

Reviews

Mykhailo Hrushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*. Volume One. *From Prehistory to the Eleventh Century*. Translated by Marta Skorupsky. Edited by Andrzej Poppe, Consulting Editor, and Frank E. Sysyn, Editor-in-Chief, with the assistance of Uliana M. Pasicznyk. Edmonton-Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1997. lxi + 602 pp. ISBN 1-895571-19-7 (v. 1). Cloth \$79.95.

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Mykhailo Hrushevsky (1866–1934) remains the greatest historian of the Ukrainian national school, and his ten-volume (eleven-book) *Istoriia Ukraïny-Rusy* was his masterpiece, a fully realized, scholarly, integrated (if unfinished and incomplete) history of the Ukrainian people from prehistory through 1658. The present volume inaugurates the project by the Peter Jacyk Centre for Ukrainian Historical Research at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta to translate the *History*, so as to make it more accessible to the widest possible scholarly and popular audience. Judging from this book, the translation will be a major achievement and a significant contribution to the study of early East Slavic history.¹

Frank E. Sysyn's "Introduction to the *History of Ukraine-Rus'*" (xxii–xlii)² sets the stage for the entire project. It surveys Hrushevsky's life and places his work within the contexts of Imperial Russian, Polish and Ukrainian historiography. Sysyn emphasizes Hrushevsky's intellectual roots in romantic nationalism and populism; his dynamic concept of the evolution of the Ukrainian "nation," which relegated modern notions of "nation" and "nationality" to the nineteenth century, and rated statehood as less important, in the primarily stateless history of the Ukrainians, than socio-economic and cultural history; and his vast erudition and prolific publications (over 2000 works). He describes the reception of Hrushevsky's work by his contemporaries and subsequent generations of scholars. Hrushevsky's *History* was controversial when it appeared, but soon influenced Russian historiography and became standard in Ukrainian historiography. It later lost some of its luster to adherents of the "statist" school of Ukrainian historiography led by Lypynsky, and was utterly rejected under the Soviets. However, even Ukrainian émigré proponents of the statist school subsequently

¹ When both have been completed, an extended comparison to the translation of Sergei M. Soloviev's *History of Russia from Ancient Times* by Academic International Press would prove fruitful.

² Reprinted in Thomas Sanders, ed., *Historiography of Imperial Russia: The Profession and Writing of History in a Multinational State* (Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 344–72.

accepted Hrushevsky's schema and tradition of national historiography. Sysyn describes Hrushevsky as a "titan of industriousness" and a "historian of genius." Since 1991 a new "cult" of Hrushevsky has arisen in independent Ukraine, restoring his popularity there to that of the "national hero" elected the first president of the Ukrainian Republic 1917–1918.

Andrzej Poppe's "Introduction to Volume 1" (xliii–liv), like his editorial additions, translated by Myroslav Yurkevich, provides a ready preparation for the monumental work that follows. Poppe repeatedly stresses the continuing relevance of Hrushevsky's views, often confirmed by subsequent research; his devotion to the spirit of German historicism, which determined the scholarly standards to which he adhered; and his intuition, caution, and intellectual maturity. Poppe calls attention to Hrushevsky's rejection of racist views. He is undoubtedly correct that even those who do not accept Hrushevsky's conclusion – that the legacy of Kyivan *Rus'* belongs almost entirely to the Ukrainian nation, slightly to the Belarusians, and not at all to Great Russians – will still understand Hrushevsky's position as a protest against Imperial Russian repression of Ukrainian national aspirations at the time of the *History's* composition, when even the status of Ukrainian as an independent language, rather than a dialect of Russian, met with hostility. Poppe contrasts the quality of Hrushevsky's *History* to the dregs produced by Soviet Ukrainian historians, and can barely suppress his rage at the servility of Soviet Ukrainian historians to the ludicrous fantasies about the Kyivan period of the "Russian archeologist" Rybakov. Poppe concludes by categorizing Hrushevsky's *History*, or at least the first three volumes (through 1340), as indispensable, and fully worthy of attention by the international scholarly community.

