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THE AZTEC TRIANGLE:  
THREE-WAY LANGUAGE CONTACT IN NEW SPAIN

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**0. Introduction.** The recent celebration of the Columbian quincennial has focused attention on the history of contact between Spanish and Native American cultures. From the linguistic viewpoint, vocabulary items borrowed from American Indian languages into Spanish are often labeled as 'Americanisms'; of course many such words have also entered other languages of the world, as witness English words like *tobacco* and *potato*.<sup>1</sup> Referring to the hundreds of words borrowed in Mexico from the Aztec (or Nahuatl) language, Hispanic scholars have spoken of 'aztequismos' (or 'nahuatlismos'); again many such words have entered English, e.g. *tomato* and *chocolate*.<sup>2</sup> In referring to borrowings in the opposite direction, from Spanish into American Indian languages - again mostly vocabulary, although features of phonology and grammar may sometimes be involved - the word 'hispanismos' has been used. This latter term can be easily Englished as 'Hispanisms'; however, it is hard to know whether to adapt 'aztequismos' to English as 'Aztequisms, Aztekisms,' or 'Aztecisms'; to avoid this dilemma, I prefer to simply borrow the terms 'hispanismos' and 'aztequismos' as loanwords into English.

The literature on hispanismos in the Aztec language is fairly substantial; landmark works on borrowings from Spanish into Aztec, from the colonial period to the present, include González Casanova 1933, Law 1961, Karttunen & Lockhart 1976, Karttunen 1985, and Hill 1990. Studies of hispanismos in Meso-American Indian languages other than Aztec include Bartholomew 1955 (for Otomí) and Clark 1977 (on Sayula Popoluca). In northwestern Mexico, marginally outside the cultural sphere of Meso-America, especially interesting studies of hispanismos have been provided by Johnson 1943 (for Yaqui), by Grimes 1960 (for Huichol), by Miller 1985 (for a broad range of languages), and by Casad 1988 (for Cora). Still farther north, in Arizona and New Mexico, we can cite the work of Miller 1959-60 (for Acoma) and of Crawford 1979 (for Cocopa). Finally, for California, we have an extensive body of works by linguists in the Berkeley tradition, initiated with the particular encouragement of Prof. Yakov Malkiel. These include cross-language surveys in Northern California by Shipley 1962, and in Southern California by Bright 1979b.

An assumption in much of the literature on hispanismos is that borrowing of vocabulary normally took place directly from Spanish to the individual Indian languages. This is undoubtedly a correct assumption for certain times and places, e.g. in the earliest borrowings into the Colonial Aztec spoken in the Valley of Mexico in the 16th century, and into languages spoken in coastal California during the 18th century. Consider the following example:

- (1) Spanish: Colonial *aguja* [ayúža, ayúša] 'needle', Modern [ayúχa]  
Aztec: Colonial *akooša* (González Casanova 1933)  
Modern (Tetzcoco) *akoša* (Lastra de Suárez 1980) (Isthmus) *akoošuh*  
(Law 1961:556)<sup>3</sup>

It appears that the Col. Sp. form was borrowed directly into Col. Az., and that the pronunciation with the sibilant [š] was perpetuated in most dialects of Modern Aztec.<sup>4</sup> In Native California, the same word shows a different pattern:

- (2) Mod. Sp. *aguja* [aɣúχa], non-standard *abúja* [aβúχa]  
Bodega Miwok *abúuha* (Callaghan 1970)

Here the Spanish form not only shows replacement of [š] by [χ], but also a non-standard variant pronunciation widespread in California.

Elsewhere, however, it is likely that hispanismos may have spread between Indian languages, from Language A to Language B, often before Language B had entered into direct contact with Spanish. In Meso-America, especially during the Colonial period, Aztec functioned as a widespread lingua franca (Dakin 1981).

Thus, in southernmost Mexico, the Tzotzil word for 'needle', *akuša* (Laughlin 1975), may be a borrowing either directly from colonial Spanish, or through Aztec as an intermediate language. (It is of course possible that additional Indian languages were also involved as intermediates.) In the inland languages of native California, a variety of forms occur:

- (3) Lake Miwok *áwha* 'needle' (Callaghan 1965)  
Patwin *awha*, *awho*, *awuuha* (Bright & Bright 1959)

In Lake Miwok, the word was probably acquired through one or more intermediate Indian languages; in Patwin, the first two forms were probably borrowed through native intermediates, while the third form is likely to be a later re-borrowing directly from Spanish.

