

GEORGE GIBBS

DICTIONARY OF THE
CHINOOK JARGON, OR,
TRADE LANGUAGE OF
OREGON

George Gibbs

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or, Trade Language of Oregon**

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PREFACE

Some years ago the Smithsonian Institution printed a small vocabulary of the Chinook Jargon, furnished by Dr. B.R. Mitchell, of the U.S. Navy, and prepared, as we afterwards learned, by Mr. Lionnet, a Catholic priest, for his own use while studying the language at Chinook Point. It was submitted by the Institution, for revision and preparation for the press, to the late Professor W.W. Turner. Although it received the critical examination of that distinguished philologist, and was of use in directing attention to the language, it was deficient in the number of words in use, contained many which did not properly belong to the Jargon, and did not give the sources from which the words were derived.

Mr. Hale had previously given a vocabulary and account of this Jargon in his "Ethnography of the United States Exploring Expedition," which was noticed by Mr. Gallatin in the Transactions of the American Ethnological Society, vol. ii. He, however, fell into some errors in his derivation of the words, chiefly from ignoring the Chihalis element of the Jargon, and the number of words given by him amounted only to about two hundred and fifty.

A copy of Mr. Lionnet's vocabulary having been sent to me, with a request to make such corrections as it might require, I concluded not merely to collate the words contained in this and other printed and manuscript vocabularies, but to ascertain, so far as possible, the languages which had contributed to it, with the original Indian words. This had become the more important, as its extended use by different tribes had led to ethnological errors in the classing together of essentially distinct families. Dr. Scouler, whose vocabularies were among the earliest bases of comparison of the languages of the northwest coast, assumed a number of words, which he found indiscriminately employed by the Nootkans of Vancouver Island, the Chinooks of the Columbia, and the intermediate tribes, to belong alike to their several languages, and exhibit analogies between them accordingly.¹ On this idea, among other points of fancied resemblance, he founded his family of Nootka-Columbians,—one which has been adopted by Drs. Pritchard and Latham, and has caused very great misconception. Not only are those languages entirely distinct, but the Nootkans differ greatly in physical and mental characteristics from the latter. The analogies between the Chinook and the other native contributors to the Jargon are given hereafter.

The origin of this Jargon, a conventional language similar to the Lingua Franca of the Mediterranean, the Negro-English-Dutch of Surinam, the Pigeon English of China, and several other mixed tongues, dates back to the fur droguers of the last century. Those mariners whose enterprise in the fifteen years preceding 1800, explored the intricacies of the northwest coast of America, picked up at their general rendezvous, Nootka Sound, various native words useful in barter, and thence transplanted them, with additions from the English, to the shores of Oregon. Even before their day, the coasting trade and warlike expeditions of the northern tribes, themselves a sea-faring race, had opened up a partial understanding of each other's speech; for when, in 1792, Vancouver's officers visited Gray's Harbor, they found that the natives, though speaking a different language, understood many words of the Nootka.

¹ Journal Royal Geographical Society of London, vol. xi., 1841.

