**Voices of the Pacific Northwest—Artifact 1.3**

Noticias de Nutka, an account of Nootka Sound in 1792

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ARTICLE NO. 7

Concerning the language and its affinity with that of Mexico; the eloquent discourse of Prince Maquinna; of the rhetoric and poetry of the Nootkans, and of their dances

THEIR language is the harshest and roughest I have ever heard; the pronunciation is done almost entirely with the teeth, each syllable being articulated by pauses. The words abound in consonants, and the endings are often *tl* and *tz*. The middle and the beginning of words consist of very strong aspirations to which a foreigner cannot accustom himself except through much work and after long practice. I have so forgotten the Mexican [Nahuatl] language that I find myself unable to make an analogy with this one in a constructive way. To the ear both languages present a similarity in the word endings, and by just considering one or two sounds alone, I find some affinity between the two.

In order to say “we go,” the Mexicans use the word *tlato,* and the Nootkans, in order to say “go away,” use *tlatlehua.* Knowledgeable persons can consult the small dictionary I have placed at the end in which I have attempted to write the words with letters which, when pronounced in Spanish, give a sound equivalent to that with which the Nootkan language enters my ears. Anyone who takes into consideration the difficulty of representing by symbols the different actions of verbs conforming to all the various tenses in which they function will easily realize the imperfection of those I have collected. I have given all of them the infinitive form although I understand that some are in the present perfect, others in the past, and others, finally, in the future. To the word *auco I* give the meaning “to eat,” when it really means no more than “he eats.” With this word I tried to begin to learn the pattern of its conjugation, but the only result of all my diligence was to observe the third person [singular and plural] of the present indicative tense, the three persons of the singular past perfect, and the second person of the imperative: “he eats,” *auco;* “they eat,” *auca;* “I ate,” *aucmiz;* “you ate,” *auc;* “he ate,” *aucmitis;* “you eat,” *aucce.* On this occasion I observed that with some small variations they could be turned into negatives. *Huicmutz* means “I did not eat”; *huic-mutitz,* “he did not eat.” When an interrogative is formed, [the verb] is combined with the words of the question to form a single expression; for example, *A chitzacol A chichitl mid* “Whose is this?” “To whom does it belong?”

The extensiveness of this language can be estimated by the degree of civilization this tribe has attained, since I think the rule is generally true that the wiser the nation, the richer is the language they speak. Consequently, that of Nootka is very poor, since it cannot have greater breadth than the ideas the Nootkans have been able to form.