Languages of the Caucasus

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"A museum of ethnology and philology": rediscovering an early work of Caucasian linguistics

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ABSTRACT

Cyril Graham's *The Avar Language*, a treatise consisting of a linguistic description and an extensive English-Avar wordlist, originally appeared in the late nineteenth century in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, and has been republished in the early twenty-first century in book form, with Russian translation and commentary by Boris Ataev of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Makhachkala. Welcoming Ataev's contribution in making it accessible to the modern Russophone audience, I discuss the linguistic qualities and shortcomings of Graham's article as well as the complex and revealing history of its composition. Engagingly written and in some respects perceptive, while in other respects outmoded even in its own time, it provides an insight into the early development of Caucasian linguistic study in the West.

Keywords

Avar language, Daghestan, History of linguistics

This is a contribution from *Languages of the Caucasus,* Vol. 5 pp. 69-83.
ISSN 2375-2068

Languages of the Caucasus, Vol. 5.
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"A museum of ethnology and philology": rediscovering an early work of Caucasian linguistics

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The Nakh-Daghestanian language family is nowadays well-known in linguistic circles thanks to the important contributions its dozens of highly diverse languages have made to the study of phonological and morphosyntactic typology. However, the synchronic and diachronic study of Nakh-Daghestanian is in its infancy compared to that of more widespread, culturally prominent families of Eurasia such as Turkic, Semitic and Indo-European: it has been the subject of linguistic scholarship for a relatively short time only, and few of its languages and dialects enjoy historical documentation dating back much beyond the start of the twentieth century. For obvious reasons, the centre of gravity of Nakh-Daghestanian studies has historically been in the Soviet Union and latterly in Russia, with important work being published in Moscow but also by the Russian Academy of Sciences in Makhachkala, the capital of the Republic of Daghestan.

So the rediscovery of a nineteenth-century linguistic work dedicated to a language of this family, never before published in Russian and previously all but inaccessible to Russian-speaking readers, comes as a welcome addition to scholarship

[1] This article was written within the framework of the Surrey Morphology Group's project *External Agreement*, funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant AH/R005540/1); I gratefully acknowledge the AHRC's support. I also wish to thank Timur Maisak and Marina Chumakina for their comments on an earlier draft, and Boris Ataev for giving me a copy of his book (and a warm welcome to RAS Makhachkala) in 2018, and thereby bringing Graham's treatise to my attention.

in the field. This is what is provided by Boris Ataev, Acting Deputy Director of the Institute of Language, Literature and Art at RAS Makhachkala, with his modern edition (Ataev 2014) of Cyril Graham's *The Avar Language*, a treatise published in 1881 in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. This work, produced on the basis of linguistic material collected in 1873, consists of an English-Avar wordlist of over one thousand items followed by a linguistic description of Avar. The edition reproduces the full English-language text (62pp. in the original, pages 98–159 in this edition), accompanied by Ataev's translation into Russian together with his own annotations provided in footnotes. Here I discuss the nature of Graham's article and the interest it holds, both in terms of its linguistic content and as an early example of scholarship on Nakh-Daghestanian, as well as commenting on the work Ataev has done in repackaging it for the Russian-speaking reader in the modern day. While in some ways Graham's work is of dubious quality as a piece of language description,[2] it provides a valuable insight into how knowledge of the Caucasus and its languages diffused into the West in the nineteenth century, and what those responsible saw themselves as doing.

Along with the linguistic material itself, to which I turn below, a brief overview of the author's career is provided in Ataev's edition (in both Russian and English), and this – together with Graham's own introductory remarks on how he, an Englishman, came to engage with the study of Avar in the first place – serves as a reminder of the cultural and historical context in which the work was produced. Sir Cyril C. Graham (1834–1895), 5th Baronet of Kirkstall, was born into an age in which talented upper-class British men commonly saw service overseas as diplomats and colonial administrators, but also enjoyed a great deal of freedom to travel privately and undertake foreign expeditions for the sake of intellectual interest alone, benefiting from their own personal wealth and the geopolitical clout of Great Britain in the Victorian period. Graham fits very neatly into this picture. In his professional life he played a part in British diplomatic efforts in the Ottoman Empire (under Lord Dufferin, a future Viceroy of India) and in Canada and the Hudson's Bay Territory, before serving as Lieutenant-Governor of Grenada in the West Indies. At the same time, he was an active member of several learned societies to which he communicated findings from his foreign travels, including not only the Royal Asiatic Society but also the Geological Society and the Royal Geographical Society, for which he served as Foreign Secretary for five years; in his twenties he published a paper in the *Transactions of the Royal Society*

