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Compilation of the Indian Languages of America

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Abstract: A series of brief comments in which the author presents archaeological findings, architectural notes, and myths and legends that deal indirectly with the Book of Mormon. Dibble discusses the wheel, ancient irrigation methods, metals, Mexican and Mayan codices, Quetzalcoatl, ancient buildings, and numerous other related items. The fifth part covers Native American languages.

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Compilation of the Indian Languages of America

By CHARLES E. DIBBLE

AT THE last International Congress of Americanists, held in Mexico City in 1939, Robert J. Weitlaner, a linguist of Mexico City, proposed the compilation of a general dictionary of the Indian languages of America. The Congress accepted the proposal, and, with the backing of this organization, the work has been initiated with Mr. Weitlaner as director.

Headquarters have been established in the National Museum of Mexico, and to date three linguistic groups are being studied: the Macro-Otomangue group of Central and Southern Mexico; the Sioux-Hokan group of Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico; and the Uto-Aztecan group of Central America, Mexico, and Western United States. Study on a fourth group, the Maya of Southern Mexico and Central America, is soon to be initiated with the Maya linguistic scholar, Professor Alfredo Barrera Vasquez, as consultant.

Special emphasis is at present being placed on those languages which are rapidly disappearing. Every effort is being made to seek the few survivors and capture a knowledge of these few languages before they are lost forever to linguistic scholars.

The study entails the searching out of all dictionaries and vocabularies thus far published on all of the languages and dialects in each group. It is also to include the work of modern, trained linguistic investigators whose studies are based on the more or less recent method of phonemic analysis.

For comparative studies three hundred basic words and fifteen hundred additional words are recorded. On each work sheet is recorded a word as spoken in each language and dialect of the group. On the basis of word comparison and grammatic comparison, the inter-relationships of the language within the group are established.

The organization solicits and welcomes linguistic co-workers, and work sheets are at the disposition of those who desire to contribute to the linguistic fund. The accumulated information of the organization is at the disposition of all, provided proper credit is given to the original contributor.

As the work progresses, other linguistic groups are to be added, and it is hoped that the National Museum of Mexico, due to its central location, will become the center of study for all aboriginal languages of the Western Hemisphere. The task is so large in scope that no time limit is considered. From time to time publications summarizing the accumulated information will appear.