

**Mykhailo Hrushevsky. *History of Ukraine-Rus', Volume Two: The Eleventh to the Thirteenth Centuries.***

**Ed. Frank E. Sysyn and Christian Raffensperger, with Tania Plawuszczak-Stech. Trans. Ian Press. Edmonton: CIUS Press, 2021. vii, 606 pp. Appendices. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Tables. Maps. CAN \$119.95, hard bound.**

Thomas M. Prymak

University of Toronto

Email: [thomasprymak123@gmail.com](mailto:thomasprymak123@gmail.com)

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Mikhailo Hrushevs'kyi, 1866–1934, is doubtless one of the most important figures in modern Ukrainian history. Before 1917, he was the unrivaled leader of the Ukrainian national

movement in both eastern Ukraine under the Russians and in western Ukraine under the Austrians. Across the first half of the twentieth century, he symbolized Ukrainian national unity across international borders. During the revolution, he was elected head of the Ukrainian Central Rada, or autonomous Ukrainian national government, and guided it to a declaration of national independence in early 1918. In the 1920s, he returned to Ukraine, by then under the Soviets, for academic work. All this time, he continued to labor intensively on his monumental *History of Ukraine-Rus'* and brought it from pre-historic times to the seventeenth century. The second volume of this ten-volume work is the book addressed in this review.

Volume Two is the middle book of Hrushevs'kyi's three volume sub-series in which he chronicles the history of what historians today call Kyivan Rus'. He ends the first volume with Volodymyr the Great and the Christening of Rus'. The second volume treats the history of the next centuries and outlines the serious problems that arose out of the lack of the primogeniture succession principle such as evolved in western Europe, and its partial replacement with the principle of laterally- revolving succession among brothers. This factor was crucial in the growing weakness of the Kyivan Rus' "proto-state," if we may use a relatively new term. Hrushevs'kyi saw the highest point in the development of this proto-state very early, before the reign of Volodymyr's son Iaroslav the Wise. This was a somewhat unusual thesis, for the cultural developments under Iaroslav were impressive. It was then that the great Church of Saint Sophia was built in Kyiv and the monarch's daughters were married off to western rulers, the most famous being Anna, who became Queen of France.

But biography was never a major Hrushevs'kyi theme; he was more interested in socio-political issues and processes. From early on, he was an "ethical" socialist who openly sympathized with "the people" rather than the rulers, and so he was never given to extolling rulers to the detriment of other elements of society. He always placed much emphasis upon economics and trade and was matter of fact about religion. Still, he goes into depth on political struggles. Hrushevs'kyi was a pioneer of Ukrainian history, wrote quickly and much, and did not pay much attention to style. Consequently, to this day, he remains a difficult author to read, even in this good English translation.

In fact, the translator and editors have done a good job in smoothing out the text, checking references, and adding supplementary ones to bring Hrushevs'kyi's scholarship up to date. A good example is Hrushevs'kyi's discussion of the 1043 Rus' attack on Constantinople. Hrushevs'kyi provides us with an extensive appendix to his text, which analyzes the Slavic and Greek sources and notes the strengths and weaknesses of Byzantine historians Michael Psellos, John Skylitzes, and Michael Attaleiates, as well as the Slavic material. He concludes that the Rus' attack was basically a failure.

However, Hrushevs'kyi's twenty-first century editors take the discussion much further. They outline three modern theories about the attack. The first by Mikhail Priselkov points to religious politics linked to the establishment of an independent Rus' church structure on the eve of the great East-West Church Schism (1054). The second is typified by Andrzej Poppe's internal Byzantine thesis and a succession crisis in Constantinople, as well as Jonathan Shepard's third theory, which proposes that Iaroslav had sent his son to attack Byzantium to uphold his honor, which had been insulted by Byzantine mistreatment of a Rus' merchant. In 1948, George Vernadsky had outlined some of this, but the discussion here is a valuable and balanced update.

Of course, there is much Kyivan Rus' history that Hrushevs'kyi held to the next volume of his sub-series. Hegumen Danylo's important pilgrim account of Palestine is thus held over. But in sum, Hrushevs'kyi's three-volume history of Kyivan Rus' remains one of the most detailed and valuable ever written and is fortunate to have found such expert modern editors and translators. And Paul Hollingsworth's historiographical introduction to this volume is excellent.