Review of Arsène Roux (2009). *La vie berbère par les textes*

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REVIEW OF ARSÈNE ROUX (2009).

LA VIE BERBÈRE PAR LES TEXTES


The present book is a facsimile re-edition (not re-edited) and English translation of La vie berbère by Arsène Roux (1893-1971), a work originally published in 1955 without any translation. Arsène Roux was an Arabist and Berberologist who published only a few works on Tashelhiyt Berber, but left behind a huge amount of unpublished materials in the so-called Fonds Roux in Aix-en-Provence, both on Moroccan Berber, especially Tashelhiyt and Middle Atlas Berber (also known as Tamazight; maybe Central Moroccan Berber is a better term1), and Moroccan Arabic.

The 65 texts in the book under review are from different Tashelhiyt speaking regions, namely the Ashtuken (Aštuken, 22 texts), Ayt Brayyim (Ayt Bṛayyim, 18 texts), and Lakhsas (Laxṣaṣ, 12 texts) of the region south of Agadir, and the Guedmioua (Igedmiwen, 10 texts) and Mesfioua (Imesfiwen, 3 texts) varieties of the surroundings of Marrakech, heading towards the Great Atlas. Roux mentions that he got the texts from students of the Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines. Tashelhiyt Berber texts of the Ayt Brayyim, Lakhsas, and Guedmioua region have already been published in Roux (1942), of which Stroomer (2003) is a linguistic reanalysis plus translation.

The book contains diverse topics in the chapters: I Habitation; II Clothes; III Food; IV Illnesses; V The Weather; VI Agriculture; VII Animal Husbandry; VIII Trades; IX Commerce; X The Hunt. Thus, these texts provide a refreshing supplement to the already published stories in Stroomer (2003), as these give an insight into Berber daily life.

The original publication did not contain a translation. The translation of the text is done in very readable English and remains relatively close to the original text, cf. (from page 102, and 212)²:

\[
\text{Midden-li-zdeŋ-nin nettni ġ-uzuqar ar-ṭṭf-en leuqqel-ɛnn-sen,}
\]
people-REL-live-PTC.PL they in-EA:plain A(R)-hold:1-3PL minds-of-them,

\[
\text{ur-a-tteggän lġwšma}
\]
NEG-A(R)-do:1:3PL ignorance:PL

1. I owe this term to Professor Maarten Kossmann (Leiden).
2. abbreviations: A(R) = imperfective particle; EA = état d’annexion; I = imperfective; PL = plural; PTC = (verbal) participle; REL = relative element 3 = third person.
“The people who live in the plain possess intelligence, they are not ignorant.”

As the example show, the original Tashelhiyt contains many phonetic details, and schwa is written, which makes it easier for students to actually pronounce the texts, i.e. easier with respect to modern publications wherein schwa (written \(<e>=[ə]\)) is considered non-phonemic, and is henceforth deleted from the orthographic representation, e.g. (taken from Stroomer 2003:50):

\[ IdDa Bu Mḥnd d wuššn šrk\]t ayyrza, krzn azalim d tmẓin.  

“The hedgehog and the jackal shared a garden, they cultivated onions and barley (together).”

Throughout the original, Roux gives notes, mostly of a phonological nature (e.g. assimilations), but also on morphology.

Unlike the original Tashelhiyt text, the translation does not have (hanging) indentations, which makes it a bit difficult to follow the translation, especially since the translation is placed after the main Berber text. It would have been more pleasant to have a facing original text and translation.

All in all, this book is a welcome addition to the growing body of Tashelhiyt Berber texts in a form that is accessible to the linguist. Thus, further research on Tashelhiyt linguistic structures are possible. We are now still waiting for a reference grammar.

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REFERENCES


