

= History of Lithuania (1219 ? 95) =

The history of Lithuania between 1219 and 1295 concerns the establishment and early history of the first Lithuanian state , the Grand Duchy of Lithuania . The beginning of the 13th century marks the end of the prehistory of Lithuania . From this point on the history of Lithuania is recorded in chronicles , treaties , and other written documents . In 1219 , 21 Lithuanian dukes signed a peace treaty with Galicia ? Volhynia . This event is widely accepted as the first proof that the Baltic tribes were uniting and consolidating . Despite continuous warfare with two Christian orders , the Livonian Order and the Teutonic Knights , the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was established and gained some control over the lands of Black Ruthenia , Polatsk , Minsk , and other territories east of modern @-@ day Lithuania that had become weak and vulnerable after the collapse of Kievan Rus ' .

The first ruler to hold the title of Grand Duke was Mindaugas . Traditionally he is considered the founder of the state , the one who united the Baltic tribes and established the Duchy . Some scholars , however , challenge this perception , arguing that an organized state existed before Mindaugas , possibly as early as 1183 . After quelling an internal war with his nephews , Mindaugas was baptized in 1251 , and was crowned as King of Lithuania in 1253 . In 1261 , he broke the peace with the Livonian Order , perhaps even renouncing Christianity . His assassination in 1263 by Treniota ended the early Christian kingdom in Lithuania . For another 120 years Lithuania would remain a pagan empire , fighting against the Teutonic and Livonian Orders during the Northern Crusades during their attempts to Christianize the land .

After Mindaugas ' death , the Grand Duchy of Lithuania entered times of relative instability , as reflected by the fact that seven Grand Dukes held the title over the course of the next 32 years . Little is known about this period , but the Gediminid dynasty was founded in about 1280 . Despite the instability , the Grand Duchy did not disintegrate . Vytenis assumed power in 1295 , and during the next 20 years laid solid foundations for the Duchy to expand and grow under the leadership of Gediminas and his son Algirdas . While the Grand Duchy was established between 1219 and 1295 , the years after 1295 marked its expansion .

= = Establishment of the state = =

= = = Baltic unification = = =

The Balts were largely driven to unite by external threats from aggressive German religious orders . In 1202 , the Order of the Livonian Brothers of the Sword was established by Albert , the Bishop of Riga , to promote the Christianization and conquest of the Livonians , Curonians , Semigallians , and Estonians near the Gulf of Riga . The Order waged a number of successful campaigns and posed a great danger to the Lithuanian territories . The Order 's progress was halted by its defeat at the Battle of Saule in 1236 , after which it almost collapsed . The following year , it merged into the Teutonic Knights .

In 1226 , Konrad I of Masovia invited the Teutonic Knights to defend his borders and subdue the Prussians , offering the Knights the use of Che?mno (Kulm) as a base for their campaign . In 1230 , they settled in Che?mno , built a castle , and began attacking Prussian lands . After 44 years , and despite two Prussian uprisings against them , they had conquered most of the Prussian tribes . Afterwards , the Knights spent nine years conquering the Nadruvians , Skalvians , and Yotvingians , and from 1283 , they were better positioned to threaten the young Lithuanian state from the west .

Further unification of the Lithuanian tribes was facilitated by the social changes that took place in Lithuania during this period . Private land ownership was established (allodiums , Lithuanian : atolai) , which would later evolve into a feudal system . As attested by many chronicles , it was the principal form of organization governing land ownership in the 13th century . Under this system , known in England as primogeniture , only the eldest son could inherit lands , which allowed dukes to consolidate their holdings . Social classes and divisions of labor also began taking shape . There were classes of experienced soldiers (bajoras) , of free peasants (laukininkas) , and of " unfree "

people (kaimynas and ?eimynyk?tis) . In order to enforce this social structure , a united state was needed . Another force behind unification was the desire to take advantage of Ruthenian lands , which were suffering from the Mongol invasion . Temporary alliances among Lithuanian dukes often sufficed for military ventures into , and plundering of , these lands (including Pskov , plundered in 1213) . Altogether , between 1201 and 1236 , Lithuanians launched at least 22 incursions into Livonia , 14 into Rus , and 4 into Poland . The ongoing administration of conquered territories , however , required a strong and unified central power .

