

Poppe, Andrzej and Sysyn, Frank E. (eds). *History of Ukraine-Rus'. Volume One. From Prehistory to the Eleventh Century*. Translated by Marta Skorupsky and Mikhailo Hrushevsky. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, Edmonton and Toronto, 1997. liv + 602 pp. Maps. Bibliography. Index. Price unknown.

THE publication of Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi's *History of Ukraine-Rus'* between 1898 and 1937 is rightly regarded as the central event in modern Ukrainian historiography. Ten large volumes appeared in all, although even then Hrushevs'kyi was only able to take the story up to the 1650s by the time of his death in 1934. The Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies has set about the enormous task of translating the whole *opus* into English, and volume one is the first fruit of their labours. Arguably, it is the most important of the ten, as Hrushevs'kyi's key contribution to Ukrainian historiography was to provide a more secure anchor for the myth of national origin by developing the idea of the early medieval kingdom of Rus' as a 'Ukrainian state', and depicting it as the outgrowth of earlier local Ukrainian creations. It is precisely this period which is covered in the first volume.

In outline, Hrushevs'kyi's argument was that 'the fourth century of the Christian era can be regarded as the threshold of the historical life of the Ukrainian people, because our first knowledge of it as a separate entity dates to that period' (p. 14). 'Everything points to the identification of the Antae [the main local tribal federation of the time] with the ancestors of the Ukrainians, allowing us to conclude that this was almost certainly the case' (p. 133). Many Ukrainians now go back much further, but Hrushevs'kyi sensibly cautioned other historians to avoid speculating about pre-historical periods for which real hard evidence was extremely scanty (p. 48). On the other hand, he definitely leaned towards the view that the ethnic 'substratum' of the Ukrainian people could be found as early as the Scythian period,

famously depicted by the Greek historian Herodotus (c. 485–25 BC) in his *Histories*, and beyond (pp. 80–84).

Hrushevs'kyi's main point, however, was that cultural and linguistic differentiation among the Eastern Slavs was well-established several centuries before the emergence of Rus'. Moreover, the main southern, that is Ukrainian, group were the real founders of this polity, the very name Rus' having originally referred only to the territory of the Polianian tribe around Kiev (p. 296). Beyond lay the Viaticians and other Russian tribes, who were most probably 'Slavic colonis[ers] on a Finnic base' (p. 142), whom Hrushevs'kyi largely excludes from his description of the life of Rus' (see the map depicting 'East Slavic Colonization During the Reformation of the Rus' State' on p. lviii, which looks remarkably like modern Ukraine). Hrushevs'kyi's account of the subsequent history of Rus' is less original, once the identity of its central subject has been reclaimed from the Russocentric historical tradition. Unlike some other, notably Belarusian, historians, Hrushevs'kyi tended to depict Rus' as a relatively united entity, but as a Ukrainian rather than a Russian or Rus'ian entity, at least until the second and third volumes of his history, which deal with the latter history of Rus' (the twelfth century in particular) and the more novel theory of the growing tension between north and south.

The editors and translator are to be congratulated in organizing this work so that English-language readers can judge Hrushevs'kyi's theories for themselves. However, it should not be forgotten in the current climate of veneration that Hrushevs'kyi's history is essentially a Ukrainian nationalist response to the equally nationalist Russian versions prevalent at his time (Solov'ev, Kliuchevskii, Pogodin). Despite his strongly positivist methodology, Hrushevs'kyi was a classic nineteenth-century Romantic populist whose subject is always the Ukrainian nation, its being and becoming. Other perspectives are absent. The very title of Hrushevs'kyi's work is an anachronism, or more exactly perhaps a prochronism or prolepsis. He established the modern Ukrainian tradition of referring to Rus' as 'Ukraine-Rus', but, as he himself admits, the term is used somewhat artificially 'in order to underscore the link between modern Ukrainian life and its ancient traditions' (p. 2).

It is perfectly possible to agree that Rus' was not 'Russia', without arguing it was 'Ukraine', as neither of the latter two entities yet existed. The crucial fourth part of Hrushevs'kyi's first volume, which describes the growing differences between the various East Slavonic tribes in the first millennium, is somewhat underwhelming. Divergence is too often assumed rather than demonstrated. However, this aspect of Hrushevs'kyi's approach can be bypassed without depriving the Ukrainians of a theory of their national origins. As many other historians have argued, the fact that the embryonic differences between the Eastern Slavs were only just beginning to emerge at the time of Rus' does not gainsay the full emergence of the Ukrainian, and Russian, nation at a later period (in the Ukrainian case, the seventeenth and eighteenth century, or even the twentieth). Much remains in the detail of Hrushevs'kyi's argument that is fascinating and novel, and a vital means of understanding why differences later became more profound.

This edition begins with a general introduction by Frank Sysyn and a particular one by Andrzej Poppe, and concludes by including two of

Hrushevs'kyi's extended essays; one on the main Rus' (Primary) Chronicle and one on the Normanist Theory of the origins of the Rus' state, which is as critical as many Russian historians. Despite the reservations mentioned above, this is a book which every library should own. The history of modern Ukraine, and the history of Ukrainian (and Russian and Belarusian) historiography, cannot be understood without engaging with Hrushevs'kyi and his ideas.

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