Hrushevsky's *History* is simply indispensable to all students of early East Slavic history. I would, however, question Poppe's assertion that there was a contrast between late nineteenth-century Imperial Russian historiography's emphasis upon the state and Ukrainian historiography's (and Hrushevsky's) attention to the "people" in their respective approaches to Kyivan *Rus'*. Such a judgment would not have applied to the dominant Great Russian historian of that period, Vasiliï O. Kliuchevskii, and reflects the tendency of studies of Ukrainian historiography to treat all adherents of the Kiev-Vladimir-Moscow continuity theory as adherents of the Great Russian "State School."

Volume One, translated from the third edition published in Ukrainian in Lviv in 1913, consists of eleven huge chapters (1–409); twelve "Notes" (410–49), such as on the Antae; and two "Excurses," on the Primary Chronicle (450–71) and Normanism (472–92); followed by the substantial, newly-compiled bibliography (493–562), which permitted the use of shorter title references in the footnotes. The translation and editing of the volume will be discussed before turning to its contents.

The translator and editors are to be congratulated on achieving their goal of producing an accurate, complete, and readable translation. The technical vocabularies of physical anthropology, archeology, and linguistics are handled very competently. Unfortunately, the translator's English-language vocabulary sometimes exceeds this reviewer's. Witness arguably the worst sentence in the book (327): "He [Oleh – CJH] is clearly distinguishable from the homunculi created in the Kyivan bookman's cucurbit that fill the Primary Chronicle throughout the second half of the ninth century," which I do not pretend to understand. While the decision to leave untranslated Hrushevsky's occasional Latin phrase, a characteristic of his literary style even in political discourse, is eminently defensible, it might have been better if editorial translations had also been provided; readers ignorant of Latin may have more trouble with some expressions than with others.³

Poppe has performed the extraordinary feat of *de visu* verifying at least 95 percent of Hrushevsky's footnotes; given Hrushevsky's Teutonic thoroughness, this was a herculean labor. Poppe has also corrected typographical errors, often of major significance to the non-specialist reader, such as "north" for "south" or "eleventh" for "twelfth" century, although at least one error remains: the Torks and Cumans replaced the Pechenegs in the Ukrainian steppe in the *eleventh*, not the *ninth*, century (181). The entire volume is devoid of misspellings and nearly free of typographical errors (in Poppe's essay the date of Kliuchevskii's *Sochineniia* should be 1956, not 1952 [xlviii, n. 10]). This detailed and meticulous editorial work greatly facilitates access to the volume and enhances the reader's confidence in the reliability of the final product. Hrushevsky's footnotes are retained with Arabic numerals; editorial footnotes appear under incremental asterisks. Hrushevsky's "Notes" were extended bibliographic and substantive mini-essays, and Poppe has provided his own commentary on each. Poppe also appends "additions" to each excursus. Poppe brings the reader up-to-date on the current status of scholarly debate of the issues discussed. Poppe's comments in Hrushevsky's footnotes, as well as Poppe's footnotes and his additions to the "Notes" and "Excurses," are all in a uniform typeface different than Hrushevsky's text or apparatus, a technical printing achievement which reflects the care and effort that have been expended in preparing the edition. This editorial process failed only once, when the same editorial comment appears undifferentiated in the text as well as in its proper place (121). There are two photographs of Hrushevsky, as a young man in the book and as an elder statesman on the back

³ For example, *ad libitum* (3), *Si datur venia* (16), *in optima forma* (161 n. 171), *cum grano salis* (263), *vagina regum* (291), *vagina gentium* (304), *ad maiorem gloriam* (320), *lapsus linguae* (347), *principandi maioritatem* (365 n. 3), *in partibus* (392).

book cover, plus two maps, of the colonization of Eastern Europe in the third century and during the formation of Kyivan *Rus'*, and an Index.

Hrushevsky began his *History* with the territory of the Ukraine, tracing its geological development. He surveys its occupants from the Old and New Stone Ages through the Indo-European, Greek, Iranian, Germanic, and Turkic populations who lived on it or passed through it before the arrival of the East Slavs. Hrushevsky surveys the origins of the Slavs and then of the East Slavs, their migrations, way of life, and development, and the history of the Kyivan *Rus'* state through the death of grand prince Volodymer in 1015. (The editors [xviii] comment on the heuristic value of forcing readers accustomed to the Great Russian presentation of this material to deal with Ukrainian-language forms of place and personal names in order to see things from Hrushevsky's perspective; this reviewer agrees wholeheartedly.)

