



BURUSHASKI

BURUSHASKI (Burúśaski), language spoken by the Burúśo (sing. Burúśin) in Hunza-Karakorum, North Pakistan, containing some Iranian loanwords of various origins. There are two main varieties of Burushaski: the two closely related dialects of Hunza (Húnzu) and Nager, perhaps spoken by as many as 80,000, and that of Yasin (northwest of Gilgit), perhaps spoken by about 10,000. The grammatical structure of Burushaski is reminiscent both of that of the Caucasian languages and that of Basque (today spoken only in southwestern France and northern Spain), however, it has not yet been possible to prove genetic relationship either with these or any other languages.

The name of the Burusho is found once in a Khotanese travel report, dating probably from the 10th century, in the form *pr̥rūśavā* (see Bailey, *Dictionary*, p. 256, and idem, *Saka Documents. Text Volume*, Corpus Inscr. Iran., pt. 2, vol. 5, pp. 70-72).

Burushaski contains numerous words borrowed from neighboring languages at various times. The older loanwords are mostly from Shina, a Dardic language, less from Khowar (Dardic), Turkish, and Tibetan. Today, Urdu and English loanwords find their way into Burushaski at an increasing rate. There is a large number of Iranian loanwords, mostly borrowed from Persian (Dari) via Urdu, cf. *dam* “breath,” *kamzoor* “weak,” etc. Older speakers still pronounce many Persian loanwords with phonetic changes that go beyond regular sound substitution, e.g. *yaqás* “paper” (modern usually *kaayáz* < *kāḡaḡ*) and *biṣkháš* “present, tribute” (< Pers. *pēškaš*, which today would give **peeskáś*). It is quite probable that many of the Persian loanwords were



borrowed directly from Persian, however, this can be proved only in cases where the Burushaski form represents a Persian form different from the Urdu one, e.g., *miq* “nail” < Pers. *mīk*, differing from Urdu *mēk* with *majhūl* vowel, or *tirdóon*, goat’s horn used to measure gun powder, < *tīrdōn* (Pers. *tīrdān*) with the typical rounding of *ā* before nasal, differing from Urdu *tīrdān* where the *ā* remained unchanged before the nasal. About one dozen words have been borrowed from Wakhi, which is spoken by a minority in the northern part of the Hunza valley, e.g., *číkíş* “the back of the house” (Wakhi *čkiş*), *γuróop* “yak wool” (Wa. *γ ōrāb*). Borrowing from other Iranian languages took place sporadically (see Morgenstierne apud Lorimer, p. XXIV). From Pashto: *lamán* “skirt front” (Urdu-Persian *dāman*, *dāmān*), *darmán* “piece of even ground” (Pashto *dərmənd[jāy]* “threshing [floor]”), *mindáo* “withers” (Pashto *manḍaw*). In some cases the exact source cannot be determined: *mel* “wine” seems to have been borrowed from a dialect where intervocalic *d* > *l*, such as Yidgha-Munji; *gušpúr* “prince” represents an old Indian loan from Iranian **wisahpuθra*– (Middle Pers. *wispuhr*, etc.), found in a Kharosthi inscription as *gušura* and in Shina as *gušpūr* (Morgenstierne apud Lorimer, p. XXIV, and see H. W. Bailey in *Orientalia J. Duchesne-Guillemin Emerito Oblata*, *Acta Iranica* 23, p. 41; cf. Parachi-Ormuri, in which initial *w*– > *g*–); *urk* “wolf” resembles Ishkashmi *urk*; *khan* “fortified village, fort” may derive from **kanθ*, with shift of the aspiration and loss of the final dental, from the widely attested word for “city” in the Central Asian languages: Sogdian *kn’-h*, Khotanese *kanthā*-, Yaghnobi *kā(n)t*, and cf. Samar-kand, Tash-kent, etc. (borrowed in Sanskrit as *kanthā/ā*, Mayrhofer, *Dictionary* I, p. 131). The word *datú* “autumn” has cultural implications; according to Morgenstierne (1945, pp. 93-94) the word derives from an early Middle Iranian form of the name of the tenth Zoroastrian month, Pahlavi/Persian *day* < **da’w* (Avestan *daθušō*, *AirWb.*, col. 679), with which we may compare *śinī* “summer” from Sanskrit *śrāvaṇikā* “belonging to the 4th month” (of the Hindu calendar; Turner, no. 12700).

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