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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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LES OUTILS DU TRADUCTEUR

MILNER, G. B., *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan-English, English-Samoan*. Oxford University Press, 1966. [51 + 465 p., Bibliography.]

To compile a Samoan-English dictionary and, say, a French-English dictionary may seem to be parallel operations; but they are not. In the latter case there is also an (approximate) cultural equation; but for the former undertaking one must also be part anthropologist, part naturalist, part experienced lexicographer, and also a trained linguist prepared to view a structurally very different language in its own terms. And Mr. Martin, a reader in Oceanic Languages at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, combines these rare qualifications. By the use of descriptive glosses and the generous employment of illustrative phrases, he succeeds in high measure in defining the ill (or un) definable (one would think, with the spirit of Malinowski at his side !). Other problems in his decade-long labor included the reconciling of various dialects of Samoan, a task compounded by the active coexistence of formal and informal usage (for good reasons set forth in the Preface, formal was made the norm). The Preface also contains an exemplary statement of Samoan phonology and a grammatical sketch. The English-Samoan part is only some 40 per cent of the length of the Samoan-English, a disparity we normally criticize in bilingual dictionaries. As pointed out in a forward, however, the rendition into Samoan of the low-frequency terminology of our arts and sciences could only result in elaborate paraphrasing of doubtful value to the Samoan user (or anyone else). Thus, Samoan, with all its cultural nuances, is central to the work. It has no rivals (certainly not the outdated 1862 Grammar and Dictionary by the Rev. Platt). A grammar by Mr. Milner, which is « expect[ed] to follow shortly » (p. viii), will, we trust, make Samoan accessible in a manner the presently most available grammar does not.

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