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Book Survey: On Foreign Legal Dictionaries

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Albert P. Blaustein*

With the ever-growing importance of foreign law has come the ever-increasing need for good foreign legal dictionaries. But which ones are good? Which are the most useful? And which are presently available?

An informal survey among American law librarians who work closely with foreign law — supplemented by the author's own evaluations — has produced a list of such dictionaries. But first, a few notes and caveats.

1) There are, in a sense, two types of foreign dictionaries. One is the bilingual or multilingual dictionary, translating legal terms from one language into another, or others. But this type of law dictionary often proves inadequate. It is elementary that "many legal terms are either, in effect, untranslatable, or may receive a distorted meaning at the hands of an unskilful translator."¹ And this fact may necessitate the use of the second type of foreign legal dictionary — one explaining legal terms in their own language; an encyclopedic-type dictionary.² Both types are listed here.

2) In analyzing those volumes (or series of volumes) which explain legal terms in their own language, it is impossible to draw a clear line distinguishing between a comprehensive dictionary and a concise encyclopedia. No work exceeding three volumes has been listed among the dictionaries here.

3) It is often difficult to name the best foreign legal dictionaries in a given language without first ascertaining the subject matter of projected research. One dictionary might be best for its translation of banking terms, another for its translation of military legal terminology, another for its glossary of commercial terms, etc. Nevertheless, it is still possible to name the dictionaries which are generally most useful.

4) Research in depth frequently requires reference to several foreign law dictionaries — and reference to non-legal dictionaries as well. Only two of the important bilingual "general" dictionaries are listed here.

5) The best bilingual foreign legal dictionary for a given language may not be one including any *English* translations — and thus could not be classified as most useful here. French-English legal dictionaries, for example, are certainly inferior to their French-German counterparts. And the linguist will probably prefer to use the latter, even though he may eventually write up the results of his research in English.³

6) Some of the best foreign legal dictionaries are now out of print, and, being thus unavailable, are not included in the survey listings here.⁴

7) While foreign legal dictionaries in Hungarian,⁵ Indonesian, Turkish and other less used languages are certainly indispensable in legal research in those tongues, such dictionaries are likewise not included here. They cannot be classified as most useful in the acquisition of a basic library of law dictionaries.

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¹ GUTTERIDGE, *COMPARATIVE LAW* 111 (2d ed. 1949). For a recent article on this problem, see Baeck, *Übersetzungsfragen im Rechtsverkehr mit den USA*, 81 JURISTISCHE BLÄTTER 230 (May 1959).

² On the other hand, it is reported that Martin Buber's "new translation into German of the Bible . . . [is] so perfect that Hebrew scholars actually refer to [it] . . . to clarify difficult passages." Levin, "Sage Who Inspired Hammarskjöld," *N. Y. Times Magazine*, Dec. 3, 1961, p. 43.

³ Highly recommended is PICCARD, THILO & STEINER, *DICTIONNAIRE JURIDIQUE RECHTS-WÖRTERBUCH, FRANÇAIS - ALLEMAND*. Pt. I. Zurich: Schulthess, 1950. 596 pp. \$14.00.

⁴ For example, this very useful multilingual legal dictionary: EGBERT, *LAW DICTIONARY, ENGLISH, ESPAÑOL, FRANÇAIS, DEUTSCH*. New York: Fallon, 1949. 637 pp.

Here is the list of recommended legal dictionaries:

BILINGUAL AND MULTILINGUAL DICTIONARIES

French

Probably the most comprehensive of those in print is:

Quemner, Thomas A. *Dictionnaire Juridique*.

Part I, Français-Anglais. Pp. 267.

Part II, Anglais-Français. Pp. 323. Paris: Navarre, 1953. \$18.00.

Also popular and useful is:

Jéraute, Jules. *Vocabulaire Français-Anglais et Anglais-Français de Termes et Locutions Juridiques*. Paris: Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, 1953. Pp. 415. \$7.50.

Yet, because of the general inadequacy of French-English legal dictionaries, supplementary reference is usually made to general bilingual dictionaries covering those languages. One which legal researchers have found particularly valuable is:

Mansion, J. E. *Harrap's Standard French and English Dictionary*. (Known in the United States as *Heath's Standard French and English Dictionary*.) 2 vols. Vol. I, French-English. Pp. 912. \$20.00. Vol. II, English-French. Pp. 1488. \$24.00. Englewood, N. J.: Heath, 1953, including 1955 supplement. Two-volume price: \$40.00.

