

The Making of Modern Ukraine

06 - The Grand Duchy of Lithuania

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llvE6tgPEf8>

- 00:00 As we try to figure out what Ukraine is, we're also trying to figure out what the countries around Ukraine are.
- And so over the course of this semester, you'll have occasion to think about what Russia is. That's not our main subject, but I assume it's come to mind already that Russia is also not simple, and that the history of Russia is also not straightforward.
- And that indeed this war that's going on now may have more to do with uncertainty about what Russia is than it does with uncertainty about what Ukraine is.
- Just something to think about.
- Professor Bushkovitch, our outstanding historian of early modern Russia, was going to lecture on the formation of the Russian state on Tuesday, but he can't.
- 01:02 So I'm gonna do it instead.
- The lecture is going to happen.
- You're going to see, in this lecture, that something like the beginning of a Russian state will start to appear.
- And I want you to track that, because the chronology of all this is very important.
- This is partly on my mind because of where we are, in fact, where we are in the war, which is that, as I'm sure most of you know, the Russian Federation has begun a mobilization under the heading partial mobilization, whatever that might mean.
- But the edict in question essentially allows any Russian male to be mobilized for war.
- And now people in Russia are being mobilized for war all over the country, but notably, and not surprisingly, in Asian Russia and in Southern Russia, in places where people are poor, or also in places where people are ethnically, as we say today, not Russian.
- Which is a reminder that one of the things that Russia is, is an Asian state.
- Most of the territory of Russia is in fact in Asia, right? And so, when Russia invaded Ukraine, many of the soldiers who were invaded, many of the casualties were themselves Asians.
- 02:11 I just mentioned that because it's gonna be helpful in the next lecture when we try to think about what Russia is and how it is or isn't like Ukraine.
- Okay.
- The first point I wanted to make today, as we move from Rus' to Lithuania, is again about language.
- I want you to remember that languages and peoples are not exactly the same thing.
- There's a modern fantasy which says that there's one language, and there's one people, and it's all the same thing.

That often goes under the heading of nationalism, or ethnic nationalism, or ethnicity, but languages are there for you, and you can move in and out of languages, especially when you are young.

Hey, multilingual guys, stop making jokes, stop whispering.

They're all like, we speak a lot of languages.

03:03 I'm sure your TFs have been like that.

They've probably been like, what languages do you guys speak? Right, have they done that in section? They have in fact done that in section.

I'm not surprised.

Okay, but actually, you know, I mean, for Victor and for Maximus, the language that they're teaching you in is a language that they've moved into, right? It's not their language of birth.

It's a language that they've moved into.

And the capacity for of humans to do this is very important in politics, especially in non-modern politics.

So when we're talking about this fellow, Volodymyr or Vladimir, or Valdemar, as his Scandinavian was, we're talking about the fellow who converted to Christianity and in some sense began the whole statehood project that we're concerned with.

He's a Scandinavian prince, right? He's from Scandinavia, his family's from Scandinavia.

His successors even will still be Scandinavian princes.

And his name is Waldemar.

And then he had, but there are these nice Slavic versions of his name.

04:02 Today we say Volodymyr and Vladimir, but those names in turn seem to come from Bulgaria, right? So there's a Bulgarian Vladimir.

So is he a Scandinavian prince? Is he a Bulgarian prince? And this gets us thinking in the right directions, because he's not any one thing, right? The way to come to power, and very often the way to stay in power, again, especially in the earlier periods, is to be more than one thing, to speak more than one language.

So if we think about Valdemar, or Vladimir, or Volodymyr, we're right to think about the Vikings, but we're also right to think about the Bulgarians, and we're right to think about the Byzantines.

When he converted the Christianity, he took another name, which is Basil, that was his baptismal name, Basil.

It's notable that he didn't make that his main name, that he stated his main name remained Volodymyr.

So people come into languages.

Languages are there, you can move through them, you can do things with them.

05:00 So when I was in Ukraine the last time, which is a couple of weeks ago, I was speaking to someone who was called Volodymyr.

And you know, that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, he's also someone who's coming into a language, right? Ukrainian was not his best language when he was elected president of Ukraine.

But now of course it's his public language.

And just even I can tell that his Ukrainian is much better now than it was a couple of years ago.

And when I spoke to his wife, Elena Zelenskyy, she's also, we spoke Ukrainian.

And I think I made her feel good because my Ukrainian was just, you know, I made mistakes.

And I think that put her at ease.

But you know it's cute, I made mistakes.

Mistakes are cute.

An old guy making mistakes is cute.

It's like one of the many advantages we have.

But she was coming into a language, like I was coming into a language, right? Ukrainian is not, I was speaking Ukrainian with her.

Ukrainian is not my language of birth, right? It's like fourth or fifth best language.

I was coming into a language in a different way she's coming into a language, right? You can come into languages.

