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## Review of: Compendium of the World's Languages, Volume 1: Abaza to Kurdish; Volume 2: Ladakhi to Zuni, 2nd edn.

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among them the observation that Chinese voiceless aspirated initials co-occur with high tones for phonetic reasons, a fact now labeled the ‘voiced-low principle’. The text of Steinthal’s essay follows (414–82), supplemented by an appendix, notes, and bibliography prepared by Edmondson (483–98).

Each volume of the series is indexed separately (with, unfortunately, only fair accuracy). The books contain numerous portraits of principal figures in the history of the Prix Volney, reproductions of manuscript pages (many of marginal legibility), and other illustrations. Short biographies of the contributors are also provided.

For historians of linguistics, the value of Leopold’s series is obvious, constituting as it does a fantastically rich mine of previously unpublished material and authoritative modern scholarship. Moreover, specialists in each of the main topics represented—phonetic transcription, French and its dialects, Native American languages, Indo-European comparative philology, African and Chinese linguistics—will want to reflect on how work represented in nineteenth-century Prix Volney essays has shaped the landscape of their own subdisciplines. For linguists at large, the series offers substantial rewards, too. In several ways, reading Leopold’s text resembles the experience of visiting a museum. These are ambitious, physically imposing books with intricate internal organization. They contain lots of detailed information, collected and interpreted by scholars who, like curators of diverse exhibits in a museum, position themselves variously with respect to their readers. Quantities of notes, appendices, and lists store excess data whose presence is still felt, like material pushed into back rooms away from public view. Historians of linguistics will consult these texts the way that some people bustle around museums culling specific facts. But another kind of visitor, whose agenda is less defined, can make another, equally powerful use of the same resource. Many 21st century linguists may at first perceive the Prix Volney essays and their commentaries to be like artifacts on display at a museum: intriguing, but lacking obvious contemporary utility. One needs to suspend the pursuit of utility, ward off ‘museum fatigue’, and move freely around in a receptive frame of mind. The reward is that, like a visitor to a museum, one leaves stimulated and ‘restored’ (Kaplan, Bardwell, & Slakter 1993) in unanticipated, intangible, ways by virtue of the shift of perspective which an encounter with another culture affords. Leopold’s series on the Prix Volney can provide such a wholesome effect and along the way enlarge one’s consciousness of the range and complexity of the intellectual community within which one works.

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**Compendium of the world’s languages**, Volume 1: Abaza to Kurdish; Volume 2: Ladakhi to Zuni, 2nd edn. Compiled by GEORGE L. CAMPBELL. Routledge: London, 2000. Pp. xiii, 1854.

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The grandiose connotations of this title are only partly justified by its contents since fewer than 400 of the world’s several thousand languages actually receive treatment here. Those that

are included, however, do seem to have been carefully chosen to represent a broad spectrum of genetic, typological, and geographical variety. Each language is described in some detail and in a pleasing visual format rather than in a shorthand style loaded with abbreviations. The compiler, George L. Campbell, is described on the first page as a 'a polyglot linguist and translator formerly of the BBC World Service'. C seems intent foremost on creating a single reference to slake the initial curiosity of readers by introducing them to a diverse mixture of well-known and 'exotic' languages. To this end, the entries pay nearly as much attention to writing systems and other philological aspects as to basic linguistic structure per se. It is important to stress at the outset that this book is geared toward the general reader more than the serious linguist. This remark is not at all intended as criticism but only as a basis for evaluation. However, this review will also argue that the sources consulted as a basis for writing many of the entries appear to have been chosen extremely haphazardly, with no broad understanding of the most up-to-date literature available. This problem, all the more unfortunate in a second edition, significantly reduces the compendium's usefulness even to the curious general reader.

Except for a brief introduction (vii–xiv), a key to abbreviations (xv–xvi), and an alphabetical listing of the languages included (xvi–xxvi), most pages are filled with the language entries themselves (1–1818). Pagination is continuous throughout both volumes, the second of which closes with a language-by-language bibliography of references (1819–54). This list reveals the origin of the information presented in the entries and directs the interested reader to sources of greater detail on each given topic. This bibliographic data would have been easier to access had it been placed directly after each entry. In keeping with the book's purpose as a general introductory reference designed to encourage new interest in language study (or to extend an existing interest into some novel, uncharted trajectory), there is an avoidance of theory-specific terminology. The grammatical and philological terms employed are only those that should be familiar to anyone with a rudimentary linguistic education. Many entries contain substantial illustrative material in the form of charts showing phoneme inventories, content-word paradigms, and explanations of alphabets and syllabaries, where necessary. Most close with the first eight lines of the Gospel of John rendered in the given language. Without interlinear morpheme glossing, this is simply a visual illustration of the script rather than a text useful for analyzing the language's morphosyntactic patterns in any meaningful way.

Some of the best and most detailed entries cover ancient language forms such as Old and Middle English (503–10), Classical Greek (632–44), and Latin (958–72), or extinct languages such as Sumerian (1548–55), Etruscan (539–42), Ancient Egyptian (490–7), Elamite (498–500), or Gothic (625–31). There are also entries on Epigraphic South Arabian (516–22) and the Orkhon-Yenisei Turkic runic inscriptions of the eighth century (1288–93). The latter is new to the second edition; unfortunately, it lacks a reproduction of the runic letters themselves, an unusual omission since writing samples are included in most other entries. Examples and explanations of scripts draw heavily from the author's own *Handbook of scripts and alphabets* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997). Like the illustrative texts, however, these explanations usually furnish nothing beyond a basic acquaintance with the general type and 'look' of each writing system.