[2] The existence of Graham's work is apparently mentioned only once in the scholarly literature on Avar, by Saidov (1967:7f.), who says that 'it is not notable for its originality' [не отличается оригинальностью].

of Literature presenting his analysis of a collection of Greek inscriptions he had discovered while exploring in the Syrian Desert (Graham 1859).

Graham came to the study of Avar as the result of a later expedition, undertaken in 1873 across the Russian Empire from the Arctic to Tbilisi and onwards to Odessa – in the course of which he was granted safe passage across Daghestan thanks to the good graces of Prince L. I. Melikov, later to serve as the commander of the Caucasus Military District. It was during his journey across Daghestan that he became curious about Avar, a *lingua franca* in mountain regions then as now; this was partly because of its distinctive phonology in comparison with Arabic, Turkish and the European languages familiar to him. In Graham's telling, hearing the Avar numerals recited by an interpreter (*'loaded as they are with "clicks"'*) inspired him to begin compiling an Avar word list, by interrogating speakers that he encountered en route through Daghestan. Upon arriving in Tbilisi he then made contact with Adolf Bergé, historian and chairman of the Caucasian Archaeographical Commission, who made available his own materials on Avar; Bergé, in turn, had previously worked on the language with Hitinaw Muhammad (Sheikh) Lachenilaw, an Avar mufti and scholar and one of the tutors of Imam Shamil, leader of the mid-nineteenth century resistance against the Russians in Daghestan.

This appears to have been Graham's only trip to Russia or the Caucasus. It will be clear that he embarked on the study of Avar not as a dedicated student of the region, nor even as a professional European orientalist more generally, in a century in which the pressure towards academic specialization was felt much less keenly than it is today.[3] Rather, he was simply taking the opportunity granted to him as a *dilettante* to pursue his interest in an intellectual topic which had attracted his attention – and the world he lived in was one where it was not unusual for a well-connected enthusiast to get such opportunities. Graham's status as an interested amateur is something that he has no reason to hide, and in his introduction he admits that the results of his own questions to Avar speakers were *'meagre'* in comparison with the substantial lexical and grammatical information that Bergé and Lachenilaw had already compiled in Russian. In fact, Graham readily states that he sees his own role as little more than to edit the manuscript provided to him by Bergé and thus make it available to his British audience.

Because of this layered history, it is not always easy to tell how much of the content of the article originates with Graham himself and how much he merely translated. The basic structure of the work – a large lexicon accompanied by a

[3] Consider the example of Julius Klaproth, who not only produced early grammar sketches of Avar and other Caucasian languages (Klaproth 1814) but also played a vital role in the development of the study of East Asian history and culture in Europe; or Anton Schiefner (to whom I return below), who carried out seminal work on Tibetan, Mongolian and Finnic languages alongside his work in the Caucasus.

grammatical sketch – is evidently drawn from Bergé and Lachenilaw's manuscript, as is most of the Avar material presented. However, it seems likely that Graham's contribution to the text is not as minor as he suggests. The discursive introduction and account of the Arabic-based *ajam* writing system (conventional for Avar at the time) appear to be his own, and they lead into the English-Avar vocabulary, with around 1100 entries in total; it is arranged by alphabetical order of the English entries (this is of course Graham's work), with the Avar item listed in both *ajam* and a Latin-based transcription. This is followed by the grammatical portion of the article, which is organized by part of speech[4] and includes numerous tables of nominal and pronominal inflection, verbal inflection, and numerals. Graham comments that this part was *'given without note or comment whatsoever'* (p.101), suggesting that the text accompanying the tables is his own. Finally, the brief conclusion is by Graham.