06:02 Another related theme is that Volodymyr, Waldemar, is coming into a religion.

So a conversion is a kind of sideways move.

You don't really stop being a pagan when you become a Christian, it's not that your whole past disappears, it's that you're moving into something which already exists and brings with it certain features.

In this case, it brings with it priests, it brings with it another language, of church Slavonic.

It brings with it a tradition.

It brings with it a heritage, because the moment that you convert into Christianity, you're inheriting the Bible, and so hence the history of the Jews, a very ancient history.

Like you're not putting yourself into that timeline as well.

Because you're going into Greek, you're also going into the tradition of the ancient Mediterranean world that way.

Suddenly you're in all of these vertical traditions that you weren't in before.

07:03 Okay, so we're gonna get from, in this lecture, we're gonna get from Volodymyr to Yaroslav, and then we're gonna get from Yaroslav to Lithuania.

We're gonna end in Lithuania, much the joy of our, I'm counting them, three Lithuanians in this group.

So the two great leaders of Rus', if you just read like a textbook about early Rus', are going to be Volodymyr and Yaroslav.

And we have, so first we have to get to Yaroslav.

It's complicated.

Okay, I mean, I could say Volodymyr was Yaroslav's son, and that would make it sound very simple, but it's not really simple at all.

As you remember last time, when Volodymyr took Ana, the Byzantine princess Ana, as his wife, he already had about six others and, you know, a harem of hundreds of women.

When he died, so his relationship with his sons was not straightforward.

08:02 When he died in 1015, he had one of his sons, and I tried to write all these down this time.

He had one of his son's, Sviatopolk, in prison, as one does, he was making war against another one of his sons, Yaroslav, as one does.

So when Volodymyr dies, Sviatopolk is freed.

Sviatopolk then arranges for, it seems, the death of three of his brothers, probably with the help of Scandinavian allies.

Sviatopolk then goes to war against Yaroslav.

Yaroslav initially wins, with the help of some Scandinavian allies, at least that's according to the tale of Evalynd, which is an Icelandic saga, which reminds you how this is all this, this could all be Nordic history, by the way.

We could be in a Nordic history class at this point, the history of Rus' at this point fits in with the history of what's, as Rus' is becoming a state, so simultaneously are Norway and Sweden becoming states.

09:10 It's a simultaneous, and it's an intermingled, process.

So Sviatopolk is freed, but then he's defeated by Yaroslav.

Then Sviatopolk goes to Poland, and gets an army, and brings it back.

He's married to a Polish princess.

He brings a Polish army back, he defeats Yaroslav, Yaroslav goes east, recruits an army of Pechenegs, comes back, defeats Sviatopolk.

Seems that Yaroslav is now in charge, but then yet another brother, there were at least 10.

I'm sure there were many, many more, but there are 10 that come down to us.

And then another brother was called Mstislav, which means something like glory to revenge, beautifully.

Mstislav marches on Kiev and defeats Yaroslav.

As a result of this in the end, Mstislav and Yaroslav rule Kiev together for a while.

10:03 Mstislav about a decade.

Mstislav dies in 1036, and from 1036 Yaroslav rules alone.

Okay, I give you those details because the colorful details from all of the Scandinavian sagas in the early Kiev of sources are very interesting, but also because I want you to see a problem, which is the problem of succession, how you get from one ruler to another, how you keep a state going.

This is a key problem in political theory, in political practice, which you wanna mark.

Because even if you're just thinking about contemporary politics, like why, for example, are things so chaotic in the Russian Federation right now? One of the first things that you should try out is, what's the succession principle? How do they know who the next ruler is going to be? That's it.

So in early Rus', there was a big problem with succession.

If you count it the way we're counting it, from one ruler to another single ruler, from Volodymyr to Yaroslav, it took 21 years.

And along the way, at least 10 of the other children of of Volodymyr were killed.

11:07 Okay, also I want you to mark succession as an issue because when we get into other kinds of regimes in a couple of weeks, the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian empire, succession is also going to be a very important issue there.

This brings us to Yaroslav and what is regarded as the golden age of Kievan Rus'.

His rule, which is the 1020s, 1030s, 1040s.

He rules by himself from 1036 until his death in 1054.

So Yaroslav is also a Scandinavian prince.

I wanna make sure this is clear.

The fact that he's a Scandinavian prince doesn't mean that he's not the prince of Rus', right? But he is a Scandinavian prince.

He's in the saga of Harald Hardrada, who is the king of Norway.

And he marries off one of his daughters to that same king of Norway.

12:00 He himself is married to a daughter of the king of Sweden.

As I've already said, some of the sources about him are Icelandic sagas.

And by the way, Iceland sagas are the earliest significant European literature.

They're quite extraordinary, but they're also interesting historical sources because they record events that are only about one or 200 years before when they were recorded, and they're based on oral tradition.