In recent years, several students of hispanismos have suggested that, in Meso-America and perhaps also in northwestern Mexico, a common route of borrowing was not directly from Spanish into individual Indian languages, but rather from Spanish into the Aztec lingua franca, and from there into the individual languages (Bright 1979a, Nordell 1985). Some especially interesting cases seem to come from the northwestern area (Miller 1985, Casad 1988), suggesting that Aztec may have been used as a lingua franca even on those remote frontiers. In this paper, I wish to clarify and expand evidence for the crucial role of Aztec—to show that, from the viewpoint of a language like Tzotzil or Cora, many so-called 'hispanismos' are better regarded as 'aztequismos' on the more immediate historical level, and as 'hispanismos' only on a more remote level. By contrast, in the languages of the southwestern U.S. and of California, hispanismos show little evidence of having passed through Aztec as an intermediate language.

An additional purpose of this paper is to point to parallels: the relationship among Spanish, Aztec, and some third language of Mexico is comparable to that between other triads of languages in a variety of times and places. A case that comes to mind is that of Latin, French, and English, in which learned words passed from Latin into French, and through French into English, as well as directly from Latin into English. Another case, perhaps less familiar to most linguists, is that involving Japanese, to be discussed in more detail at the end of this paper. The very numerous European loanwords in modern Japanese are occasionally from German or French, but mostly from English. However, some of the English words were themselves borrowed by English from French. A question then arises as to whether we can reliably distinguish French words borrowed directly into Japanese from those borrowed through the intermediacy of English.

**1. Origins: Spanish or native?** In examining the linguistic history of Mexico (and Guatemala), our data involve lexical similarities from which we can

infer some historical relationship involving Spanish and various American Indian languages. However, as stated above, it is not always clear what the route of transmission may have been for a given word. In some cases, there may even be doubt as to whether the starting point is in Spanish or in a native language. A striking example is that of words designating FELINES in several modern languages, which involve the syllable *mis*:

- (4) Col. Az. *mis-tli* 'mountain lion' (with absolute *-tli*)  
Mod. Az. (Teotihuacán) *mis-tli* (González Casanova 1922); (Isthmus)  
*mis-ton* (with diminutive *-ton*, Law 1961:558)

Mazatec *mišī* (Stewart and Stewart 1954)

Huichol *misu* (Grimes 1981)

The element *mis*, meaning 'domestic cat', occurs alone in a few languages, such as Mazatec and Huichol. In Aztec, however, the same element occurs either with an absolutive suffix or a diminutive marker. One possibility is that all these are derived from Col. Az. *mis-tli* 'mountain lion'. However, it is also possible that all these terms, whether meaning 'mountain lion' or 'domestic cat', are derived from a Spanish element *mis*, attested from pre-Conquest times as a syllable used for calling cats (often with repetition; Kiddle 1964). That is, two hypotheses can be considered: (a) the similarity between the Aztec and Spanish elements *mis*, both connected with felines, may be accidental, so that native words for 'cat' in Meso-America may be derived from either source, or both; or (b) Col. Az. *mis-tli* may reflect early borrowing from Spanish, with atypical (but not unprecedented) addition of absolutive *-tli* to a loanword.<sup>5</sup> However, cases like this, in which it is hard to distinguish Spanish vs. native sources, are rare.

Apart from such unusual cases, there are hundreds of less problematic vocabulary items which show resemblances in Spanish, Aztec, and the non-Aztec native languages, which I will for convenience label simply as 'Indigenous'.<sup>6</sup> But distinctions can be made among such words: in the following sections, they will be classified in terms of (a) their starting-points within Mexico, and (b) their paths of transmission from one language to another.

**3. Indigenous origin.** Words of native but non-Aztec origin have, in a relatively small number of cases, been borrowed into Spanish, but usually only for local use. Thus a Mayan word for a type of resin used as incense, *pom*, has been borrowed into Spanish in the areas of principal Mayan contact, namely southern Mexico and Guatemala. But elsewhere the corresponding Aztec term, *kopalli*, has been borrowed as Sp. *copal*, and has entered into widespread use (it can even be found in dictionaries of English). I only know of one non-Aztec Indian word which was borrowed into Spanish and became universally known in Mexico (and again, even entered English). The Spanish word is *huarache* 'a type of sandal', apparently from Tarascan *kuařāčī* 'an old sandal', derived from a verb *kua řā-* 'to break' (Santamaria 1959, Velásquez Gallardo 1978).

