

The Atlas of Languages: The Origin and Development of Languages Throughout the World

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Bernard Comrie, Maria Polinsky, Stephen Matthews : The Atlas of Languages: The Origin and Development of Languages Throughout the World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Atlas of Languages: The Origin and Development of Languages Throughout the World:

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Book smells like tobacco!By MikeThe product is the book I expected. However, the cover had tobacco on it and the book smells heavily of tobacco.21 of 24 people found the following review helpful. Nice maps, some factual errors, useless picturesBy Ricardo de HollandaAlthough this book makes interesting reading for almost anyone interested in languages and their interrelationships, I was upset by some errors I noticed. In the section devoted to South America one reads that countries of that part of the world are not linguistic homogeneous. Since more than 99.5 % of the inhabitants of Brazil (the most populous country of the region) have Portuguese as their native language, and more than 99 % of Argentineans (the second most populous country) speak Spanish, that statement is simply not true. It seems the authors simply looked at some South American countries and then generalized the findings to all others. In the section devoted to Africa one finds a picture that should portrait a classroom at a fundamental school in a French speaking country. The sentences on the blackboard are written in Portuguese! I could find these errors easily since I am Brazilian and speak Portuguese. I wonder how many more I simply accepted as truths. By the way, that picture could simply have been omitted since, like most of the other pictures of this book, it is non-informative and superfluous.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not a

linguistics reference book, but useful for language students. By Richard R. Other reviewers have very appropriately pointed out the numerous errors or inadequacies of this aging linguistic atlas. But those deficiencies notwithstanding, I think that there is a small audience out there for this book even 15 years after its publication. In the broad picture that it paints of language usage throughout the world it can be very informative for students like me, who study languages but not linguistics. To illustrate, I am currently studying French and Russian. On page 10 there is a table of the top 20 languages in terms of numbers of native speakers. To my surprise, there are more than twice as many Russian speakers as French speakers in the world, a ratio that cannot have changed much since the book was published. I now see the study of Russian as far more important than I had previously thought. Could I have found this out from other, more academically reliable sources? Almost certainly yes. But comparative linguistics is not a burgeoning academic field, and reference sources are consequently few and hard to obtain. And I am not and never will be a student of linguistics. Could I have figured it out on my own? Perhaps, but I had never even thought about it; I had simply assumed that because French is used in so many countries throughout the world the number of French speakers must be comparable to that of Russian speakers. So notwithstanding its age and its errors of detail, this book is useful for students who are interested in languages but not relying on it as an academic reference book.

An extremely authoritative writing style, full-color illustrations, and maps combine in this ultimate exploration of the evolution of languages.

This is recommended for the shelves of any college-level or public library with a strong interest in world languages and cultures: a series of excellent color maps charts the origin and development of languages throughout the world, revealing both the linguistic histories of particular cultures and the ideas and cultures represented within the language's structure. A fine blend of maps and color photos adds excitement and leisure interest. -- Midwest Book