Undoubtedly the most useful dictionary for French legal terms is one which is still in preparation. It is the third part of a three-volume, trilingual legal dictionary. The first two volumes have already been published.

Herbst, Robert. *Dictionary of Commercial, Financial and Legal Terms*. 3 vols. Vol. I, English-German-French. Lucerne: Thali, 1955. Pp. 1150. \$22.50.

Tome III will be subtitled "Français-Anglais-Allemand." Band II is listed below under German-English legal dictionaries.

German

Most highly recommended is:

Herbst, Robert. *Wörterbuch der Handels-, Finanz- und Rechtssprache*. Band II (the second of the three volumes of this trilingual work), Deutsch-Englisch-Französisch. Lucerne: Thali, 1959. Pp. 985. \$22.50.

Also comprehensive is:

Basedow, Klaus H. *Wörterbuch der Rechtssprache; Dictionary of Legal Terms*. 2 Vols. Vol. I, German-English. Pp. 720. Vol. II, English-German. Pp. 616. Hamburg: W. Heldt, 1947-1948. \$4.50 each.

A very popular and handy one-volume work, published jointly by firms in Germany and the United States, is:

Kniepkamp, Hanns P. *Rechtswörterbuch; Legal Dictionary*. Part I, English-German. Part II, German-English. Berlin: Colloquium, and New York: Oceana, 1954. Pp. 216. \$6.25.

Spanish

Generally considered most useful is:

Robb, Louis A. *Dictionary of Legal Terms, Spanish-English and English-Spanish*. New York: Wiley, 1955. Pp. 228. \$8.00.

More comprehensive, but extremely difficult to use because of its poor typography is:

Sell, Lewis L. *Español-Inglés Diccionario Para Especialistas en Seguros, Finanzas, Derecho, Trabajo, Política, Comercio; English-Spanish Comprehensive Specialist's Dictionary for Insurance, Finance, Law, Labor, Politics, Business*. 2 vols. Vol. I, English-Spanish. Pp. 536. (Out of stock indefinitely.) Vol. II, Spanish-English. Pp. 650. New York: David McKay, 1957. \$12.50.

Italian

Generally unsatisfactory, but the only Italian-English legal dictionary available is:

5 For example, SZLADITS & SZEMZÖ, ENGLISH-HUNGARIAN & HUNGARIAN-ENGLISH LEGAL, COMMERCIAL & FINANCIAL DICTIONARY. Budapest: Egyetemi Nyomda, 1946. 398 pp.

Parisi, Guido Annibale. *Dizionario Giuridico*. Vol. I, Italiano-Inglese. Milan: Giuffrè, 1951. Pp. 212. About \$1.10, plus handling.⁶

Russian

The only bilingual *legal* dictionary which has been published for Russian and English is:

Telberg, Ina. *Soviet-English Dictionary of Legal Terms and Concepts*. New York: Telberg, 1961. Pp. 111. (Mimeograph). \$9.80.

In many respects far more useful to lawyers (and certainly an indispensable supplement) is this general dictionary:

Smirnitiski, A. L. *Russian-English Dictionary and English-Russian Dictionary*. 2 vols. Vol. I, Russian-English. Pp. 951. Vol. II, English-Russian. Pp. 699. Moscow: State Publishing House of Foreign and National Dictionaries, 1958. \$7.50 per volume.

Japanese

Far and away the best and most useful is:

Ito, Juijro. *Japanese-English Dictionary of Legal Terms*. Tokyo: Daigako Shobo, 1951, with 1953 supplement. Pp. 896. \$5.00, plus \$5.00 for supplement.

Latin

The most popular, containing a brief "course in Latin" as well as "Latin Maxims and Phrases" and a "General Vocabulary," is:

Latin for Lawyers. London: Sweet & Maxwell, 3d ed., 1960. Pp. 287. \$3.55.

An indispensable supplement for any work in Roman law is the excellent:

Berger, Adolf. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953. (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, n. s. vol. 43, pt. 2, September, 1953). Pp. 303-808. \$5.00, paper; \$7.00, cloth.

