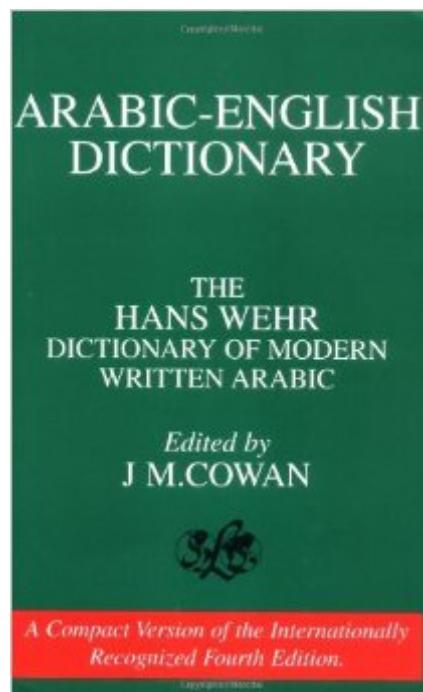


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Arabic-English Dictionary: The Hans Wehr Dictionary Of Modern Written Arabic



Synopsis

"This Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic (fourth edition) has been enlarged and amended with 13,000 new entries. It is the only authorized paperback edition of the famous Hans Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary, edited by J. Milton Cowan. This new edition has thousands of new entries include numerous additions and corrections to the material and presents the results in a single handsome volume. The author provides a useful introduction in which he discusses, clearly and precisely, the present state of the Arabic language. He points out the situations in which written and spoken varieties of Arabic are used, and remarks on the forces that influenced the development of the lexicon of Modern Arabic. He discusses both the purist movement with its normative tradition, and what might be called the laissez-faire actual usage of writers and journalists under the influence of Western modes of expression, of their everyday colloquial, or both. He then moves on to the problem of local terminology, especially for public institutions, offices, administrative matters, titles, and foods. Although such terms are included for most of the Arab countries, the list is not complete, as indeed the author recognizes (viii); readers of Arabic material characterized by a distinct regional coloring are advised to refer to dialect dictionaries and glossaries."

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Customer Reviews

[Please note the note at the end of the review that I have added to this 2004 review]First, I must say this is the only Modern Written Arabic (MWA) - English dictionary that the student of Arabic has to have. Others, Al-Mawrid, for example, are useful as supplements, and contain new vocabulary, and

there is a more recent German edition (5th edition) of Wehr published by Harrassowitz, but this book has a standard of scholarship unrivalled by any other MWA-English dictionary. Middle Eastern published MWA-English dictionaries like Mawrid, for example, don't give the grammatical information learners of Arabic need, such as broken plurals, verbal vowelling, verbal nouns (masdars), let alone how verbs are used with prepositions, all of which Wehr tells the user. Words are in root order, so maktaba (desk) [mktbh] and kaatib (writer) [k'tb] both are found under the verb kataba (to write) [ktb]. This really is the most useful way of ordering Arabic dictionaries for someone who's mastered the basics of Arabic grammar, though an alphabetic order dictionary is a help when you're starting and occasionally even when you're expert. This dictionary is NOT a dictionary of Classical Arabic (although Beeston in his anthology of Bassar bin Burd reckoned that Wehr covered the vast majority of the vocabulary of this poet of the 8th Century AD). For Classical Arabic, Lane (perhaps supplemented by Hava's much more affordable al-Fara'id) is essential. But Lane is useless for modern Arabic. And if you're reading mediaeval Arabic, you will find Wehr fills in some of the gaps in Lane. This dictionary is NOT a dialect dictionary, though it contains many dialect words that have found their way into the written Arabic of Egypt, Iraq, etc.

I am a former Army Arabic linguist, and a graduate of DLI/FLC Monterey. This dictionary is the primary one we used, both at DLI and later on the job. An old Army buddy, I have a deep abiding affection for this thing, it being a true linguistic masterpiece and longtime companion. Hans Wehr was professor at University of Munster from the fifties thru the seventies. This dictionary was first published in 1952 in German as "Arabisches Wörterbuch für die Schriftsprache der Gegenwart" - a mouthful of a title if there ever was one. We just called it the Hans Wehr. To my knowledge, it is the only dictionary that's organized to properly exploit Arabic morphology, which is to say the consonal root system. Any other approach makes a hash out of the Arab language. Straightforward alphabetical ordering is ill suited to Arabic. The only traditionally alphabetically organized Arabic dictionary that I've seen (and I've seen quite a few) which is any good at all is the Lebanese Al-Mawrid. But I use it only as an occasional adjunct to Hans. Once you get a hang of Hans, and your vocabulary and sense of Arabic grows, the Mawrid will only be very occasionally useful from Arabic to English. It may not seem possible to a beginner (it certainly didn't to me,) but the Hans Wehr will come to make much more sense, and become much more accessible, than any other Arabic to English dictionary. So if you are new to this game, suck it up and use Hans as much as possible. One sole caveat: for Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) the Hans Wehr is incomparable & indispensible. MSA is the modern universally written form of Arabic, and the pan-national lingua

franca spoken in formal settings- on TV, in courts, etc., by educated Arabs.

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