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Review

JAROSLAV NIKOLAEVIČ GUTGARC, *Russko-tigrajskij tigrin'ja-russkij razgovornik i slovar' (Éritreja, Éfiopija)*. መምህራ ዝርርብ ትግርኛ-ሩሲያኛ ሩሲያኛ-ትግርኛ ምስ መዝገበ ቻላት

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contribution to the literature not only on Ethiopia but on Africa more generally. Needless to say, Sidaama culture is massively shaping pop culture in Ethiopia, as can be seen through the music and clothing as well as dance. This is one area that could have been explored to show the connections and resonances beyond the region under discussion. In the discussion on change and continuity, the author privileges major ‘events’ that led to huge transformation and also focused purely on empire as the sole actor. However, it would have enriched the work even further if the author had paid attention to other forces and actors such as the Oromo. In particular, one would expect reference to the mutual influence of *luwa* and *gadaa*, Fičee, and Irreecha as there seem to be some obvious overlaps well worth exploring.

While the author might take these issues into account for future work, as it stands now, the book contributes greatly to scholarship on Ethiopian studies. It introduces one major voice that, historically, has been marginalized by hegemonic voices of empire. This immensely shapes knowledge production processes and, hopefully, inspires more in-depth discussion.

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JAROSLAV NIKOLAEVIČ GUTGARC [YAROSLAV GUTGARTS], *Russko-tigrajskij tigrin'ja–rususkij razgovornik i slovar' (Ēritreja, Ēfiopija)*. መምህራ ዝርርብ ትግርኛ–ሩሲያኛ ሩሲያኛ–ትግርኛ ምስ መዝገበ ቻላት ('Russian–Təgrəñña Təgrəñña–Russian phrase book and dictionary (Eritrea, Ethiopia)') (Moskva: Nauka–Vostočnaja Literatura, 2017). 455 pp. Price: unknown. ISBN: 978-5-02-039804-7.

There is a growing body of phrase books, dictionaries, and other learning aids for people eager to gain some practical knowledge of Təgrəñña. Among them, this tastefully published middle-size book is a pearl: well thought-out and reliable from both the linguistic and cultural point of view. Like no other contemporary source on the language, it incorporates both varieties of Təgrəñña: that which is spoken in Eritrea, and that which is spoken in Təgray in northern Ethiopia.¹ The few criticisms to be made below are all of a minor and technical nature.

The book is divided into two major sections of more or less equal size: a phrase book and a dictionary. It opens with preliminaries in Russian encompassing a Preface, an introduction to the Təgrəñña language and its speakers, a succinct outline of

¹ A small improvement would have been to mark, when two options are given, which community uses which word.

the history of Eritrea and Ethiopia, general information on Eritrea and Təgray (ethnic groups, languages, religions and the like), a guide to the use of the phrase book, and a presentation of Təgrāñña pronunciation and transcription. The Təgrāñña version of the preliminaries consists of similar components but here the target language is Russian and the speech community described are the Russians. A final three-page section of the book contains a list of useful phrases for quick reference, for example, ‘thank you’, ‘what is your name?’, and ‘I love you’.

The phrase book’s target audience, as stated by the author, embraces both Russian speakers travelling to Eritrea and Ethiopia, and Təgrāñña speakers travelling to Russia (plus the former Soviet republics). Gutgarts goes to great lengths to treat both groups on an equal footing, a practice quite unusual for this type of work. Each of the Russian parts of the phrase book, beginning from the preliminaries, through all the topics and situations, up to the extras dealing with Təgrāñña culture and travel tips, is mirrored in the Təgrāñña part catering to the needs of the Təgrāñña-speaking readership eager to learn Russian. Here there is an imbalance, in that the history of Russia, the Russian language, and especially Russian pronunciation and transliteration are treated in much less detail than their Təgrāñña counterparts. This puts the Təgrāñña audience at a disadvantage; but perhaps the author has (rightly) felt that information on anything involving Russia should be relatively easy to access.

