

The Golden Gate

Oksana Lastovska, National Sanctuary Complex "Kyiv Sophia"

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The Golden Gate, a unique monument of defensive architecture of Kyivan Rus', is located in the center of Kyiv, close to St. Sophia Cathedral and is one of the oldest buildings in Eastern Europe. The monument is first mentioned in a famous chronicle of 1037 on the development activities of Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise: "Yaroslav founded the great city of Kyiv, and this city had the Golden Gate. He also founded the Church of St. Sophia, the Wisdom of God, the Metropolis, and then the stone Church at the Golden Gate, the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin... After that (he built) the Monastery of St. George (Victorious) and (the Monastery) of St. Oryna... ". However, the results of modern research show that the construction of the Kyiv fortifications with the Golden Gate was started by the Kyiv prince Volodymyr Sviatoslavych (980-1015) and completed by his son Yaroslav.



1. The Golden Gate, Kyiv

It was Yaroslav the Wise, having expanded the territory of Upper Kyiv, who surrounded the city with new grand defensive ramparts. In terms of scale, the fortifications of the "city of Yaroslav" surpassed those of the ancient Rus' city fortifications. Encompassing an area of 80

hectares, the ramparts surrounding upper Kyiv (the "city of Volodymyr" and the "city of Yaroslav") extended to three and a half kilometers.

In relation to the fortifications of the "city of Yaroslav" the chronicle mentions three gates: the Golden, the Lach, and the Jewish (Lviv). Only the Golden Gate was made of stone. This building was not only the most powerful element in the fortification system of the ancient city, it was also the main main ceremonial entrance to Kyiv. Ambassadors from Byzantium and other countries in Europe and the East entered through this very gate, when attempting to establish friendly relations with Kyivan Rus, and returning victorious military campaigners entered the city to store spoil in the vaults. Perhaps, the embassy of the King of France, Henry Capet, also entered the city through the Golden Gate to secure in marriage the hand of Anna, Yaroslav the Wise's daughter.

The Golden Gate consisted of a passageway through a fortified tower which was crowned with the Church of the Annunciation. The building-type that combines a gate and a temple was probably borrowed from Byzantium. And of course, the main gate in Kyiv is called the Golden Gate by analogy with the main city gate of Constantinople.

The Golden Gate was also known outside the ancient state of Rus. It is associated with the famous legend about the Sword "Szczerbiec", recorded in later Polish historical chronicles. It says that King Boleslaw I the Brave of Poland struck the Golden Gate with his sword at the entrance to Kyiv as a sign of capture of the city. The sword was nicked by hitting (hence its name). "Szczerbiec" is the coronation sword of Polish kings, which was kept in the first capital of Poland, Gniezno, and was one of the symbols of the Kingdom of Poland. Although it is well known that this sword did not relate to the events of the early eleventh century, the origin of the legend is, of course, not accidental, because the striking of the Golden Gate gestured the conquest of Kyiv and paid tribute to the renown of Kyiv's Golden Gate and its importance in the defense of the city.

The Golden Gate of ancient Kyiv embodied the power of the state, its greatness and its invincibility. In fact, the gate was exceptionally impregnable; it was never captured by enemies. Even in December 1240, having overcome the heroic resistance of the city's defenders, numerous troops of Khan Batu invaded Kyiv through the southern Lach Gate. Reports of the Golden Gate reappear in official documents and records of travellers only at the end of the 15th century. Thus, the charter of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Alexander, testifies that in the second half of the fifteenth century the Golden Gate was the main entrance to the city, where the city guards traditionally housed and collected tolls from merchants. Merchant Martin Gruneweg (1584), envoy from Austrian Emperor Rudolf II to the Zaporozhian Cossacks Erich Lasotta von Steblau (1594), and Archdeacon Paul of Aleppo (1654), who accompanied his father Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch, to Moscow, mention the Golden Gate in travel accounts. Written sources of the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries mention that the Golden Gate was half-destroyed. Martin Gruneweg wrote: "The Golden Gate is still standing, but most of it is destroyed..."



