. The Persians built a bridge of boats near the mouth of the Danube and invaded Scythia. Over a month Darius was moving eastwards chasing the Scythians. Herodotus noted that Scythians fielded three military detachments against the Persians. But that was done not to confront them. According to their idea, a detachment commanded by king Scopasis, retreating, had to take the Persians to the banks of the Don along the Azov Sea coast. The other Scythian warriors headed by kings Idanfirs and Taksakis were to encourage the enemy to go north. According to Herodotus, these tactics

of the Scythians were quite successful. The Persians moved inland of the uninhabited Scythia by hundreds of miles. Eventually, Darius camped on the bank of the Oar River. That was the place to hold the battle between the Persian troops and Scythians, mentioned in the works by Herodotus.



The Histories by Herodotus

Thus, both armies lined up for the battle. The detachments of the Persian troops deployed for the attack were ready to attack the enemy, but at that time hares ran across the field. Therefore, the Scythians, being in-born hunters, forgot about the Persians and started hunting. The battle was over prior to its commencement. This curious story of the battle was provided by Herodotus. Considering the absence of any other sources, it is

hardly possible to identify whether the ancient Greek historian's story is true. We can but suggest that, due to the significant quantitative advantage of the enemy army, the Scythian commanders planned to imitate the battle, understanding that the vast steppe expanse itself was an efficient tool in fighting against the foe.

Therewith, the situation of the Persians was indeed rather miserable. Unexpectedly for himself Darius I realized that the odds of winning were against him. To keep on moving in the strange steppes was too dangerous, so he had nothing to do but retreat. In addition, even the return to the Danube crossing with no serious losses from starvation and diseases would be a success for him. It would be a bigger success if he was able to cross the Danube, since his allies, the Greeks, had undertaken to guard the bridge for two months only. Therefore, leaving his camp at night on the Oar River, the king rushed to leave Scythia with the best and able part of his army. The Scythians got a great deal of trophies and captives. At that time the detachment of king Scopasis approached the bridge guarded by the Greeks, and required their promise that the bridge would be drawn in due time. Nevertheless, it turned out later that the Greeks were reluctant to draw the bridge and destroyed only a part of it from the Scythian side. So, when Darius with his troops came up to the Danube, the bridge was quickly renewed. The Persian army successfully crossed to the right bank of the river and returned home. It is to be noticed that Darius's campaign failure in moving to the Northern Black Sea coast united the population of Scythia in their struggle against the external enemy. As to the Persian king himself, he learnt from that unsuccessful campaign and did not participate in any foreign campaigns any longer and, instead, sent his commanders to head the armies.



Image of Darius I
on an ancient Greek vase

Scythian warriors
on electrum vase
from Kul-Oba



SCYTHIAN VICTORY OVER ZOPYRION, A MILITARY COMMANDER OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

In 331 BC a new intervention against the lands located in the south of modern Ukraine began. This time it was led by ethnarch of Alexander the Great in Thrace — the commander called Zopyrion. Having collected an army of 30,000 warriors, he set off to the lower reaches of the Danube towards Scythia.

The first target of the Macedonian commander was Olvia, situated on the Crimean Peninsula. At the time the city was a military ally of the Scythian tribes. Having conquered Olvia, Zopyrion intended to leave Scythians with no support. Historical sources report that the approach of the Macedonian commander's army took Olvia citizens unawares and they were not ready for defence. It is mentioned that before the attack of the Macedonians the city had been affected by internal controversies, therefore, the troops of the city-state were not able to stop the enemy troops far from the city. The level of danger was assessed properly only when Zopyrion came close to the walls of Olvia. As a result, many Olvia citizens were captured by Macedonians. That tragic fact was confirmed by the excavations, during which on the territory of the ancient city a mass grave was found. And chronologically it belonged to the times of the city seizure by the ethnarch of Thrace. The grave contained the skeletons of young people, who had been killed.