= = = Galicia ? Volhynia Treaty = = =

Some evidence suggests that Lithuanians began combining their forces at the dawn of the 13th century . For example , in 1207 , soldiers were recruited across Lithuania to fight the German religious orders , and in 1212 , Daugirutis ' treaty with Novgorod shows that he exerted some degree of influence over a vast area . During the first twenty years of the 13th century , Lithuanians organized some thirty military expeditions to Livonia , Russia , and Poland . Historian Tomas Baranauskas argues that a Lithuanian state could be said to exist as early as 1183 .

However , the first conclusive evidence that the Balts were uniting is considered to be the treaty with Galicia ? Volhynia signed in 1219 . The treaty 's signatories include 21 Lithuanian dukes ; it specifies that five of those were elder and thus took precedence over the remaining sixteen . Presumably , the eldest Duke was ?ivinbudas , since his name was mentioned first . Mindaugas , despite his youth , and his brother Dausprungas , are listed among the elder dukes . That would imply that they inherited their titles . The remaining two elder dukes were Daujotas (mentioned second) and his brother Vilikaila (mentioned last of the five) .

The treaty is important for several reasons . It shows that the Lithuanian Dukes were co @-@ operating ; the signatories include Dukes who ruled lands such as Samogitia , which probably had no contact with Galicia ? Volhynia . Their participation implies a perception of common interest , an indication of a nascent state . However , the designation of five Dukes as " elder " shows that the process of unification was still in transition . The inclusion of 21 Dukes indicates that the various lands in Lithuania were powerful and semi @-@ independent . Historians consider the treaty an interesting documentation of the long and complex process of a state 's formation . The progress of unification was uneven ; for example , after the deaths of Dukes Daugirutis in 1213 and Stek?ys in 1214 , fewer raids were organized by Lithuanians .

= = = Rise of Mindaugas = = =

Mindaugas , the duke who governed southern Lithuania between the Neman and Neris Rivers , eventually became the founder of the state . Mindaugas is referred to as the ruler of all Lithuania in the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle in 1236 . The means by which he managed to acquire this title are not well known . Russian chronicles mention that he murdered or expelled various other dukes , including his relatives .

In 1236 , Duke Vykintas led the Samogitian forces to victory in the Battle of Saule , where the Livonian Order suffered a catastrophic defeat . It seems that Vykintas did not receive support from Mindaugas . Vykintas ' personal power grew . The Livonian Order was on the brink of collapse and was forced to become a branch of the Teutonic Knights . The combined Orders focused on the conquest of Samogitia , since only this land prevented them from consolidating their territories . The union of these aggressive powers could not have passed without notice in Lithuanian lands , and might have furthered the unification process . In about 1239 Mindaugas took over the weakened Black Ruthenia and appointed his son Vai?vilkas to govern it . During the early 1240s , Mindaugas strengthened and established his power in various Baltic lands . In 1245 , Mindaugas sent his nephews Tautvilas and Edivydas , the sons of Dausprungas and Vykintas , to conquer Smolensk , but they were unsuccessful . In 1249 , an internal war erupted as Mindaugas sought to seize his nephews ' and Vykintas ' lands .

Tautvilas , Edivydas , and Vykintas formed a powerful coalition with the Samogitians , the Livonian

Order , Daniel of Galicia (Tautvilas and Edivydas ' brother @-@ in @-@ law) , and Vasilko of Volhynia in opposition to Mindaugas . Only Poles , invited by Daniel , declined to take part in the coalition against the Lithuanians . The dukes of Galicia and Volhynia managed to gain control over Black Ruthenia , an area ruled by Mindaugas ' son Vai?vilkas . Tautvilas traveled to Riga , where he was baptized by the Archbishop . In 1250 , the Order organized two major raids , one against Nal?a land and the other against the domains of Mindaugas and those parts of Samogitia that still supported him .

