

Mykhailo HRUSHEVSKY, *History of Ukraine-Rus'*. Vol. 1. From Prehistory to the Eleventh Century. Translated by Marta SKORUPSKY. Edited by Andrzej POPPE and Frank E. SYSYN with the assistance of Uliana M. PASICZNYK (*The Hrushevsky Translation Project*). Edmonton-Toronto, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press 1997. LXI, 602 S., 1 Portr. ISBN 1-8955710-19-7.

The Hrushevsky Translation Project has translated in full the text and references of the third edition of Volume One of Hrushevsky's *Istoriia Ukrainy-Rusy*, published in 1913.

The newly compiled bibliography, a feat of scholarship in itself, offers a conspectus of the sources and historiography on the early Slavs up to c. 1911. Appended to the endnotes and excursuses are summaries of recent historiography and select bibliographies provided by Andrzej Poppe, the Consulting Editor.

Hrushevsky's ten-volume *History* was intended to demonstrate the development of a distinct Ukrainian 'nationality', literally defining a subject area. His insistence on the importance of social and economic history has relevance today, while many specific judgements are well-founded. Thus his suggestion that Kiev is most likely to have been the metropolitan see from Vladimir's time on enjoys strong endorsement,¹ while his view that Christianity first took root mainly in 'the larger population centres' (p. 392) accords with the evidence of burial-ritual and church buildings.² Moreover, Hrushevsky's stress on the relevance of prehistory to later periods and concern with the interrelationship between agriculturalists and pastoralists prefigure modern approaches.³ He also noted that archaeological evidence of change in material culture does not by itself necessarily betoken wholesale population shifts: many of the peoples named in our literary sources probably represent confederations. Hrushevsky took this line on the Khazars, and modern archaeology confirms his view that 'the hordes ... known under the single name of Khazars were not ethnically homogeneous' (p. 173).⁴ One grouping associated with the Khazars was that of the Hungarians. Hrushevsky was sceptical as to Constantine VII's implication that the Hungarians spent only three years 'living together with' them, scepticism shared by modern authorities.⁵ His position on the origins of the Hungarians was equally felicitous. While accepting the general view that their language had a 'Finno-Ugric base' he stressed the significance of other elements, including 'Turkic, Mongol and Caucasian' (p. 177, n. 241). Such *caveats* have resonance, now that serious doubt is being cast on the very concept of a distinct 'Finno-Ugric' family of languages.⁶

¹ L. MÜLLER, *Zum Problem des hierarchischen Status und der jurisdiktionellen Abhängigkeit der russischen Kirche vor 1039*. Cologne-Braunsfeld 1959; A. POPPE, The original status of the Old-Russian Church. *Acta Poloniae Historica* 39 (1979) 5–45, repr. in POPPE's *The Rise of Christian Russia*. London 1982, no. 3.

² V. V. SEDOV, *Rasprostranenie khristianstva v Drevnei Rusi*. *Kratkie Soobshcheniia Instituta Arkheologii* 208 (1993) 3–11; S. FRANKLIN and J. SHEPARD, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200*. London 1996, 174–6, 227–30.

³ Thus D. CHRISTIAN, noting the gradualness of the advance of 'rainfall agriculture' northwards beyond the wooded steppe north of the Black Sea, remarks: 'In the history of Inner Eurasia, Rus and its successor states represent the belated triumph of the agrarian neolithic': *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia, I, Inner Eurasia from Prehistory to the Mongol Empire*. Oxford 1998, 327.

⁴ S. A. PLETNEVA, *Ocherki khazarskoi arkheologii*, ed. and afterword V. I. PETRUKHIN. Moscow–Jerusalem 1999, 207, 221–4.

⁵ Constantine VII, *De administrando imperio*, 38, ed. and tr. G. MORAVCSIK and R. J. H. JENKINS (*CFHB* 1). Washington, DC, 1967, 170, lines 13–14; G. KRISTÓ, *Hungarian History in the Ninth Century*. Szeged 1996, 131–4.

⁶ A. MARCANTONIO, *The Uralic Language Family: Facts, Myths and Statistics*. Oxford 2001, forthcoming.