Hrushevsky devoted considerable attention to historical linguistics, archeology, and ethnography, despite the fact that he remained very cautious in their application to history. For example, he was fully cognizant of the inability of archeology on its own to speak to the question of ethnicity. Poppe highlights Hrushevsky's strict source criticism, his scepticism toward Tatischev's *Joachim Chronicle* and the *Toparcha Gothicus*. I would emphasize his highly critical attitude toward the *Primary Chronicle*. Although Hrushevsky did not agree with all of Shakhmatov's conclusions, he appreciated the significance of Shakhmatov's work (for Poppe's evaluation of the Soviet attitude toward Shakhmatov, see 470–71), and was quite capable of dealing with varying manuscripts, redactions, and scribal errors in the *Primary Chronicle*. Hrushevsky's continuing remarks on the unreliable, inconsistent, fantastic, and legendary material in the *Primary Chronicle* are a breath of fresh air compared to most credulous scholarship since. (It is to be remembered that Hrushevsky dealt in Volume One with pre-1015 chronicle entries.) Hrushevsky on many occasions identified statements in the *Primary Chronicle* as no more than the chronicler's conjectures, devoid of historical value, a feature of his work which shows up prominently in the treatment of the "summoning of the Varangians." Therefore, Hrushevsky rejected or reinterpreted much of what the *Primary Chronicle* had to say about Askold and Dir, Oleh and Igor, although Hrushevsky did not question the historicity of Askold and Dir per se. Hrushevsky had more than good instincts, as Poppe puts it; he was an historical agnostic, willing not only to admit when the evidence did not permit resolution of an issue, but also to cease discussing it at that point. The contrast with Vernadsky could not be greater. Typically, Hrushevsky mistrusted such Slavophile myths as Slavic "democracy" and "peacefulness"; early Slavic society was dominated by clan and tribal elders, and Byzantine sources make abundantly clear the Slavs' reputation for warfare. Hrushevsky rarely broached

the kind of speculative and uncorroborated hypotheses that would undoubtedly have been overthrown since the publication of the *History*.

At the macro level, the distinguishing feature, the hallmark, of Hrushevsky's *History* is the Ukrainian national focus. To Hrushevsky, the Antae were Ukrainian tribes; the Polianians and other occupants of the Dnipro river valley, the founders of Kyivan *Rus'*, were Ukrainians, not Russians. He leaned strongly toward the conclusion that the Ukrainians were autochthonous to the Dnipro region. Hrushevsky denied that the population of Kyivan *Rus'* migrated to Vladimir-Suzdalia under Cuman or Mongol pressure only later to be replaced by new settlers; by default therefore the earliest Slavic inhabitants of the Dnipro valley had to be at least the ancestors of modern Ukrainians. Hrushevsky saw thirteenth-century Galicia-Volhynia as the true continuation of Kyivan *Rus'*. He fully subscribed to the concept of "national character" ubiquitous in European culture during his lifetime, although he was very sober in denying the existence of a Ukrainian "race" or even uniform physical type. This national perspective obviously went well beyond cliché depictions of Sviatoslav as a true Zaporozhian (348-49), which can be found in Russian historiography as well.

Sysyn comments that the interplay of Hrushevsky's populism and nationalism in the *History* requires further study. Hrushevsky did not neglect political, military, and diplomatic history in his work, the activities of the elite, but he did constantly reiterate that political affairs were less important than social and cultural developments. However, there is nothing "anti-statist" in Hrushevsky's presentation of the formation and consolidation of the Kyivan *Rus'* state. Volodymer's defense of the southern and southeastern borders, promulgation of a law code, and conversion to Christianity, which Hrushevsky considered primarily a political act, are presented in a manner indistinguishable from "statist" historiography, including Great Russian. Hrushevsky concluded that the "organization of the *Rus'* state" was "the dominant event of the first period of Ukrainian history" (14). Common sense dictates that Hrushevsky's "anti-statistism" would be more likely to extrude into his discussion of stateless periods of Ukrainian history or of more controversial Ukrainian political rulers, such as Khmelnytsky, than in this volume.