On the arrival of Lewis and Clarke at the mouth of the Columbia, in 1806, the new language, from the sentences given by them, had evidently attained some form. It was with the arrival of Astor's party, however, that the Jargon received its principal impulse. Many more words of English were then brought in, and for the first time the French, or rather the Canadian and Missouri patois of the French, was introduced. The principal seat of the company being at Astoria, not only a large addition of Chinook words was made, but a considerable number was taken from the Chihalis, who immediately bordered that tribe on the north,—each owning a portion of Shoalwater Bay. The words adopted from the several languages were, naturally enough, those most easily uttered by all, except, of course, that objects new to the natives found their names in French or English, and such modifications were made in pronunciation as suited tongues accustomed to different sounds. Thus the gutturals of the Indians were softened or dropped; and the *f* and *r* of the English and French, to them unpronounceable, were modified into *p* and *l*. Grammatical forms were reduced to their simplest expression, and variations in mood and tense conveyed only by adverbs or by the context. The language continued to receive additions, and assumed a more distinct and settled meaning, under the Northwest and Hudson's Bay companies, who succeeded Astor's party, as well as through the American settlers in Oregon. Its advantage was soon perceived by the Indians, and the Jargon became to some extent a means of communication between natives of different speech, as well as between them and the whites. It was even used as such between Americans and Canadians. It was at first most in vogue upon the lower Columbia and the Willamette, whence it spread to Puget Sound, and with the extension of trade, found its way far up the coast, as well as the Columbia and Fraser rivers; and there are now few tribes between the 42d and 57th parallels of latitude in which there are not to be found interpreters through its medium. Its prevalence and easy acquisition, while of vast convenience to traders and settlers, has tended greatly to hinder the acquirement of the original Indian languages; so much so, that except by a few missionaries and pioneers, hardly one of them is spoken or understood by white men in all Oregon and Washington Territory. Notwithstanding its apparent poverty in number of words, and the absence of grammatical forms, it possesses much more flexibility and power of expression than might be imagined, and really serves almost every purpose of ordinary intercourse.

The number of words constituting the Jargon proper has been variously stated. Many formerly employed have become in great measure obsolete, while others have been locally introduced. Thus, at the Dalles of the Columbia, various terms are common which would not be intelligible at Astoria or on Puget Sound. In making the following selection, I have included all those which, on reference to a number of vocabularies, I have found current at any of these places, rejecting, on the other hand, such as individuals, partially acquainted with the native languages, have employed for their own convenience. The total number falls a little short of five hundred words.

An analysis of their derivations gives the following result:

Chinook, including Clatsop 200

Chinook, having analogies with other languages 21

Interjections common to several 8

Nootka, including dialects 24

Chihalis, 32; Nisqually, 7 39

Klikatat and Yakama 2

Cree 2

Chippeway (Ojibwa) 1

Wasco (probably) 4

Kalapuya (probably) 4

By direct onomatopoeia 6

Derivation unknown, or undetermined 18

French, 90; Canadian, 4 94

English 67

I had no opportunity of original investigation into the Nootka proper, but from the few words in different published vocabularies, and from some imperfect manuscript ones in my possession of the Tokwaht, Nittinat, and Makah dialects, have ascertained the number above given. Some of the unascertained words probably also belong to that language. Neither was I able to collate the Wasco or Kalapuya, but have assigned them on the opinion of others. The former, also called Cathlasco, the dialect of the Dalles Indians, is a corrupted form of the Watlala or Upper Chinook. With the Chihalis, Yakama, and Klikatat, and the Nisqually, I had abundant means of comparison.

The introduction of the Cree and Chippeway words is of course due to the Canadians. None have been derived from the Spanish, as their intercourse with the Nootka and Makah Indians was too short to leave an impression. Spanish words, especially those relating to horses or mules and their equipments, have of late come into general use in Oregon, owing to intercourse with California, but they form no part of the Jargon. It might have been expected from the number of Sandwich Islanders introduced by the Hudson's Bay company, and long resident in the country, that the Kanaka element would have found its way into the language, but their utterance is so foreign to the Indian ear, that not a word has been adopted.

In the nouns derived from the French, the definite article *le, la*, has almost in every instance been incorporated into the word, and the same has in one or two instances been prefixed to nouns not of French origin. Besides the words created by direct onomatopoeia, there are quite a number which are really Indian, but have their origin in the similarity of sound to sense.