So they're pretty good comparatively speaking to historical sources.

And, oh, he also married one of his, So Yaroslav also married one of his own daughters to the king of Norway, right? So we're very, here, connected to the history of Scandinavia.

And it's inconceivable that he didn't speak whatever we wanna call the Swedish language, or whatever we wanna call it at that time.

He did marry another one of his daughters, this is just something we have to know.

He did marry one of his other daughters to the king of France, which is a fun fact, which every Ukrainian needs for you to know.

13:01 So we're gonna make sure that it's in this class.

That would be Yaroslav's favorite daughter who was called Ana, who was remembered as Anne of Kiev.

Because from the point of view of Paris, she was Anne of Kiev.

She, in the middle of the 11th century, she was the queen of France.

She was the one who went to Paris and said, compared to Kiev, this is kind of dingy and pathetic and wanted to go back.

So now you know, that's Anne of Kiev.

So Yaroslav is a Scandinavian prince, but he is also an inheritor of Byzantine Christianity from his father.

And he is also the ruler of a Slavic speaking population.

So it's like there's a triangle.

So on the Byzantine side of the triangle, he builds, or maybe he completes the church of San Sophia, which is the central cathedral in Kiev, which still exists.

It exists in a kind in a kind of Baroque reconstruction, but which still exists and was completed somewhere around the 1030s.

14:08 And it was modeled on Hagiya Sophia in Constantinople.

So the main cathedral in Kiev was modeled on the main cathedral in Constantinople.

So he's balancing that.

With that church came Greek speaking priests.

The first priests who came to convert the population were from Constantinople.

They spoke Greek.

And with these Greek priests, and with the conversion came a certain model of order, which might seem intuitive to a lot of you.

It seems so natural, perhaps because it's now more or less hegemonic, but it had to arrive at a certain point, which is the days of the week.

The days of the week and the idea that the day of rest is the seventh day, Sunday.

Churches and churchyards come with Christianity.

15:00 The idea that you bury your dead, as I mentioned before, rather than cremate comes with Christianity.

That you bury them in a certain place, a cemetery in a churchyard, comes with Christianity.

So there's a civilizational package, which comes with the Greek priests.

But interestingly, it is Yaroslav who shifts over from Greek priests to local, Slavic speaking priests.

In the year 1051, he manages to have appointed, or appoints himself, as the local head of the church, the metropolitan, a man called Helarion, who was a local Slav and not a Greek.

And somewhere around this time as well, and this is crucial, the language of the liturgy gets changed from Greek to old church Slavonic.

So in other words, there's a big difference between going to church and hearing a language that you can't understand at all, to going to church and hearing a language where you can understand a little bit, right? So that's basically the shift from Greek to old church Slavonic.

16:12 Geek, from the point of view of Kiev, is a foreign language.

Very few people speak Greek.

They're mostly people who have arrived from Constantinople or Greek traders coming up and down from the Black Sea coast, as we've talked about, it's basically a foreign language.

And in the whole history of the Greek church, the Orthodox church, the Eastern church in Kiev, relatively few people learn Greek.

Some people do, but relatively few.

Basically very educated churchmen learn Greek.

Old church Slavonic is a different story.

You'll remember where old church Slavonic came from.

Old church Slavonic is invented by Cyril and Methodius.

It has this journey down to Bulgaria, and now it arrives in Kiev.

And it has the huge advantage that it is a Slavic language.

It is based on a Slavic language, probably the Slavic language that was spoken in Macedonia by the mother of Cyril and Methodius.

17:07 But it's based in a Slavic language.

And therefore, if you're a native speaker of a Slavic language, you can figure out a lot of it.

So when I studied old, I'm not a native speaker of Slavic language, but I studied old church Slavonic.

A lot of it was intuitive to me, a thousand years later and with the funny glycolytic alphabet, but a lot of it was intuitive to me.

I could look at it and see a lot of it.

So it's not totally impenetrable and, once you start with a Slavic language, and this is very important, you can then start to mess with it.

You can then take it as a basis of a written language.

And then with time, vernacular words will start to make their way into the language.

What's the vernacular? The vernacular is the language as we actually speak it.

As we actually speak it.

And so Slavic words, as people actually spoke them, made their way into the written language, thereby enriching it and changing it.

18:06 And this language, church Slavonic, slowly becomes a written language, which is serving not just the church, but also the state.

And this is hugely important because, if you're going to run a state as distinct from a church, it's good to have law.

It's good to have a language in which you can record that law.

So old church Slavonic, in the version that it's used in the Kievan state, is usually called Chancery Slavonic.

Just to make this distinction.

Chancery Slavonic.

And this Chancery Slavonic is recorded in, is the language of a very important text, which seems to originate with Yaroslav, and then continues after his time for another century or so, which is called the Ruska Pravda, or the Russkaya Pravda, which is a collection of laws.