**4. Aztec origin.** Some aztequismos widely used in Spanish, such as *chocolate*, have been mentioned above. However, there are differences among the paths of borrowing followed by such words.

**4.1. Az. > Sp.** Certain words were borrowed from Aztec into Spanish, but are seldom found in the Indigenous languages - presumably because they designate features of native American life which already had well-established names among native peoples. An example is Aztec *koyootl*, borrowed into Spanish as *coyote*, and subsequently into English.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, most Indigenous languages have totally unrelated terms, such as Tzeltal *ok'il* (Laughlin 1975) or Huichol *yaavi*

(Grimes 1981). But even words like this have occasionally been borrowed by Indigenous languages from Spanish, probably in recent times: thus we find that the Popoluca (Sayula) term is, in fact, *koyote* (Clark 1961). The phonology of this item clearly reflects borrowing through Spanish, rather than directly from Aztec.

**4.2. Az. > Ind.** A somewhat larger number of words seem to have been borrowed from Aztec directly into Indian languages, and never to have entered Spanish. Some of these may well have been part of patterns of linguistic borrowing which existed in Mexico even before the Conquest; e.g.,

- (5) Cl. Az. *koolootl* 'scorpion'  
Totonac (Xicotepec) *kuluutl* (Reid & Bishop 1974)
- (6) Cl. Az. *šiwitl* 'year'

Popoluca (Sayula) *šiwit* (Clark and Davis de Clark 1960)

But others are found not only in Meso-America proper, but also in northwestern Mexico, where contacts with Aztec are likely to reflect the post-Conquest period in which Aztec came increasingly to function as a lingua franca. Consider the word for 'adobe':

- (7) Cl. Az. *šaamitl* 'adobe'  
Zoque *sāmit* (Harrison, Harrison and García 1961)  
Tzotzil *šāmit* (Laughlin 1975)  
Kekchi *šan* (Haeserijn 1979)  
Yaqui *sami* (Buelna 1890)  
O'odham (Pima-Papago) *šaamt* (Saxton and Saxton 1983)

Here the Az. word seems to have been borrowed not only in languages of southern Meso-America (such as Zoque and Tzotzil in Mexico, and Kekchi in Guatemala), but also in northwestern languages like Yaqui, and even in O'odham of Arizona.

One of the terms for 'cat' mentioned above was undoubtedly spread in post-Conquest times:

- (8) Mod. Az. (Isthmus) *miston* (Law 1961).  
Popoluca (Sayula) *mištoon* (Clark & Clark 1960).  
Cora *mistun* (Casad 1988:80).

A number of other borrowings from Aztec turn up MAINLY in the state of Sonora and in adjacent areas of the northwest (cf. Miller 1985):

- (9) Cl. Az. *tootolin* 'female turkey'  
Yaqui *totoli* 'chicken' (Buelna 1890)
- (10) Cl. Az. *tlahtoanani* 'ruler, governor'  
Cora *tahtuwan* (Casad 1988:96)
- (11) Az. *teookwitlatl* 'god's excrement, i.e. silver, gold'  
Yaqui *teokwita* 'silver' (Buelna 1890)

Again, some such loans extend all the way to the O'odham of Arizona:

- (12) Az. *teoopan(-tli)* 'temple, church'  
Yaqui *teopo* 'church' (Buelna 1890)  
O'odham *čōpi* (Saxton and Saxton 1983)
- (13) Az. *teki-panoa* 'to perform a duty, to work'  
Yaqui *tekipanoa* 'work' (Buelna 1890)  
O'odham *čkpan* 'to work' (Saxton and Saxton 1983)<sup>8</sup>

**4.3. Az. > Sp. > Ind.** When we look at Indigenous languages spoken in an area like California, far distant from the area where Aztec was ever used, we can be

satisfied that apparent *aztequismos* are in fact borrowings through Spanish. The numerous examples in a language like Cahuilla (Bright 1979b) include the following:

- (14) Cl. Az. *kamohtli* 'sweet potato'  
 Sp. *camote*  
 Cah. *kamóoti*
- (15) Cl. Az. *wehšoolootl* 'male turkey'  
 Sp. *guajolote*  
 Cah. *waxolóoti*

**4.4. Az. > Ind., or Az. > Sp. > Ind.?** There remain cases where words of Aztec origin appear both in Spanish and in Indigenous languages - and it is not clear whether the latter borrowed the items directly from Aztec, or whether they entered via Spanish. Examples are the following:

- (16) Cl. Az. *sakatl* 'grass'  
 Sp. *zacate* 'hay'  
 Totonac (Papantla) *šakat* (Aschmann 1973)  
 Popoluca (Sayula) *šogot* (Clark & Clark 1960)
- (17) Cl. Az. *šikalli* 'gourd cup'  
 Sp. *jícara*  
 Huichol *šukúuri*. (Grimes 1981)

Of course it is possible that some of the Indian words represent BLENDS between forms borrowed directly from Aztec and those borrowed from Spanish as intermediary.

