

**Handbook of North American Indians**, vol. 17: **Languages**. Ed. by IVES GODDARD.  
Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution. 1996. Pp. xiv, 958. ISBN 0-16-048774-9. \$89.50.

Book review

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Reviewed by SARAH G. THOMASON, *University of Michigan*

This book (henceforth Volume 17, as specialists generally call it) is listed as seventeenth in the Smithsonian Institution's twenty-volume *Handbook of North American Indians* project, but it was the tenth to appear. Only one of the other general volumes appeared earlier (vol. 4, *History of Indian-White relations*, in 1988); the first two books published in the series were regional volumes, *California* and *Northeast*, both in 1978. Not only is the project as a whole a long-running event, but Volume 17 itself has a lengthy history: eight of its twenty-five main chapters were submitted between 1992 and 1995, but all the others were first submitted between 1972 and 1977.<sup>1</sup>In spite of its rather distant 1996 publication date, the editors of *Language* have agreed that its importance—its established eminence in the permanent literature on Native American languages—make it appropriate to publish a review even at this late date.

Listing the chapters of an edited volume in a review is rarely a good idea, but this is not an ordinary edited volume, and a complete list is needed to give a clear idea of the impressive scope of the entire work. The book begins with an Introduction by the editor (1-16), followed by thirteen general chapters: 'The description of the Native languages of North America before Boas', by Goddard (17-42); 'The description of the Native languages of North America: Boas and after', by MARIANNE MITHUN (43-63); 'Language and the culture history of North America', by MICHAEL K. FOSTER (64-110); 'Borrowing', by CATHERINE A. CALLAGHAN and GEOFFREY GAMBLE (111-116); 'Dynamics of linguistic contact', by MICHAEL SILVERSTEIN (117-136); 'Overview of general characteristics', by Mithun (137-157); 'Native writing

systems’, by WILLARD B. WALKER (158-184); ‘Place-names’, by PATRICIA O. AFABLE and MADISON S. BEELER (185-199); ‘Personal names’, by DAVID H. FRENCH and KATHRINE S. FRENCH (200-221); ‘The ethnography of speaking’, by WICK R. MILLER (222-243); ‘Discourse’, by M. DALE KINKADE and ANTHONY MATTINA (244-274); ‘Nonspeech communication systems’, by ALLAN R. TAYLOR (275-289); and ‘The classification of the Native languages of North America’, by Goddard (290-323).

The other twelve main chapters are sketches of particular languages, chosen for maximum diversity in geographical and family coverage (although there is no sketch of a language from the southeastern U.S.): Central Alaskan Yupik, by OSAHITO MIYAOKA (325-363); Hupa, by VICTOR GOLLA (364-389); Cree, by H.C. WOLFART (390-439); Lakota, by DAVID S. ROOD and Taylor (440-482); Zuni, by STANLEY NEWMAN (483-506); Eastern Pomo, by SALLY MCLENDON (507-550); Seneca, by WALLACE L. CHAFE (551-579); Wichita, by Rood (580-608); Thompson Salish, by LAURENCE C. THOMPSON, M. TERRY THOMPSON, and STEVEN M. EGESDAL (609-643); Coahuilteco, by RUDOLPH C. TROIKE (644-665); Sahaptin, by BRUCE RIGSBY and NOEL RUDE (666-692); and Shoshone, by Miller (693-720).

The book concludes with ‘Sources’, by HERBERT J. LANDAR (721-761), an ambitious compilation that is intended to provide, wherever possible, references to ‘a printed grammar, dictionary, and collection of texts for each native language of North America’ (p. 721); a list of contributors (four of them deceased by the time the book went to press), including the dates of submission and then acceptance of each article (762-763); an enormous comprehensive bibliography covering the entire book (764-925); and an index (926-957). And finally, in a pocket inside the back cover, there are two handsome multicolored maps: a large map of ‘Native languages and language families’, compiled by Goddard, and a reproduction of ‘John Wesley Powell’s 1891 map “Linguistic stocks of American Indians North of Mexico” ’.

