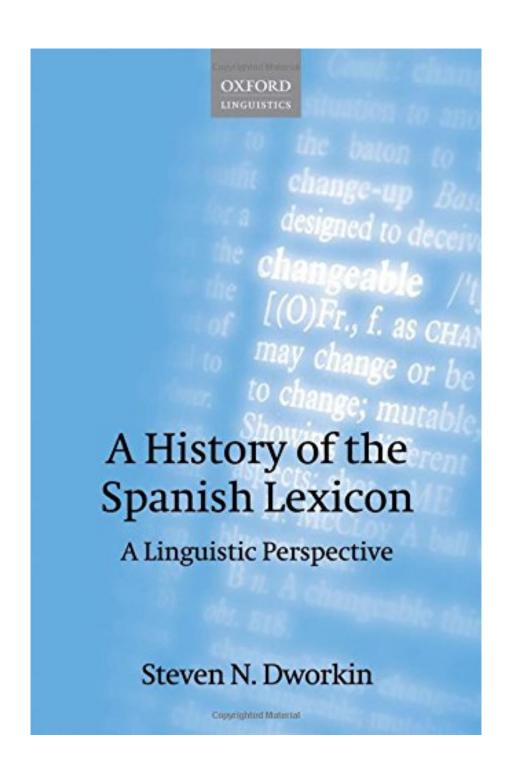


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"This History will probably be used as a reference book rather than as a good read, but the scholarly perspectives and thought processes displayed should even so impress and inspire all those who have ever wondered about the hows and whys of the provenance of Spanish vocabulary from other languages."--Bulletin of Hispanic Studies

About the Author

Steven N. Dworkin is Professor of Romance Linguistics and Linguistics at the University of Michigan. His books include Etymology and Derivational Morphology: The Genesis of Old Spanish Denominal Adjectives in -ido (Niemeyer, 1985); with David J. Billick, Lexical Studies of Medieval Spanish Texts (second edition Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1993); and, co-edited with Dieter Wanner, New approaches to Old Problems: Issues in Romance Historical Linguistic (John Benjamins, 2000). He is the author of over eighty scholarly articles, many of which deal with lexical change in Spanish.

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This history of the Spanish lexicon is written from the interacting perspectives of linguistic and cultural change and in the light of advances in the study of language contact and lexical change. The author describes the language inherited from spoken Latin in the Iberian Peninsula during six centuries of Roman occupation and examines the degree to which it imported words from the languages - of which only Basque survives - of pre-Roman Spain. He then shows how Germanic words were imported either indirectly through Latin or Old French or directly by contact with the Visigoths. He describes the importation of Arabisms following the eighth-century Arab conquest of Spain, distinguishing those documented in medieval sources from those adopted for everyday use, many of which survive in modern Spanish. He considers the influence of Old French and Old Provencal and identifies late direct and indirect borrowings from Latin, including the Italian elements taken up during the Renaissance. After outlining minor influences from languages such as Flemish, Portuguese, and Catalan, Professor Dworkin examines the effects on the lexicon of contact between Spanish and the indigenous languages of South and Central America, and the impact of contact with English. The book is aimed at advanced students and scholars of Spanish linguistics and will interest specialists in Hispanic literary and cultural studies.

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While this is published by Oxford University Press and written by a scholar with decades of formal publications, the book is in fact remarkably accessible to a wide audience. While a modicum of Spanish is necessary to enjoy this book, Dworkin glosses most Spanish words. It's both a friendly introduction and a valuable contribution to the field, as Dworkin refers to many obscure references like unpublished doctoral dissertations that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Penny's A History of the Spanish Language is still worth checking out alongside this, as it has some more indepth coverage in a few areas, but Dworkin's book is great fun and recommended as a first stop to anyone interested in how Spanish has evolved.

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