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VAN SKYHAWK, Hugh: *Burushaski-Texte aus Hispar. Materialien zum Verständnis einer archaischen Bergkultur in Nordpakistan*. (Beiträge zur Indologie; 38). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003. xxiv, 506 pp. – ISBN 3-447-04645-7. – € 148,--.

This collection of Burushaski texts is a truly beautiful book in every respect. Burushaski, of course, is spoken by the Burusho, who live high in the Karakoram Himalayas. Traditionally Burushaski is considered to be a magnificent language isolate, although I have proposed that Burushaski together with the Yenisseian languages make up the Karasuk language family. Hugh van Skyhawk follows in the footsteps of the great German tradition of Burushaski scholarship which, with such eminent exponents as Hermann BERGER, Georg BUDDRUSS and Karl JETTMAR, has made German the most important scientific language for Burushaski studies since the demise of British imperial power in the region. This valuable and timeless contribution is a worthy new addition to this legacy. Hugh VAN SKYHAWK augments the available corpus on this endangered language and gives us intimate insight into the original culture of the Burusho.

One of the *Leitgedanken* quoted *in extenso* by the author from TEDLOCK and MANNHEIM is worth quoting here too, albeit just in part:

There was a time when the same anthropologists who worked at producing ethnographies also worked on text collections, but that came to an end when American cultural anthropology was diverted from its course by British social anthropology, which tended to treat the utterances of natives as falsehoods and illusions concealing truths that could be revealed only by anthropologists. The collection of texts fell to other field-workers whose concerns were narrowly linguistic and who increasingly pursued their careers in academic departments separate from anthropology. (pp. 1-2)

The author's empirical methodology and even-handed treatment of the data are likewise an enlightened rebellion against much of the fashionable 'meta-twaddle' that currently plagues anthropology. By his own confession, Hugh van Skyhawk steers a clear and level-headed course, charting a Middle Way between the excesses of cultural relativism and the perils of an implicitly Eurocentric view.

This lovely book opens with numerous maps of the region, both historical maps from early British sources and detailed modern maps compiled during the Survey of Pakistan, which was conducted in this region with the assistance of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences. There are six marvellous photographs of the landscape and settlements, both historical and recent, which transport the reader to the magical place where the author conducted his research. There are also 60 colour photographs and one black-and-white photograph of the people and environs of Hispar and the narrators. There are numerous technical drawings

and diagrams, detailing the structure of dwellings and other man-made structures at Hispar.

After evoking a sublime sense of place, the author in his first chapter succinctly explains his methodology, outlines the cultural history of the region, summarises the history of scholarship and research in the area from British colonial times, and concludes with an illuminating discussion of oral traditions as an art form, treating us to some insightful reflexions on narrative art as a genre.

All of the Burushaski text material assumes acquaintance with the grammatical and lexicographical reference works on Burushaski, particularly those written by the author's own guru, the prolific Hermann Berger. All of the Burushaski texts are provided in readable phonological transcription. For the first Burushaski text the author also provides a meticulous morphological analysis of the text, followed by an integral translation of the text and a commentary. It would have been wonderful, had the author also provided such meticulous morphological analyses of all the subsequent texts in the volume, but that would have doubled the girth of the book and perhaps distracted those readers who find relevant linguistic facts tedious. As it is, the remaining texts in the book furnish students of the language with a wonderful exercise book to test their knowledge of Burushaski grammar. To be sure, highly readable German translations are provided for each and every sentence.

The texts deal with many themes and substantively document aspects of the cultural history of the Burusho, a people who have been converted to Islam but retain lore which antedates the arrival of this alien religion. The themes of the assembled narrative art in the book cover the conceptualisation of time and agricultural calendar of the Burusho of Hispar, stories of the supernatural and the Burusho shamanist belief system, accounts of encounters with a cyclops and with witches and fairies, and a few Gesar stories, Gesar being 'Kisár' in Burushaski. The volume contains word lists for special jargon and new terms not contained in other lexicographical sources on the language. The entire lay-out and presentation is delightful, and the book has been handsomely published by Otto Harrassowitz in Wiesbaden.

In conclusion, this book is a valuable and timeless resource, which will bring delight to those who use it either to gain knowledge of the cultural history of this unique language community in the Karakoram Himalayas or to exercise their grammatical knowledge of the Burushaski language. Hugh van Skyhawk has rendered a great service to scholarship and to the Burusho people.

George VAN DRIEM