This is a unique and uniquely important reference work, both for its breadth of coverage and for its excellent content and format. As with the other *Handbook* volumes, Vol. 17 is enhanced by elegant black-and-white illustrations—of speakers of the languages in the ‘sketch’ chapters, of notational systems for sign languages, of writing systems, of historical language maps, and of many other things as well. It is beautifully edited: there must be typos somewhere in a book this size, but I noticed none as I read through the book. (I did find one or two citations that had been updated in the bibliography but not in the text, but the works were still easily identified.) It has another quality that makes it especially valuable for an audience that includes nonlinguists as well as linguists: most authors, especially in the general chapters, have made serious and successful efforts to make their discussions intelligible to readers who have little or no background in linguistics. Mithun, Foster, and (somewhat surprisingly, given the denseness of his prose in his analyses of Algonquian structure) Goddard stand out in this regard.

The book is a must-buy item for everyone interested in the Native languages of North America, in spite of the fact that several important works covering some of the same ground have appeared since it was published.<sup>2</sup>Mithun 1999 and Campbell 1997 are the most prominent potential competitors, and regional volumes such as Hardy & Scancarelli (2005) offer more linguistic detail than Vol. 17. What Vol. 17 has that all the others lack is a broader focus—topics like Native writing systems, personal names, and ethnography of speaking do not figure prominently in any of the other books. It also offers succinct and authoritative surveys of topics covered at much greater length in (e.g.) Mithun’s and Campbell’s books. Mithun’s ‘general characteristics’ chapter here is in a sense an extended abstract for the typological discussions in her 1999 book; it is also, in effect, an updated version of the typological discussion in Boas’s famed 1911 ‘Introduction’. The prospect of updating Boas must have been daunting, but Mithun succeeds admirably: her Vol. 17 chapter (like her 1999)

book) is superb. Campbell's 1997 book focuses on language classification and includes all the Americas rather than just North America. It is an excellent work, but Goddard's chapter in Vol. 17 on the classification of the North American languages, besides being conveniently succinct, does not suffer by comparison. Goddard starts by describing the history of the classification of North American languages and closes with a survey of the generally accepted current picture. His brief discussion of controversial claims of very distant relationships, such as Greenberg's 1987 'Amerind' proposal (pp. 317-318), is dispassionate, and he is careful to cite works on both sides of the issue.

Each of the twelve 'sketch' chapters was written by one or more specialists in the language, and although they inevitably vary in quality, the range is from good to excellent. Goddard notes in his 'Introduction' that the authors were given organizational guidelines (p.1), but that no absolute uniformity was imposed. The one oddish editorial decision was to have each sketch author include a list of 'selected vocabulary' that would 'reflect the particularities of the individual languages and of their speakers' aboriginal and contemporary ways of life' (3). The lists do indeed contain some fascinating culturally-loaded words, such as Zuni *koyemši* 'clowns (Mudheads)' (p. 503) and Sahaptin *spílya* 'coyote' vs. *Spilyáy* 'Coyote (in legends)' (p. 689). But most of the items are more ordinary words, for 'fog', 'eye', 'kill', and the like, and there is no systematic inclusion of (for instance) the items on the 100-word Swadesh list.

Like any other reader, my attention was drawn particularly to chapters that offered information that was (for me) new and exciting—the standouts in this book are Willard's chapter on writing systems and Kinkade & Mattina's wide-ranging chapter on discourse—and to chapters in my own areas of specialization, especially language contact. In this area alone I found Vol. 17 somewhat disappointing. The 'Borrowing' chapter, only six pages long, has some very interesting examples, but it is too short and too limited in geographical coverage to give a clear continent-wide picture of the phenomenon. And the longer chapter

on ‘Dynamics of linguistic contact’, though it contains much valuable material, misrepresents the controversy over a pre-contact vs. a post-contact origin for Chinook Jargon by implying, incorrectly, that all proponents of a pre-contact origin base their claim on ‘spurious ethnological reconstructions, such as direct Nootkan-Chinookan trade’ (p. 127). The major reason for rejecting Silverstein’s claim that Nootka vocabulary belonged to ‘the earliest layer...in the formation of Chinook Jargon’ (p. 129) is that the phonology of the small but central stock of Nootka-derived words in the pidgin points clearly to transmission by Whites, while the words from Chinookan and Salishan languages show equally clearly that they were transmitted by Natives to other Natives (and to a few talented Whites). This sharp discrepancy makes it difficult to maintain the position that Chinook Jargon arose directly from a Nootka-lexicon pidgin: the phonology and syntax of Chinook Jargon are easily traceable to Native linguistic structures, but if Whites had participated significantly in the development of Chinook Jargon, it would be very surprising to find almost no trace of that participation beyond the handful of Nootka-origin words. But this is an idiosyncratic reaction (I’m one of the people Silverstein is criticizing), and in any case Silverstein, like other authors in Vol. 17 who touch on controversial subjects, provides ample references to both sides of the issue.