So there's secular law now.

19:01 There's secular law.

Not just church custom and church law, but secular law.

And what the law itself says is itself very revealing.

So now the law becomes a historical source for us.

We don't just have sagas, we don't just have genealogies, we don't just have, you know, legends about Rus' written in Kiev a century after the events.

We have the law, which was applied in its own time.

What we see in this law are at least two very important developments.

Number one, you see that the society has shifted from the kind of society we talked about in the beginning, which is one where people could be enslaved, to one in which the chief preoccupation of people was agriculture, and agriculture is being regulated.

So we now have a state which is based upon people generating a surplus in agriculture.

The classic model, which we see over and over again, beginning in Mesopotamia, the classic model, where you can have a city, and you can have a state with a capital in that city, because you have rules about how you collect a surplus from the people who are actually working the land.

20:11 Which may be a somewhat exploitative system, but it's a very different system than raiding and slave trading.

It's a very different system than raiding and slave trading.

And it describes a relationship between a ruler and his people, as opposed to a relationship between people who are just passing through and collecting things or people that they're going to sell somewhere further down the river.

So by the time the law is written down, that transition has been achieved and we're in a different kind of society.

Maybe even more fundamentally, what you see in the Russkaya Pravda, the Ruska Pravda, is an attempt to make a transition from a culture of personal revenge, to a culture where disputes are actually settled in courts.

So I'm sure all of you, you know, in your lives, depending upon where you're from, have some familiarity, at least from, I don't know, film, with what I mean by personal revenge.

21:03 Where I do something to your clan and therefore your clan has to do something to my clan, and this can go on indefinitely, and it can be very costly and destabilizing.

If you're trying to set up a state, you don't want this clan and this clan to have a feud indefinitely, right? If there's a dispute, like this clan has stolen this, or this clan has burned down that, or whatever, you want that dispute to come to me, you want the dispute to come to the court, to the state, where it can be resolved.

And so one of the things that Ruska Pravda lays down is what the appropriate penalties are.

So there's a generic penalty rather than personal feuds, this is the kind of thing that builds up a state.

But, I keep coming back to this, but a weakness in the state is that it didn't have the legal structures to allow it to perpetuate itself, which one finds surprisingly often is a problem with states.

It's actually, it's kind of the magic of founding a state is how, the German sociologist Max Weber was also obsessed with this, how you get from the stage of founding a state to the

stage of continuing a state.

22:09 Where you might find a state because of some great achievement or because of some charismatic leader, but neither the achievement nor the charisma lasts.

And so then how do you keep the state actually going? Maybe you found institutions, these institutions sound pretty good, but how do you make sure that people continue to believe in them without the achievement and the charisma somehow backing them up? In then you event, how can you do it without a procedure? So, in Kiev, when we talk about Kievan Rus, we're talking about a range of lands, going to the east, going to the north, going a bit to the south and west of Kiev.

We're talking about not just Kiev and Ukraine today, we're talking about what's now Belarus and what's now a lot of European Russia.

All the way up to a bit to the east of what's now Moscow.

And these various districts were passed out to the various sons in an extremely confusing order, which honestly no one has figured out.

23:06 And one suspects it changed from generation to generation, or sometimes that they were just making it up.

And if we don't know it, I think it's forgivable because whatever the rules were, the brothers were constantly fighting each other.

And if they were constantly fighting each other, it means that whatever the rules were, maybe they were contested, or not clear, or maybe not taken always seriously.

So the rulers in Kiev passed out the various districts to their sons, and there was an idea that a certain son at some point would become the ruler of Kiev and will be superior to all the others, but that never panned out the way that it was supposed to be.

So after Yaroslav's death in 1054, we essentially have one long confusing series of succession crises until the Mongols come in 1241.

There are however, at least one moment in here which I want you to mark, which is the rise of a city called Vladimir, not the person, the city.

24:03 And we're gonna call it Vladimir and not Volodymyr because this city is all the way out in the far Eastern extreme of Rus', a little bit to the east of where Moscow now is.

I say now, because Moscow didn't exist at the time.

Vladimir, the city, was ruled in the 1160s, 1170s by a man called Andrey Bogolyubsky, who I think is on your list, should be on your list.

And he attacked Kiev, not once, but twice.

The first time he successfully sacked it.

The second time he was repulsed.

But the point is that Andrey Bogolyubsky had the idea that he was gonna make Vladimir the most important city, the successor of Kiev, as it were.

He took an important icon that was near Kiev, and he brought it to Vladimir.

He built a church in Vladimir, which was meant to look like St. Sophia in Kiev.

25:02 So he had the idea that he would be the most important ruler and that his city would be more important than Kiev.

So this is Vladimir, and Vladimir is in a district which is called Suzdal.

The Mongols are going to come, they're going to wipe out Vladimir, they're gonna wipe out Suzdal, they're gonna wipe out basically everything in that part of Rus.