OTHER BILINGUAL AND MULTILINGUAL DICTIONARIES

Unfortunately, there is no Portuguese-English legal dictionary and none for the Scandinavian languages.⁷

For further information on bilingual legal dictionaries — data on dictionaries in other languages and data on dictionaries which are now out of print — the following references are extremely valuable:

Modern Multi- and Bilingual Legal Dictionaries. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Law Library, rev. ed., December, 1960. Pp. 7. (Paper.) No charge. (Incorporating the useful list in 6 *Ost-Europa Recht* 241-242 (1960).)

Szladits, Charles. *A Bibliography on Foreign and Comparative Law Books and Articles in English*. 2 vols. Vol. I, 1955, items 957-1051, pp. 30-33. Vol. II, 1962, items 872-894, pp. ****. New York: Parker School of Foreign and Comparative Law, Columbia University. Distributed by Oceana Publications. \$15.00 each.

Holmstrom, J. E. *Bibliography of Interlingual Scientific and Technical Dictionaries*. UNESCO, 4th ed., 1961. Pp. 236. \$3.50.

Foreign Language-English Dictionaries. Library of Congress, 1955. 2 vols. Vol. I, *Special Subject Dictionaries with Emphasis on Science and Technology*. Pp. 246. Out of print; available on positive microfilm from photo duplication service, Library of Congress, \$2.50. Vol. II, *General Language Dictionaries*. Pp. 239. \$1.75.

ENCYCLOPEDIA-TYPE DICTIONARIES

There are, of course, many foreign law books describing and discussing legal terms in their own language. And these are vital supplements to bilingual and multilingual legal dictionaries. Not all of these works, however, can be described as dictionaries. After a certain point is reached in comprehensiveness and detail, some must be categorized instead as encyclopedias. For the purposes of this study, works of four volumes or less have been classified as dictionaries.

⁶ Useful for the more accomplished linguist, however, is HAKULINEN, SUOMALAIS-RUOTSALAIS-SAKSALAINEN LAKIKIELEN SANAKIRJA (Finnish-Swedish-German Law Dictionary). Helsinki: Söderström, 1943. 729 pp.

⁷ Volume II, known as PICCOLA ENCICLOPEDIA GIURIDICA, is presently out of print. A letter from the publisher indicates that it will be reprinted in the near future.

French Law

The most useful all-French dictionary is:

Réau, Roger and Rondepierre, Jean. *Le Petit Dictionnaire de Droit*. Paris: Dalloz, 1951. Pp. 1360. (Now loose-leaf.) \$18.50, including 1960 supplement. Annual supplement, \$6.00, plus \$3.00 for binder.

German Law

Excellent in every respect (except that its bulk makes for difficult handling) is:

Reifferscheid, Adolf. *Ergänzbare Lexikon des Rechts*. 2d ed. Loose-leaf, 3 vols. (plus supplemental "Gesetzestexte"). Berlin: Luchterhand, 1954-****. Pp. about 3,800. DM 98. About \$23.00, plus handling. Supplementation, about two cents per page.

Also very useful and certainly much handier as a "desk book" dictionary is:

Curtius, Klaus and Hertha. *Keyser's Rechtslexikon für Alle*. 4th ed. Heidelberg: Keyser, 1959. Pp. 480. DM 13.80. About \$3.50 plus handling.

Spanish-Latin American Law

There are, as would be expected, several law dictionaries written entirely in Spanish. And none of these, of course, could possibly cover the entire field of Spanish law *and* the law of all of the Latin American nations. One dictionary is primarily oriented to the law of Spain, another to the law of Mexico, etc. Most highly recommended is the three-volume work based on the law of Argentina:

Cabanellas, Guillermo. *Diccionario de Derecho Usual*. 2d ed. 3 vols. Vol. I, pp. 762. Vol. II, pp. 908. Vol. III, pp. 933, 153. Buenos Aires: Arayú, 1953. \$60.00.

Soviet Law

Far and away the most useful Russian dictionary on Soviet law is:

Urídicheskii Slovar'. [Juridical Dictionary.] Principal editor, P. I. Kudriavtsev. 2 vols. Vol. I, A-N. Pp. 687. Vol. II, O-IA. Pp. 663. Moscow: State Publishing Office for Juridical Writings, 1956. About \$4.00 each, unbound.