Hrushevsky kept his Ukrainian national interpretation of Kyivan *Rus'* consistent with the evidence. Although he began with the inescapable fact that the original territory of the *Rus'* and the *rusaskaia zemlia* was the Dnipro river triangle of Kyiv, Chernihiv and Periaslavl', he appreciated that in its beginnings Kyivan *Rus'* did not encompass even all the Ukrainian tribes (especially 144-45, 173). Moreover, he explicitly recognized that the terms expanded to include not only additional (but not necessarily all) Ukrainian but also Belarusian and Russian tribes. Novgorod the Great was not a Ukrainian city, but Hrushevsky certainly did not slight its role in the Ukrainian Kyivan *Rus'* state. While he admitted that

Vladimir-Suzdalia inherited political, legal, and cultural institutions from Kyivan *Rus'*, he denied that such borrowing finessed the national barrier between Ukrainian south and Russian northeast, which he likened to that between Rome and Gaul. Hrushevsky's interpretation remains a powerful indictment of the Great Russian interpretation of Kyivan *Rus'* exclusively or primarily as the forerunner of Muscovy, of *ruskaia zemlia* as the "Russian Land" (a sin to which the present reviewer pleads *mea culpa* for too many past occasions). Hrushevsky's nuanced and sophisticated presentation of his conception reflects both his enormous erudition and impeccable scholarly integrity.

No matter how much Hrushevsky rejected the Great Russian bias of Imperial Russian historiography, he did not for that reason discard its scholarly achievements. Hrushevsky utilized Imperial Russian historiography extensively. His refutations of its national prejudice should not obscure the degree to which he shared its methodological and conceptual framework. After all, both Ukrainian and Imperial Russian historiography not only derived from the same European intellectual roots, but also evolved in tandem, in parallel if self-consciously antagonistic fashion. Hrushevsky shared his populism and positivism with some of the Imperial Russian historians he read; the most readily available comparison is with Kliuchevskii.

Kliuchevskii, born 1841, was a generation older than Hrushevsky, who had access before he published the first edition of volume I of his *History* in 1898 to Kliuchevskii's seminal doctoral dissertation, *Boiarskaia дума drevnei Rusi*, which anticipated the historical schema of the first volume of his *Kurs russkoi istorii*, which appeared in 1904. (It is unlikely Hrushevsky in Kiev, let alone Lviv, had access to earlier lithographed versions of Kliuchevskii's *Kurs*.) *Prima facie* Kliuchevskii's and Hrushevsky's historical "courses" are not comparable: Kliuchevskii's selective and much shorter, not to mention unfootnoted, lecture course could hardly match Hrushevsky's comprehensive and fully documented study, and a definitive comparison of their views of Kievan *Rus'* would exceed the boundaries of Hrushevsky's Volume One. Still, several salient issues can be raised here which warrant further discussion.

Both Hrushevsky and Kliuchevskii were anti-Normanists: while recognizing the contribution of Scandinavians to Kyivan political and economic development, neither believed that the Varangians deserved credit for "founding" the earliest East Slavic state. Such a position distorted the domestic evolution of the East Slavs which led to statehood. Hrushevsky's depiction of the evolution of "burgs" into commercial and political centers in which Varangians only later played a visible role at first blush seems very much influenced by Kliuchevskii's concept of urban, commercial Kyivan *Rus'*. (Hrushevsky cited Kliuchevskii *inter alia* 276 n. 167 re "burgs," but not on Kliuchevskii's innovative and critical emphasis on foreign trade; rather, he refuted Rozhkov's denial of the role of trade,

303 n. 62.) Hrushevsky debunked Kliuchevskii's conclusion that the decline of Khazar power served as the catalyst of Scandinavian involvement (303 n. 60), but he acknowledged Kliuchevskii's rejection both of Normanism and of the Primary Chronicle's legend of the summoning of the Varangians (478). The source of their shared diminution of the role of Scandinavians in the early political development of the East Slavs lies precisely in their commitment to a very European organic conception of historical evolution, which emphasized the continuity of internal historical processes (12–13) based upon geography and ethnographic factors, and to their shared emphasis on socio-economic history.

