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ALEXANDER KUCHIN (1888–1913?) AND HIS SMALL RUSSIAN-NORWEGIAN DICTIONARY

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The article introduces Alexander Kuchin and his “Small Russian-Norwegian dictionary”, which was published in 1907 by the publishing house “Pomor” (Finnmarken) in Vardø (Norway) and was very popular at that time. Its author, Alexander Stepanovich Kuchin, a man with a unique destiny, is known to compatriots as the only Russian who participated in the discovery of the South Pole in the Roald Amundsen’s expedition, and also as the first of our countrymen who, after the discovery of Antarctica in 1820 by the expedition of Faddey F. Bellingshausen and Michael P. Lazarev, landed on the coast of the Southern continent. A talented young man who died in the expedition of Vladimir A. Rusanov at the age of only 25, made a great contribution to science, research and navigation. Born in the village of Kushereka in the Onega district of the Arkhangelsk province, Alexander received a good education for that time. He graduated from a two-grade parochial school in Kushereka, brilliantly studied at the Onega City School, attended classes at the Tromsø school for a year and was the only one in the course graduated from the Arkhangelsk Merchant and Maritime School with a gold medal. He read H. Ibsen, K. Hamsun, J. Falkberget and other writers in the original. Alexander was also lucky to work at the biological station in Bergen under the direction of Bjørn Hjølland-Hansen, one of the founders of oceanography as a science; here he also met Fridtjof Nansen, one of the national Norwegian heroes, which played a significant role in A. Kuchin’s life. The “Small Russian-Norwegian dictionary” was published in 2,000 copies and was very popular that time. The dictionary contains around 4,000 words on 48 pages. There are no proper names in it, but at the end of the dictionary basic information about the phonetics and grammar of the Norwegian language is disposed. It is focused on Russian users and arouses undoubted interest among linguists, since it appeared in 1907, two years after the termination of the union with Sweden. It is valuable that Alexander Kuchin, not being a linguist, fixed the language

used by common people such as fishermen and trawlermen in the North of Norway (particularly in Finnmark and Troms). Such a democratic version of the language is also of special scientific interest. In general, the dictionary was caused by necessity, appeared at a proper time, was well compiled and completely fulfilled the functions assigned to it.

Keywords: Norwegian, bilingual dictionaries, Russian-Norwegian dictionaries, small dictionaries, Alexander Kuchin.

One of the first Russian-Norwegian dictionaries was printed in the printing house “Pomor” (Finnmark, Norway) in 1907. Its author, Alexander Stepanovich Kuchin (28.09.1888–1913?), is a man with a unique destiny [Aliev, 2016; Borovoi, 1989; Bregman, 1962; Bulatov, 2001]. At the age of 18 he was already the captain of a fishing vessel in Norway. At the age of 21 Alexander was responsible for the research part of Roald Amundsen’s expedition to Antarctica and being 23-year-old young man was the only candidate for captain in the campaign of Vladimir Rusanov to Svalbard. He is also known as the first of our compatriots who, after the discovery of Antarctica in 1820 by the expedition of Faddey Bellingshausen and Michael Lazarev, landed on the coast of the Southern continent [Bregman, 1962; Bulatov, 2001; Gorbato, 1987; Terent’ev, 2011].

Alexander Kuchin was born in a pomor family in the village of Kushereka in the Onega district in the Arkhangelsk¹ province. Kushereka (from Finnish *koski* — “river threshold”) was a large rich settlement and the administrative center of the district. His father Stepan Grigorievich was an educated and competent sailor respected by his fellow villagers. His mother Fekla Andreevna came from a wealthy family and was a domineering and order-loving woman. Alexander received a good education for that time. He graduated from a two-grade parochial school in Kushereka and then brilliantly studied at the Onega city school from 1899 up to 1903.

Onega was only two times larger than Kushereka at that time. It was an international trade and port city, where fish and timber were changed for flour and cereals. It was called the “Pomor trade”² [Niemi, 1992, p. 122]. It lasted for more than two centuries and contributed to

¹ The city is also known in English as Archangel and Archangelsk.

² The trade (“byttehandel” in Norwegian) carried out between the Pomors living near the White Sea (the North-West of Russia) and Norwegians along the coast of Northern Norway.

the mutual influence of two cultures and the economic development of Norway and Russia. There were several sawmills owned by the British and Norwegians in Onega and nearby settlements. High-tech equipment required maintenance, and therefore inhabitants (clerks from sawmills) sent their children to study to England and St. Petersburg, and captains and skippers — to Norway. “Onega is the same Norway, only speaking differently,” — was a widely used phrase (cit. [Simakova, 2015, p. 18]).