Hrushevsky's view of the Middle Dnieper region as a geopolitical hub is shared by modern historians of diverse schools.⁷ But his quest for indigenous princes there leads to such assertions as: 'the organization of a powerful military force and princely rule in Kiev ... must be dated back to the eighth century or even earlier' (p. 302). And this, in turn, requires a stand on the 'Normanist question'. Hrushevsky tends to accept the importance of the 'Varangians' (i.e. persons of Scandinavian origin or cultural traits) at the tenth-century Kievan court. But he dismisses as tendentious the *Chronicle's* indication that the *Rus'* name had been brought south by the Varangians, preferring its apparently contrasting assumption that the name was synonymous with that of the Slav Polianians.⁸ He holds that *Rus'* was 'the native, age-old name of the Kiev region' (pp. 145–6, 296). He likewise dismisses the *Chronicle's* version of the arrival in Kiev of Askold and Dir, supposing that Askold 'was indeed a Kievan prince' (and not, as the *Chronicle* implies, of Varangian stock), while it is 'quite possible' that he led the 860 raid on Byzantium (p. 311). He further maintains that 'at the beginning of the ninth century ... there could have been no Khazar control over Kiev' (p. 302). Hrushevsky's equation of the Rus with the Polianians raises more problems than it resolves. On his own avowal, the Khazars retained formidable power in the steppes in the tenth century, still levying tribute from the Viaticians to the north-east in the 960s. One would hardly expect them to have tolerated a situation in which – Hrushevsky supposes (pp. 302, 482–3) – a prince of the Rus based on the Middle Dnieper styled himself kagan (*chaganus*), emulating the Khazar ruler's own title. Hrushevsky's solution to this anomaly is to adduce Byzantine and Byzantine-related sources so as to demonstrate the military might of the self-governing (Slav) Rus during the ninth century. He cites the *Lives* of St. George of Amastris and St. Stephen of Sougdaia, together with Photius' encyclical of 867 and his homilies referring to the Rus attack of 860 (pp. 300, 308–09). The *Lives* – especially St. Stephen's⁹ – are of questionable source-value while there is nothing in Photius' writings to indicate that the Rus attackers of 860 were predominantly Slavs. Their conduct recalls that of Northmen raiding Western Europe around that time, and John the Deacon expressly describes Constantinople's assailants as seaborne *Normanni*.¹⁰ He offers details consonant with Photius' of mass-slaughter in the suburbs: dismissal of John as being subject to confusion is therefore somewhat wilful (p. 484).

These reservations are made on the strength of evidence available to Hrushevsky. Recent research tends to reinforce them. As Poppe notes (p. 491), a convincing case has been made for regarding the term *Rus'* as a slavified form of the Baltic-Finnish name of the Swedes, *Ruotsi*.¹¹ This leaves little room for the concept of a mighty Polianian political structure deriving its name of Rus locally, and established on the Middle Dnieper through

⁷ E. g. V. I. PETRUKHIN, *Nachalo etnokul'turnoi istorii Rusi IX–XI vekov*. Smolensk – Moscow 1995, 92–101; P. TOLOCHKO, *Kyivs'ka Rus'*. Kiev 1996, 48–9, 57–63; FRANKLIN and SHEPARD, *Emergence*, 112–33.

⁸ *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, ed. V. P. ADRIANOVA-PERETTS and D. S. LIKHACHEV, with M. B. SVERDLOV. St. Petersburg 1996, 15, 16.

⁹ On the fifteenth-century Slavic *Life* of St. Stephen of Sougdaia, see PETRUKHIN, *Nachalo*, 217.

¹⁰ John the Deacon, *Chronicon*, ed. G. PERTZ (*MGH SS*, VII). Hanover 1846, 18.

¹¹ G. SCHRAMM, *Die Herkunft des Namens Rus'*: Kritik des Forschungsstandes. *Forschungen zur europäischen Geschichte* 30 (1982) 7–49; E. MELNIKOVA and V. PETRUKHIN, *The origin and evolution of the name Rus'*. *Tor* (Uppsala) 23 (1990–1) 203–34.

the ninth century. Furthermore, general considerations based on close study of Islamic coins found east of the Baltic point to exchanges at Staraja Ladoga involving Scandinavians already in the eighth century,¹² while there are indications of the arrival of individual Scandinavians in Byzantium by the end of the eighth century.¹³ Nor does archaeological evidence bespeak a powerful polity based in Kiev in the ninth century. Traces of settlement at Kiev then are confined mainly to hill-tops, with significant change in settlement patterns and construction methods coming only towards the end of the ninth century or beginning of the tenth.¹⁴ While the territory of the Polianians seems, as Hrushevsky observed (pp. 143–4, 150), to have been limited, that of the Severians was extensive.¹⁵ Slav settlements stretched south-eastwards towards the stone fortresses symbolizing Khazar dominance along the Oskol and the Donets.¹⁶ Their orientation would accord with a situation in which the Khazars continued to levy tribute from the Slavs of the wooded steppe through most, if not all, of the ninth century. Kiev might have been a convenient tribute-collection centre and the site of limited commercial exchanges, but scarcely the seat of powerful local princes.

If Hrushevsky's reconstruction of the ninth-century scene fails to convince, his handling of the tenth century is surer-footed and offers a masterly appraisal of the reign of Vladimir Sviatoslavich. Overall, his generalizations are well-grounded and the insights and judgements are of lasting value. Special praise is due to the translator. Rendering *termini technici* accurately and elegantly, she has produced an idiomatic translation that should draw many Western readers to Hrushevsky's masterpiece.

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