Attacked from the north and south and facing the possibility of unrest elsewhere , Mindaugas was placed in an extremely difficult position , but managed to use the conflicts between the Livonian Order and the Archbishop of Riga in his own interests . He succeeded in bribing Andreas von Stierland , the master of the Order , who was still angry at Vykintas for the defeat in 1236 . In 1251 , Mindaugas agreed to receive baptism and relinquish control over some lands in western Lithuania , for which he was to receive a crown in return . In 1252 , Tautvilas and his remaining allies attacked Mindaugas in Voruta , sometimes considered to be the first capital of Lithuania . The attack failed and Tautvilas ' forces retreated to defend themselves in Tverai Castle , in the present @-@ day Rietavas municipality . Vykintas died in or about 1253 , and Tautvilas was forced to rejoin Daniel of Galicia . Daniel reconciled with Mindaugas in 1254 ; the Black Ruthenian lands were transferred to Roman , the son of Daniel . Vai?vilkas , the son of Mindaugas , decided to join a monastery . Tautvilas recognized Mindaugas ' superiority and received Polatsk as a fiefdom .

= = Kingdom of Lithuania = =

As promised , Mindaugas and his wife Morta were crowned at some time during the summer of 1253 , and the Kingdom of Lithuania , proclaimed by the pope in 1251 , was soundly established . 6 July is now celebrated as " Statehood Day " (Lithuanian : Valstyb?s diena) ; it is an official holiday in modern Lithuania . However , the exact date of the coronation is not known ; the scholarship of historian Edvardas Gudavi?ius , who promulgated this date , is sometimes challenged . The location of the coronation also remains unknown .

Pope Innocent IV supported Mindaugas , hoping that a new Christian state could stem the inroads being made by the Golden Horde , a state of the Mongol Empire . On 17 July 1251 , the pope signed two crucial papal bulls . One of them ordered the Bishop of Che?mno to crown Mindaugas as King of Lithuania , appoint a bishop for Lithuania , and to build a cathedral . The other bull specified that the new bishop was to be directly subordinate to the pope . This was a welcome development to the Lithuanians , since they were concerned that their long @-@ standing antagonists , the Livonian Order , would exert too much control over the new state .

It took some time before a Bishop of Lithuania was appointed because of various conflicts of interest . The Bishop of Gniezno appointed Vito (Lithuanian : Vitas) , a monk of the Dominican Order , to this position , but he was not recognized by Mindaugas or accepted by the populace . The activities of Vito in Lithuania are unknown , although he is sometimes associated with Mindaugas ' Cathedral . Finally , in 1254 , Christian (Lithuanian : Kristijonas) from the Livonian Order was appointed . Mindaugas endowed him with some lands in Samogitia , but not much is known about his activities . Historical sources do not mention any sponsorship of missionaries , education of priests , or construction of churches during that time , and Bishop Christian went back to Germany in 1259 , where he died in 1271 . The establishment of Mindaugas ' Cathedral remains problematic , but recent archeological research found the remains of a 13th @-@ century brick building on the site of the present @-@ day Vilnius Cathedral . The general assumption is that the remains are those of Mindaugas Cathedral , built to satisfy the agreement with the pope . However , as later events showed , Lithuanians resisted Christianization , and Mindaugas ' baptism had only a temporary impact on further developments .

Immediately after his coronation , Mindaugas transferred some western lands to the Livonian Order ? portions of Samogitia , Nadruva , and Dainava . There is some discussion as to whether in later years (1255 , 1257 , 1259 , 1261) Mindaugas gave even more lands to the Order . The deeds might have been falsified by the Order ; the case for this scenario is bolstered by the fact that some

of the documents mention lands that were not actually under the control of Mindaugas . Whatever the case , relative peace and stability was established for about eight more years . Mindaugas used this opportunity to concentrate on expansion to the east . He strengthened his influence in Black Ruthenia , in Pinsk , and took advantage of the collapsed Kievan Rus ' by conquering Polatsk , a major center of commerce in the Daugava River basin . He also negotiated a peace with Galicia ? Volhynia , and married a daughter to Svarn , the son of Daniel of Galicia , who would later become Grand Duke of Lithuania . Diplomatic relations with western Europe and the Holy See were also reinforced . In 1255 , Mindaugas received permission from Pope Alexander IV to crown his son as King of Lithuania . In the domestic arena , Mindaugas strove to establish state institutions : his own noble court , administrative systems , a diplomatic service , and a monetary system . Silver Lithuanian long currency (Lithuanian : Lietuvos ilgieji) circulated , providing an indice of statehood .

