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Review of Étienne Tiffou, Dictionnaire du bourouchaski du  
pÿ Yasin : Bourouchaski Français et Français Bourouchaski

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**Étienne Tiffou**, *Dictionnaire du bourouchaski du Yasin: Bourouchaski–Français et Français–Bourouchaski*. (Bibliothèque des Cahiers de l’Institut de Linguistique de Louvain 134) Louvain-la-Neuve: Peeters, 2014. ISBN 978-90-429-2961-6. 435 pp.

**Reviewed by Bertil Tikkanen (University of Helsinki)**

This dictionary of the Yasin dialect (also known as Werchikwar) of Burushaski is a very welcome contribution to Burushaski lexicography. Comprehensive dictionaries of the Hunza and Nager dialects are already available or in the making (<[www.burushaskiresearchacademy.org](http://www.burushaskiresearchacademy.org)>), but so far no comprehensive dictionary of the less common Yasin dialect has been published. Having been isolated from the two other Burushaski dialects for several centuries, the dialectal differences of Yasin have grown in many respects, to the extent that mutual intelligibility has been severely impaired. The Yasin dialect has retained many words that have been lost in the other dialects – although the opposite is also true. Whereas the Yasin dialect has borrowed quite a few words from neighbouring Khowar, the other dialects have borrowed from neighbouring Shina. For a long time, all of the dialects have also been borrowing extensively from Persian, Urdu, and English, so that the original Burushaski vocabulary is undergoing attrition. Nevertheless, the conspicuously intricate structure of the language has remained more or less intact in spite of dialectal innovations.

The work under review is based on several sources: field notes taken by the author during thirteen expeditions to Yasin, a supplementary dictionary compiled by the author with Y. Morin (1989), and previous works by I.I. Zarubin (1927), D.L.R. Lorimer (1938, 1962), and H. Berger (1974, 1998), as well as a list of words cited by H. Herbes (1998).

In the introduction (pp. 1–6), the author discusses sources, arrangement, notation, metalanguage, special lexico-grammatical categories, and terms (such as collective number, causative and benefactive, passive, periphrastic verbs, ergative construction, “cible verbale” as mapped by the absolutive case, and controlling verbal plurality), Urdu loanwords, proper names, and such. Many of these issues have been dealt with by the author in separate publications (e.g. Tiffou & Pesot 1989), but certain problems have admittedly remained, such as the ambiguous relationship between the causative and benefactive, and the status of various types of periphrastic verbs. It is hoped that the data presented in this dictionary will be of use in solving these problems. The introduction ends with acknowledgements. Then follows a list of references (pp. 7–8) and a list of abbreviations (pp. 9–10).

The bulk of the volume is, of course, the Burushaski–French dictionary (pp. 13–343), which I will examine a little closer below. The French–Burushaski dictionary (pp. 347–435) is a comprehensive word index with translations, grammatical data, and explanations.

The Burushaski–French dictionary contains roughly 6,000 entries, representing both lexical and grammatical morphemes (i.e. words, word stems, and inflectional/derivational affixes). Each entry (with possible variant forms) is followed by relevant grammatical data, translations and semantic clarifications, synonyms or related terms, attested examples of use with source references, collocations, internal and external comparisons, possible etymologies or explanatory articles (i.e. *éserum* ‘aiguisé, affûté’ < --*ser-* ‘donner à manger’, p. 99), or notes on customs, traditions or culture.

For practical purposes, the author has decided to enter each derived lexeme as a separate entry followed by a cross-reference to the base. But the diverse valencies/voices of a verb (e.g. intransitive, transitive, benefactive, causative, passive, impersonal) are, of course, entered under one and the same root.

The author uses in this book the same notation of long or double vowels and accent/tone as Berger did for the Hunza and Nager dialects. In some cases, this may lead to over-differentiation, insofar as the Yasin dialect has not maintained the same distinctions consistently, yet the procedure is defensible.

A special lexicographical problem is posed by the many Urdu loanwords, some of which have been integrated in the language, others not. The author has decided to enter all those Urdu words that are attested at least once in his data, but every time such a word has a doublet in Burushaski, the latter is given. This, I think, is a fair compromise.

Burushaski is still not a commonly written language. And even when it is written or transcribed, each writer or researcher uses his own alphabet and orthography. The words and idioms cited in this dictionary are taken from diverse sources, covering a time span of 90 years. When citing external sources, the author has wisely retained the received forms, seeing that divergent forms may in some cases shed light on the history of the language.

All in all, it can be said that this is more than just a dictionary. It is a significant contribution to research not only of the lexicon, but also the morphology and syntax of this complex relict language of the transit zone between Central and South Asia.

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