However, the chronicles say that at that complicated time for Olvia there was one citizen called Kallinik, who managed to organize the city dwellers



View of Olvia excavation. Mykolayiv region, Ukraine

and defend their homes. The talented organizer was able to convince the citizens to forget their arguments and unite their forces to defend their city. For the sake of the victory Kallinik offered a step that was unusual for the slavery age — at his request citizens freed their slaves and provided them with the citizen rights. Moreover, authorized ambassadors were urgently sent by Olvia to sign a new alliance with the Scythians.

Then the events developed in a highly adverse way for the Macedonians. Fulfilling their alliance obligations, Scythian troops backed Olvia. The rumours of their approach became a warning to Zopyrion. After a meeting with his field commanders, he decided to terminate the seizure and return to Thrace. That was the fatal error made by the Thracian ethnarch. The retreat to the vast steppes of the Black Sea region was a failure and the Macedonian army was entrapped by the numerous Scythian tribes. Realizing that it was impossible to escape, Zopyrion had to fight, and that fight turned out a complete failure and destruction for him. The commander also shared the fate of his warriors.

It should be mentioned that Scythians did not stop there. After Zopyrion's army, they destroyed the city of Nikony, which served the quarters to the Macedonian troops. After that the Thracian tribes, feeling that the power of Macedonia was weak, rebelled against Alexander. The deadly war burst out. Nonetheless, the Scythians fairly believing that they did not need to conquer any new lands, abstained from that war. Soon the union of the Scythian tribes sent an ambassador to Alexander the Great. They entered a peace treaty between Scythians and Olvia on the one part and Macedonia kingdom, on the other.



Olvia, ruins of an ancient residential area

THE GREAT SLAVIC EXPANSION IN THE 6—8TH CENTURIES



K. Lebedev. Prince Ihor collects duty from Drevlians in 945



Nestor the Chronicler — a probable author of Chronicle "The Tale of Bygone Years"

Historical sources report that in the early sixth century, the Slavs were rather numerous. Our ancestors lived on the territory from the Adriatic Sea in the south to the Arctic Ocean in the north, from the deserts in Central Asia in the east to the Baltic Sea in the west. It is also known that at the time Slavic tribes inhabited Asia Minor, Italy and Spain. A famous Arab geographer of the tenth century Ibn Haukal noted that in Palermo on Sicily two out of five city quarters belonged to the Slavs.

For a long period of time researchers believed that the territory where the Slavs lived was so vast during the great migration period from the 2nd till the 6th century. However, afterwards it was confirmed that it happened later. There were a number of reasons for the Slavic migration to Europe and that expansion was determined by many objective historical processes. They were especially active in the 6—8th centuries. In the origins of the Slavic ethnos there was the issue of the collapse of primitive communal system, caused by the evolution of the productive forces and labour relations. Crop farming and cattle breeding were developing more actively and various crafts and industries were becoming more powerful. Trading relations within

the Slavic world grew fast as well. The demographic boom, encouraged by all these factors, also led to the migration and spread since the Slavs felt cramped at home.

A significant role in the expansion of the Slavs across the European continent was played by external political factors too. At that time, due to the collapse of the Roman Empire and the advance southwards of the German tribes, in particular, Goths and Vandals, the integrity of the Slavic lands was infringed. That process promoted separation of the Slavs and the division of their tribes into groups — eastern and western. As of the early sixth century, due to the fall of the Hun state, Slavs were able to settle in the south moving down to the banks of the Danube, and further to the north-western Black Sea region, which also entailed the division of the Slavic ethnos into different groups. These processes, owing to the retreat of the Goths and also the fall of the Avar Khaganate in the seventh century, enabled the Slavs to settle on the Balkan Peninsula and a number of Mediterranean islands. At the same time the Slavs continued expanding to the lands of Central and Eastern Europe.

