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Athabascan Kin Term Systems

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IN the AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST¹ for last year, M. E. Opler analyzes the kinship systems of seven South Athabascan groups. The data are presented compactly and conveniently for comparison; and a classification is made into two types, called Chiricahua and Jicarilla, of which the first is construed as developmentally earlier. Dr Opler's paper is executed with genuine workmanship, and his data are a boon: there has not been even one Apache kinship system previously on record, so far as I know. He has however taken no cognizance of Northern or Pacific Athabascan kinship systems, long ago recorded by Morgan and Gifford; and it seems worth while examining these to see whether, at least on certain points, they do not suffice for a tentative reconstruction of primitive Athabascan kinship which in turn will illumine the South Athabascan situation.

Southern Athabascan includes Chiricahua, Mescalero, Western Apache, Navaho, Jicarilla, Lipan, Kiowa Apache. They are all Apaches, historically and in Spanish usage. The first three are southwesterly, the last four northeasterly within the Southwest.

California Athabascan includes Kato, Wailaki, Lassik, Sinkyone, Hupa, Tolowa. Linguistically there appear to be three groups: Kato-Wailaki-Lassik-Sinkyone; Hupa; and Tolowa-Oregon Athabascan.

Northern Athabascan (superordinate to the preceding) includes Slave Lake, Hare, Yellow Knife ("Red Knife"), Kutchin, Tukuthe, Carrier (this last from Morice, *Carrier Language*).

Kinship abbreviations are as introduced by Gifford in *Californian Kinship Terminologies*.

All original Athabascan forms are rough generalizations, not proven or arguable reconstructions such as a philologist would designate by a *. The purpose is recognition of former kinship plans, not of precise linguistic forms.

Grandparents—Chiricahua and Mescalero have 4 terms: FF nale, FM tc'ine, MF tsoye, MM tco. Western Apache merges the two last, Navaho the two first, Jicarilla and Lipan use MF for both GF, and MM for both GM; Kiowa Apache has again merged and uses MF for all 4 GP. That this is the historical sequence is shown by the California Athabascans having the 4-GP scheme, with close correspondence of forms: FF al (Lassik, Wailaki; others aberrant: Tolowa ame', Hupa maatcwuñ, Sinkyone abak, Kato tcau); FM trene, tcin, tcuñ, tcañ; MF tcugi, tcigi, tchuwe, sagi; MM tco, tcwo, su. Northern Athabascan has only two terms, of type tsian and tsu, or tsun and tsea, for GF and GM; these forms probably correspond to FM and MF. The whole of America east of the Rockies is a region of

¹ M. E. Opler, *The Kinship Systems of the Southern Athabaskan-Speaking Tribes* (American Anthropologist, Vol. 38, pp. 620-33, 1936).

only two (or one) GP terms, so that the loss of half an original stock of 4 terms in the Northern as also among the Southern Athabascan of the Plains (Jicarilla, Lipan, Kiowa Apache) is infinitely more likely than that the Chiricahua-Mescalero and the California tribes should have independently devised not only 4 concept words but the same stems for them. In short, original Athabascan possessed separate terms for FF, FM, MF, MM.

Parents and Children—For F, the general Athabascan stem—Northern, Southern, California—is ta: Lipan and Kiowa Apache aci is therefore a secondary specialization. On the contrary, for M, Chiricahua-Mescalero-Western Apache-Navaho ma seems specialized, and Jicarilla-Lipan-Kiowa Apache ni, nandi, nade probably agrees with Northern Athabascan nde, ana, na-aing, etc., and California Athabascan nan, nang, ne, etc.

For children the situation is complicated. The clearest is a stem yacetc, yactce, yatce in California Athabascan and yatse, yadze in Northern Athabascan, which uniformly means wn D. This is obviously Southern Athabascan yatc'e', jatc'e', etc., which however appears more generalized as D; and which is replaced in Western Apache and Navaho by tsi'.

A second term, perhaps the base of the preceding one, is yaz, yaza in Northern Athabascan and yac in California Athabascan, and means wn Sn. In Hare and Yellow Knife this is widened to mean Sn; in Hupa and Tolowa it is lost, and its place taken by a term of different meaning, tse or sie, mn D, which is probably cognate with the just mentioned Western Apache-Navaho tsi', D.

The situation becomes too intricate to make further dissection profitable without more accurate phonetic and semantic record than is available for most tribes; but it does look as if original Athabascan might have had 4 terms (mn Sn, mn D, wn Sn, wn D); or at any rate 3, which is the number in all six California systems (though on two logical plans) and in Western Apache (adds wn Ch) and Navaho (adds wn Sn). In any event, the simple Sn-D terminology of Chiricahua-Mescalero does not seem original.