Hrushevsky also endorsed the "honorable role" of the Ukrainians as "defenders of European civilization against the Asiatic hordes," (11; 10–12 *passim*), an attitude toward the steppe derivative of Solov'ev and Kliuchevskii. On the whole Hrushevsky's treatment was devoid of their religious accent, despite his passing evaluation of Christianity as a "higher" religion than paganism. Regardless of Hrushevsky's familiarity with recent scholarship on Inner Asian nomads, his overall assessment of the Turkic impact on Kyivan *Rus'* followed well-worn Great Russian paths: the semi-sedentary Khazars were "better" than the nomadic "barbarians" (173).

Finally, Hrushevsky took a very evenhanded stand on the conversion of Kyivan *Rus'* to Byzantine Orthodox Christianity rather than Latin Catholicism, dismissing previous scholarly contempt for "Byzantinism," which might have tinged Kliuchevskii's attitude, and proclaiming Volodymer's choice completely "natural" (401–02). This sobriety reflected both advances in Byzantine studies and Hrushevsky's non-partisan approach.

Obviously, Hrushevsky read existing Imperial Russian, not West European, historiography on the Kyivan period. Of course Hrushevsky disagreed with Kliuchevskii more often than not, but for that very reason their agreements are all the more illuminating. Given the current "cults" of Kliuchevskii in Russia and Hrushevsky in Ukraine, exploration of their intellectual commonalities would serve a beneficial purpose. Western scholars might in this way contribute to breaking down the provincial insularity of competing national historiographies in Eastern Europe.

I have three quibbles with the editors' syntheses of current scholarship on issues touched by Hrushevsky in this volume. I do not know why the editors failed to update Hrushevsky's discussion of the origins of the "Crown of Monomakhos"; while alluding to Kondakov's theory of Byzantine derivation and other claims of steppe production, Hrushevsky pronounced all such conclusions "hypothetical" (386–87). The steppe origin of the Crown is, I believe, no longer

in doubt.⁴ In discussing the reference to “*rus’kyi pismena*” in the *Vita Constantini*, Poppe is correct that the consensus of modern scholars is that “*sur’skyi*” was the original reading (436–37). However, Poppe might have mentioned Goldblatt’s view that “*rus’kyi*” is primary, but the text is late, because this is closer to Hrushevsky’s interpretation.⁵ Finally, on the derivation of the term *Rus’* (491–92), Poppe might have made mention of the innovative observations of Paul Bushkovitch.⁶ These personal caveats notwithstanding, Poppe’s commentary deserves exceptional praise for its breadth, depth, and objectivity.

In his Preface to the First Edition of Volume One (lxi), written in 1898, Hrushevsky conceded that Ukrainian history on the whole had been unhappy. But, he continued, “a society which believes in itself must also have the courage to confront the unvarnished truth about its past in order to draw strength, not discouragement from it.” Hrushevsky’s combination of objectivity and optimism motivated his impressive scholarly productivity. His *History* stands as a lasting monument both to his scholarship and to his devotion to Ukraine. One can only applaud its wider dissemination and look forward eagerly to the continuation of this project.

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⁴ For the most recent statement, see Guzel F. Valeeva-Suleimanova, “Korony russkikh tsarei - pamiatniki tatarskoi kul’tury,” in *Kazan, Moscow, St. Petersburg: Multiple Faces of the Russian Empire*, ed. Catherine Evtuhov, Boris Gasparov, Alexander Ospovat, Mark von Hagen (Moscow: OGI, 1997), 40–52.

⁵ Harvey Goldblatt, “On ‘rus’skymi pismeny’ in the *Vita Constantini* and Rus’ian Religious Patriotism,” in *Studia Slavica Medievalia et Humanistica. Riccardo Picchio Dicata*, ed. Michelle Colucci, Guisepppe Dell’Agata, Harvey Goldblatt, 2 vols. (Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli. Dipartimento di Studi dell’Europa Orientale. Rome: Edizioni Dell’Ateneo, 1986), vol. 1, 311–28.

⁶ Paul Bushkovitch, “*Rus’* in the Ethnic Nomenclature of the *Povest’ vremennykh let*,” *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 12: 3 (1971): 296–306.