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CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS:

*A Maldivian Dictionary.*

xii, 412 pp. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003. £55.

The book under review is a dictionary of Maldivian (the aboriginal term is Divehi, sometimes also written Dhivehi, where *dh* stands for mere dental, not for an aspirate), an Indo-Aryan language, closely related to Sinhala and spoken by the population of the Republic of Maldives. The author, Christopher Reynolds (R.), who is also a great authority on Sinhala and a connoisseur of the Maldives and Maldivian history and culture, has already published several articles on Maldivian and a comprehensive bibliography of the Maldives (Chr. Reynolds, *Maldives* (Oxford, 1993)), where the reader can find references to the literature on this small island country, on which relatively little information has been available up to now, in spite of the rapid development of tourism over the last three decades. Ironically, the Maldivian language has probably received less scholarly attention than any other official (i.e. used as the official language of a country) language in the world. Fortunately, the turn of the century was marked by a rapid increase in publications on Maldivian. During the last few years, we have obtained a short grammatical sketch by Bruce Cain and James Gair, *Dhivehi (Maldivian)* (Munich, 2000)

and, two years later, a comprehensive description by Sonja Gippert Fritz, dealing with both synchronic and diachronic aspects of the language (*The Dhivehi Language. A Descriptive and Historical Grammar of Maldivian and its Dialects I, II* (Würzburg, 2002)). As far as dictionaries are concerned, apart from some quite out-of-date publications in nineteenth-century Orientalist journals, a few Maldivian lexicons published in the Maldives and inaccessible to the Western reader, as well as word lists in tourist guides, there have been none up to now. The present book aims to fill this gap in the research into Indo-Aryan languages.

The book opens with a short introduction (pp. v–x). The first two sections explain the main rules of transliteration of the Maldivian script, Tāna. R. rightly abandons the standard ('official') system of transliteration adopted by the Maldivian authorities, which is essentially oriented towards English spelling (*ee* for *ī*, *oo* for *ū*, etc.) and has no scientific value. The author also introduces some justifiable modifications to the standard orthography, mainly aiming at the unification of the representation of morphemes. Thus, the stem-final [-n] and *alif* [-ʔ] are written as *-m* and *-k* when corresponding to *-m-* and *-k-* before vocalic endings, not as *-n* and *-h*, as in the official Maldivian orthography.

There are, however, a few features which make R.'s system less scientific and, in my view, less attractive for an Indologist: (1) Rendering the vowel length by writing the corresponding vowel twice (*aa* etc.), instead of using the superscript <sup>ˉ</sup> (though not quite consistently: in the list of letters on pp. v and vii, R. writes *ā*, *ī*, etc.); (2) The use of *ř* for the retroflex fricative (affricate (?) according to R.), apparently following W. Geiger's notation (*ř*, that is, with the non-rounded superscript sign, háček). Although the notation of this phoneme varies much from one author to another (*ś*, *sh*, *š*, *ř*, *rh*), and, in some dialects, it is indeed realized as the retroflex flap or trill (*r*), a more common transcription, *ś* (thus De Silva, Gippert Fritz) or *š* (Cain and Gair), referring to the fricative realization, seems more appropriate; (3) R. apparently avoids using any special sign for the glottal stop (mostly appearing as the realization of some consonants at the end of a word or before consonants), which he merely calls *alif* in text. On several occasions in the introduction, R. adopts quite an unusual transcription (with no explanation), \* (e.g. on p. vi: 'a final written -t is pronounced -y\*'). It seems that a more common notation for this sound, ʔ or ʔ̄, would be preferable.

The reader may also complain about the lack of a summarizing phonetic table, which would be particularly helpful for a non-Indologist (who may not know, for instance, that *c* and *j* denote palatal affricates, but not dental affricate [ts] and palatal sonant [j/y]).

R. further gives some minimal grammatical information relevant to the presentation of verbs and nouns in the dictionary, and lists the main sources of the dictionary. For compiling the present dictionary, the author used the lexicon *Ran Tari* ('Golden Star'), published in the Maldives in 1957 by Malim Musa Kalegefanu, which has been essentially supplemented from several newspapers and literary works.

The main part of the book, the dictionary proper, contains 5,130 numbered items. Maldivian words are arranged in accordance with the order of letters adopted in most Indic alphabets (vowels—stops and nasals in order of place of articulation, from velars to labials—sonants and sibilants), not with that of Tāna (which partly reflects the historical sources of the letters, beginning with nine letters based on Arabic ciphers from 1 to 9: ۱ (= 1) *h*, ۲ (= 2) *ś/ř*, ۳ (= 3) *n*, etc.). Each entry opens with the Latin transliteration of the Maldivian word (in caps), followed by its Tāna spelling. For nouns R. also gives the indefinite

form in *-ek*, in order to show the final stem consonant or consonant cluster where it is different from that which appears in the base form (e.g., *gas*, *gah-ek* 'tree', *kudi*, *kujj-ek* 'child'). Verbs are listed in the present tense form in *-nī* (*-nīi*). The author further gives the part of speech characteristics (noun, verb, adjective, etc.), English translation, as well as, where necessary, some irregular forms for verbs (past participles, absolutes), verbal nouns and honorific forms. Some entries also contain examples of the uses of the item in question, some fixed collocations and idiomatic expressions. Many entries conclude with some brief etymological information, mostly amounting to the quotation of the Sinhala, Sanskrit and/or Prakrit cognates or sources of loan-words (English, Portuguese, Arabic, Hindi-Urdu, Persian).

As well as free words (lexemes), the dictionary also contains some bound morphemes, viz. suffixes and prefixes, even including some (but not all) inflectional morphemes, such as the indefinite nominal suffix *-ek*. Such a practice appears quite unusual for a standard dictionary. Rather, the author might collect all derivational and inflectional morphemes in a separate chapter, which could partly compensate for the lack of a short grammatical sketch and/or some basic paradigms that would be quite in order in such a dictionary.

The few minor remarks do not of course diminish the importance and value of the book under review. This long-awaited dictionary does not merely fill one of the last lacunae among Indo-Aryan lexicons; it also represents an impressive scholarly achievement, being the outcome of many years of work on Maldivian, one of the least known South Asian languages. The book is highly recommended both for linguists and Indologists; it will also be helpful for non-professional readers who may need some basic knowledge of the Maldivian language. Unfortunately, the author was not given the opportunity to read the proofs, which results in quite numerous misprints and *corrigenda*, not to mention annoying typographical lapses such as underlined brackets or commas. Let us hope that the next edition will correct these irritating blunders in this magnificent opus.

LEONID KULIKOV