Siblings—Original Athabascan had 4 terms, each specifying sex and seniority.

	<i>Northern</i>	<i>California</i>	<i>Southern</i>
OB	unaga, unda	onung, onaga, on, ungutc	Navaho, Jicarilla, Lipan na'i oB
OSS	ada, ache, yat	at, ati, ade	Western Apache de oSb; Navaho adi oSs; Kiowa Apache dada oSs
YB	acha, chilea, che, chel	tcil, tcel, tcal, kil, tcelc	Navaho tsili yB; Kiowa Apache tcitl'a yB
YSs	adaze, tis, chith	t'eci, te, de, eci, detc	Western Apache dije ySb; Navaho deji ySs; Kiowa Apache detc'a ySs

Chiricahua-Mescalero are aberrant with a totally different plan: k'is, parallel Sb, la' cross Sb, without reference to seniority. Both these terms recur among the

five other Southwest Athabascan groups, but apparently either with narrower sense or as alternative words. (Opler's tabular data are difficult to interpret on this point because they refer to male egos.) In California, Tolowa has *disle mn Ss*, and *la'e (mn and wn) B*, as evident cognates; in the North, Carrier *lthes "Ss"* and *tetsin "B"* may or may not be cognate. There may thus be a second system of original Athabascan *Sb* terms, based on the parallel-cross principle instead of seniority or absolute sex; as there also is in Algonkin. The Tolowa forms of this type I have previously characterized as "evidently an idea-loan from the Yurok."² If so, Tolowa may have had the supplementary terms ready from its original Athabascan heritage.

In any event, parallel-cross *Sb* terminology recurs in Kiowa, Tanoan, and especially Keresan. Whether these influenced Southern Athabascan or were influenced by it remains to be seen. The closest linkage in this point appears to be between Chiricahua-Mescalero and Keresan.

Cousins—While Chiricahua-Mescalero distinguish only parallel *Sb* and cross *Sb*, they do not distinguish parallel cousin and cross cousin, in fact call them all *Sb*. The equation all cousins = *Sb* recurs among the Northern Athabascan groups reported on by Morgan. On the other hand, Carrier has *zit*, "♀ cousin on M side," and *unte*, "♂ cousin on M side." Of these the first corresponds to Western Apache-Navaho-Jicarilla *zede*, ♀ cross cousin, and Tolowa, Lassik, Wailaki, Kato *seti*, *tce*, *tcet*, ♀ cross cousin. Carrier *unte* also corresponds to *ontde-si*, *untu*, *un'd*, *unt* in the same four California languages, where it always denotes ♂ cross cousin and sometimes ♀ also. Western Apache-Navaho-Jicarilla *lna'ac* does not seem cognate, but has just the range of meaning of California *ontdesi-untu*.

It must be concluded that original Athabascan had a pair of terms of a type represented by *zede* and *untu*, meaning ♀ and ♂ cross cousin respectively, which have been preserved in Navaho, Jicarilla, Western Apache, but were lost in Chiricahua, Mescalero, Lipan, Kiowa Apache.

Uncles-Aunts—Athabascan designations for *P Sb* are varied, and the original pattern promises to be difficult to reconstruct. Both in Northern and Southern Athabascan, *FB = F* and *MSs = M* sometimes but not always. The most consistent Southern form is *da'i* or *da'a* for *MB*, but this has no recognizable Northern or California cognates. In California the most consistent feature is the use of *oSs* for *FSs*. California throughout equates parallel *U-A* not with *P* but with *StP*. There is also a strong tendency toward this in Southern Athabascan. The universal stem for *StF* there is *bedje*. In Western Apache and Navaho this also denotes *FB*; in Western Apache, Navaho, Jicarilla, Lipan, Kiowa Apache, also *FSs*! *FSs* and *StF* can obviously be named alike only through the *FB*; the logical chain must run *StF = FB = FSb = FSs*. Yet in Southern Athabascan, the ends of this chain mostly remain equated, the links have mostly got specialized away. California appears to

² A. L. Kroeber, *Yurok and Neighboring Kin Term Systems* (University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1934), p. 17.

have no cognates to *bedje*, but in Northern Athabascan Slave Lake shows *embadza* and Carrier *pizyan* for FSs. *Bedje* is therefore old Athabascan, but whether its original meaning was StF or FSs or something between, is not clear.