Dr. Scouler's analogy between the Nootkan and "Columbian," or Chinook, was founded on the following words:

English. Tlaquatch and Nutka. Columbian. plenty, *aya, *haya. no, *wik, *wake. water, tchaak, chuck. good, *hooleish, *cosh. bad, *peishakeis, *peshak. man, *tchuckoop, tillicham. woman, *tlootsemin, *clootchamen. child, *tanassis, *tanass. now, tlahowieh, clahowiah. come, *tchooqua, *sacko. slave, mischemas, *mischemas. what are you doing *akoots-ka-*mamook, ekta-*mammok. what are you saying *au-kaak-*wawa, ekta-*wawa. let me see, *nannanitch, *nannanitch. sun, *opeth, ootlach. sky, *sieya, *saya. fruit, *chamas, *camas. to sell, *makok, *makok. understand, *commatax, *commatax.

But of these, none marked with an asterisk belong to the Chinook or any of its dialects. The greater part of them are undoubtedly Nootkan, though there are errors in the spelling and, in some instances, in the meaning. Of the rest, the Nootkan *tchaak* and the Chinook *tl'tsuk* alone presents an analogy. *Klahowiah* does not mean "now," nor do I believe it is Nootkan, in any sense. It is, as explained in the dictionary, the Chinook salutation, "How do you," "Good-bye," and is supposed to be derived from the word for *poor, miserable*. *Mischemas* is not Chinook, and is probably not Nootkan. With the exception of Franchere, whose short vocabulary was published by Mr. Gallatin, and Mr. Hale, all the writers mentioned by Ludwig who have given specimens of the Chinook language, have presented it in its Jargon form, more or less mixed with the neighboring ones, and with corruptions of French and English words. Mr. Swan, among others, has been led into this error. The place of his residence, Shoalwater Bay, is common ground of the Chinook and Chihalis Indians, and the degraded remnants of the two tribes are closely intermarried, and use both languages almost indifferently.

Setting aside interjections, common in a more or less modified form to several adjoining tribes, twenty-one words of those given in this vocabulary present noticeable analogies between the Chinook and other native languages. They are as follows:

English. Chinook. Hailtjuk and Belbella. salmon berries, klalilli, olalli.

English. Chinook and Clatsop. Nootka.

Jewitt and Cook.

water, tl'tsuk : tl'chukw, chauk : chahak.

English. Chinook. Cowlitz. Kwantlen. Selish. six, tákhum, tukh'um, tuckhum', táckan.

English. Chinook. Chihalis. Nisqually. deep, kelliſſe, kluputl, klep glad, kwan, kwal (*tame*) proud, eyútl, júil. demon, ichiatku, tsiatko, tsiatko. black bear, eitchhut, chetwut. crow, skaka, skaka. oyster, klokhklokh, chetlókh, klokhklokh. game of "hands," itlokum, setlokum.

English. Chinook. Yakama and Klikatat. certainly, nawitka, n'witka. always, kwanisum, kwálisim. younger sister, ats, atse. road, wehut, wiet (*far*). barrel, tamtúlitsh, tamolitsh. buffalo, emúsmus, músmus. coyote, itálipus, talipa (*gray fox*). mouse, kholkhol, khóilkhoil. bread, tsapelil, saplil. needle, okwépowa, kapus (*a pin*).

The Clatsop (Klátsop) is merely a dialect of the Chinook (Tchinúk); the Cowlitz (Káualitsk), Kwantlen, Chihalis (Tsihélis), and Nisqually (N'skwáli), are severally languages belonging to the Sélish family. The Yakama and Klikatat are dialects of one of the Sahaptin languages; and the Tokwaht (Tokwát), Nittinat, and Makah (Maká), quoted in the dictionary, are dialects of the Nootka (Nútka), of which the Hailtzuk or Belbella (variously spelled Haeeltzuk and Hailtsa) is probably the northern type. It thus appears that, with two or three exceptions, the analogies of the Chinook, as contained in this vocabulary, are to be sought in the immediately adjoining tongues, or those of languages belonging to the same families with them; that these analogies, with perhaps one or two exceptions, can by no means be considered radical, and that their correspondence, or rather adoption, is easily accounted for by neighborhood and habits of intermarriage. A much more remarkable coincidence is the fact that two words included in this Jargon,—one from the Nootkan, viz., *Mawitch*, a deer, venison; and the other Chinook, *Mooluk*, an elk,—are also to be found in the Kowilth, the language of Humboldt Bay, in California. As this bay was first discovered in the winter of 1849-50, the words could not have been introduced by the fur trappers.