**5. Spanish origin.** Words of this type, i.e. *hispanismos* in the narrower sense, constitute a very large number of examples. When such words are found in Indigenous languages, it is often hard to determine whether they have first passed through Aztec as intermediary. Nevertheless, the following categories may be distinguished.

**5.1. Sp. > Az.** A hypothetically possible category is that of Spanish words which appear in Aztec, but not in other native languages of Mexico. In the available data, a few words appear to fall into this category; however, this may be only because of accidental gaps in the corpus. For instance, Sp. *aliñar* 'to align' is attested as borrowed in Col. Az. *alinyaroa* (González Casanova 1933), but is not reported in any Mod. Az. dialect or Indigenous language. Similarly, Sp. *alfiler* 'pin' is reported as Mod. Az. (Isthmus) *aalpinel* (Law 1961:556), but not elsewhere in Meso-America. It is likely that these terms could in fact be found elsewhere in the area.<sup>9</sup>

**5.2. Sp. > Ind.** Another possible category is that of Spanish words which are reported from Indigenous languages, but not from Aztec. Such examples are rarely attested in Meso-America, though this may result in part from gaps in the data. However, they are common in California and the Southwest, outside the reach of the Aztec lingua franca. An example is the word for 'bee', which is reported in Mexico only from one variety of Zapotec, but is found in several languages of California and the southwest U.S.:

- (18) Col. Sp. *abeja* [aʒé ʒa, aʒé ʃa] 'bee', Mod. Sp. [aʒeʎa]  
 Zapotec (Coatlán) *bée's* (Robinson 1963:34)  
 Cahuilla *evēexa'* (Bright 1979b)  
 Cocopa *avix* (Crawford 1979).

**5.3. Sp. > Ind., or Sp. > Az. > Ind. ?** In a large number of Spanish words, found both in Aztec and in Indigenous languages, it is difficult to say whether the Indigenous languages borrowed the forms from Aztec or directly from Spanish. An example is the following:

- (19) Sp. *tomin* 'coin, money' (now obsolete, originally from Arabic *ṭumna* 'an eighth')  
 Col. Az. *tomin*  
 Mod. Az. (Tlaxcala) *tomih* (Bright & Thiel 1965)  
 Kekchi *tumin* (Haeserijn 1979)  
 Yaqui *tomí* (Johnson 1962)

In such an item, the Spanish phonetic model could be copied with little change by any of the native languages, so we have few phonological clues as to the path of transmission. Another example is:

- (20) Sp. *aceite* [aséyte] 'oil'  
 Col. Az. *aseyte*  
 Mod. Az. (Milpa Alta) *hauseyte* (Whorf 1944:372)  
 Tzotzil *asete* (Laughlin 1975)  
 Seri *hasáiti* (Moser and Moser 1961)

Here the unusual initial *h* in Mod. Az., with its re-appearance in Seri, is suggestive; however, any attempt to trace the exact paths of borrowing would have to be based on detailed knowledge of the phonologies of the native languages concerned—descriptive, dialectological, and historical - and such knowledge is, in general, not available.

**5.4. Sp. > Az. > Ind.** In a fair number of Spanish words, found both in Aztec and in other native languages, phonological clues are more strongly indicative that borrowing occurred first from Spanish into Aztec, and secondarily into at least some Indigenous languages. These are, specifically, words which reflect certain phonetic features of Colonial Spanish which have been altered in more recent Mexican Spanish, but are attested in Aztec from both the Colonial and Modern periods (e.g., Col. Sp. apico-alveolar [ʃ] becomes Mod. Sp. [s], but Col. and Mod. Az. [š]). Specifically, we find the following phonological correspondences:<sup>10</sup>