It is known that at the end of the seventh century the Slavs settled in the lower reaches of the Elbe River, and also on the south-western coast of the Baltic Sea. Owing to this expansion in Europe, the ethnic and cultural unity of the Slavs started changing. There emerged three groups of languages — Western Slavic, Eastern Slavic and Southern Slavic. It is to be emphasized that none of the groups was similar to the modern Russian language, i.e. the language of the country that is currently, due to unclear motives, seeks the status of the leader in the Slavic world. However, this is another story, and as of the early seventh century Anno Domini three branches of the Slavs had been completely formed in Europe. Those were the people, who would be later called by the legend the descendants of Rus, Czech and Lech. The state that was to make the Slavs great and declare themselves on the expanses of medieval Europe — Kyivan Rus — was looming on the horizon.



The Death of Oleg, Drevliane Prince,
work by Taras Shevchenko



Princess Olga's Revenge on Drevliane
for her Spouse

THE FOUNDATION OF KYIV

It will not be an exaggeration to say that there are few cities with such rich history as the capital of our country, Kyiv. It is true not only for Ukraine, but also for the European Continent. Though not so long as the history of the cradle of the western civilization — Greek cities and Rome — the city on the Dnipro has deserved the status of one of the oldest settlements in Eastern Europe.



V. Vasnetsov. Nestor the Chronicler (Volodymyr Cathedral, Kyiv)

In fact, it is hard to imagine the time contained in the phrase “Kyiv is 1536.” From the times immemorial it seems to us that history addresses us using the words of Nestor the Chronicler and other creators of the timeless “Tale of Bygone Years.” He says that *Kyi was sitting on the hill, which today is Borychiv descent while Shchek was sitting on the hill which today is called Shchekovytsia whereas Khoryv was sitting on the third hill, which was called after him Khoryvytsia. And they built a town in honour of their older brother and called it Kyiv.*

That was the way the chronicle described the foundation of Kyiv. It is this chronicle that shows the historic events involving three leaders of the Slavic tribe of Polyany: Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv, as well as their sister Lybid. The name of the latter was not related in the chronicle to any hill the way it was

done to the brothers’ names. However, this name has been given to the right tributary of the Dnipro — the Lybid, which flows from the area of contemporary Radyshchev Street.

The arguments about the reliability of Nestor’s information originate from the medieval epoch. For instance, Novgorod chronicler and Nestor’s contemporary expressed his opinion that Kyi was not a prince. From



Kyi, Shchek, Khoryv and Lybid (miniature from Radziwill Chronicle)

his point of view, the founder of the capital of Rus was an ordinary boatman, who transported people across the Dnipro. As the confirmation of his position, Nestor provided interesting facts from Prince's life: Kyi once visited Byzantine Empire, where he was respectfully received by the Emperor. Having come back home, the prince built a town Kyivets on the Danube. However, that attempt to keep that position failed as Polyany prince was pushed back by the *surrounding tribes*. It should be mentioned that the information on the foundation of Kyiv by three brothers was very similar to the history of other mythological founders of cities — for example, Romulus and



Ruins of Church of the Tithes.
Picture, 1826

Remus; or to the legend on the founders of all Slavs Rus, Czech and Lech. This fact long made researchers treat the version of Kyiv foundation laid out in the "Tale of Bygone Years" sceptically. Nevertheless, a large number of recently completed historical studies have proven that prince Kyi was a real historic figure.

The arguments as to the reliability or unreliability of the part of the "Tale of Bygone Years" related to the foundation of Kyiv could last for ever. However, archaeologists put an end to those debates. The research has shown that since the end of the fifth century on Starokyivska hill there was a settlement enclosed with a ditch, earth bank and wooden picket fence. That ancient town, the contemporary of the Rome fall, was to become the centre of a great feudal state, which in Nestor the Chronicler's times occupied a leading position in the life of the European civilization.

Over the time that passed from its foundation, Kyiv history has featured numerous ups and downs. Today it still proudly shows its status of a great European city. Thus, as of 01/05/2018 the population of Kyiv was officially 2,895 million people. To compare, the population of Paris is 2,197 million. The abovementioned Rome has the population of 2,875 million people.