I thus treat Graham as the single author of the work, although the linguistic 'raw material' is primarily contributed by Bergé and Lachenilaw. And the Avar material itself is in some ways of less interest to the modern reader than the manner in which Graham presents it in his own terms, which are often distinctive and humorous. The start of the section on *The Verbs* (p.149) is representative:

> *After the extraordinary inflections to which the previous parts of speech have been subjected, one might well look with dread to what may happen to the verbs. Curiously enough these, except in the migration from tense to tense, remain perfectly quiet. Even our inveterate enemy* to be*, who in almost every cultivated language gives us so much trouble, assumes a stolidity which is surprising.*

Another colourful passage (p.104) concerns the voiceless uvular ejective *q'* of *q'ʷerq'* 'frog', transcribed by Graham as *k̲* :

> *K̲, which my Sheikh* [i.e. Lachenilaw] *tells me, so far as he knows, is to be found only in three or four words, the most notable of which is* k̲werk̲*, frog, but he says, "I have never been able to frame my mouth to pronounce this word", and he adds naively, "to the best of my belief no creature in the world can properly pronounce the frog's name but the frog himself."*

[4] The titles of the component sections are *The Article; The Numerals; The Substantive; The Formation of the Plural; Declension of the Substantive; The Adjective; Personal Pronouns; Demonstrative Pronouns; Determinative Pronouns; Possessive Pronouns; Indefinite Pronouns; The Verbs; Adverbs; Prepositions; Conjunctions*.

As illustrated by these excerpts, the tone is engaging and often conversational rather than impersonal. Although the above is purportedly quoted from Lachenilaw (presumably via Bergé), in general Graham speaks in his own voice, and not only in those parts of the introduction where he is accounting for his acquaintance with Avar. Accordingly, we get the chance to see what a cultured non-specialist of his time found noteworthy about the Avar language and people, and how he chose to present the subject to other interested parties from the West with no direct knowledge of the Caucasus. He considers it necessary to distinguish these Avars, of the Caucasus, from the historical (Pannonian) Avars of the first millennium AD, who emerged in the Great Migration period after the fall of the Western Roman Empire and would have been better known to Europeans with a classical education. At the same time, he expects his readers to be familiar with the turning point of the Caucasian War (only twenty years in the past at the time his article came out) and evokes the scene of Shamil's capture in 1859 in literary terms (p.99):

> *At Gunîb, once an almost impregnable, now an impregnable fortress, in which Shamyl, having been driven from mountain top to mountain top, kept the whole force of the Russians at bay, until after months of pressure that last stronghold had to be surrendered…*

Graham also takes it to be well-known that the Caucasus is a *'Babel'* of different languages, and this explains its particular interest to scholars: *'such a variety of races of independent extraction and diversity of speech are to be found, that the Caucasus may well be called a museum of ethnology and philology'* (p.99) – a sentiment which is not far removed from what one might read in a corresponding work today, though of course recognition of the Caucasus as a hotbed of ethnic and linguistic diversity dates back to the Arabic travellers of the Middle Ages and even to classical antiquity (Catford 1977).[5] Meanwhile, his own personal interest in Avar shines through the work, and he considers the language exotic and unfamiliar to the point of uniqueness, commenting that it *'differs in its vocabulary from anything else far and near'* and being especially impressed by Avar phonology, in particular *'a certain peculiarity which at once strikes*

[5] Graham's proposed explanation for this state of affairs, again stated in picturesque terms, is that the modern peoples of the Caucasus are descended from successive waves of refugees who took flight into the mountains where they would be safe (p.99):

> *…century after century, races and vanquished peoples have been driven by those persistent revolutions which in Central Asia have occurred on a scale without parallel in the history of other parts of the earth, to seek refuge in places inaccessible to their persecutors, and in which once lodged they remained and multiplied.*

the stranger; the extraordinary "click" found in the beginning, the middle and the end of words, and resembling nothing in our continent' (p.102), by which he is surely referring to the lateral ejective affricate [tɬ'ː]. His surprise at other aspects of Avar has already been touched on: as Ataev points out, Graham's light-hearted perplexity at the behaviour of the verb arises from his assumption that the morphology of verbs (and especially *to be*) is supposed to be sensitive to person, hence his comparison of the Avar verb paradigm to a pseudo-English paradigm with the forms *'I am, thou am, he am, we am, you am, they am'* (p.149).

