



Sviatoslav the Brave 945-972

Sviatoslav I was an early ruler of the Kievan Rus'. He was the son of Igor I of Kiev and Olga of Kiev. He ruled from 962 until 972. He is famous for his persistent campaigns in the east and south, which precipitated the collapse of two great powers of Eastern Europe, Khazaria and the First Bulgarian Empire. He also conquered numerous East Slavic tribes.



Early life and personality

It is nothing known about Sviatoslav's childhood and youth, which he spent reigning in Novgorod. Sviatoslav's father, Igor, was killed by the Drevlians around 945, and his mother, Olga, ruled as a regent in Kiev until Sviatoslav reached maturity (ca. 963). His life was spent with his *druzhina* in permanent warfare against neighboring states. According to the Primary Chronicle, during his expeditions he carried on neither wagons nor kettles, and he didn't boil meat, cutting off small strips of horseflesh or beef to eat after roasting it on the coals. He didn't have a tent, he spread out a horse-blanket under him and set his saddle under his head.



Appearance

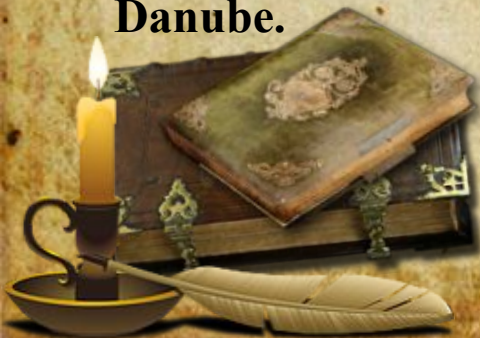


Sviatoslav's appearance has been described very clearly by Leo the Deacon, who himself attended the meeting of Sviatoslav with John I Tzimiskes. Following Deacon's memories, Sviatoslav was a blue-eyed male of average height but of stalwart build, much more sturdy than Tzimiskes. He shaved his blond head and his beard but wore a bushy mustache and a sidelock as a sign of his nobility. He preferred to dress in white, and it was noted that his garments were much cleaner than those of his men, although he had a lot in common with his warriors. He wore a single large gold earring with a carbuncle and two pearls.



Religious beliefs

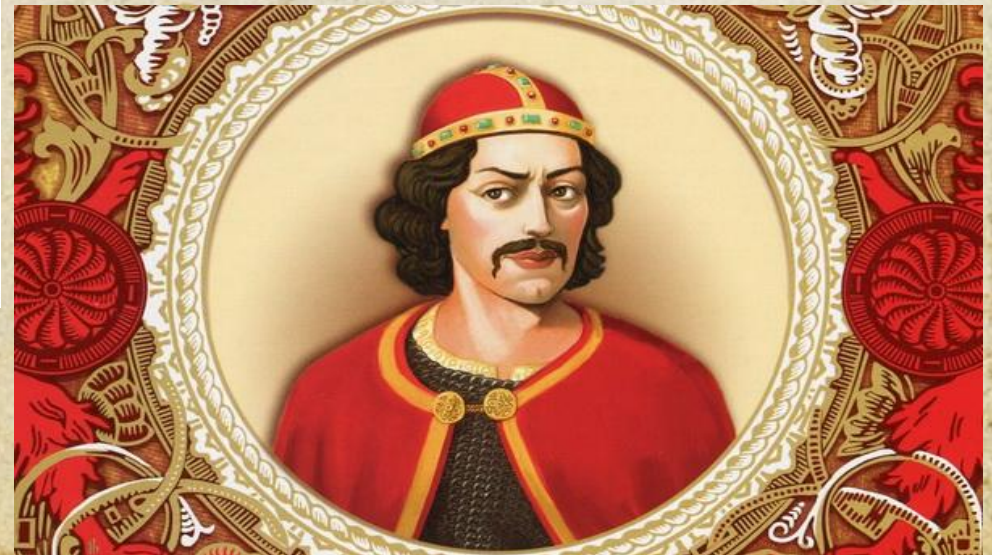
Sviatoslav's mother, Olga, converted to Eastern Orthodox Christianity at the court of Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus in 957. However, Sviatoslav remained a pagan all of his life. In the treaty of 971 between Sviatoslav and the Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes, the Rus' are swearing by Perun and Veles. According to the Primary Chronicle, he believed that his warriors (druzhina) would lose respect for him if he became a Christian. The allegiance of his warriors was of great importance in his conquest of the empire that stretched from the Volga to the Danube.



Family



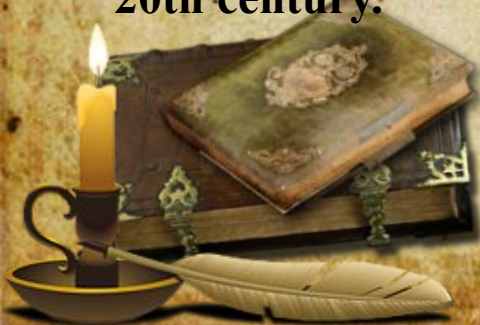
It is known very little of Sviatoslav's family life. It is possible that he was not the only (or the eldest) son of his parents. Sviatoslav had several children, but the origin of his wives is not specified in the chronicle. By his wives, he had Yaropolk and Oleg. By Malusha, a woman of indeterminate origins Sviatoslav had Vladimir, who would ultimately break with his father's paganism and convert Rus' to Christianity.



Art and literature

Sviatoslav has long been a hero of Belarusian, Russian, and Ukrainian patriots due to his great military successes. His figure first attracted attention of Russian artists and poets during the Russo-Turkish War (1768–1774). Yakov Knyazhnin wrote a tragedy *Olga* (1772). Nikolai Nikolev (1758–1815) wrote a play about Sviatoslav's life. Ivan Akimov painted “*Sviatoslav's Return from the Danube to Kiev*” (1773).

Interest in Sviatoslav's career increased in the 19th century. Klavdiy Lebedev depicted an episode of Sviatoslav's meeting with Emperor John, while Eugene Lanceray sculpted a statue of Sviatoslav in the early 20th century.



Reign



Formally Sviatoslav became Grand Duke at 3 years old after the death in of his father in 945, the great Prince Igor, but self-rule began in around 964. The Rus' was ruled by his mother, Princess Olga, first because of the early age of Sviatoslav, then due to his permanent stay in military campaigns.

When Sviatoslav grew and matured, he began to gather a lot of brave warriors and fought a lot. And he sent messengers to other lands, as a rule, before the Declaration of war with the words: "have at you!"

When returning from a trip to Bulgaria, Sviatoslav was killed by Pechenegs in 972 on the Dnieper rapids.



Death

The Byzantine emperor induced the Pecheneg khan Kurya to kill Sviatoslav. According to the Slavic chronicle, Sveneld attempted to warn Sviatoslav to avoid the Dnieper rapids, but the prince slighted his wise advice and was ambushed by the Pechenegs when he tried to cross the cataracts near Khortitsa early in 972. The Primary Chronicle reports that his skull was made into a chalice by the Pecheneg khan. By the end of his short life, Sviatoslav carved out for himself the largest state in Europe, eventually moving his capital in 969 from Kiev (modern-day Ukraine) to Pereyaslavets (identified as the modern village of Nufăru, Romania) on the Danube.



Memory

In memory of Svyatoslav a lot of monuments were erected in Kiev, Zaporozhye, Belgorodskaya oblast and Mariupol.



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**Thank you for your
attention!**

