



# Vanished Kingdoms: The Rise and Fall of States and Nations

By Norman Davies

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**Vanished Kingdoms: The Rise and Fall of States and Nations** By Norman Davies

**From the bestselling author of *Europe: A History* comes a uniquely ambitious masterpiece that will thrill fans of lost civilizations**

While Germany, Italy, France, and England dominate our conceptions of Europe, these modern states are relatively recent constructs. In this brilliant work of historical reconstruction, Norman Davies brings back to life the long-forgotten empire of Aragon, which once controlled the Western Mediterranean; the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, once the largest country in Europe, and the Kingdom of the Rock, founded by ancient Britons when neither England nor Scotland existed. In the tradition of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Davies subverts our established view of the past and urges us to reconsider the impetus for the rise and fall of nations.

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### Editorial Review

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A dozen-plus examples from European history constitute this ruminative disquisition on the impermanence of polities. Struck by popular amnesia about the existence of his selections, some of which endured for centuries (although one, the Republic of Carpatho-Ukraine, lived but one day), Davies, from a traveler's viewpoint, describes the contemporary appearance of each former state's territory or principal city, then applies engrossing clarity to the history of its origin, ascent, and decline. Two states en route to expiration, Prussia and Savoy, left traces in contemporary Germany and Italy, but the rest are gone, submerged by dynastic politics, as were the duchy of Burgundy and the kingdom of Aragon, or hacked away and conquered by aggressive neighbors, as was the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. Despite the subject of extinction, pessimism does not pervade Davies' accounts, which detect a persistence of popular memory about each vanished state, encouraging advocates for its revival, as occurred in the cases of Poland and Lithuania. Having current relevance especially to the UK and Montenegro, Davies' fascinating work harbors insights and discoveries for avid history readers. --Gilbert Taylor

Review

"An alternative history of Europe that is . . . densely packed yet commendably accessible, magisterial, and uncommonly humane." — *The Boston Globe*

"Hugely ambitious . . . From the mists, Mr. Davies summons the kingdoms; he records their emergence, their flowering and their demise—whether by 'internall diseases' or 'forraign warre' in Thomas Hobbes's words. And he examines the traces that the kingdoms have left behind, in works of art or a piece of rock or perhaps just a place name." — *The Wall Street Journal*

"Davies resurrects the lands and peoples that were lost in the brutal tide of history. . . . It takes a tremendous feat of empathy to write about countries and peoples that no longer exist. And the amount of information in *Vanished Kingdoms* that will be new to all but the most expert students of European history is staggering. . . . Fascinating facts and insights flutter on its many pages."

— *San Francisco Chronicle*

"Davies is well known as an iconoclast who punctures the comforting myths of countries that history has blessed. . . . *Vanished Kingdoms* gives full rein to his historical imagination and enthusiasms, imparting a powerful sense of places lost in time. All across Europe ghosts will bless him for telling their long-forgotten stories."

— *The Economist*

"Davies is certainly one of the best British historical writers of the past half century, and every gauntlet he

throws down is bejeweled. His literary gifts and his capacity for what he nicely calls ‘imaginative sympathy’ are stretched to their limits by this challenging project. . . . Yet Davies succeeds, and it is quite a success.”

— **Timothy Snyder**, *The Guardian* (London)

#### About the Author

**Norman Davies** is the bestselling author of several acclaimed books, including *Europe: A History*; *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw*; and *No Simple Victory: World War II in Europe, 1939–1945*. He lives in Oxford, England, and Cracow, Poland.

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