This preference for enthusiasm and expressiveness, while it is accompanied by something of an exoticizing flavour,[6] does not mean that Graham's work is lacking in critical sense, and he shows some signs of having considered his material and how best to present it. The grammatical sketch is arranged in accordance with Western conventions of the time, and thus features sections on *Prepositions* and *The Article*, but it acknowledges that Avar is in fact characterized by postpositions, and does not impose the existence of articles on a language which has none (observing merely that Avar sometimes uses a demonstrative pronoun where English would require the definite article). Graham argues for consistent and efficient transcriptions, favouring *č*, *ž*, *š* over more unwieldy equivalents,[7] and he makes the deliberate choice to arrange his word list according to the English headwords, reasoning (rightly or wrongly) that this will be most helpful for users.[8]

At times it is clear that he is thinking perceptively within the confines of his own intellectual milieu. For example, he takes for granted racial and linguistic groupings which have not stood the test of time, identifying Avar as belonging to the *'Turanian'* languages, a term coined by Max Müller (then Professor of Comparative Philology at Oxford) which conflated all languages of Eurasia which could not be assigned to Indo-European, Semitic or Chinese; but he correctly notes that this in itself says nothing

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[6] Note for example the interpolated comment in the following sentence (p.99), which would not be out of place in a literary retelling of a folk tale:

> *I may here remind the reader that so diverse are the tribes of the Caucasus in origin and in speech, that the traveller may in one day pass through three or four communities who – but for the jargon of a rude interpreter, who is in fact the ordinary tajar or carrier, a retailer of little luxuries and of gossip – would be unintelligible to one another.*

[7] p.104, and cf. p.158: *'I cannot find it either in the Tshetshentsh – how much easier to write Čečenč – …'*

[8] *'I think that in rendering an obscure or little known language, by far the most convenient form of giving a vocabulary is to place the* European *words alphabetically foremost, so that the student who wishes to make a comparison between a variety of dialects can at once turn to the words… which most excite his curiosity'* (p.101).

about the Avars as a people, as there is no guarantee of a link between the ancestry of a language and that of the population that speaks it (p.102):

> *Their physiognomy, I am bound to say, led me to take them for men of Aryan descent, but this would not, of course, be incompatible with the fact that their speech might have been borrowed from another source.*

The overall impression provided by Graham's work is of an enquiring and enterprising figure with a wide-ranging interest in linguistics and human history; one mark of this is the fact that in discussing the Avar '*click*' that he finds so remarkable, he comments that it is utterly different from those heard in South Africa (i.e. the lingual ingressive sounds still referred to as clicks in modern terminology), *'but reminding us of the terminal sound so exuberant in the Aztek language'* (i.e. the lateral affricate [t͡ɬ] of Nahuatl, reflected by the spelling <tl>). These eclectic allusions indicate someone whose linguistic points of reference are by no means limited to the classical and 'elite' European languages which would have figured most prominently in his own education and that of his readership.

However, Graham's treatment of this *'extraordinary'* sound also serves as a neat illustration of the deficiencies of his approach to linguistic description. It is telling that although he returns to the topic several times, at no point does he attempt to describe the sound itself in its own terms. On the contrary, he comments that *'Except to those who have heard it uttered, it is impossible to explain it'* (p.102). This remark nicely captures Graham's conversational tone, but also the scientific limitations entailed by the style of presentation seen in this work, which is often impressionistic rather than precise. It is notable that while taking the opportunity to inform his readers about a feature of Avar which (as far as he is concerned) is unparalleled elsewhere in Europe, Graham satisfies himself with a description which lays more weight on its outlandish nature than how it is actually pronounced. In fact, although it is reasonable to assume that the object of his fascination is the ejective [t͡ɬʼ:] now written with the digraph <кь>, it is not clear whether he recognizes that this is distinct, let alone how it differs, from its non-ejective counterpart [t͡ɬ:], modern <лl> or <лълъ>.