2. Abraham van Westerfeld, The Golden gate, the drawing reproduction

A chapel is arranged above them according to the custom of the Rus people, who decorate their gateways with beautiful small churches on the top, entrusting them to God for protection.” The appearance of the gate at that time is illustrated by drawings by the Dutch artist Abraham van Westerfeld, who visited Kyiv in 1651 together with the Polish-Lithuanian troops of Prince Janusz Radziwill and painted many famous monuments of Kyiv antiquity. According to Westerfeld's pictures, the Golden Gate of the seventeenth century was a picturesque ruin, but some arches, vaults, and the parts of the gateway remained.

In 1648, Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky with his army entered Kyiv through the Golden Gate. There, he was solemnly greeted by the townspeople and the clergy.

In the middle of the seventeenth century the old fortress in Kyiv began to be rebuilt. The invincibility the Old Kyiv rested on the Rus architects' fortification plan of the ancient ramparts of the "city of Yaroslav" and the "city of Volodymyr". However, with the development of artillery, the construction of old fortifications no longer met the new requirements of warfare, and a new system of urban fortifications was therefore created. Old wooden fortifications were dismantled, shafts were added, and cannons were installed on the upper platforms.

The Golden Gate was also adapted to the new requirements; earthen bastions were built in front of it, as seen on the plan of Kyiv in 1695 made by Colonel I. Ushakov.

After inspecting the Gate in 1750, Lieutenant Colonel D. Debosquet came to the conclusion that it could not be repaired. After that it were covered with earth.



3. The lithography from 19th Century

Excavations at the Golden Gate in 1832-1834 were at the forefront of archaeological research into the ancient city of Kyiv on the Dnipro River, carried out on the initiative of amateur archaeologist K. Lokhvytsky.

To this day, the Golden Gate has survived in the form of two parallel walls that are 25 m long (east), 13 m long (west), and about 8 m high. The inner surfaces of the passageway walls are divided into seven pairs of pilasters (partially preserved), the lower part of which rested at the base of the foundation. Since then, the Golden Gate has become one of the favorite monuments of antiquity for Kyiv citizens, and for its visitors, it has become a hallmark of Kyiv. In 1981-1982, a protective pavilion was built over the ancient ruins of the eleventh century, which protects them from the weather. It recreates the following elements of the original Golden Gate: the principal part of the fortified tower with a passage and the church above and there are sections of the Serpent's Wall with fences above them on both sides of the gate.

The gate was connected to Serpent's Wall the segments of the moat adjacent to the tower are reproduced in the pavilion. The field-side of the wall, the slopes are ragged; on the city-side of the moat, the slopes are terraced. There are stairs leading to the Church of the Annunciation from the level of the restored wall. In addition to a liturgical function, the church at the Golden Gate had a symbolic significance. This is particularly indicated in ancient Kyivan Rus literature. In the

final part of the "Sermon of Law and Grace", glorifying Yaroslav the Wise, Metropolitan Hilarion addressed Volodymyr and said that Yaroslav had completed the construction of fortifications and the Church of the Annunciation, "And he crowned your glorious city Kyiv with majesty. He gave his people and his city to the glorious and charitable Holy Mother of God. He also built a church for her at the Great Gate in the name of the first holy feast of the Annunciation. ' Then, the author addresses the city with the same greeting that the angel used to the Holy Virgin, "Rejoice, believer, the Lord is with you!" Thus, Yaroslav, who dedicated the gate church to the Annunciation, put Kyiv under the patronage not only of the Mother of God but also of God himself. Hilarion calls Kyiv a "God-protected city". In written sources, this term is used to describe Jerusalem and Constantinople. The main purpose of the gate church at the Golden Gate is to defend the city from heaven.

In May 2016, a mosaic panel "The Virgin of Nicopia" was installed on the facade of the Golden Gate. This panel depicts the Virgin holding the Infant Christ in front of her. The icon of the Virgin of Nicopia (Victorious) was considered miraculous, the one that protects people and statehood. In 1983, the pavilion-reconstruction "Golden Gate" became a museum. It is part of the National Reserve "Sophia of Kyiv". Like the Cathedral of St. Sophia, the Golden Gate is one of the oldest buildings that is preserved from the time of Yaroslav the Wise. They are witnesses to the glory and splendor of Kyivan Rus and the most significant events in the centuries-old history of Kyiv. It is impossible to imagine Kyiv without the Golden Gate, this monument is the symbol of the city and it is inseparably linked with it.

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