Another lack of parallelism that will strike the reader already on the cover is the use of two slightly different Russian glossonyms for ‘Təgrāñña’. Thus, in the title we read *russko-tigrajskij* (Russian–*tigrajskij*; an adjectival form derived from ‘Təgray’) but *tigrin’ja-russkij* (*tigrin’ja*–Russian). The author later explains in a footnote (p. 17, n. 10) that the word *tigrajskij* (normally associated with the Ethiopian region of Təgray) is employed in the book in the ‘traditional way’ (whose tradition?) to refer to both the language and the Təgrāñña-speaking people of Eritrea and Ethiopia; but I find the double naming for the selfsame language, especially in the title, pointlessly confusing. It would have been better to stick to the single (and not less widely accepted) form *tigrin’ja*.

Throughout the book the author uses his own original transcription system, applying the Ethiopic writing system for transcribing Russian and, correspondingly, Cyrillic for transcribing Təgrāñña. I find this idea very user-friendly—to employ the Latin alphabet in its English or IPA versions would only overstrain the reader unnecessarily. There is a section on pronunciation and transcription for both languages, but, curiously, we do not find out which Russian letters/Təgrāñña syllabographs correspond to which sound. A table showing matching pairs—a letter/syllabograph and a sound—would have been highly useful.

The phrase book offers a representative, wide array of general topics, such as ‘everyday communication’, ‘arrival’, and ‘hotel’, which are further divided into more detailed subjects. To give some idea about the latter here are a few within

the topic ‘free time’: ‘trips and [tourist] attractions’, ‘museum’, ‘theater’, ‘cinema’, ‘seaside’, ‘night club and bar’. In tune with the times, it also subsumes such helpful topics as ‘photocopying’ and ‘internet’. As a result of economic cooperation between Russia and the two African countries in the fields of medicine and mining, the author has decided to expand the section on health and to devote one short section to mining terms.

The second major section of Gutgarts’s work, the dictionary, is the first Russian–Təgrəñña, Təgrəñña–Russian bilingual dictionary anywhere. It contains some two thousand words in each part, which are those ‘most frequently used in everyday life and while travelling’ (p. 254) along with some three hundred terms from the field of medicine. This assessment of ‘most frequently’ cannot help but be an approximation unless the author has really worked with a corpus. This might be possible in the case of Russian, where the lexicographer has at her/his disposal the Russian National Corpus; but not for Təgrəñña, where there is no analogous corpus and one can only rely on her/his intuition and familiarity with the language.

As for the rationale of the dictionary within the project as a whole, on the one hand, it is meant to complement the phrase book by supplying the user with yet more alternative words, while, on the other, it provides lexical items which have not been separately treated in the phrase book, such as animals, furniture, colours, quality adjectives, pronouns, and adverbs. What is, however, lacking in the Introduction to the dictionary is a clear statement whether it is geared only for production, only for comprehension, or for both. And that makes a difference. As the phrase book is aimed unmistakably at production, we would expect the same orientation for the dictionary: like the phrase book, the Russian–Təgrəñña part of the dictionary should target Russian speakers so that all explanatory or supplementary information in an entry would be given in Russian; similarly, in the Təgrəñña–Russian part, which is intended for Təgrəñña speakers, all the additional lexical explanation should be provided in Təgrəñña. But this is not the case. Moreover, the supplementary lexical information provided is too sketchy for a true production-comprehension dictionary. At the very least, it would be advantageous for Təgrəñña speakers to be provided with irregular forms of Russian nouns and verbs. On the whole, however, this pioneering lexicographical enterprise is a success and the reader can see that much good thought has gone into its preparation.

Gutgarts’s Russian–Təgrəñña/Təgrəñña–Russian bilingual phrase book and dictionary is an ambitious and serious piece of work whose quality goes well beyond that of common phrase books supplied with a dictionary. It may be strongly recommended to anyone who knows one of the two languages and is keen on learning the other.

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