With regard to the form into which this dictionary has been thrown, an explanation is necessary. The Jargon must in some degree be regarded as a written language, the orthography of which is English. In Mr. Hale's vocabulary alone has one more scientific been attempted, and of several other printed, and numerous manuscript dictionaries in circulation, M. Lionnet's alone, that I have met with, is according to the French. Although no fixed system of spelling exists among them, I have therefore deemed it best to preserve for the Jargon words that which most distinctly represents the common English pronunciation; while for the Indian derivations, I have adopted that recommended by the Smithsonian Institution in collecting Indian vocabularies, using the Italian sounds of the vowels, and representing the guttural of the German *ich* by *kh*. This seemed the more proper, as the work would thereby be rendered of practical use, independent of what philological value it may possess.

In collating the words of the present work and obtaining their derivations, I have been assisted by a number of friends; among whom I should specially mention Mr. Alexander C. Anderson, of Victoria, V.I., and Mr. Solomon H. Smith, of Clatsop, Oregon.

~Bibliography of the Chinook Jargon.~

Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains. By Rev. Samuel Parker. 12mo. Ithaca, N.Y., 1838.

"Vocabulary of the Chenook language, as spoken about Fort Vancouver," pp. 336-338.

Ethnography and Philology of the United States Exploring Expedition. By Horatio Hale. 4to. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1846.

A vocabulary of the "Jargon or Trade Language of Oregon," with an essay thereon, and phrases, is given in this work, pp. 636-650.

Transactions of the American Ethnological Society. 2 vols., 8vo. New York: Bartlett & Welford, 1845, 1848.

In vol. ii., pp. 62-70, under title of "Hale's Indians of Northwest America," is a partial reprint of the above.

Rev. Z.B.Z. Bolduc, "*Mission de la Colombie*." 8vo. Quebec, 1843.

The Lord's Prayer in Jargon, "et quelques mots Tchinoucs et Sneomus." The Snohomish is a tribe of Puget Sound. The Chinook words are merely Jargon.

Journal of Travels over the Rocky Mountains, &c. By Joel Palmer. 12mo. Cincinnati, 1847, 1852.

"Words used in the Chinook Jargon," pp. 147-152.

Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River, &c. By Alexander Ross. 12mo. London, 1849.

Ross gives a "Chinook Vocabulary," pp. 342-348, and words of the "mixed dialect," p. 349. His Chinook is, however, also impure.

Ten Years in Oregon. By D. Lee and F.H. Frost. 12mo. New York, 1844.

"A short vocabulary of the Clatsop dialect." This is likewise Jargon.

History, &c., of the Indian Tribes of the United States. Collected by Henry R. Schoolcraft. 4to. Parts 1-5. Philadelphia, 1851, 1855.

Lieut. G.F. Emmons gives a brief "Klatsop Vocabulary" in Part III., pp. 223, 224, which is of the same character.

Note 1 to article, "Philosophy of Utterance," Part V., pp. 548-551, a

"Vocabulary of the Chinook Jargon."

Vocabulary of the Jargon or Trade Language of Oregon. English, French, and Jargon. 8vo. Washington, 1853. pp. 22.

Printed by the Smithsonian Institution, for private distribution. Without title-page. This is the one by M. Lionnet, before referred to.

The Northwest Coast; or, Three Years' Residence in Washington Territory. By James G. Swan. 12mo. New York: Harpers, 1857.

"A vocabulary of the Chehalis and Chenook or Jargon Languages, with the derivation of the words used in the latter," pp. 412-422.