The Livonian Order used this period to consolidate their control over Samogitian lands . They built three castles along the border : Memelburg (Klaip?da) , Georgenburg (Jurbarkas) , and Doben (Durbe in Latvia) . The Samogitians responded by electing Algminas as their war leader , and attacked Courland , as the Order had limited battlefield successes . In 1259 , the Livonian Order lost the Battle of Skuodas , and in 1260 , it lost the Battle of Durbe . The first loss encouraged a rebellion by the Semigalians , and the later loss spurred the Prussians into an uprising against the Order . The Great Prussian Uprising lasted for 14 years . Encouraged by Treniota , his nephew , Mindaugas broke peace with the Order . Some chronicles hint that he also returned to his former pagan beliefs , but this is disputable . Nevertheless , all the diplomatic achievements made since his coronation were lost .

Mindaugas then formed an alliance with Alexander Nevsky of Novgorod and marched against the Order . Treniota led an army to C?sis and battled Masovia , hoping to encourage all the conquered Baltic tribes to rise up against the Orders and unite under Lithuanian leadership . He waged successful battles , but did not manage to capture the fortified castles or spark a coalition of Baltic forces against the Order . His personal influence grew because Mindaugas was concentrating on the conquest of Russian lands , dispatching a large army to Bryansk . Treniota and Mindaugas began to pursue different priorities . In the midst of these events , Mindaugas ' wife Morta died , and Mindaugas expressed the wish to marry Daumantas ' wife . Daumantas and Treniota responded to this insult by assassinating Mindaugas and two of his sons , Ruklys and Rupeikis , in 1263 . Lithuania lapsed into years of internal instability .

= = Years after Mindaugas = =

= = = Years of instability = = =

After Mindaugas ' death , the state did not disintegrate and Treniota took over the title of Grand Duke . However , his power was fragile ; he was challenged by Tautvilas , who had not forgotten his own claims to power . Tautvilas was also assassinated by Treniota . However , just a year later , in 1264 , Treniota was killed by Mindaugas ' former servants . His son Vai?vilkas and his brother @-@ in @-@ law Shvarn from Volhynia took over the control in Lithuania . Daumantas was forced to flee to Pskov , was baptized Timofei , ruled successfully from 1266 to 1299 and even became a saint . In 1265 Vai?vilkas , as a Christian , reconciled with the Livonian Order and , without support from Lithuania , the rebellions among the Balts that had been fueled by Treniota began to subside . In 1267 he returned to a monastic life and transferred the Grand Duchy to Shvarn .

Little is known about Shvarn and his rule , but historians believe he was unable to take control of all Lithuania , and ruled only over its southern portions . He died in 1269 or 1271 in Galicia .

= = = Reign of Traidenis = = =

The circumstances surrounding the advance to power in 1269 of the next ruler , Traidenis , are not

clear . From the outset his relationships with Galicia ? Volhynia were tense and eventually resulted in the 1274 ? 1276 war . Traidenis was successful in battle , and his control over Black Ruthenia was strengthened . Traidenis , known for his strong anti @-@ German attitude , was also successful in fighting with the Livonian Order . In 1270 he won the Battle of Karuse , fought on ice near Saaremaa . However , in 1272 the Order retaliated , attacking Semigalia and building Dünaburg (Daugavpils) Castle in 1273 on lands nominally controlled by Traidenis . Several years later , in 1281 , Traidenis conquered Jersika Castle in the present @-@ day Preiži District , and was able to exchange it for the Dünaburg Castle . Dünaburg remained a Lithuanian outpost until 1313 . In 1279 the Order attacked Lithuanian lands , reaching as far as Kernavė , but on their way back they suffered a major defeat in the Battle of Aizkraukle . The Order 's master , Ernst von Rassburg , died in the battle , and the conquered Semigallians rebelled . The Semigallians were now willing to acknowledge Lithuania 's superiority and asked Traidenis for assistance . However , Traidenis died soon afterwards , and the rebellion was not successful .