What is salient here is not, exactly, Graham's failure to find terminology suitable to communicate the concept of voiceless alveolar lateral affricates of different kinds. Rather, it is that his writing gives the impression that he has not fully realized this would be worth doing. This casual approach is typical of his treatment of the pronunciation of Avar, and it makes his article less useful than it might have been. In both the word list and the grammar, Graham chooses to take as his starting point the *ajam* representations of Avar words that he effectively 'inherited' from Bergé and Lachenilaw, and uses Roman letters simply to transliterate the *ajam* characters. But while this is a defensible choice (and indeed it is now one of the more valuable linguistic

features of the book that it preserves what appear to be the spellings of Avar words preferred by a sophisticated native speaker of the period), it has the result that we are never introduced to the sounds of Avar in their own right. In fact, Graham simply walks us through the *ajam* 'alphabet', largely attributing to the letters their conventional Arabic values, and he does not discuss how successfully these letters capture the sounds they are intended to represent. In particular, it can be pointed out that he never mentions that the character ڀ, which he transliterates as *tl*, is used to represent multiple sounds (including the distinctive 'click' specifically when it is marked with the diacritic *tashdid* used in Arabic to signal gemination), and not all of these involve a dental, cf. his transliteration *antlgo* for what is now written *анлъго* /anɬgo/ 'six'.

The fact that Graham's article conflates the very different functions of a transliteration and a transcription in this way is one indication, among others, that it suffers from the lack of a truly *linguistic* mindset as we would understand it today – though not all such issues can be laid at Graham's door if, as he says, the grammatical portion is largely the work of Bergé and Lachenilaw. That is, the description does not make a consistent effort to lay out the observed behaviour of Avar in a manner which allows it to make sense in terms of its own principles, and to explain these principles to the reader. Thus the section on *Verbs* contains tables illustrating the fact that different verbs require different cases of their subject (examples include *bogizi* 'to be', taking the absolutive case; *abizi* 'to tell', taking the ergative; *tlazi* 'to know', taking the superessive); but this is never explicitly stated, and indeed the ergative case goes unrepresented in the tables illustrating nominal inflection. I presume that this is because the 'nominative' role, as Graham sees it, is already accounted for by the absolutive case; and in general, the treatment of case morphology is one area where the grammar betrays traditional preconceptions about what one *ought* to find in a language. For example, Graham identifies an Avar vocative case, and describes his hesitation as to whether to identify a distinct accusative case as well, in a revealing passage (p.159) which shows that he has not appreciated the logic of ergative-absolutive alignment.

To some extent this is unsurprising, and naturally one would not expect a linguistic description from 1881 to meet modern-day scholarly standards, given all that we have learnt in the intervening period about human language and its study. However, we should not be too quick to assume that any faults in Graham's work merely reflect its age. In fact, the circumstances of its production allow for an interesting 'natural experiment'. In his introduction, Graham mentions that the notes of Bergé's that he drew on in putting this treatise together had previously been made available to (Franz) Anton Schiefner, a Tibetologist and Caucasologist based in St Petersburg, who himself brought out a description of Avar containing a grammar and word list (Schiefner 1862) which came to Graham's attention after he had completed his own. A comparison of the

two works thus has the potential to reveal something about Graham's individual approach to the task he set himself.

The comparison is illuminating. To the modern eye, Schiefner's treatment is of course lacking in many respects itself, giving little space to Avar syntax as opposed to morphology, for example; but on the points mentioned above where Graham's article falls down, Schiefner is much more successful. Crucially, he recognizes the existence and function of the ergative case (his *'Instructiv oder Aktiv'*), and he attempts to represent Avar directly by means of a transcription appropriate to the sounds of the language, which he describes in articulatory terms. While these descriptions are by no means entirely accurate, the difference between Graham and Schiefner is stark. Consider what the latter has to say about the 'strong' (i.e. ejective) [t͡ɬʼ:], in contrast with the 'weak' [t͡ɬ:] : 'Alongside the dentals are two mixed sounds whose basic elements are the slightly aspirated *t (d)* and an *l* produced with the tip of the tongue… [T]he strengthened version… is accompanied by a squeezing sound which bursts forth from both corners of the mouth'.[9] It is hard to imagine Graham aspiring to the same level of precision on this or indeed any linguistic topic, and this is especially notable given that he acknowledges seeing Schiefner's work. In a similar vein, the Avar wordlists published by the two authors largely feature the same items, drawing as they both do from the same list originally compiled in Tbilisi.[10] Unlike Graham, however, Schiefner places his vocabulary at the end of his book (thus privileging the grammar as central to language study), organizes it by the form of the Avar word rather than its translation, and has clearly taken care to verify as far as possible the pronunciation, as distinct from the orthography, of the words involved. As the result of differences like these, to today's reader Graham's article comes across as far less modern in its outlook than Schiefner 1862, despite being published two decades later.