A Complete Dictionary of the Chinook Jargon. English-Chinook, and Chinook-English. To which is added numerous conversations, &c. 3d edition. 24mo, pp. 24. Portland, Oregon: published by S.J. McCormick.

Several editions of this work have been published; the last which I have seen, in 1862.

Guide-Book to the Gold Regions of Frazer River. With a map of the different routes, &c. 24mo, pp. 55. New York, 1858.

A vocabulary of the Jargon, pp. 45-55.

The Chinook Jargon and English and French Equivalent Forms. In "Steamer Bulletin," San Francisco, June 21, 1858.

Contains an unarranged vocabulary of 354 words and phrases.

The Canoe and the Saddle. By Theodore Winthrop. 12mo. Boston: Ticknor & Fields. 1863.

"A partial vocabulary of the Chinook Jargon," pp. 299-302.

History of the Oregon Territory, &c. By John Dunn. 2d edition. London, 1846.

"A few specimens of the language of the Millbank and Chinook tribes." *Chinook tribe*: 50 words and phrases, including digits. These words, as usual, are in great part "Jargon," and belong to the Nootkan, *not* to the Chinook.

Besides the above, one, of which I have not the title before me, has been published by Mr. A.C. Anderson, and several in the newspapers of Oregon and Washington Territory.

~PART I.~ CHINOOK-ENGLISH

NOTE.—The references, "Hale," "Cook," "Jewitt," are respectively to Hale's "Ethnology of the United States Exploring Expedition," "Cook's Voyages," and "Jewitt's Narrative." The others, as "Anderson," "Pandosy," "Shaw," "Tolmie," are from manuscript notes of those gentlemen in possession of the writer.

A DICTIONARY OF THE CHINOOK JARGON

PART I. CHINOOK-ENGLISH

~A.~

~Ah-ha~, *adv.* Common to various tribes. *Yes.* Expression of simple assent. On Puget Sound, E-ÉH.

~Ah'n-kut-te~, or ~Ahn-kot-tie~, *adv.* Chinook, ANKUTTI. *Formerly; before now.* With the accent prolonged on the first syllable, *a long time ago.* Ex. Ahnkutte lakit sun, *four days ago*; Tenas ahnkutte, *a little while since.*

~Al-áh~, *interj.* Expression of surprise. Ex. Alah mika chahko! *ah, you've come!*

~Al-kie~, *adv.* Chinook, ALKEKH. *Presently; in a little while; hold on; not so fast.*

~Al'-ta~, *adv.* Chinook, ALTAKH. *Now; at the present time.*

~A-mo'-te~, *n.* Chinook, AMUTE; Clatsop, KLABOTÉ. *The strawberry.*

~An-áh~, *interj.* An exclamation denoting pain, displeasure, or depreciation. Ex. Anah nawitka mika halo shem, *ah, indeed you are without shame.* On Puget Sound, Ad-de-dáh.

~Ats~, *n.* Chinook, idem; Yakama, ATSE (Pandosy). *A sister younger than the speaker.* In the original, only when used by her brother.

~A-yáh-whul~, *v.* Chihalis, ATAHWUL. *To lend; borrow.*

~Ay-kéh-nam.~See EH-KAH-NAM.

~B.~

~Bé-be~, *n., v.* French. A word used towards children; probably a repetition of the first syllable of BAISER. *A kiss; to kiss.*

~Bed~, *n.* English, idem. *A bed.*

~Bit~, or ~Mit~, *n.* English, BIT. *A dime or shilling.*

~Bloom~, *n.* English, BROOM. *A broom.* Mamook bloom, *to sweep.*

~Boat~, *n.* English, idem. *A boat*, as distinguished from a canoe.

~Bos'-ton~, *n., adj.* An American; American. A name derived from the hailing-place of the first trading-ships to the Pacific. Boston illahie, *the United States.*

~Bur-dash~, *n.* Can. French, BERDACHE (Anderson). *An hermaphrodite.* The reputation of hermaphroditism is not uncommon with Indians, and seems to attach to every malformation of the organs of generation. The word is of very limited use.