But I want you to at least mark that this idea was already here in the 12th century, that there could be a successor to Kiev that could somehow be better than Kiev.

Okay.

When the Mongols do come, and we'll talk more about the Mongols and what they were up to, but when the Mongols do come, we see a partition of Rus, which is very durable.

I'll just say a word about the Mongols and what they were up to.

Just a word.

It is always the case that from the point of view of the people whose cities get sacked, that the arriving people are just marauders, and chaotic and so on, but it is almost always the case that, in fact, what is happening is that those who are arriving are trying to establish trade routes, admittedly on terms favorable to them.

26:13 And you tend to get, I mean, this is why we now have a European Union to avoid this, but the way you get terms favorable to you is you sack the city.

And then you get terms favorable to you.

I mean, it's tough, but that's how it is.

So the Mongols, like the Vikings before them, were trying to establish a long trade route, the Vikings over sea, the Mongols over land, in which they would be able to trade favorably all the way down the line at terms which are favorable to them.

At terms which are favorable to them.

And they had tremendous success with this everywhere they went.

They were never really defeated.

In the early 1240s, they destroy what remains of Kievan Rus'.

You understand that when they destroy Kievan Rus', they're not destroying a unified state, because there is no unified state.

27:00 There are a bunch of districts with rivals.

When the princes of Rus' go out to meet the Mongols on the battlefield, they're literally arguing amongst one another on the way to the battlefield about who is who, and who gets to go first, and who's the most important.

So that gives you a sense.

Even if they'd have been in perfect formation, had loved one another, they still would've had their hats handed them by the Mongols, however.

The Mongols were gonna win.

So after the Mongol invasion, we get a kind of three part division of the lands of old Rus, which I'm gonna mark.

And then we're gonna talk about the most important of these, which is Lithuania.

So, far off to the west you have a district called Galicia-Volhynia.

And that district, Galicia-Volhynia, is going to have a slightly different trajectory than the rest, because Galicia-Volhynia is gonna be ruled by its own princes for a while.

And then the Galician part of Galicia-Volhynia is gonna become part of Poland in the mid 14th century.

28:03 So that Western part of Ukraine, Galicia-Volhynia, is going to have a somewhat different history.

That's part one.

Part two, so that's the extreme west, part two is the extreme east or the extreme Northeast.

Suzdal, the areas around what is gonna be at some point, Moscow.

Moscow has still not come into being, but I promise you, at some point Moscow will be created.

The territories in Suzdal in the Northeast are going to remain longer under direct Mongol domination.

That's also a different political story.

The Mongols are gonna come and they're gonna stay.

And they're gonna establish a durable form of transactional politics with the inheritors of Rus' princes in the far Northeast.

And we'll pick up that story next time when I talk about the origins of the state, which is based in Moscow, the origins of Russia.

29:04 The third and the most important trajectory is the one we're going to follow today, which is the grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Most of the territory of old Rus' comes under the grand Duchy of Lithuania.

And not only that, one of the reasons why I've spent so much time talking about this civilization is that, interestingly, this civilizational package associated with Yaroslav, the language, the Chancery Slavonic, the law all gets absorbed by Lithuania.

The Lithuanians take it over.

They appropriate it, they make it their own very comfortably.

And so in that sense, the Kievan civilization survives in the written form of its law.

So it's sometimes it's helpful to think of history as having different speeds, or different elements in history having different kinds of durability.

So a language has a lot of durability.

It changes over time.

A particular civilizational package, like law, it doesn't last as long as a language, but it can last much longer than a person.

30:05 So the fact that Yaroslav got the law together has meaning, which goes well beyond his lifetime, deep into the history of Lithuania.

Centuries later, when Lithuanians are gonna be writing their grand statutes, which starts in the 16th century, when they write their statutes, three of them, they're gonna be using this language, Chancery Slavonic.

In turn, it's gonna have more words from their part of the world and so on, but this civilizational package long outlasts the actual Kievan Rus'.

So the last big thing we have to do, we've gotten Volodymyr to Yaroslav, Yaroslav to the end of Rus'.

Now we have to get to Lithuania.

What is Lithuania? And how could Lithuania be so, I mean, isn't Lithuania just this tiny country? It's this tiny country filled with Baltic speakers? How can it? It was the biggest country in Europe, my friends.

It was the biggest country in Europe at the time.

And it emerged, as countries often emerged, because of pressure from two directions.

31:02 The Lithuanian state consolidated, because of pressure from the west, in the form of Christianity.

Now a very aggressive, pointed pressure in the form of crusades.

A few centuries earlier, when we're talking about the Franks, and Poland, and Moravia, and so on, that's a more gentle pressure.

You know, we want you to convert.

Perhaps you'll be a little bit subordinate to us.

