conditions and economic development of towns and villages. The same can be said about contributions by M. Hrynbiat, A. Koršunaŭ, M. Kacer, H. Halenčanka, S. Misko, B. Smolski and N. Pierkin on the development of Byelorussian culture.

The book is richly illustrated and contains 10 well-executed maps. One cannot, however, help feeling certain misgivings about the use as illustrations (luckily few) of works by modern artists, which, whatever their artistic merits, are of no value to the historian and at the same time are often suggestive of a partisan interpretation of the historical events they purport to illustrate.

On balance, despite its many commendable points, it is a rather disappointing work which leaves one

with a feeling that the history of Byelorussia has yet to be written.

A. Nadson

Notes

1. V. Martynaŭ, A. Michnievič, 'Bie-laruskaja etymaŭhija'. *Matadość* 12, Minsk, 1969, p. 139.
2. M. Ułaščyk, 'Kniha pra Połackuju ziamlu'. *Potymia*, 4, Minsk, 1967, p. 242.
3. *Ibid.* p. 239.
4. U. Ihnatoŭski. *Historyja Bielarusi ŭ XIX i pačatku XX stалеccia*. Minsk, 1928, p. 5.
5. Martynaŭ & Michnievič, *op & loc cit.*
6. A. N. Mal'cev (ed.), 'Barkulabovskaja letopis'. *Archeografičeskij ežegodnik za 1960 g.* Moscow, 1962, p. 306.
7. F. Skaryna, *Pradmovy i pasla-stoŭji*. Minsk, 1969, p. 53.

Hraviury Francyska Skaryny. Compiled, introd. and annot. by L. Barazna. 'Bie-larus', Minsk, 1972. 158 pages. Illustrations.

This collection of engravings, ornamental plates and illuminated initials from the *Biblija Ruska* (Prague, 1517-9) and the *Malaja podorožnaja knižica* (Vilna, 1522) is the first attempt to present to the general public a comprehensive survey of the graphic art of Francis Skaryna (c. 1485-1540). It is appropriate that such a book should appear during the year which marks the 450th anniversary of printing in Byelorussia. A few years ago the first complete text of Skaryna's *Prefaces and Postscripts* was also published in Minsk (see *JBS*, II, 2, pp. 230-1), and so the complete original works of the great Byelorussian humanist of the Renaissance have now been made available to students.

The present collection is handsomely presented: the standard of the photographic reproductions and enlargements of the engravings is satisfactory, although one might have hoped that the editors would have used a facsimile process such as line engravings, rather than somewhat blurred photo-blocks. The commentary is in Byelorussian and Russian, and consists of a preface and a study of the engravings with explanatory notes. The preface proper gives a few details of Skaryna's life, his probable artistic training and his place in the contemporary European context. The

authors also deal very briefly with previous writers who have made studies of Skaryna's artistic work, such as Stasov, Karataev, Vladimirov and Ščakacichin. There follow the photographic reproductions together with a number of enlargements of Skaryna's forty-seven known engravings, and of the frontispieces, headpieces, vignettes and ornamental lettering to his books covering the period 1517-25. In the commentary at the end of the collection the author L. Barazna embarks on a summary analysis of the engravings which, following Ščakacichin, he divides into five groups, according to their composition, general style and draughtsmanship. In seeking to differentiate each group, Barazna attempts nothing more than a classification by subject matter, and design; he does not go as far as Ščakacichin in questioning the authorship of groups (see the present reviewer's *The engravings of Francis Skaryna*, *JBS*, I, pp. 159 ff.). Whether Skaryna was the author of all the engravings in his works or not, and whether he was helped by a number of assistants, as some writers have thought, Ščakacichin's grouping of the engravings by style seems preferable to the rather more nebulous criteria of classification by subject matter adopted by Barazna. Some of the engravings, such

as *Jeremiah*, the *Coronation of the Beloved*, and the *Divine Wisdom* are quite outstanding, both in execution, composition and design. Others depicting larger groups, and perhaps more animated scenes, are equal in excellence, though lacking the masterly compositional unity of the three former engravings: such are, for example, *The Judgment of Solomon*, *The anointing of David*, *David dancing before the ark*, and *The Seraphim in prayer*. Yet a number of engravings lack, sometimes quite strikingly, the finesse and sense of unity so evident in the two foregoing groups, and their artistic quality varies widely, from the relatively proficient *Ruth* or *The Creation* to the somewhat feeble *Job*. Other engravings seem, stylistically, to ante-date the better examples by at least a decade; such are the markedly Gothic *Moses teaching the Second commandment*, and more surprisingly, the illustrations from the later *Malaja podorožnaja knižica* (1522), such as *Christ teaching in the Temple*, *The Annunciation* and the *Baptism of Our Lord*.

Yet there are undeniable links between all these groups of engravings, notwithstanding these stylistic differences: the constantly recurring motif of the sun and moon in works of varying quality, the general high standard of the facial expressions, and the similarity of detail in the draping

and folds of the clothing. Barazna is therefore probably justified in supporting the widely accepted view that some at least of the engravings were executed by assistants, following drawings prepared by Skaryna.

In addition Barazna advances one or two interesting new theories. He suggests for example that the engraving of the Holy Virgin on the frontispiece of the *Malaja podorožnaja knižica* is a copy of the Icon of Our Lady from the Holy Trinity monastery in Vilna. Similarly he surmises that the enigmatic letters 'MZ.' in the bottom lefthand corner of Francis Skaryna's portrait are not the initials of a possible contemporary artist such as M. Zasinger or M. Zegel (as Rovinsky suggested), but represent in abbreviation the words *Malavaŋnie zdietai* or *malavanija zižditiei* which are to be read in conjunction with Skaryna's own name which is depicted a little lower on the block.

Despite its shortcomings, which have been dealt with more extensively elsewhere by E. Nemirovsky ('*Albom staropečatnych gravjur*', *V mire knigi*, 1973, 2, pp. 74-5), students of Byelorussian graphic art will welcome this publication as an essential basis for their research into the models and origins of Francis Skaryna's artistic formation.

H. Pichura

Ja-r. *Narodnaja mudraść i materyjalnaja kultura na chutary Vysoki Hrud, što na Pružanščynie*. Heidelberg, 1969. 36 pages. Illustrations. (Mimeographed).

In this interesting monograph the author, who originates from the north-western part of Byelorussian Palešsie, describes the everyday life, customs and folklore which prevailed in a family home on a Byelorussian farm prior to the year 1939. The Popko family owned a sizable estate in the Pružany district, comprising some 100 hectares of arable and marshland and supporting a clan of 16 people living in three separate households. Details of local flora and livestock, as well as numerous illustrations of farm implements, tools and household articles, ranging from pitchforks to mousetraps, have been painstakingly recorded by the author. He also gives a collection of pro-

verbs, riddles and sayings commonly used on the estate, together with a number of local ritual songs, folk-songs and tales. It is worth noting that Vysoki Hrud was visited by the distinguished Byelorussian musicologist Ryhor Šyrma who recorded a number of folk-songs from the wife of the head of the family, Hanna Popko (born Ivaniukievič), during one of his ethnographical expeditions.

The study appears at a time when many of the customs and usages of rural Byelorussia are tending to disappear. It casts an attractive and lively light on the passing of country life in a secluded but ethnographically interesting area.

H. Pichura