~C.~

~Cal'-li-peen~, *n.* French, CARABINE. *A rifle.*

~Ca-nim~, *n.* Chinook, EKANIM. *A canoe.* Canim stick, *the cedar, or wood from which canoes are usually made.*

~Ca-po'~, *n.* French, CAPOT. *A coat.*

~Chah'-ko~, *v.* Nootka, Clayoquot, CHAKO; Tokwaht, TCHOKWA. *To come; to become.* Ex. Kansik mika chahko? *when did you come?* Chahko kloshe, *to get well.*

~Chák chak~, *n.* Chinook, idem. *The bald eagle* (by onoma.), from its scream. Of only local use on the lower Columbia.

~Chee~, *adv., adj.* Chinook, T'SHI. *Lately; just now; new.* Chee nika ko, *I have just arrived.* Hyas chee, *entirely new.*

~Chet'-lo~, or ~Jet'-lo~, *n.* Chihalia, CHETLOKH. *An oyster.* Used on the lower Columbia.

~Chet-woot~, *n.* Nisqually, idem. *A black bear.* Used only on Puget Sound.

~Chik'-a-min~, *n., adj.* Tokwaht, TSIKAMEN; Nootka, SICKAMINNY (Jewitt); SEEKEMAILE (Cook). *Iron; metal; metallic.* T'kope chikamin, *silver; pil chikamin, gold or copper.* Chikamin lope, *wire; a chain.*

~Chik-chik~. See TSIK-TSIK.

~Chil-chil~. See TSIL-TSIL.

~Chitsh~, *n.* Chihalis, TSHITSH. *A grandmother.*

~Chope~, *n.* Chihalis, TSHUP. *A grandfather.*

~Cho'-tub~, *n.* Nisqually, idem. *A flea.* Used on Puget Sound.

~Chuck~, *n.* Nootka, CHAUK (Cook); CHAHAK, *fresh water* (Jewitt); Chinook, TLTSUK (Shortess); Clatsop, TL'CHUKW. *Water; a river or stream.* Salt chuck, *the sea; skookum chuck, a rapid; solleks chuck, a rough sea; chuck chahko or kalipi, the tide rises or falls; saghilli and keekwillie chuck, high and low tide.*

~Chuk-kin~, *n., v.* Chihalis, TSUKAEN. *To kick.* Of local use only.

~Close~. See KLOSE.

~Cly~, *v.* English. *To cry.*

~Cole~, *adj.* English, COLD. Cole illahie, *winter; icht cole, a year; cole sick waum sick, the fever and ague.*

~Comb~, *n.* English. *A comb.* Mamook comb, *to comb; mamook comb illahie, to harrow.*

~Coo'-ley~, *v.* French, COUREZ, imp. of COURIR. *To run.* Cooley kiuatan, *a race-horse; yahka hyas kumtuks cooley, he can, i.e., knows how to run well.*

~Coop'-coop~, *n.* Chinook, idem. *The smaller sized dentalium or shell money.* See HYKWA.

~Co'-sho~, *n.* French, COCHON. *A hog; pork.* Siwash cosho, *a seal; literally, Indian pig.*

~Cul'-tus~, *adj.* Chinook, KALTAS. *Worthless; good for nothing; without purpose.* Ex. Cultus man, *a worthless fellow; cultus potlatch, a present or free gift; cultus heehee, a jest; merely laughing; cultus nannitsh, to look around; cultus mitlite, to sit idle; to do nothing; cultus klatawa, to stroll. Ques. What do you want? Ans. Cultus, i.e., nothing.*

~D.~

~De-láte~, or ~De-létt~, *adj., adv.* French, DROITE. *Straight; direct; without equivocation.* Ex. Klatawa delett, *go straight;*

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