- |                                     |         |                        |
|-------------------------------------|---------|------------------------|
| (21) Col. Sp. <i>s</i> [ʃ, ʒ]       | Az. [š] | Mod. Sp. <i>s</i> [s]  |
| Col. Sp. <i>x</i> [š], <i>j</i> [ž] | Az. [š] | Mod. Sp. <i>j</i> [X]  |
| Col. Sp. <i>ll</i> [lʲ]             | Az. [l] | Mod. Sp. <i>ll</i> [y] |

When we study hispanismos which contain any of these sounds, certain inferences may be possible concerning the transmission of loanwords. Consider the following typical example:

- (22) Col. Sp. *xabon* [ʃaβón] 'soap', Mod. Sp. *jabón* [xaβón]  
 Col. Az. *šapo*  
 Mod. Az. (Tetelcingo) *šapo* (Brewer and Brewer 1962)  
 Tarascan *šapū* (Velásquez Gallardo 1978)  
 Popoluca (Sayula) *šapuun* (Clark and Davis de Clark 1960)  
 Yaqui *sabum* (Buelna 1890)

These and many other languages show an initial sibilant, reflecting the sound of Colonial Spanish. (In languages like Yaqui which lack [š], an *s* occurs instead.) In the case of central Mexican languages like Tarascan, it is of course possible that the

sibilant pronunciation was borrowed directly from Colonial Spanish, instead of through Aztec. But in a language of the northwest like Yaqui, where contact with Spanish came at a somewhat later date, there is considerable likelihood that borrowing was from Aztec.

Sometimes a hispanismo reflects the pronunciation of Colonial Spanish (or of Aztec) in some languages, and that of Modern Spanish in others:

(23) Col. Sp. *ajo(s)* [ážo(š), ášo(š)] 'garlic', Mod. Sp. [áxo(s)]

Col. Az. *ášvš*

Mod. Az. (Huasteca) *ášvš* (Kimball 1980)

Popoluca (Sayula) *áušvš* (Clark and Davis de Clark 1960)

Tequistlatec *gal-áhus* (Turner and Turner 1971)

Cora *háahu* (Casad 1988:82)

Here the last two languages listed have clearly borrowed their forms from the Modern Spanish pronunciation.

Sometimes doublets occur in different dialects of a single language, as shown by the two Mod. Az. forms below, or even in a single dialect, as in Kekchi:

(24) Col. Sp. *silla* [šilʎa] 'chair, saddle', Mod. Sp. [siya]

Col. Az. *šila*

Mod. Az. (Isthmus) *šilah* (Law 1961:556); but (Tetelcingo) *siya*  
(Brewer and Brewer 1962)

Huichol *šira* (Grimes 1981)

Kekchi *šiił, siiy* (Haeserijn 1979)

In the Kekchi case, the first form may have been borrowed either directly from Colonial Spanish, or from Nahuatl (possibly through some other Indigenous language); but the form *siiy* is clearly a borrowing from Modern Spanish. We thus find here a type of lexical stratification, in which the form *siiy* is apparently the newer form in Kekchi.

The likelihood that an Indigenous language borrowed a word from (or through) Aztec, rather than directly from Colonial Spanish, increases when we look at languages of northwestern Mexico, where Spanish arrived at a relatively late date. An interesting case is the following:

(25) Col. Sp. *Castilla* [kaštilʎa] 'Castile' (Mod. Sp. [kastiya])

Col. Az. *kaštil-ian* 'Spain' (by re-analysis, with the locational suffix

*-ian*); *kaštil-* 'Spain, Spanish, foreign'; *kaštil(an)-totolin*

'Spanish turkey, i. e. hen, chicken'

Subsequently, variants of the Aztec words spread all over Meso-America, and as far north as Arizona and the Rio Grande pueblos of New Mexico, but with further changes of form and meaning: The element *kaštil-* has acquired the added meanings 'mestizo, Mexican' (as opposed to Indian), and the combination meaning 'chicken' has been reduced to *kaštil* or *kaštilan*, which is then reduced in turn to the types *kašan*, *štilan*, or *tilan*. Here are some sample forms:

- (26) Mod. Az. (Tetzoco) *kaštil* 'Spanish' (Lastra de Suárez 1980); (Tlaxcala) *kuštil* 'hen' (Bright & Thiel 1965); (Huasteca) *kaštelan* 'Spanish' (Kimball 1980)  
 Cuitlatec *kaštili* 'Spanish' (Escalante Hernández 1962)  
 Totonac (Papantla) *kaštil* 'foreign', *štilaan* 'hen' (Aschmann 1973)  
 Tzotzil *kašlan* 'foreign; hen' (Laughlin 1975)  
 Kekchi *kašan*, *čilan*, *tiilan* 'hen' (Haeserijn 1979)  
 Cora *kastiran* 'Spanish' (McMahon and McMahon 1959)  
 Hopi *kastila* 'Mexican' (Voegelin and Voegelin 1957)  
 Keresan (Santa Ana) *kasdiira* 'Mexican' (Davis 1964)

The liquid consonants in the forms of Cora, Hopi, and Keresan give an especially clear reflection of the pronunciation used in Colonial Spanish and of Aztec, as opposed to the [y] of Modern Mexican Spanish.