It is impossible, in a short review, to show the coherence of the narrative in the various chapters, but a few examples of specific items will at least suggest the kinds of nuggets to be found in this gold mine. In ‘The ethnography of speaking’, Miller points to an elder’s negative attitude toward younger speakers’ ‘funny Arapaho’, and similar attitudes for other languages, as a factor in hastening language death (p. 242). With the help of the index, interested readers can explore different manifestations of particular linguistic phenomena, for instance reduplication (in the Eastern Pomo, Sahaptin, Shoshone, Thompson, and Zuni sketches). French & French (in ‘Personal names’) discuss taboos on uttering one’s own name and/or certain other people’s names, citing references from a number of languages (pp. 212-

213). Some of the most colorful characters in the history of Native American linguistics are mentioned, though usually only in bland terms, such as Goddard's observation that Constantine S. Rafinesque's classification of the languages 'is generally considered to fall outside the scientific tradition' (p. 290). With J.P. Harrington there is no question of his scientific respectability—he was a tireless and highly talented fieldworker—but he hid his field notes and sound recordings from scholars during his lifetime, and it is due in part to luck that the Smithsonian now has almost a million manuscript pages of his notes on microfilm (Mithun, pp. 55-56). On p. 207 (in 'Personal names') is a photograph of 'Pictographically rendered names of the heads of 84 families in the Oglala Sioux band led by Big-road', who submitted the drawings—each one consisting of a numbered head surmounted by a picture illustrating the name (e.g. a bear looking back over his shoulder for 'Bear-looking-behind'). And finally, I was delighted to see a picture of Bitterroot Jim, a Bitterroot Salish (a.k.a. Flathead) speaker, telling a story in the Plains Indian Sign Language at a 1930 'sign talking council' (p. 277): Bitterroot Jim was the grandfather of a prominent current Salish elder who is one of the last fully fluent speakers of the language, and her own nickname 'Jim' derives from his name.

Vol. 17 is a book that richly rewards browsing (the wonderful illustrations alone would guarantee that) as well as careful reading. It is authoritative, comprehensive, and interesting throughout to anyone with a healthy curiosity about the continent's indigenous languages. The editor and contributors have a right to be very proud of their accomplishment.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>I would like to be able to claim that the extreme tardiness of this review is due to a temporal jinx laid on Vol. 17, but that would be wrong. The review was delayed by my own unaided inefficiency.

<sup>2</sup>The price of Vol. 17 is rather steep, but not unreasonably so, given its massive large-format size and its copious illustrations. Mithun 1999, for instance, is listed on amazon.com at \$71.98 in hardcover; Campbell 1997 is cheaper, at \$50. Mithun's book is also available in paperback, at \$30.51, but it's hard to imagine a usable paperback version of Vol. 17.

Start by marking "Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 17: Languages" as Want to Read: Want to Read saving... Want to Read. We'd love your help. Let us know what's wrong with this preview of Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 17 by Ives Goddard. Problem: It's the wrong book It's the wrong edition Other. Amy McCullough American Humane Association, Humane Research and Therapy, Washington, DC, USA. Sandra McCune WALTHAM Centre for Pet Nutrition, Freeby Lane, Waltham-on-the-Wolds, Leicestershire, UK. Gail F. Melson Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA. Jeannine Moga Family and Community Services, College of Veterinary Medicine, Veterinary Hospital, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, USA. When I first accepted the editorship of this Handbook, I was excited about the opportunity because of my genuine enthusiasm about AAI. I was also compelled to put together a book that helped clarify some of the misconceptions about the topic. Vol. 17, Languages | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. Languages. Ives Goddard. ed. Handbook of North American Indians, 17. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996. 957 pp. Read more. Article. Ives Goddard (ed.), Handbook of North American Indians, 17: Languages. Washington, DC: Smithsonian | October 1999. Language in Society. Regna Darnell.