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A. V. Beliakov, A. G. Gus'kov, D. V. Liseitsev & S. M. Shamin, *Perevodchiki Posol'skogo prikaza v XVII v.: Materialy k slovariui*. Moscow: Indrik, 2021. 304 p. ISBN: 978-5-91674-618-1.

Reviewing a reference book is a difficult task. Reference books are supposed to be complete, at least up to the moment of publication. At the same time, completeness is usually an impossible goal, and the reader can be grateful for what the writers and compilers have actually achieved. Such is the present case, reflected in the modest subtitle *Materialy k slovariui*.

The object of the authors was to produce a list and index of the translators for the Ambassadorial Office (*Posol'skii prikaz*), which handled Russian relations with all foreign powers in the seventeenth century, with references to the Russian published and unpublished sources about them. It is impossible to say if the authors have found every archival reference, but if they have not, they have certainly provided extensive indications of the archival record, much more abundant than most historians have known. Information for the sixteenth century is less complete and is relegated in this volume to an appendix, and these entries lack the fullness of the main text on the seventeenth century. The translators, as historians have increasingly realized, were a crucial group, both for government and its foreign policy and for Russian culture generally. During the century they varied in number from ten to thirty at any one time, covering the languages of Russia's European neighbors (Poland, Sweden) as well as more distant but frequent contacts (England, Holland, Denmark, the Holy Roman Empire). They commanded all the languages of those countries, but also and increasingly Latin, still a language of diplomacy as well as culture. An equally important group worked with Near Eastern languages, primarily Turkic languages that the Russians usually called "Tatar". In nationality the translators were a mix of foreigners settled in Russia, Russians, and (for the Tatar translators especially) subjects of the tsar who knew the language for a variety of personal reasons. They engaged in many tasks besides basic ones of oral and written translation, including participation in military campaigns and other special tasks. This story is concisely described in the introduction.

The present volume seems to include everyone for whom there is some evidence in the Russian archives, mainly the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts (RGADA). The authors have tried to find which translators were actually employed regularly or at least repeatedly, not just men brought in quickly for one event and not heard of again. Those whose services were used only once or occasionally and not permanently part of the staff are found in an appendix. The exploration of the Russian archives seems to be quite thorough. They have established and noted references to translators in the archives, including the records of their salaries, their activity in receiving ambassadors from abroad, and journeys out of the

country with Russian envoys. What is not present in this volume is the traces of these translators in foreign archives. Tracking through the archives of half a dozen European states and (at least) Turkey and all the references to translators in the Western literature on seventeenth century Russia would have been a daunting task. It would probably have meant that the volume would have been postponed indefinitely, but the reader should be aware that this is a limitation to the material. Foreign archives are not included and Western literature rarely. Some things that emerge from the volume are not new, such as the careers and fates of individual translators (John Helms, for example), though there are usually some new and interesting details even about these known figures. It is not absolutely new that some translators played a role, even an important one, in Russian culture, such as Nicolae Spafarii-Milescu. Just to take one example, the translators of Polish numbered twenty-eight in the course of the century, most of them Poles or Ruthenians who came to Russia and stayed for one reason or another. Ten of them were involved in important translations projects, from both Polish but also Latin, mainly in the last decades of the seventeenth century. These included the *Velikoe zertsalo*, a translation from the Polish version of a late medieval/baroque collection of exempla for preachers, Latin treatises on pharmacology, Szymon Starowolski on the Ottoman Empire, or even Hiob Ludolf on Ethiopia. Their work comprised a substantial part of the known translations from Polish and Latin, an important component in the changing Russian culture of the last decades of the seventeenth century. At the same time, the information on the translators is another important contribution to the work on the personnel and functions of the expanding *prikaz* system in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, begun in the work of S. A. Belokurov, and continued by S. B. Veselovskii, S. K. Bogoiavlenskii, N. F. Demidova and most recently the four authors of this volume. Especially valuable is the 2019 conference volume, *Perevodchiki i perevody v Rossii kontsa XVI-nachala XVIII vv.*, published in Moscow by the Institute of Russian History and edited by the same team as this volume.

The resulting volume represents an important step toward understanding both the operations of the Ambassadorial Office as a diplomatic chancery and also its role in the Russian culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As the subtitle implies it is not complete, but it is certainly a major step in that direction and an invaluable reference tool for the study of Russian foreign policy, culture, and language in the early modern era.