After the school according to the regulations on city schools of 1872, Alexander Kuchin had the right to receive the first class rank in public service without an exam and enjoy benefits during military service. However in summer 1903, Alexander’s father took him to Tromsø to improve his Norwegian, since the captain of the ship and the ship owner needs to have a good command of language. Alexander fell in love with the town, later he called the year spent in Tromsø one of the happiest times in his life and he eagerly returned to his beloved town. He lived in the family of Hamundsen and had many acquaintances there. He became a good friend with Bartold Hagemann, an elder son of Alta mayor and Storting’s³ representative. They remained good friends for the whole life, and the preserved correspondence with Bartold tells a lot about Alexander.

In September 1904, Alexander was accepted into the second class of the Arkhangelsk commercial and maritime school, which was one of the leading educational institutions of that time. Arkhangelsk was an international sea port, which connected Russia with Europe. Dozens of ships from Holland, England, Germany and Norway stood at anchors on the river Northern Dvina. Arkhangelsk served also as an important base for the development of Arctic and the establishment of navigation along the Northern Sea Route. It was quite difficult to study in the Maritime school as demands were very high. The teaching staff consisted mostly of graduates from universities and higher maritime institutions.

Kuchin studied brilliantly. Meanwhile, Russia was overwhelmed by a wave of the strike movement, and the young man did not escape the revolutionary temptation — on October 18, 1905, he marched through Arkhangelsk in a column of demonstrators together with some stu-

³ The Storting is the Norwegian Parliament.

dents, workers and political exiles. The reaction of the school authorities was sharp: all participants of the demonstration were expelled. Having received the documents, Alexander left for Onega and then, using a fake passport, to Vardø, the famous center of hunting and fisheries at that time. He worked part-time at the printing house “Pomor” (Finnmark) which was supported by Russian Social Democrats who published illegal literature there. Later this printing house will publish Kuchin’s small Russian-Norwegian dictionary. Alexander remained there until the resumption of classes at the maritime school in the fall of 1906. In 1909, Alexander graduated from the school with a gold medal, the only one from the course.

One of the privileges of the Arkhangelsk Merchant and maritime school was opportunity to receive a diploma of a navigator of the 2nd category without additional tests in case an adult graduate had reached the age of 21 and sailed for 24 months. But after the graduation from the Merchant and maritime school Alexander decided to study oceanography at the Bergen biological station, where “his diligence, curiosity and inquisitive mind soon attracted the attention of Norwegian scientists” [Proceedings of the Arkhangelsk Society for the Study of the Russian North, 1910, p. 72]. Oceanography was just beginning to develop as a science. The biological station in Bergen was one of the leading centers for the study of the sea. It was known not only for research works carried out there, but also due to courses organized on various topics which attended scientists from all over the world.

The variety of Alexander Kuchin’s interests and talents amazed his contemporaries. Pavel Bashmakov, a well-known hydrographer, historian of the North and fellow student of Alexander, wrote: “The road of an ordinary seaman or seafarer that opened before Alexander Stepanovich didn’t tempt him anymore. Now he dreamed of a career as a marine scientist, wanting to devote himself to oceanography... He admired greatly such famous Norwegians as Fridtjof Nansen and Otto Sverdrup” [Bashmakov, 1939, p. 89].

Alexander worked hard under the guidance of Bjørn Helland-Hansen, director of the biological station and the founder of oceanography as a science. Professor clearly singled out the Russian navigator among his other interns. Soon Alexander became one of the best students and was transferred to the position of assistant and began to get salary. Here on the station Kuchin met Fridtjof Nansen, the national hero of Norway,

who was impressed by the diligence and scrupulousness of the young man. In the spring of 1910, on the recommendation of F. Nansen and B. Helland-Hansen, a Russian researcher and navigator was accepted into the Roald Amundsen's expedition.

Alexander had to perform both the duties of an oceanographer and a navigator on the "Fram"⁴. Kuchin was included in the expedition contrary to the resolution of the Storting, which advocated that the named expedition should be exclusively of Norwegian national character and its participants should be only Norwegians. "Such violation of the Storting's wishes by the organizer of the expedition was made due to the exceptional abilities and talent of A. S. Kuchin in the oceanography," — was written in *Morgenbladet* in 1910 (cit. [Simakova, 2015, p. 80]).