The likelihood of borrowing through Aztec (with or without other native-language intermediaries), as opposed to the unlikelihood of borrowing directly from Spanish of any period, is especially great in words which were common in Spanish of the colonial period, but subsequently became obsolete. A good example is the following:

- (27) Col. Sp. *zaragüelles* [saray<sup>w</sup>élyeš] 'loose breeches' (the Mod. Sp. pronunciation would be [saray<sup>w</sup>éyes])  
 Col. Az. *sarawelas*  
 Mod. Az. (Pipil, El Salvador) *sala* (Campbell 1985)  
 Zoque *sanawénes* (Harrison & García 1961)  
 Yaqui *sarawera* (Buelna 1890)  
 Névome *salvel* (Pennington 1979)

Here the occurrence in the northwestern languages Yaqui and Névome, as well as the liquids preserved in those languages, both argue for borrowing from Nahuatl or some intermediate native language, rather than directly from Spanish.

**6. Blends.** I have made the argument that, of the numerous 'hispanismos' in the Indigenous languages of Mexico, many may indeed have been borrowed directly from Spanish—but that a significant number were probably borrowed through the intermediacy of Aztec. I have also suggested some phonological criteria which may be used to identify words borrowed in that way. However, as mentioned above, the possibility remains that some terms show BLENDING of phonological elements from both Spanish and Aztec. This is illustrated in the following:

- (28) Col. Sp. *naranja(s)* [naránža(š), naránša(š)] 'orange(s)', Mod. Sp. [narán]χa(s)]  
 Col. Az. *nalanša*, *nanša*  
 Mod. Az. (Tlaxcala) *nanšuh* (Bright & Thiel 1965); (Tetelcingo) *anššš* ([č] < *na*; Brewer 1962)  
 Tzeltal (Bachajón) *alaššš* (Slocum & Gerdel 1965); (Oxchuc) *narašš* (Slocum 1953)

It is apparent that the Col. Sp. word entered Aztec in at least three forms - approximately (a) *nalanša*, (b) *nanša*, and (c) *alanša*s. In Tzeltal (a Mayan language of Chiapas), the Bachajón dialect clearly contains form (c), but the Oxchuc dialect apparently has form (a). The loss of the final vowel in the Oxchuc dialect is common when Spanish and Aztec loanwords enter Mayan languages. Beyond this, however, Oxchuc uses *r*, a sound not native to Tzeltal, instead of the expected *l*. The most likely explanation is contamination from Spanish *naranja* — or perhaps a more general tendency to replace *l* by *r*, by hypercorrection, in words which speakers regard as borrowings.

**7. French, English, and Japanese.** Modern Japanese is of course famous for its hospitality to loan words, especially from English. In effect, English loans in Japanese constitute an open-ended list, since writers feel at liberty to use, in a Japanese text, virtually anything they find in a bilingual dictionary. Thus, in 1988, a Tokyo department store advertised men's clothing under this heading:

(29) *riizunaburu kara yangu purestiji made, waido na puraisu renji*

'From "reasonable" to "young prestige", a wide price range.'

However, Japanese also borrows words from other European languages, especially French. But since English also borrows many of the same words from French, we have a situation somewhat comparable to that in Mexico: just as a language like Tzotzil seems to have borrowed some Spanish words directly, and others through Aztec, so also Japanese seems to borrow some French words directly, and others through English.<sup>11</sup> One very large class of resemblances between French, English, and Japanese consists, of course, of words which English borrowed from French (or from Latin, on a French model), during the period from the Norman Conquest through the Renaissance—and which Japanese has subsequently borrowed from English. An example is the following:

(30) Old French *mansion* 'abode' (Mod. Fr. *maison* 'house')

Eng. *mansion*

Ja. *manshon* 'upscale apartment'

Such cases, although numerous, are of relatively little interest in the present context: the phonological difference between the Mod. Fr. and the Mod. Eng. forms is great enough to make it clear that Japanese has borrowed the term from English, not from French.