To a large extent, the distinction can be captured by saying that Graham's approach is less than fully scientific in the broad sense: that is, while he genuinely seeks to inform a cultivated audience on a complex and unfamiliar topic, he does not feel the strong urge to analyse and account for as much as he can of what he observes. This is not to say Graham suggests that the language is inherently too primitive to be tackled in a systematic way – in fact he describes it as *'highly developed'* (p.102), despite the

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[9] *'Den Dentalen zunächst stehen zwei Mischlaute, deren Grundelemente das leichtaspirirte t (d) und ein mit dem vordersten Theil der Zunge hervorgestossenes l sind… [D]ie Verstärkung dieses Lauts… wird von einem durch die beiden Mundwinkel hervorbrechenden Quetschlaut begleitet'* (Schiefner 1862:6).

[10] In principle it should be possible, by comparing the contents of the two wordlists, to determine at least some of the Avar vocabulary items which Graham collected in person during his travels in 1873, as opposed to drawing them from the notes also consulted previously by Schiefner. A brief check suggests that these included some terminology related to firearms – for example 'muzzle (*of gun*): tufenkutl gal' and 'powder horn: khariruk', which Schiefner does not record.

popular typological conception of the time that Turanian languages stood below Aryan ones in the hierarchy of linguistic sophistication. But he gives the impression that he is counting on the reader to take an indulgent view of his work, given how alien and inherently strange Avar evidently is. This is the flip side of the engaging tone that Graham adopts. It is also in keeping with his emphasis on the language's uniqueness: from reading Graham, one would not know that it was possible to link Avar to other languages of the region by anything more precise than their general Turanian affiliation. He shows no sign of recognizing that Avar has any more in common with *'Tush'* (Batsbi) or *'Kurinian'* (Lezgian), its Nakh-Daghestanian relatives, than with the Abkhaz or Circassian of the Northwest Caucasian family, and indeed he claims that Avar differs in its vocabulary from all other languages (including its near neighbours), making no mention of Andic varieties such as Karata and Andi which Schiefner (1862:3) has already identified as not so far removed (*'nicht so sehr fern stehende'*) from Avar.

What all this suggests is that it may be most appropriate to view Graham's work not just as an early, flawed example of linguistic scholarship on the Caucasus – but, in equal measure, as a representative of an older tradition of reporting back to the West on exotic peoples, in which accuracy is just one consideration alongside historical interest and local colour. In part, linguistic enquiry as an empirical science in the West crystallized out of this tradition, just as ethnology and anthropology did in the same period. We are looking back at a time which saw the gradual stabilization of a field of descriptive linguistics, which treated languages worldwide as worthy of the same meticulous analysis as had traditionally been applied by philologists to the classical languages of Eurasia. The study of Nakh-Daghestanian languages as a professional calling obviously benefited greatly from this development; but in Graham, a gentleman amateur, its benefits are not fully in evidence. Although the differences between the two should not be exaggerated, it is indicative of the condition of Western scholarship on the Caucasus in that period that Graham's work was able to surface in a prestigious venue two decades after Schiefner's own, while appearing so much less rigorous in its approach.

This treatise on Avar is thus very much of its time, and of course none of this takes away from its value as a document illuminating the history both of Western, and particularly British, interest in the Caucasus and of attempts to document and understand the Nakh-Daghestanian languages. In this respect Graham's work is already eloquent, and accordingly the Russian edition handles the material with a light touch. The brief introduction provided by M. A. Magomedov simply welcomes the fact that Graham's article is now available in Russian translation, and gives an overview of its contents. Ataev's contribution, beyond translating the article, is greater, but essentially twofold: he reframes the English-Avar lexicon of the original by adding to each entry the relevant modern Avar word in its conventional Cyrillic orthography, alongside a

Russian translation of the English item; and he provides annotations to the text throughout, which contextualize it in various ways.