Kuchin's work in this expedition was highly appreciated. Alexander was warmly welcomed both in Norway and in Russia. As the only foreign member of the Amundsen expedition, he was awarded a meeting at the Norwegian Geographical Society, where he was presented to the king, Haakon VI, and a prize from the Norwegian government of 3,000 kroner. In Russia the scientific community elected him a corresponding member of the Society for the Northern Study. Soon in one of the Bergen newspapers appeared announcement that Alexander Kuchin was engaged with Aslaug Paulsen, the 18-year-old daughter of the famous literary and theatre critic Andreas Paulsen.

After returning home in 1912, A. Kuchin went on a polar expedition with Vladimir Rusanov on a new ship "Hercules" to the northern polar latitudes. On June 26, 1912, at 9 p. m., "Hercules" departed from the harbor of Alexandrovsk-on-Murman for its last sea voyage. In the autumn of 1912, after exploring the Svalbard archipelago, "Hercules" unexpectedly set off along the Great Sea Route and in 1913 disappeared near the shores of Taimyr [Aliiev, 2016; Gorbatov, 1987; Terent'ev, 2011]. Alexander Kuchin — a talented young man with diverse interests died even before reaching the age of 25 years. An experienced captain, a talented and versatile researcher, an

⁴ From Norwegian *fram* 'forward'. Norwegian wooden sailing-motor schooner, specially built for the needs of polar research, in particular, long-term drift in pack ice. The author of the project was Fridtjof Nansen, the construction was carried out under the supervision of Otto Sverdrup. Three expeditions to the North and South Poles were carried out on the "Fram" in 1893–1912.

outstanding scientist with a wide range of scientific contributions arouses also interest among linguists.

Alexander read a lot including Norwegian literature. He read Norwegian authors in the original (H. Ibsen, K. Hamsun, J. Falkberget, etc.) He translated books also. In his letter from 29 July, 1910 to Bartold Hagemann he wrote: "I looked through Falkberget's book, but I didn't start translating. Russian readers are used to the best, so I think they are unlikely to meet the book with enthusiasm" (cit. [Simakova, 2015, p. 82]). So no wonder that in 1907 the "Small Russian-Norwegian dictionary" compiled by Kuchin was published.

The dictionary was very popular and was quickly sold out although it was printed in 2,000 copies. In one of the letters the father wrote to Alexander: "I was at the Shmakovskaya bookstore today. They don't know how to get your dictionary... I sold also out your dictionary, all the copies, I didn't even keep it. Shmakovskaya said that they wanted to get 2 or 3 dozens, as many people ask them, but your dictionary had been gone for a long time" [Simakova, 2015, p. 59]. However, the dictionary is of much interest as a monument of the Norwegian language. At the turn of the century, there were heated debates about the ways of language development in the independent Norway after the termination of the Swedish-Norwegian union in 1905 [Berkov, 2011; Berkov, 2012; Kan, 1980]. The dictionary of A. Kuchin was one of the first dictionaries of the Norwegian language, which became the state language at that time.

For almost 400 years Norway was a part of Denmark and all official documentation, legal proceedings were written in Danish. In a number of European countries, the "Reformation contributed to the creation of the norm of the national language (the most important role was played by the translation of the Bible). In Norway, on the contrary, Danish has become established as a written language" [Berkov, 2012, p. 64]. All books were published in Denmark, including the Bible, the psalm book, prayer books, collections of sermons and catechism [Ves-sen, 1949]. It was a written language, which was studied at universities and taught in schools, all scientific and research works were also written in Danish. When Norway became independent in 1814 (remaining, however, in the union with Sweden), the political basis for the dominance of the Danish language in the country was eliminated. But it would take about a century before the Norwegian national language was created.

The national Norwegian language was formed in two different ways. The first one was focused on “norwegianization” of the literary language, bringing the written norm in accordance with the real spoken language of the educated urban population. The second one was to form a literary language on the basis of rural dialects in districts [Berkov, 2011; Berkov, 2012; Kan, 1980]. Alexander Kuchin, not being a linguist, recorded the language used by common people while working in the North of Norway and it is very valuable, as such a democratic version of the language is also of special scientific interest.

The dictionary included almost 4 thousand words and terms most commonly used by fishermen and trawlermen in Northern Norway (particularly in Finnmark and Troms). The first spelling reform was carried out already in 1907. The main point of it was the introduction of voiceless stops (*p, t, k*) instead of voiced (*b, d, g*) after long vowels. But that reform did not affect the dictionary [Berkov, 2011; Berkov, 2012]. We could only guess whether the dictionary was printed before the reform or the compiler decided to release the dictionary in the old orthography as in the remained letters written to brothers Hagemann nothing is said about the dictionary.