We're now in the 14th century in the era of crusades, and the Lithuanians were subject to violent, forcible conversion.

By that I mean, all the men were killed and the women and children were taken and

baptized.

That's what the Teutonic Knights did.

So pressure from the west, the Teutonic Knights had wiped out the Prussians.

I realize there's still a place called Prussia, but the place called Prussia today takes its name from an earlier people who spoke a Baltic language, similar to Lithuanian.

32:03 These people were exterminated by the Teutonic Knights.

They no longer existed.

And as that was happening, the groups of Baltic speakers that are called the Lithuanians managed to consolidate a state.

So they were consolidating because of pressure from the west.

And also, as we'll get to, they consolidated because of what the Mongols did in the south.

So faced with pressure from the west, the Lithuanian state in the early 14th century, in the 13 hundreds, was able to move south from its base around Vilnius into what's now Belarus, and deep into what's now Ukraine.

And so, as they were pressed from the west, they took advantage of what the Mongols had done in the east.

It might help, although, you know, in the kind in a kind of Christian dominated historiography, this would never be put this way, to think of the Teutonic Knights and the Mongols as arriving at about the same time, which they did, and their arrival at about the same time creating the conditions in which a Lithuania could face a challenge and respond to that challenge by gathering up territories from the south, from Rus, and becoming the biggest state in Europe, which it was.

33:08 So what do we know about Lithuania? The Lithuanians, so I talked earlier about the math, the math of slavery and paganism.

The Lithuanians were the last holdouts in this.

They were the last major pagan group in Europe.

They were the last ones who were able not to be enslaved more than they enslaved others.

They were using slave labor of others in their countryside.

They raided Rus' for slaves, they raided Poland for slaves, they also raided their Baltic, their pagan neighbors for slaves.

So long as they had pagan neighbors.

They brought in tens of thousands of people to work as slaves in their agriculture.

We know that they traded timber, and furs, and grain, and wax and honey for iron products.

We know that they turned a corner in their own agricultural planning in the early 14th century under their most important ruler, who I may not have put down, Gediminas.

34:06 Is he there? He's there? Okay.

So under Gediminas, who ruled from 1315 to 1343, they started moving away from slavery and towards colonization, where they would accept the rules of local, they would kind of control land rather than people.

So in a way it's the same kind of transition you see earlier in Rus', control land, rather than people, accept basically the rules that already existed.

And then try to tax.

It's Gediminas who moves into what is now Rus'.

What was their religion? Very briefly about this, we know a lot more about it because their paganism lasted for another four centuries.

And many people had contact with them, many Christians, many Muslims, many Jews had

contacts with them over the centuries.

There were Christian churches in Vilnius the whole time.

Why? Because if you're a tolerant, prosperous regime, you need to have traders coming from other places and you have to make sure they have churches, right? And additionally, just to make sure this is always clear, this story is gonna end with the Lithuanian rulers converting, but the Lithuanian rulers are always ruling over a country which is majority Christian.

35:20 Because most of the people who are in Lithuania are in what is now Belarus, and then later in what is now Ukraine, i.e. they're Eastern Christians.

So the whole time this is a regime where the rulers are pagans, and the ruling families are pagans, but most of the population are actually Christians.

So when I talk about this religion, this is the religion of the Baltic core, which then spreads out and tolerates Christianity.

They make no attempt at converting the Christians at all.

So we know that the grand duke was also the high priest.

We know that the priests were priests of sacrifice, as in the Slavic lands.

36:00 We know what some of the most important gods were, who were familiar figures already.

They had a version of Perun, who was called Perkūnas.

In general, if you just add us to the end, you'll get a Lithuanian word.

So like, okay, doesn't always work.

Doesn't always work.

But the Lithuanian version of Perun was called Perkūnas.

Other important gods were Andai, who was associated with water, Teliavel, who was associated with like a Hephaestus figure, associated with the smithy.

But as with the Slavic paganism, the gods were not separate.

This is much more animistic, it's much more a religion where everything is in some sense animated by divinity.

So trees were venerated.

Specific groves of trees regardless as important.

In specific groves of trees, the dead would be burned as a sacrifice.

Specific springs and rivers and rocks were also important.

The Lithuanians, like the Slavs, also didn't have temples until they made contact with Christians.

37:06 And then they began to build temples, it appears, as a kind of borrowing from the Christians.

We know that they divined omens from the behavior of, some of them still do, from the behavior of horses and snakes.

We know that after victories they sacrificed a third of the spoils to the gods.

We know that horses were of special significance.

That horse skulls were meant to ward off evil spirits.

That two horses in front of a house, on the gable of houses, was meant to bring good fortune.

We know that if you were important and you died, you were buried with your horse so that you would have your horse in the next world.

And Lithuanians also thoughtfully did this to important people who they captured on the battlefield.

So for example, when they were in battle with the crusaders, and they captured important

knights, they would thoughtfully burn them to death, fully armed, on horseback.