Naturally, both of these facets of Ataev's editing enhance the value of the book for the modern reader. Setting the modern Avar item alongside the word provided by Graham makes clear the limitations of the Arabic-based *ajam* writing system (and its transliteration into Latin characters) and the details of how it dealt with Avar phonology, as discussed above;[11] it also flags up instances where the item standardly used in Avar now is not the one reported by Graham.[12] On occasion, the Avar word provided by Graham was chosen erroneously and does not actually translate the English entry, and Ataev's edition makes that clear.[13] Meanwhile, Ataev's unobtrusive annotations to the text include biographical notes on the personalities mentioned – Bergé, Lachenilaw, Schiefner and others – and explanations of various academic terms and concepts employed, some of which are no longer current (e.g. *'Kasi-kumuk'* for the language now referred to as Lak, or *'the Turanian languages'* as a notion) or would even be misleading in the modern day (e.g. *'Lesghian'* as an alternative name for Avar). He also corrects some trivial mistakes made by Graham, e.g. his translation of *dongi mongi* (= дунги мунги) as 'I and he' rather than 'I and you'; and on occasion he draws attention to the unhelpfulness of Graham's terminology with regard to Avar inflection, owing to his reliance on concepts drawn from other linguistic traditions – such as the instrumental and vocative cases he mistakenly identifies in the paradigm of the Avar noun.

In fact, the edition would have benefited from more extensive commentary along these lines. It is understandable that Ataev largely wishes to let Graham's article speak for itself, and the ways in which it differs from any modern description of a Nakh-Daghestanian language are obvious without being pointed out. But these substantial differences provoke questions which Ataev could have treated more effectively if he had allowed himself more space to do so, beyond mere footnotes to the text. As the *ajam* script, which plays a central role here, was used for communication in Avar for hundreds of years (and well into the twentieth century) but is an afterthought in the study of the language today, some general discussion of its suitability to Avar phonology would have been welcome; this would also help to distinguish between those entries in the word list that are genuinely unexpected in their form and those that are merely

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[11] Cf. 'Very – žaḳ – цIакъ – очень', illustrating the use of the character ӂ, transliterated as *ž*, to represent the initial voiceless ejective *c'* in *c'aq'* / *цIакъ* 'very'.

[12] Cf. 'Melon – [paṭikh] – пастIан – дыня'; 'Barrel – [ḫinḳi] – чирма – бочка, бочонок'.

[13] Cf. 'Malediction – [gandulev] – нагIана кьей [хьандолев] – проклятие [заклинатель]' (p.45), i.e. as the translation of *malediction* Graham wrongly gives the word for the person who utters it, *gandulev* (хьандолев).

spelt in an unfamiliar way. Similarly, although it is immediately clear (for example) that Graham has certain misconceptions about Avar nominal inflection, it would be worthwhile to see the nature of these misconceptions explored. How do we think now about those cases which he treats together as various subtypes of genitive, dative and prepositional, and which cases does he overlook entirely? Can the analytical choices he makes be accounted for? The existence of Schiefner's description of Avar, based largely on the same materials, would have provided a chance for Ataev to explore how far the errors in Graham's work are idiosyncratic – and how far they reflect the state of the field at the time, which is the more interesting question.

Additionally, Ataev does make a few slips of his own, generally minor. Graham refers to the sound represented by the Arabic character خ, and its Latin transliteration *kh*, as a *'hawking sound'* (i.e. sound of clearing the throat), but this is translated by Ataev as 'ястребиный звук', as if referring to the sound made by a hawk (ястреб). A few errors not found in the original have crept into the edited version of the word list: for example, the English item *sigh (v.)* is translated by the modern Avar and Russian entries 'бихьизе – увидеть, наблюдать', presumably representing 'see' or 'sight'. Rather less easily accounted for is Ataev's claim in a footnote that because the *ajam* script has no character for *p*, Graham's article is forced to represent this with the Arabic ب *b* – when in fact *ajam* does possess a distinct character پ *p* (long used in the orthography of Persian, for example), which appears regularly in Graham's article, is reliably transliterated as *p*, and is presented separately from ب *b* in his introduction to Avar spelling (p.103).

These criticisms, however, do not detract from the overall value of Ataev's edition, and Ataev and Magomedov should be commended for bringing to light an informative – as well as characterful and entertaining – early document in the history of scholarship on Avar. In some ways, Graham's article was already superseded as a linguistic resource before it even appeared in print; but for those curious as to how the study of Caucasian languages developed during the nineteenth-century establishment of linguistics as a science, this is part of what makes its revival here so fascinating to see.

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