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## Review of A Dakota-English Dictionary and An English-Dakota Dictionary

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*A Dakota-English Dictionary.* By Stephen R. Riggs. Ed. James Owen Dorsey. 1891; reprinted: St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992. Foreword, Letter of Transmittal. xvi + 665 pp. \$24.95.

*An English-Dakota Dictionary.* By John P. Williamson. 1902; reprinted: St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992. Foreword, introduction. xxvi + 264 pp. \$12.95.

There has been a good deal of interest in the Dakota dialects in recent years, due no doubt to a general increase in interest in American ethnicities since the 1960s. There has been even more interest in the language since the appearance of the film *Dances with Wolves*.

One index of the increased interest in the Dakota language has been the reprinting of classic works on the language, including the two under review here. Since the original printings (Riggs 1892; Williamson 1902) each work has been reprinted twice. The first new editions were those of Ross and Haines (Minneapolis), which were issued in 1968 and 1970 respectively. The second reprinting is the present edition.

There will continue to be a need for these works until a better dictionary of the language is available. (In many respects a better dictionary is *A Dictionary of Teton Sioux, Lakota-English: English-Lakota*, by Eugene Buechel, S. J., edited by Paul Manhart, S. J., Red Cloud Indian School, Inc., Holy Rosary Mission, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, 1970, 1983. This is a very full dictionary, with a great deal of ethnographic information as well. But the Buechel dictionary has one major flaw in its orthography: aspiration is very inconsistently marked. All stops indicated as aspirated are indeed aspirated, but not all stops which lack indication of aspiration are unaspirated. It is therefore necessary to verify virtually all spellings with native speakers. Moreover, there is no indication of the quality of the aspiration that is marked.) We must thus be grateful to

the Minnesota Historical Society for producing this edition.

In the introduction to this latest edition students of Dakota are warned to use the written forms of words given in Riggs and Williamson only *after* words and expressions have been learned orally. This advice reflects the major defect of the Riggs orthography: the aspiration of stops is not adequately represented in the spelling system that the Dakota Mission devised. The aspiration of stops in the eastern Dakota dialects is phonetically very similar to the aspiration of the same sounds in English. Unfortunately, the missionaries represented the aspiration in the same way as it is represented in English, viz. by nothing! Thus a phonemic distinction is lost in the orthography, and the loss can only be rectified by hearing and learning pronunciations at the same time that the spelling of words is learned. This startling underdifferentiation is balanced by an equally startling overdifferentiation: there is no phonetic or phonemic contrast between the orthographic *o*<sub>i</sub> and *u*<sub>i</sub> of the dictionaries.

With this warning, these classic works can be used profitably by all students of the language. They are a rich repository of lexical and ethnographic information on Dakota life and society of the nineteenth century.

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For the record, a new Lakota dictionary, with full coverage of the lexicon of the language, and with complete phonetic accuracy, is presently under preparation at the University of Colorado. When completed, this will be the definitive dictionary for the Dakota language, and it should render obsolete all previous Dakota dictionaries.