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BULAVA IN UKRAINE

Kleinods were attributes of Cossacks power. Kings of Poland, [Emperors](#) of [Russia](#) and Emperors of Austria gifted Cossacks with Kleinods. Kleinods consisted of bulava, bunchuk, pernachi, korugves, seal, litavris and guns. Let's discover the history of bulava.

The bulava (a variety of mace or club) was the symbol of supreme power and authority used by the Cossacks. Before the firearms emerged, it was used as a striking or crushing weapon.

The first examples of mace were found in the Ancient East. However, they must have combined the functions of both weapons and symbols of power. They were usually made of stone.

The earliest decorative bulavas found within the territory of Ukraine are dated back to Stone Age [1:35]. In the Chalcolithic period the maces in this area were made of the best stone available, which suggests that it might have already been used not only as a weapon but also as a symbol of power. Later it was occasionally used throughout the Bronze Age. Maces were also found in Scythian burial mounds, although only within those that obviously belonged to the most honorable warriors [2:228]. Thus, a small amount of such items found, means that those used to be owned by a limited circle of people, probably those who concentrated a certain amount of authority.

In the times of the Kievan Rus the bulava becomes widely spread. It comes both with simple iron, as well as more exquisite bronze garnishments [2:229]. This makes it possible to assume that it was then used not exclusively by the members of the high class, but also by the ordinary warriors. The Vikings are believed to have influenced the popularity of the bulava. Regardless of that, the bulava becomes a popular kind of weapon in the Kievan Rus.

Further on, the bulava disappears from the territory of Ukraine for a while, to reemerge during the Cossack period.

At that time, the bulava was used in Rzeczpospolita as a sign of favour given to the best generals. The Poles themselves must have taken the bulava from the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman army, this was a weapon used to crush the adversary's shield, later to be substituted by fire weapons in the 13th century. Before that, however, the bulava developed into a kind of trophy used in the Turkish army, made of precious metals and garnished with precious stones. As a trophy it is adopted by Rzeczpospolita, hence by the Cossacks. The Cossacks themselves never actually used it as a weapon, since the tactics of warfare had changed considerably by that time.

The bulava was the supreme symbol of power within the Cossack army. It was first received by the Cossacks from Stephen Báthory, King of Poland for their valour and prowess in fight, together with other Cossack kleynods. The bulava was essentially a stick made of walnut wood, 50-70 cm in length with a gilded pommel. This was decorated with precious stones and could bear the owner's emblem or monogram [1:35]. Being an attribute of power, it was always stored in a place to be observed, which stresses its importance. For instance, during the Cossack councils, where the Hetmans were elected, it was laid on a table [1:35].

The bulava was handled over to the newly elected Hetman with the consent of the Zaporizhian Kosh (although this was not a written regulation) [1:37]. It must have been merely a Cossack tradition, since the Zaporizhian Sich was regarded as the "origin" of the Cossacks and was thus an authority to be reckoned with. This also suggests a high level of democracy in the Cossack society.

The Ukrainians are proud of their history, especially the Cossack era, which made the bulava one of the symbols of the President as Head of State. Every President of Ukraine coming to embrace his position solemnly raises this symbol of authority as a memory of those majestic times. Inside the President's

Bulava, a trihedral stiletto is hidden, with a motto engraved on it saying, “OMNIA REVERTUTUR” – “All Things Repeat”.

LITERATURE

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