



Negotiating Languages: Urdu, Hindi, and the Definition of Modern South Asia (South Asia Across the Disciplines)

By Walter Hakala

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Prior to the nineteenth century, South Asian dictionaries, glossaries, and vocabularies reflected a hierarchical vision of nature and human society. By the turn of the twentieth century, the modern dictionary had democratized and politicized language. Compiled “scientifically” through “historical principles,” the modern dictionary became a concrete symbol of a nation’s arrival on the world stage.

Following this phenomenon from the late seventeenth century to the present, *Negotiating Languages* casts lexicographers as key figures in the political realignment of South Asia under British rule and in the years after independence. Their dictionaries document how a single, mutually intelligible language evolved into two competing registers—Urdu and Hindi—and became associated with contrasting religious and nationalist goals. Each chapter in this volume focuses on a key lexicographical work and its fateful political consequences. Recovering texts by overlooked and even denigrated authors, *Negotiating Languages* provides insight into the forces that turned intimate speech into a potent nationalist politics, intensifying the passions that partitioned the Indian subcontinent.

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Editorial Review

Review

A monumental work. Its eloquence is sublime, the stories are tantalizing, and the illustrations are gripping. (Syed Akbar Hyder, author of *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory*)

South Asianists have needed a pioneering book that takes seriously the ideological underpinnings of dictionary production and meaning-making across a range of linguistic, cultural, and class boundaries and shows how dynamic such exchanges often are. *Negotiating Languages* is a major contribution to the study of South Asia. (Christi Merrill, author of *Riddles of Belonging: India in Translation and Other Tales of Possession*)

Who knew that lexicographical analysis could be so historically revelatory, culturally astute, and rich in anecdotes? Hakala's book is not only a source to be mined for information but also a joy to read. Everyone with an interest in South Asian language history will find it both a treasure and a pleasure. (Frances Pritchett, author of *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and Its Critics*)

A pioneering study of Hindi/Urdu lexicography, Hakala's book is an equally significant contribution to the sociology of Urdu's premodern literature. His meticulous analyses of four lexicons, dating from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, bring revealing insights to the issues that much concerned not only the lexicographers but also all the creative writers of those times, as well as issues of linguistic authority and authenticity and gender and class identities. (C. M. Naim, author of *Urdu Texts and Contexts*)

A brilliant contribution to the story of how Hindustani emerged as a standardized, comprehensive language, and in the end diverged into Urdu and Hindi as languages of cultural and national identity. With great originality, Hakala shows how dictionaries change over time in their sources, format, claims to authenticity, and the populations they at once reflect and create. We will never look at the Fallon, Platts, and Farhang that sit on our desks in the same way again. (Barbara D. Metcalf, author of *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*)

This is the sort of book that one hopes will find its way into the hands of non-specialists. . . . The stories are delightful, the theoretical questions are thoughtfully posed and wide-ranging, and the author's mastery over a weird and in some ways unexpectedly important archive is evident throughout. (Arthur Dudney *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*)

About the Author

Walter Hakala is assistant professor of South Asian languages and literature at the University at Buffalo, SUNY; as of September 2017 he will be Associate Professor in the Department of English. His work has been published in the *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, and *Modern Asian Studies*.

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