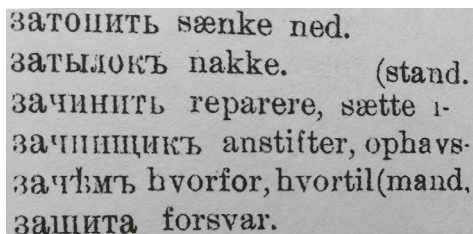
There are only 48 pages and no proper names in it, but at the end of the dictionary short basic information about the phonetics and grammar of the Norwegian language is positioned. It was focused on Russian users and arouses undoubted interest among linguists. It is figured out on the cover page that there are 4,000 words in the dictionary. Frankly speaking it should be noted that there are about 3,000 Russian words and terms, but some of them have two or three (or even four) Norwegian equivalents, for example: *бездѣлица* — *smaating, bagatel*; *вдоволь* — *nok, tilstrækkeligt*; *дробь* — *brudstykke, skaar*; *задатокъ* — *forskud, fæstepenge*; *защищать* — *værge, forsvare*; *извѣстiе* — *beretning, efterretning, meddelse*; *мѹка (муч.)* — *pine, smerte, plage*; *нести* — *bære, bringe, fore*; *отпустить* — *løslade, slippe, ladegaa*; *прямая* — *lige, ret, direkte*; *сохранять* — *bevare, skaane, spare, passe*; *спор* — *krangel, trætte, disput*; *считать* — *tælle, regne; holde for*; *хозяйка* — *værtinde, husfrue, etc.*⁵

It's obvious that there are not so many vocables in the dictionary. It's predictable that under some letters, such as *Ф, Ц, Ш, Ъ, Э* and *Ю* there are a few vocables (16, 16, 15, 5, 7 and 6 correspondingly). As for the

⁵ Spelling and punctuation are given as in the dictionary.

letter *A* there are only 19 vocables under it, two vocables less than under the letter *Я*.

The compiler of the dictionary used the common principle — maximum information at a minimum of space [Berkov, 1996; Berkov, 2011]. That's why we can find such cases when the translation of one word ends in a line with another vocable. For example, on page 11 there are two such cases (see Figure).



ЗАТОПИТЬ sænke ned.
ЗАТЫЛОКЪ nakke. (stand.
ЗАЧИНИТЬ reparere, sætte 1-
ЗАЧИННИКЪ anstifter, opbavs-
ЗАЧЪМЪ hvorfor, hvortil (mand,
ЗАЩИТА forsvar.

An example of the word hyphenation

Source: The small Russian-Norwegian dictionary, 1907 [Kuchin, 1907, p. 11] (photo by the author of the article)

There are some other cases given below:

постановление anordning, af-
постель seng, bolster. (gjørelse
принять modtage. (lige
приравнивать tilpasse, gjøre
скользкий glat. [meget.
сколько hvor mange, hvor
страховое о-во — forsikrings-
страх — angst, frygt. [skab

The disposition of the words is clearly seen in the photo taken from the dictionary [Kuchin, 1907, p. 11].

Kuchin also spares space by reducing some words, for example: *мостикъ* (*парох.*) ‘kommandobro’, *набѣло* (*пис.*) ‘renskrive’, *надѣл* (*змл*) ‘andel, arvedel’, *указатель* (*кн.*) ‘veiviser’ or *ярусъ* (*промыш.*) ‘linje’ etc.

Right after the vocables, the author disposes the Norwegian alphabet and explains how some sounds should be pronounced, precisely only ten of them. It is a difficult task for a person, who did not know linguistics, to explain phonetics, that's why there are some inaccuracies and

errors, for example it is stated that *u* is a little bit softer than the Russian *y* or *y* is softer than the Russian *y*.

The compiler did not specify accents in Norwegian lexemes and did not supply them with grammatical marks. There is only an indication what nouns belong to the masculine, feminine or neuter gender on the last pages of the dictionary devoted to grammar (“НЪсколько о норвежской грамматикъ”) [Kuchin, 1907, p.41–45].

On page 46 there are lists of quantitative and ordinal numerals and names of weeks and months. As for the last two pages A. Kuchin suggests users some sentences and dialogues both in Russian and in Norwegian which are supposed to help common people to communicate with each other.

Когда хотите вы пить кофе? Лучшие получить его въ четыре часа. Где моя комната? Ваша комната во второмъ этажъ. Когда я могу получить ужинъ? Вы можете ѣсть сейчасъ или въ девять часовъ. Ты хочешь пить (жаждешь)? Да, я очень хочу пить, дай мнѣ стаканъ воды... (Naar ønsker De at drikke kaffe? Tak, best at faa den klokken fire. Hvor er mitt værelse? Deres værelse er i anden etage. Naar kan jeg faa kveldsmad? De kan spise straks eller klokken ni. Er du tørst? Ja, jeg er meget tørst; giv mig et glas vand...) [Kuchin, 1907, p. 47].