Of greater interest, however, is the more recent chronological stratum of French words—referring especially to clothing, food, and the arts - which have gained international currency from the 17th century onward, entering English and Japanese as well as other languages. In examining this more recent layer of words in Japanese, we may distinguish three categories: those clearly borrowed directly from French, those clearly borrowed through English, and (the largest class) those for which the path of transmission is unclear.

**7.1. Fr. > Ja.** Words which we can identify as probable direct borrowings from French into Japanese fall into two classes. First, there are terms which have simply never become current in English:

(31) Fr. *manteau*, Ja. *manto* 'cloak'

Fr. *concours*, Ja. *konkuuru* 'contest'

Fr. *petit*, Ja. *puchi* 'small' (esp. in trade names)

Fr. *prêt-à-porter*, Ja. *puretaporute* 'ready-to-wear'

Other words occur in both English and French, but phonological criteria make it clear that Japanese has borrowed them directly from French. That is, their pronunciation reflects the phonetics of French (as pronounced in Japan) more closely than the phonetics of English (again, as pronounced in Japan). Thus

syllable-final *r* of French is normally *ru* in Japanese, whereas Eng. syllable-final [ur] would be rendered as *ua(a)*, as in Ja. *tsuaa* 'package tour' < Eng. *tour*.

(32) Fr. *mètre*, Ja. *meetoru* 'meter' (unit of measure)<sup>12</sup>

(33) Fr. *mannequin*, Ja. *manukan* 'mannequin' (The medial *u* is the regular reflection of Fr. 'e muet' [ə], as in *petit* > *puchi*.<sup>13</sup>)

(34) Fr. *reportage*, Ja. *ruporutaaju*, abbreviated to *rupo* 'news report' (Cf. Ja. *repooto* from Eng. *report*.)

(35) Fr. *gourmet*, Ja. *gurume* (Ja. final short *e* is normal in direct loans from French, as compared to long *ee* in words borrowed through English, e.g. Ja. *baree* from Eng. *ballet*.)

**7.2. Fr. > Eng. > Ja.** Words which can be clearly identified as having been transmitted through English, en route from French to Japanese, are characterized by distinctive phonology; the examples mentioned above have been Fr. *tour*, Eng. *tour*, Ja. *tsuaa*, and Fr. *ballet*, Eng. *ballet*, Ja. *baree*. Other instances are the following:

(36) Fr. *dessert*, Eng. *dessert*, Ja. *dezaato* (As seen above, the syllable-final *r* of English, but not that of French, is realized as Ja. *a* or *aa*. Note also Fr. [s], Eng. [z], Ja. [z], as well as final Fr. zero, Eng. *t*, Ja. *to*.)

(37) Fr. *brassière* 'bodice', Eng. *brassiere*, Ja. *burajaa* 'bra' (The phonology of Ja. *jaa* < \**jiyaa* < Eng. [ziə], as well as the semantics, indicates borrowing through English.)

(38) Fr. *pension* 'accommodation with meals', Eng. *pension*, Ja. *penshon* 'small hotel'.<sup>14</sup>

**7.3. Fr. > Ja., or Fr. > Eng. > Ja.?** The largest category of all, as might be expected, is that of words whose path of borrowing is uncertain. These items are current in both French and English, as well as Japanese, and lack crucial phonological features which would confirm transmission through English. Examples are:

(39) Fr. *madame*, Eng. *madam* 'proprietress of a brothel', Ja. *madamu*  
Fr. *ensemble* 'musical group', Eng. *ensemble*, Ja. *ansamburu*  
Fr. *cognac*, Eng. *cognac*, Ja. *konnyakku*

**7.4. Blends.** Finally, as might be expected, there are words that show a mixture of French-type and English-type phonological features. Thus the word *ruporutaaju* 'news report', cited above (34) as a loan from Fr. *reportage*, has an alternant *repootaaju*: this is probably a blend of the French form with Ja. *repooto* < Eng. *report*. Another possible blend is the following:

(40) Fr. *chou à la crème* 'cream puff', Ja. *shuukuriimu* (with apparent contamination from Ja. *kuriimu* < Eng. *cream*)<sup>15</sup>