Entries also contain sociolinguistic data. In particular, C is to be commended for his use of modern ethnonyms for native peoples and languages of the former Soviet Union. For instance, he uses Nivkh rather than Gilyak, Khanty rather than Ostyak, and so forth (probably following Comrie 1981, the first English publication to follow this practice consistently). Information about genetic relationships tends overall to be on the conservative side, reflecting the baseline consensus rather than more speculative hypotheses. However, some entries on Native American languages contain statements that do not seem to reflect views currently held by anyone. For example, Choctaw is described as 'a member of the Muskogean branch of the Macro-Algonquian family' (387). Such pronouncements seem to be gleaned at random from earlier monographs, many quite outdated. It is unfortunate in this regard that C did not simply consult such standard, recent sources as Goddard 1996, Campbell 1997, or Campbell and Mithun 1979. The last of these must certainly have been readily available to him even during preparation of the first edition.

The second edition differs from its decade-old predecessor mainly in that most of the entries have been rewritten and some considerably expanded. Also, about 25 new entries have been

added, extending the work's scope to include such languages as Comanche and Shona. C notes that his decision about which languages to include was made in part based on consultation of the list of 1,000 languages in the first edition of David Crystal's *Encyclopedia of language* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 436–44). But while Crystal's list contains no languages spoken by fewer than several thousand remaining speakers, C adds a number of entries on endangered languages of diverse genetic affiliations and typologies, mainly representing Native Siberia, North America, or the Caucasus. In light of the obvious space-constraints in a work of this kind, one generally finds few real surprises in C's choice of languages given his basic goal of introducing the general reader to the world's linguistic diversity. Overall, his coverage of aboriginal languages of Central and South America, and of the South Pacific in particular, is the least satisfying—a failing that continues to dog most general linguistics books despite a virtual explosion of recent descriptive work in these regions. C appears not to have utilized general treatments such as Jorge A. Suárez's *The Mesoamerican Indian languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), or any volume of the four-part *Handbook of Amazonian languages*, (Derbyshire & Pullum 1986–98) as a source for possible single-language entries to better represent these highly complex linguistic areas. Likewise, the brief entry 'Papuan languages' (1323–7) could have been easily augmented by individual entries based on such excellent grammars as William A. Foley's *The Yimas language of New Guinea* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991). Native North America is somewhat better served but is also not entirely without problem. The entry 'North America Indian isolates' (1243–9) is puzzling in that, alongside Haida (considered an isolate by most linguists) and Tlingit (actually distantly related to Athabaskan-Eyak), it includes the multilanguage families of Salishan and Wakashan. Some mention here of Quileute (an isolate if one ignores the extinct Chemakum) or Kutenai and Beothuk (true isolates by almost anyone's estimation) would have been more appropriate.

Otherwise, there is generally little reason for fair complaint about C's choice of languages. On the other hand, the published sources used for most languages that were included leaves a very great deal to be desired. This is the book's main failing, and it is particularly inexcusable in a second edition such as this, since numerous books available during the 1980s, when the first edition was being prepared, were likewise omitted this second time. For numerous entries, the only sources cited are over 20 years old, with especially meager use made of language descriptions published during the past decade. Ignoring newer sources often considerably damages C's ability to convey even the most basic structural facts known about a language. For example, the chief Russian publications cited on languages of North Asia are the five-volume *Jazyky narodov SSSR [Languages of the peoples of the USSR]* (Moscow: Nauka, 1966–68) and the three-volume *Jazyky Azii i Afriki [Languages of Asia and Africa]* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976–79). Although standard compilations for their time, these books have been superseded in manifold ways by seminal monographs on individual languages such as Volodin 1976 on Itelmen, Nedyalkov 1997 on Evenki, and Werner 1997 on Ket, to name just a fraction of the relevant, newer titles C ignores. C's entry on Ket, for example, lacks an adequate description of the tone system, lists only half a dozen nominal cases when there are twice that many, and notes that the language is unwritten (though Ket has been written since 1989 with a Cyrillic-based script devised by Heinrich Werner). Many other entries are similarly outdated. A perusal of the bibliography at the end of Vol. 2 reveals virtually none of the monograph-length language descriptions published by Routledge, Cambridge University Press, Lincom Europa, or a host of other publishing houses that likewise offer well-known, multivolume series of descriptive grammars. For example, C failed to use any of the superb volumes available in John Benjamins' 'London Oriental and African Language Library', the 'Mouton Grammar Library', or the newer Russian-language series 'Jazyki mira [Languages of the world]'. This lengthy roster of sources not consulted could be easily extended, but the series and publishers mentioned should suffice to demonstrate that this compendium is highly unsystematic in its utilization of the most up-to-date basic sources for the languages it describes. Occasional bright spots do turn up, such as the inclusion of Saltarelli 1988 for Basque, Hewitt 1979 for Abkhaz, and Aronson 1982 for Georgian, each of which noticeably enriches the respective entries when compared to other languages with which

C has no personal familiarity. Most other 'exotic' languages are represented only by sources that are decades old and fairly inaccessible to most readers, so that the corresponding entries are equally out-of-date and the reader left with no realistic direction toward a more detailed description of the given language.

These two weighty volumes actually go far in showcasing the world's linguistic diversity, both past and present, in a format that is invitingly accessible to any reader with a modicum of familiarity with general linguistic terms and concepts. Engaging the curiosity of the nonspecialist is a very worthwhile goal as linguists succeed in bringing ever more language forms to the attention of the general public. However, because even the most dedicated linguist can intimately know only a miniscule fraction of the world's linguistic richness, the success of any encyclopedic treatment of world languages hinges crucially on the published sources consulted. Unfortunately, the omission of so many excellent publications is precisely this book's failing—and one that could only be rectified by preparing a third edition based on a thorough, systematic re-assessment of the best basic language descriptions available.

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