Куда идете Вы? Я иду въ лавку, чтобы купить кое-что. Хочу я получить одну рубаику и двѣ пары чулокъ. Какой сортъ хотите Вы имѣть, лучший или дешевле? <...> Да, напримѣр, этотъ сортъ стоитъ полторы кроны, а этотъ только одна крона. (Hvor gaar De hen? Jeg gaar paa butikken, at kjøbe noget. Skal jeg faa en skjorte og to par strømper. Hvad sort vil De ha, den bedste eller billigere?... Jo, for eksempel, denne slags koster halvanden krone, og denne bare en krone.) [Kuchin, 1907, p. 48].

As far as we can see from above given sentences, all of them are examples of the most frequently used phrases and sentences. There is also a list of typos on the back cover at the end of the dictionary. However there are some mistakes and inaccuracy in the dictionary mostly concerning punctuation and inconsistency in the design of the dictionary. On page 22 the word *отнустить* is translated as “ladegaa”, though it should be written as “la det gaa”. Or narrative sentence: “Jeg skal faa en skjorte og to par strømper” starts with the verb “skal” instead of a noun. But we should remember that Alexander Kuchin was only eighteen-nineteen years old when he compiled the dictionary and he was a cap-

tain on a fishing vessel in Norway at that time knowing almost nothing about lexicography and linguistics.

Despite some shortcomings the small Russian-Norwegian dictionary of Alexander Kuchin was well compiled and completely fulfilled the functions assigned to it. In general, the compilation of such a dictionary was extremely necessary for people who communicated and worked in the North with Norwegians and it appeared at a proper time. Its compiler himself was an outstanding person, a unique specialist in different spheres, and although Scandinavian philology was not the main business of his life, he made a contribution to this science also.

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Для цитирования: *Taratonkina I. Alexander Kuchin (1888–1913?) and his Small Russian-Norwegian dictionary // Скандинавская филология. 2023. Т. 21. Вып. 1. С. 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu21.2023.112>*

Статья посвящена А. С. Кучину и его «Малому русско-норвежскому словарю», который был опубликован в 1907 г. издательством «Помор» (Финмаркен) в г. Вардё (Норвегия) и пользовался большой популярностью. Его составитель, Александр Степанович Кучин, человек с уникальной судьбой, известен соотечественникам как единственный русский, участвовавший в открытии Южного полюса в составе экспедиции Руаля Амундсена, а также как первый наш соотечественник, который после открытия Антарктиды в 1820 г. экспедицией Ф. Ф. Беллинсгаузена и М. П. Лазарева высадился на берег южного материка. Одаренный молодой человек, погибший в экспедиции В. А. Русанова в возрасте всего 25 лет, внес большой вклад в науку, исследования и мореплавание. Уроженец с. Кушерека Онежского района Архангельской губернии получил хорошее образование для того времени. Александр Степанович окончил двухклассную приходскую школу в Кушереке, блестяще отучился в Онежском городском училище, год посещал занятия в школе г. Трумсё, единственный из курса окончил Архангельское торгово-мореходное училище с золотой медалью. В оригинале читал Г. Ибсена, К. Гамуна, Ю. Фалкбергер и др. Довелось Александру поработать и на биологической станции в Бергене под руководством Бьёрна Хеллани-Хансена, одного из основателей океанографии как науки; здесь же он встретился с национальным норвежским героем — Фритьофом Нансеном. «Малый русско-норвежский словарь» вышел тиражом 2000 экземпляров и пользовался большой популярностью. В словарь вошло около 4000 русских слов, в нем отсутствуют имена собственные, но в конце включены основные сведения о фонетике и грамматике норвежского языка. Словарь ориентирован на русских пользователей и вызывает несомненный интерес у лингвистов, поскольку появился в 1907 г., спустя два года после разрыва унии со Швецией. А. Кучин, не являясь лингвистом, зафиксировал тот язык, на котором общались рыбаки и промысловики на севере страны (в Финмарке и Трумсё), и такой «демократический» срез языка также вызывает научный интерес. В целом словарь был вызван необходимостью, появился своевременно, добротен составлен и полностью выполнил функции, возложенные на него.

Ключевые слова: норвежский язык, двуязычные словари, русско-норвежские словари, малые словари, Александр Степанович Кучин.

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