Traidenis ' reign was the longest and most stable regime during the period of unrest . After his death the Orders finalized their conquests : the conquered Baltic tribes did not rebel again and the Orders could now concentrate on Lithuania . In 1274 the Great Prussian Rebellion ended , and the Teutonic Knights proceeded to conquer other Baltic tribes : the Nadruvians and Skalvians in 1274 ? 1277 , and the Yotvingians in 1283 ; the Livonian Order completed its conquest of Semigalia , the last Baltic ally of Lithuania , in 1291 . The Orders could now turn their full attention to Lithuania . The " buffer zone " composed of other Baltic tribes had disappeared , and Lithuania was left to battle the Orders on its own .

= = = Rise of Gediminids = = =

There is considerable uncertainty about the identities of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania between Traidenis ' death in 1282 and Vytenis ' assumption of power in 1295 . This is in part because the two main sources for Lithuanian history in the 13th century , the Hypatian Codex and the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle , end in the early 1290s . In 1285 , one chronicle mentions Daumantas as Grand Duke . He attacked the Bishop of Tver and was severely wounded or even killed in the battle . However , that is the only information about him .

The Gediminid dynasty began its ascent in Lithuania during this time with the emergence of its first leader , Butigeidis . In 1289 , leading about 8 @, @ 000 troops , he attacked Sambia . In 1289 the Teutonic Knights built a castle in present @-@ day Sovetsk (Tilsit) and their raids intensified . Butigeidis was the first to build strong castles along the Neman River . He died in 1290 or 1292 , and his brother Butvydas (also known as Pukuveras) inherited the crown . Butvydas was the father of Vytenis and probably of Gediminas . During his short reign Butvydas tried to defend the duchy against the Teutonic Knights ; he also attacked Masovia , an ally of the knights . His son , Vytenis , advanced to power in 1295 and ended the period of relative instability . His reign marks the transition from the state 's establishment to the point at which it was poised for expansion .

= = Legacy = =

The state united and ruled by Mindaugas constituted the first Lithuanian state . The state effectively protected Lithuanians and Samogitians from assimilation induced by the Teutonic Knights and the Livonian Order , the destiny of Prussians , Skalvians , Curonians , Selonians and other Baltic tribes . Mindaugas ruled about 100 @, @ 000 km² (39 @, @ 000 sq mi) of Lithuanian ethnic territory , an area with an estimated population of 300 @, @ 000 . The Slavic lands under his control and influence occupied another 100 @, @ 000 km² (39 @, @ 000 sq mi) . By about 1430 , at its peak during the reign of Vytautas the Great , the Grand Duchy controlled some 930 @, @ 000 km² (360 @, @ 000 sq mi) and almost 2 @. @ 5 million people .

The period from 1219 to 1295 also shaped future conflicts : the pagan Lithuanians were surrounded by the aggressive Roman Catholic Orders to its north and southwest , and by adherents of the Orthodox Church in the east . The Catholic Orders ' raids intensified after they overcame the " buffer

zone " created by Prussians , Nadruvians , Skalvians , Yotvingians , and Semigalians by 1283 . The Lithuanian relationships with the Orthodox Church were more peaceful . The people were allowed to practise their religion ; Lithuanian dukes did not hesitate to marry daughters of Orthodox dukes ; at least some of the dukes ' scribes must have been Orthodox as well . Struggles with the Teutonic Knights and expansion to the east were characteristic of the years from 1295 to 1377 . It was inevitable that Lithuania could not endure religious , political , and cultural isolation forever and would have to choose either Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy . In 1386 , Grand Duke Jogaila elected baptism in the Catholic rite to marry Jadwiga of Poland and become King of Poland ; the last pagan state in Europe was converted to Christianity .