Chiricahua-Mescalero use of *dede* for both FB and FSs, as distinct from *bedje* StF, is therefore, within Southern Athabascan, a specialization. The stem may be the same as Slave Lake *eta* FB, Tukuthe "tye" (=tai ?) FB, Carrier *thai* FB, Kato and Hupa *tai* FB = StF. If these are true cognates, the indicated original meaning would be FB. In that event we should have this curious set of Athabascan developments for the concept of FSs:

Chiricahua-Mescalero, FSs ex FB.

Western Apache-Navaho, FSs ex FB-StF.

Jicarilla-Lipan-Kiowa Apache, FSs ex StF, FB different.

California, FSs ex oSs.

Slave Lake, Carrier, FSs ex FB-StF, as in Western Apache-Navaho.

Hare, Yellow Knife, FSs ex GM (but Northern Athabascan also tends to associate StP and GP).

StM in Southern Athabascan is throughout *ka* or *ka'a*. This is also used for MSs, regularly in Western Apache, alternatively in Mescalero and Navaho. (Jicarilla, Lipan, Kiowa Apache use *M* for MSs; but their term for *M* is *ni*, *nandi*, *nade* as against the *ma* of the other Southern tribes.) California throughout uses *unkai*, MSs and StM. Can this *unkai* be equated with Southern Athabascan *ka'a*? And in Northern Athabascan with Slave Lake *anga*, Yellow Knife *krea*, Tukuthe *kui*, Carrier *akei*, all = MSs?

The original Athabascan kinship system cannot be reconstructed, so far as it may prove definitively reconstructible, until we shall have records more accurate both phonetically and as to inclusion of meaning, from more languages, and until sound shifts have been worked out to allow the determination of true cognates. Even in the present state of knowledge, however, thanks to Opler's most welcome new Southern Athabascan data, certain salient features of original Athabascan kinship nomenclature emerge as probable. These are:

(1) Four grandparent terms. Where fewer occur, there has been reduction of terms, extension of meaning.

(2) More than two children terms, through recognition of parents' sex. On the other hand, son and daughter are sometimes merged for the same parent.

(3) Four sibling terms on the widespread American plan of older brother, older sister, younger brother, younger sister.

(4) Possibly a second set of two sibling terms, expressing parallel *vs.* cross relationship. (Cross sibling is sibling of opposite sex.)

(5) Two cross cousin terms, probably for male cross cousin and female cross cousin, though these meanings have at times been narrowed or altered.

(6) An unstable pattern of uncle-aunt designations, with however a strong tendency for the equations step-mother equals mother's sister, and step-father equals father's brother equals father's sibling equals father's sister.

The various local developments were no doubt both internal and due to contacts. America east of the Rockies favors limitation to two grandparents and two uncles-aunts (through merging of parallel uncles-aunts with parents). Some of the Northern Athabascan tribes and the easterly ones of the Southern Athabascan division show these features. California is on the whole an area of four grandparents, four uncles-aunts, four siblings, and the California Athabascans conform, even if they have to use older sister for father's sister and step-mother for mother's sister. Western Apache, Chiricahua, Mescalero, heavily self-reciprocal, are the most western and southern groups of Southern Athabascan, adjacent to Sonoran-Piman-Shoshonean and Yuman tribes, among whom reciprocal expression has its strongest development in America. Contact influences are therefore almost indubitable. Whether it was the logic of nomenclature that was diffused as such, or sets of kinship usages and institutions which were then also reflected in nomenclature, cannot be decided without much fuller knowledge and analysis. Probably both processes were operative; the problem is, at what points and to what degree. What is clear empirically or behavioristically is that *nomenclature logic has diffused*; how far this happened directly, as such, or on the contrary through the medium of social usage or institution diffusion, is something to be ascertained, not assumed. For reciprocal terminology, a corresponding institution is hard to imagine. Reciprocity seems essentially a thought-pattern.

As regards Opler's "guess" that the Chiricahua-Mescalero-Western Apache type of kinship is the older in Southern Athabascan, this is confirmed as probable at some points, rendered highly improbable at others. These three groups, which front Sonora, have certainly had their systems warped away from primitive Southern Athabascan by Uto-Aztecan and Yuman contacts; the Jicarilla, Lipan, Kiowa Apache by Plains (and Eastern) influences; the Navaho, who live essentially between the various Pueblos, by Pueblo influences, I suspect, and perhaps also by Plains in-

fluences through the Jicarilla. While guesses are in order, mine is that Navaho, though altered at a great many separate points, has been altered least consistently according to any one systematic pattern or logical plan, and may prove to preserve a greater number of features of original Southern Athabascan than any one Apache group.

