

Book Reviews

LUR'E, IA. S. *Obshcherusskie letopisi XIV-XV vv.* [All-Russian chronicles of the 14th and 15th centuries]. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1976. 284 pp. 1.54 rubles.

No subject occupies as significant a portion of Iakov Solomonovich Lur'e's wide-ranging scholarship as the study of Russian chronicles, which he began while a student of M. D. Priselkov (to whom he dedicates the book under review) and has continued with a series of important articles that have appeared with increasing frequency in recent years. His monograph on the all-Russian chronicles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is the culmination of a life's work and in every respect is a remarkable achievement.

Unlike some of his colleagues, who merely cut and splice their earlier articles to create a book, Lur'e has systematically reorganized and revised his earlier work, in the process adding much that is new for this volume. In each numbered section he poses a series of questions. Following a lucid historiographical survey of a given problem, he applies A. A. Shakhmatov's comparative-textological method, beginning with the examination of surviving chronicles, then reconstructing their protographs, and finally attempting to determine the milieu in which the texts were compiled. Lur'e has managed to make his complex subject comprehensible by compressing much of the textological proof into footnotes and providing appropriate summaries of each step in his argumentation. Stemmata showing genealogies of texts and indexes

of names and chronicles facilitate use of the book for reference.

In a short review, one can only begin to give an idea of the important contributions of Lur'e's book. He provides the first complete scheme of the interrelationships of all the major all-Russian chronicles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He draws a number of far-reaching conclusions, notably: there were no Muscovite all-Russian chronicles compiled before the last quarter of the fourteenth century; Muscovite grand-princely chronicles do not appear before the second half of the fifteenth century, at which time the prince's court replaces the Metropolitan's as the most important center for Muscovite chronicle writing; the compilation of non-official chronicles of any scope virtually ceases by the end of that period. To be sure, not all of this is new, but where agreeing with the conclusions of his predecessors, Lur'e usually proves their views by adducing fresh evidence. It is unlikely though that all his conclusions which I find particularly persuasive will convince others. For example, his support of Priselkov's contention that the monk Lavrentii merely copied but did not edit the chronicle that bears his name has been vigorously disputed. Most scholars probably will agree with Lur'e that there is little evidence for the existence of the "Polychron" posited by Shakhmatov and Priselkov as a source for the important "Compilation of 1448." However, Lur'e's support for the conclusions of M. A. Salmina regarding the origin of certain "tales" found first in the "Compilation of 1448" will not satisfy peo-

ple who find it convenient to date them several decades earlier. He breaks the most new ground in his discussion of official and especially unofficial chronicle traditions of the last third of the fifteenth century. It is precisely in this increasingly complex and hitherto uncharted territory, where it is possible to trace a considerable refinement of Lur'e's own views over the years, that new discoveries and further textological studies are most likely to require some emendation of his conclusions.

The reviewer who has not himself spent years studying chronicles can at best check isolated examples, an approach that is hardly sufficient to confirm or reject the major conclusions of a study such as this one. In cases I know in some detail for material in chronicles compiled before the last two decades of the fifteenth century, Lur'e's posited genealogies for the texts all seem to be valid. In general, I have only minor quibbles with the author—concerning matters such as his fuzzy explanation of the relatively muted "anti-Tatar" tone of the "Compilation of 1305," his somewhat confusing multiple labeling of the hypothetical Rostov Compilation of the 1480s, and his suggestion of the probable primacy of the Rostov account dealing with the confrontation on the River Ugra in 1480.

It is difficult to emphasize sufficiently the importance of this book for all those who would study seriously the history and literature of medieval Russia. Perhaps the most appropriate tribute is to suggest that more than any others, four individuals have left a lasting mark on scholarship dealing with the textual history of pre-sixteenth-century Russian chronicles: A. A. Shakhmatov, M. D. Priselkov, A. N. Nasonov, and Ia. S. Lur'e.

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