38:07 That's a mark of privilege.

A major Teutonic Knight who, so the crusading wars between the crusaders and Lithuanians were unbelievably fierce on both sides, and were recorded by the crusaders that way.

The conflict between the crusaders and the Lithuanians actually makes it into English literature right at the very beginning.

So if you've had like a high school course in English literature, where you were forced to read, where you happily read Chaucer, the Canterbury Tales, you might remember that when the knight is introduced as a character in the prologue, he's described this way.

A knight there was, and that a worthy man, that from the time that he first began to riding out, he loved chivalry, truth and honor, freedom and courtesy above all nations in Prus, Prussia, in Lithau had he reysed and in Rus.

39:06 Lithau is Lithuania and Rus' is, of course, Rus'.

So the Knight in this English story from 1380, from the 14th century, is a Crusader, but he's a Crusader in Northeastern Europe.

He's a Crusader in Lithuania.

And that word, he reysed, that's the German word, reyse.

And reyse, in this particular context, every year the Teutonic Knights declared that there was a reyse, which meant that all of the flower of chivalry, all of the Knights from the other Christian countries were meant to come and join the crusade.

That's what they did.

They had the crusade was a kind of seasonal adventure, which was called a reyse.

So it's the Teutonic Knight who are forcing Lithuania to consolidate and who are pushing Lithuania to the south.

The Teutonic Knights creep their way across the Baltic sea as Polish rulers invite them to come and deal with pagan problems or other problems.

40:06 Teutonic Knight come, Teutonic Knights stay, Teutonic Knights establish their own state.

They rule Teutonic state along the Baltic Sea.

They do this in defiance of the Polish Kings who say, or grand Dukes often who say, we just wanted you to solve this particular problem.

They also do it by exploiting a specific feature of Western Christianity, which is that the Teutonic Knights play off between the Holy Roman Emperor, we'll talk about what this means later on, but the Holy Roman Emperor, the chief secular figure in the west, the chief secular leader, and the Pope.

They manage to play off between these two patrons and essentially do what they want and become a power into themselves.

So these are armed monks.

They are crusaders.

They're men who isolate themselves from the world who are trained in the spirit of sacrifice.

Their fellow monks find them intimidating.

41:01 Their basic program of Christian conversion, as I mentioned, is that you attack, you kill all the men, you resettle your own men, and that's baptism, that's conversion.

Their major achievement was the colonization of the Baltic Basin, from what's now in Northern Poland, all the way up to what's now Estonia where Germans had some kind of significant social and political presence for the next 700 years until 1945 and the arrival of the red army.

So they begin something which lasts in some form or another for a very long time.

So it is their war.

We're now getting to the crux, which I'm sure you already understand, it is their war against Lithuania which coincides with and brings about the Lithuanian absorption of the lands of Rus'.

They are fighting in the late 13th century into the 14th century.

42:01 I'm gonna read you one long quotation from the chronicler of the Teutonic Knights, Peter of Dusburg, just because it gives you the flavor of how they saw it.

The odd kind of respect that the crusaders, the Teutonic Knights, had for the Lithuanians, but also the fierceness of this.

This is from 1283.

He writes, 53 years had flowed since the war began on the Prussian nation, and all the nations in the said land, Prussia, had been beaten and exterminated so that not one survived which did not humbly bow the neck to the Holy Roman Church.

Okay, so that's Prussia, which is gone.

The afore said brethren of the German house, us, Teutonic Knights, initiated the war against this mighty people, most hard of neck and well versed in war, which is neighbor to land of Prussia dwelling beyond the Nemunas River in the land of Lithuania.

So that's how it looks from the Teutonic Knight's point of view.

The Lithuanian reaction is not, we will never become Christian.

43:01 Lithuanian reaction seems to have been, we will not become Christian this way.

We will not become Christian this way.

So in the late 13th century and the early 14th century, what you have is a kind of geometry of four powers.

Where there's Poland, there's Galicia-Volhynia, there are the Knights, and there is Lithuania, and there is What's left of Rus', which is no longer a political entity.

So what happens is that the Lithuanians, facing this challenge, move south in the early 14th century.

They attacked the city of Breast, which is now in Belarus.

44:01 By 1323 it appears that they have also controlled Kiev.

But the crucial thing here is that, although there seemed to have been some armed engagements in the beginning, the Lithuanian rule Rus', not just in a spirit of toleration, but in the spirit of appropriation.

So they come to the great ruler, they come to the princes of Rus', and they say, in their own language, we're not gonna bring anything new and we're not gonna change anything old.

How do they say it in their own language? Because remember the Lithuanian Grand Dukes are ruling a country which is already majority Slavic.

It's already majority Eastern Christian, it's already majority Slavic, it already controls some of the lands that had been Rus', which is Belarus.