Methodologically, it is clear that, because kinship systems are sets of words, we are neglecting extremely pertinent evidence when we do not use comparative philological findings. Technically rude as Morgan's and Gifford's data from the North and California are philologically, they throw genuine beams of illumination into the South Athabascan situation, and show that Opler's excellent typological classification cannot in the main be read historically. Wherever we are dealing with members of a larger indubitable or close-knit speech family—Uto-Aztecan, Siouan, Algonkin, Muskogean, Salish, Eskimo—the same must apply. It seems sterile to grope for understanding of why a particular system is what it is, while philological evidence that contains at least a partial answer is not even examined. Nor is high technical competence of lifelong absorption in the study of a family of languages requisite for preliminary and orienting results. I am certainly not an Athabascanist, and am quite unable to "prove" the cognates which I indicate; I may well have guessed a few false ones. Nevertheless, so much is patent, that while philologists will correct, they will also no doubt accept the majority of the present findings as self-evident; and I do not see how ethnographers can feel differently.

There has been, for one reason or another, enough discredit cast on historical reconstruction as such, among American and English anthropologists of recent decades, that it seems well to reemphasize that comparative philology, whether Indo-European, Sinitic, Bantu, Athabascan, or Algonkin, is in its very nature and essence a reconstructive discipline. To be sure, philologists mainly reconstruct the forms or sounds of words, and only secondarily their meanings; and we have in culture relatively little material so sharply formalized as to lend itself to comparison as exact as that of language forms. There is consequently some reason for the difference that in ethnography there is still argument whether one may legitimately reconstruct at all and that in philology the main argument is which reconstructions are the sounder. Nevertheless it is well to remember that philology in reconstructing follows techniques definitely more rigorous than most of those used in ethnography even when this is not reconstructing. The implications of this fact are too often forgotten.

At any rate, since kinship systems are first of all systems of classifica-

tory logic expressed in words which are parts of languages, the analysis and comparison of such systems without reference to their linguistic history, so far as this may be available, is an arbitrary limitation on understanding.³

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³ Since the above was written, Osgood has published Tatlit Kutchin and Kutcha Kutchin systems from the far North (Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 14, 1936) p. 116, Peel River; p. 133, Fort Yukon; p. 136, same inft. by Sapir, 1923. In general, these confirm Morgan. There are 4 terms for Ch, 4 for Sb, 4 for U-A. StF, StM, C are not given. There is no indication of parallel-cross Sb terms. GF is tsi or chi', GM tsio or chio. The latter is evidently extended in meaning from FM, because it still has the reciprocal meaning of wn SnD also, in Tatlit. GF tsi is obviously not cognate to Southern and California Athabascan FF; it may or may not be cognate to MF. Both dialects have 3 GCh terms: Tatlit, mn GCh, wn DCh and SnSn, wn SnD=GM; Kutcha, wn GCh, mn GSn, mn GD. This looks like the asymmetrically distorted remnant of a 4 GP-4 GCh reciprocal system.

Jenness has just added the Sekani terms (Bulletin, National Museum of Canada, No. 84, Anthropological Series, No. 20, 1937). There are two GP words, ase and asu, and one for GCh, asa (FL, ML, ese, esu seem related to GF, GM). F, M, Sn, D are abba, ana, se-tchwa', se-tchwe'; the two latter also mean StSn and parallel Np, and StD and parallel Nc, respectively. MB is sase, FSs abedze (see text above); FB=StF is esta, MSs=StM is s-ongwe (perhaps cognate with Californian unkai, South Athabascan ka'a, StM and MSs). MnSsCh is s-azi; for other Np-Nc relationships Ch or Sb terms are used (wn BSn=yB, wn BD=ySs). There are 4 Sb terms by age: hotige, oB; s-ade, oSs; asidle, yB; es-dje', ySs. The last 3 have general Athabascan cognates. All 4 include cousins. In addition, se-ttane means B or ♂ cousin, and se'-tise' Ss or ♀ cousin, irrespective of age or speaker's sex. There appear to be no Sekani cognates to the cross cousin terms that sometimes crop out elsewhere. The list is completed by se-naze, SnL, se-tcha, DL, klaze', SbL. As so often with new material, this list raises as many problems as it answers; especially because of uncertain cognates. The system seems simplified, perhaps mainly under Eastern influences and with emphasis on step-relationship and levirate.