**8. Conclusion.** The moral to be drawn is that the historical linguist should be alert to situations of sociolinguistically motivated three-way borrowing such as those discussed: Language A, of high prestige (at least in certain cultural fields), provides loanwords both to Language B and Language C; but Language B, also characterized by prestige, transmits some of those same loans to Language C. Within Language C, the assignment of loans to Language A vs. Language B may be sometimes clear, sometimes ambiguous, and sometimes complicated by blending. Situations like this must have arisen frequently in the history of the world: for example, although I am mostly ignorant of African linguistics, I would expect to find that words of Arabic origin, in certain languages of Nigeria or of Kenya, might be traced directly to local varieties of Arabic—or, alternatively, to Hausa and to

Swahili, respectively, as vehicles of transmission. In general, it seems likely that borrowing of vocabulary can not be understood in terms of single 'languages of culture' as sources for loanwords, but must rather be seen in terms of a more complex model which allows for stratified transmission through intermediary languages. In the context of the Columbian quincentennial, we are reminded again that the history of contact between cultures and languages in the Americas was not a unilateral matter, but rather a multilateral process of what Spanish Americans prefer to call an *encuentro*: not a 'discovery', but an 'encounter'.

## NOTES

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1. An authoritative reference is Friederici 1947.
2. A relevant study is Macazaga Ordoño 1987; see also the review by Bright 1990.
3. Col. Az. hispanismos cited below are, in general, from González Casanova 1933; native words can be found in Siméon 1885.
4. Data from Indian languages are transcribed as they appear in sources, but with adaptation of symbols to a common phonetic standard. Thus the Aztec word for 'needle' is often transcribed *acoxa*, following the orthographic conventions of Spanish, but it is converted here into symbols more generally recognized by linguists. —Regarding the phonology of Colonial Spanish, see the recent discussions of Ariza Viguera (1989:159-69) and of Campbell 1989.
5. An argument for hypothesis (a) is the fact that *mis-tli* 'mountain lion' is attested in several native compounds, e.g. *masa-mistli* 'deer-lion, a feline species', and metaphors, e.g. *wei mistli ipan kistok* 'He resembles a great lion, i.e. is very brave' (Siméon 1885). However, an argument for hypothesis (b) is provided by the borrowings with added absolutive *-tl*, *-tli* which are attested in some modern dialects, e.g. Tlaxcala *ako šah-tl* 'needle' (Bright & Thiel 1965).
6. This term is intended to acknowledge the fact that Aztec was itself an intruder in Meso-America, only a few centuries before Spanish.
7. Cl. Az. forms of native origin, as transcribed here, include indication of vowel length and of the 'saltillo' or glottal stop, written as *h*; for these features, often omitted in the usual Spanish-based orthography, I rely on the determinations made by Karttunen 1983.
8. Relevant here is the report of Kroeber (1934:1-2) that Aztec was still spoken in the early 20th century by a few people in Sonora - the descendants of settlers moved there from central Mexico by the Spanish.
9. In fact, borrowings of Sp. *alfiler* are reported from several languages of California, e.g. Cahuilla *enfiléer* (Bright 1979b).
10. For a recent discussion of these, see Hill 1990.
11. Many publications, both in Japanese and in English, deal with European loans in Japanese; see, for instance, Arakawa 1984, Webb 1990.
12. Distinguished in Japanese from *meetaa* 'meter' (instrument for measuring), which is borrowed from German *Meter*. Japanese has borrowed many words from German in the areas of science, medicine, winter sports, and hiking.
13. But Ja. *manekin*, from Eng., also occurs, perhaps assisted by native Ja. *maneku* 'to welcome in' (Roy Andrew Miller, p.c.)
14. Since the Eng. pronunciation of this word is usually modeled on Fr. [päsio], the Ja. form is probably based on a spelling pronunciation of the English, like that used in English sense for the meaning 'retirement pay'. Such spelling pronunciations are common in Ja. borrowings, e.g. *nyuusuu* 'news'.
15. A possible blend involving German, rather than French, is a term which has recently become familiar in Japan: *kapuseru hoteru* 'capsule hotel' (i.e., one where the guest rents not a room, but a sleeping space something like a glorified coffin). This is only superficially modeled on English. The word *hoteru* may indeed be originally borrowed from English, French, or German. But *kapuseru* can only be from German *Kapsel*; the English word *capsule* would be rendered as Ja. \**kyapushuru*.

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Abbreviations:

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 ILV = Instituto Lingüístico de Verano  
 INAH = Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia  
 JCGBA-PL = Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology,  
 Papers in Linguistics  
 RPh. = Romance Philology  
 UCPL = University of California Publications in Linguistics  
 UNAM = Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

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