So it is not as though Christianity, or orthodoxy, or even the language is unfamiliar to them.

They know all of these things, they know what Christians are, right? They know all of this stuff.

So they say to the princes of Rus', you don't have to change anything.

We're just gonna marry into your families, you're gonna regard us as the center of the state, and you're gonna organize taxes for us.

45:08 And that's how it works.

And it seems to have worked very smoothly.

So this process then all comes to a kind of crux in the last part of the 14th century.

The Lithuanians are pressed from the west, they have absorbed the lands to the south.

But the way that the Lithuanians actually find a way to defeat the Teutonic Knights finally is by making an Alliance with the Poles.

And this is carried out by the second Lithuanian Grand Duke, whose name I really want you to remember after Gediminas, which is Jogaila, or as he's remembered by the Poles, as Jagiello.

So, oh, sorry, I forgot something very important.

The Lithuanian Grand Dukes, they not only know all about this.

46:02 They know about Rus', they know that Rus' existed.

They know that Rus' was a very important state.

And so to their own list of titles they add, we are the rulers of Rus'.

So the Lithuanian grand Dukes add, we are the rulers of Rus'.

So from their point of view, they have not just inherited the territory.

They've inherited also the patrimony, in the legal sense, we are the rulers of this thing called Rus'.

And, as I said before, in the earlier part of this lecture, they inherit the legal language and they began to use it themselves.

And that's not such a stretch, because remember, they're used to using Slavic languages.

Slavic languages are nothing new, nothing surprising.

It's good to have a written one.

Okay.

But the way that this history reaches a climax has to do with Poland.

Poland has a succession crisis.

The king of Poland is a 11, 12, maybe 13 year old girl.

47:04 It looks for a moment as though she's gonna be married to a Hapsburg.

If that had happened, the whole history of our region would've been very, very different.

But the Hapsburg, who was called Wilhelm, who's riding to claim his Polish bride never makes it, he's stopped by some Polish Nobles along the way.

And instead this girl is married to a much older man.

I mean, I'm afraid it's a little scandalous.

He's like 40 years older than she is.

Though Lithuania's not scandalized.

So, Jogaila, what is her name by the way? Jadvyga or Hedwig.

She has a very interesting past, too.

I mean, she has a fascinating past, she's only just a very young girl, but she's been raised for interesting things.

But anyway, she turns out to be the king of Poland.

Her name is Jadvyga or Hedwig.

48:00 She marries Jogaila.

And in that way, a whole bunch of things happen at once.

The Lithuanians, the ruling family convert to Christianity, 1385, 1386.

Slowly, the Lithuanian nobility, which includes the old Russia nobility, will merge with the

Polish nobility and start to take up some of its norms, which we'll talk about.

But most importantly, a new state, a defacto new state, it's a personal union.

It's a personal union between Lithuanian Grand Dukes, who will also be Polish Kings, is set up and it will bump along for the next 200 years.

So the Polish, the Lithuanian Grand Dukes and the Polish Kings are generally gonna be the same people for quite a while now.

For a couple hundred years.

And what this means for these territories is hugely important for Kiev.

We're keeping our focus on Kiev.

This means that Kiev is gonna be attached to Vilnius and to Poland from roughly 1320 until roughly 1670.

49:12 For a very long period of time, which we'll be dealing with in the next several lectures.

It means that this, so there's also gonna be this, the Northeast, there's also gonna be Galicia-Volhynia, that most of Rus' is gonna be in this Lithuanian Polish synthesis for the next several centuries.

Where this all leads to is a famous battle that all the Polish kids, and actually all the students from much of Eastern Europe will know about, which is the battle of Grunwald.

The famous battle of Grunwald which is famous for Poles, famous for Lithuanians.

It's the battle where decisively, in 1410, it's the battle which is so shocking to everyone, which it's referred to by both Hitler and Stalin during the second world war, it's still taught as fundamental.

It's the battle where the Lithuanian Grand Duke, who is now king of Poland, and can now marshal an army which includes people from Rus' and Poland, as well as Lithuania, where he decisively defeats the Teutonic Knights.

50:08 And the reason why it's remembered, or one of the reasons, if you go to central park, which you will, right? You're in New Haven, you're gonna go to central park, right? It's not far away.

There's a statue of Jogaila, Jagiello, holding two swords.

And one of them is his.

And the other one is the one which was given to him by the grand master of the Teutonic Knights, according to legend at least, at the beginning of the battle on the logic of, you're going to need this.

And so that little bit of like Teutonic arrogance got remembered down the centuries.

And so the notion of Jagiello going to battle with the two swords, and of course the Lithuanians, the Poles, the Slavs winning is something which made a big mark in history.

Okay, we're gonna leave you there.

We're gonna pick up with this Polish, Lithuanian, Ruthenian synthesis next time around.

But we're also gonna try to explain how we get to Russia.