
REVIEWS

Zare Yusupova. *The Kurdish Dialect Gorani. A Grammatical Description.* Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2017. ISBN: 978-3-330-05472-1

In March 2017, Lambert Academic Publishing (Saarbrücken, Germany) published “The Kurdish Dialect Gorani” by Z.A. Yusupova which is an English translation of the updated version of the earlier book in Russian by the same author: “Kurdskiy dialect gorani po literarturnym pamyatnikam 18–19 vekov” (The Kurdish dialect Gorani as represented in the literary monuments from 18th–19th cc.). Edited by L.G. Herzenberg. Saint-Petersburg: Nauka, 1998).

The publication of the book in English is a significant event because it makes reading audiences in the West, who are often unaware of works coming out in Russian, familiar with the Russian school of Kurdish linguistic studies and its most recent discoveries largely contributed to by Z.A. Yusupova’s works (monographs and articles).

A noticeable interest in *Gorani* as a subject of research both in Russia and abroad might have resulted from the fact that not all scholars specializing in the field recognized *Gorani* as one of the Kurdish dialects, some tended to consider it a separate Iranian dialect (or a dialect continuum). Up to the present day its attribution to Kurdish varieties is being questioned in certain (mostly Western) publications.

Apart from the political considerations which may be behind the reluctance of some scholars to “extend the geographical area” of the Kurdish language, it would be safe to assume that *Gorani*’s “disputable” linguistic status or position for other researchers was due to insufficient data and, consequently, lack of conclusive arguments for defining the position of *Gorani* within Iranian dialects. Z.A. Yusupova’s book in Russian (see above) which served as a basis for its English version provided a clue for resolving this issue. In the book, the author employing data collected from the divans of four famous poets: Wali Dewana, Mawlawi, Ranjuri and Jafai as well as from Khanai Kubadi’s romantic poem “Shirin and Khusraw”, all of which are major masterpieces of the 18th–19th cc. *Gorani*

literature, has convincingly proved that *Gorani* used for several centuries as a literary language in Eastern Kurdistan undoubtedly belongs to Southern Kurdish dialects.

The book has sections about phonetics, morphology and syntax and also includes a Gorani-English glossary. Some special problems are dealt with in the Conclusion. The detailed introduction contains the history of *Gorani* studies in Europe and in Kurdistan as well as an analysis of the position of *Gorani* among other Kurdish dialects.

The problem of including *Gorani* into the continuum of Kurdish varieties has been most thoroughly addressed, which resulted in refuting the opinion of those scholars who consider *Gorani* to be a non-Kurdish idiom and try to prove this viewpoint by using data of historical phonetics only. Such a narrow and selective approach is neither convincing nor sufficient, because the problem cannot be solved without taking into consideration grammatical and lexical data, without a general evaluation of the linguo-geographical structure of contemporary Kurdish, and without taking into account such an important extra-linguistic factor as the ethnical identity (self-identity) of the dialect speakers: the *Gorans* are profoundly convinced to be Kurds and to speak a Kurdish variety.

This meticulously researched book presents a thorough description of all grammatical parts of speech of *Gorani*, including various categories of pronouns. It is written in an elegant style, well-argued, extremely informative, and quite convincing. A large part of the material is presented in the form of tables, which makes the book easy to use and more reader-friendly. The author obviously tried to illustrate every linguistic phenomenon by examples from a wider range of sources in order to avoid the impression that she based her description on isolated instances of observed facts. This approach makes the author's arguments more convincing and her conclusions more tenable. These can be summarized in the following way: *Gorani* has an obvious Kurdish grammatical structure, being essentially a southern Kurdish dialect it has special features, which relate it to the mentioned dialect group; however, it also has much in common with northern dialects (*Kurmanji*).

Z.A. Yusupova's research goes far beyond a study of one single dialect (such as *Gorani*), because it provides convincing proofs for refuting the theory, which regards *Awromani* as a variety of *Gorani*, as the former displays quite a few unique grammatical features distinguishing it from the latter, despite all the similarity between the two dialects. This fact alone highlights the importance of the book as an extremely valuable contribution to Kurdish and even Iranian dialectology as a whole, because it casts light on various aspects of Iranian linguistics, including the classification of Iranian dialects in general, and Kurdish varieties in all their diversity in particular.

I would like to conclude by saying that the publication of the English version of the book, updated and revised, marks a new milestone for Kurdish and Iranian studies, making it much more available for interested readers throughout the world.

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