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Book Review: *A Grammar of Crow: Apsáalooke Aliláau* By Randolph Graczyk

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A Grammar of Crow: *Apsáalooke Aliláau*. By Randolph Graczyk. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. xxiv + 448 pp. Tables, references, index. \$75.00 cloth.

On my desk is an old, unbound manuscript, a hand copy of a Crow grammar written by a Jesuit missionary in the late 1800s. Randolph Graczyk's *A Grammar of Crow: Apsáalooke Aliláau* is the first extended grammar of my language since that time. That alone makes it an important contribution to American Indian linguistics and to the study of Crow. It is also a first-class effort. His work is based on a prize-winning dissertation at the University of Chicago, but has been revised and expanded into a general descriptive format to make it accessible to any language scholar interested in comparative searches for relationships to other Siouan family languages or exploring linguistic patterns or universals.

Crow is a subject-object-verb (SOV) language, most closely related to Hidatsa, a tribe in North Dakota. These two languages separated very early from proto-Siouan and separated from one another when Crow groups left the Hidatsas' sedentary farming culture along the Missouri to develop into a nomadic hunting culture in the Yellowstone and Big Horn River country of Montana and Wyoming. (Graczyk includes a section comparing the diverging phonological structure of the two languages.) After a brief historical sketch and a very detailed discussion of Crow phonology rules (including vowel length and accent) and the related orthographic conventions, Graczyk includes detailed and well-illustrated chapters on patterns and structures of Crow at the word, phrase, clause, and sentence level.

A Catholic priest, Graczyk has lived and worked on our reservation and studied our language for thirty-five years. Besides eliciting linguistic structures and using text examples from recent bilingual education materials and Wycliffe Bible translation work (a practical orthography for Crow was not available until the '70s) for his analysis, he has been a par-

ticipant observer in contact and interaction with fluent Crow speakers on a daily basis. He has developed conversational ability in the language and uses it regularly in religious services.

There are 12,000 enrolled Crows, most living on a large reservation in traditional homelands in southeastern Montana. Crow remains the most vital of tribal language of the Great Plains. Reservation-wide surveys of school children in the '60s and late '70s indicated that more than 75% of children still spoke Crow as their dominant language. The language was heard everywhere—in schoolyards, stores, and at all tribal social, religious, and political events. However, a dramatic intergenerational language shift occurred in the early '90s. A new comprehensive survey indicated that although more than 60% of the older students still spoke Crow, there was a sudden drop in active Crow-speaking children to below 30% in the middle grades and to less than 10% in preschool and primary grades. Such a rapid change in any stable linguistic community is rare—most Plains tribes saw earlier language decline, but over more than one generation.

The shift from Crow appears related to the cumulative pressures of pervasive English in schools and media, along with changing sociolinguistic factors such as new cluster housing in all communities (reducing extended family households and permitting back-migration of urban Crow families whose children did not speak Crow), and increased intermarriage to non-Crows (with more college attendance and work mobility). There was also an apparent shift in parental attitudes about the critical importance of interacting in Crow with young children as the school- and government-related job market became more accessible and as modest school bilingual programs were introduced. In any case, intergenerational transmission of Crow is no longer the norm, even though the great majority of adults on the reservation are still primary Crow speakers and Crow remains in active use in most homes and in tribal social and political activities.

Thus Graczyk's grammar comes at an ideal time for those of us working with promoting or teaching the Crow language on the reservation. We are just now seeing the beginnings of an effort to revitalize the language and promote its early use at the family, daycare, and Head Start levels. For children already in school, there is a growing awareness of student interest in learning Crow as a second language to promote tribal and self-identity. Graczyk's grammar is an invaluable reference for those developing teaching materials or training local teachers. While its format is somewhat formal and academic, his rich use of several Crow examples to illustrate each topic and structure, as well as rule variations or exceptions, makes it possible for the nonlinguist to navigate the book. I recommend it highly, and hope that a lower-priced edition soon helps it reach its potential wider audience. **Rose Chesarek**, *Billings, Montana*.