

AN INQUIRY INTO THE PROTO-ALGONQUIAN SYSTEM
OF SOCIAL CLASSIFICATION AND MARRIAGE:
A POSSIBLE SYSTEM OF SYMMETRIC PRESCRIPTIVE ALLIANCE
IN A LAKE FOREST ARCHAIC CULTURE
DURING THE THIRD MILLENNIUM B.C.

The study of relationship terminologies in reconstructed proto-languages is of significance to both linguists and social anthropologists. Where a proto-language relationship terminology can be reconstructed, the analyst is in a position to evaluate precisely the nature of changes in social classification. Such knowledge is invaluable and essential if we are ever to understand the meaning of social classification and the causes of change in social classification.

Disagreements on how these goals are best achieved is apparent from the recent work of Blust in *Current Anthropology* (1980) and subsequent comments on his methods, published in the same journal.

At Oxford the publications of Allen (1976), on reconstructing the Sherpa social classification, and Barnes (1979) on the meaning of Proto-Austronesian relationship terms, as well as their individual comments on Blust (1980) exemplify the social anthropologist's concern with meanings and systems of relationship in proto-languages. This interest in relationship terminologies, meanings and systems of relationship comes to us from Tylor whose essay of 1889 on cross-cousin marriage inaugurated a topic that is still essential to our understanding of social classification. The development of formal arguments that allow the analyst to draw conclusions about principles of social classification, marriage, and cosmology, is most fully developed in the work of Needham (1962, 1973, 1974). In this method of analysis relationship terminologies and their genealogical glosses provide primary evidence from which classificatory principles may be adduced. Where the principles of social classification are sufficiently

clear, one may be able to define the presence or absence of lines of descent, the presence of unilineal principles, or marital prescriptions. What this method of analysis will not do is allow the analyst to make conclusions about jural obligations or the regularity of behaviour. This is appropriate given the number of ways known societies allocate, adhere to, or disregard obligations.

Formal analysis is suited to the analysis of social classification in proto-languages. We need assume no more than that words classify and that by intensive examination of glosses principles of social classification may be adduced. To demonstrate the value of these assertions I will take the case of the Proto-Algonquian relationship terminology and the inferences that have been drawn from its earlier analysis and show that a formal analysis has definite advantages in determining features of social structure for the Proto-Algonquians.

Algonquian languages are found scattered from west of the Rocky Mountains through the Plains and Woodlands to the Atlantic coast. Linguistic studies indicate that the Algonquian languages are related to other major linguistic stocks in North America (Haas 1960). Specific linguistic studies of Proto-Algonquian terms for flora and fauna have been used to establish a Proto-Algonquian homeland in the Lake Forest biome some time prior to the first millennium B.C. (Siebert 1967). A glotto-chronological date has yet to be agreed upon and linguists' general impressions of the antiquity of Proto-Algonquian now seem to be converging around a date late in the third millennium B.C. or early in the second millennium B.C.

Recent archaeological investigations (Buchner 1979) provide good evidence that a cultural chronology for the appropriate time in the Lake Forest, from the most recent Northern Algonquian Archaeological cultures to Archaic cultures, can be reconstructed.

Linguists divide the Algonquian language family into two separate linguistic sub-groups: the central and the eastern languages (Goddard 1978). Many linguists formerly divided the central grouping into western and central sub-groups; similarly some linguists formerly reconstructed proto-terms and glosses for the previous sub-groups. The reconstructed proto-relationship terms and glosses presented are those of Hockett (1964) for the Proto-Central Algonquian languages, excluding the western languages. More recently these reconstructed proto-relationship terms and glosses have been accepted for the Proto-Algonquian language (Aubin 1975). It is to be expected that further comparative linguistic work will alter the form of these Proto-Algonquian relationship terms, but my own researches into Algonquian social structure indicate that Hockett's glosses are fairly secure. By this I mean that the glosses for categories should remain unchanged by further comparative linguistic work on the form of the category.

In the analysis that follows, principles of social classification will be inferred from the reconstructions of Hockett with recourse to limited comparisons to eastern and western Algonquian languages to clarify certain crucial points in the analysis.

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Before presenting the evidence in this case, I think it best to deal with Hockett's original inferences. While his reconstructed proto-terms and glosses have been generally accepted, his inferences remain controversial (Hickerson 1967; Eggan 1966, p. 104; Aberle 1974, p. 74). It is my contention that Hockett's conclusions must be rejected. His conclusions are: '1. Cross-cousin marriage of the stricter type (man with mother's brother's daughter); 2. Patrilocality.' (1964, p. 256). Patrilocality may be a statistically-defined behaviour or a jural obligation. Where the jural obligation is followed it becomes statistically demonstrable. Relationship terminology is at best tenuously associated with behaviour and classification remains logically prior to behaviour. I have yet to find any convincing theory indicating that specific principles of social classification cause specific residential rules or behaviour.

If Hockett had made a comparative study of residential rules and behaviour in historic and contemporary Algonquian-speaking societies indicating a uniform or probable set of residential rules and behaviour, we might accept patrilocality for the Proto-Algonquian speech community. He does not, and there is no consistent set of residential jural obligations or behaviour associated with Algonquian-speaking societies. If Hockett meant that historic and contemporary Algonquian societies sharing principles of social classification with the Proto-Algonquian speech community have patrilocal residential rules and behaviour, he is wrong. The historic and contemporary Algonquian-speaking societies sharing principles of social classification with their Proto-Algonquian ancestors have bilocal residential rules. Neolocal residence is not prohibited and occurs frequently.

There are neither theoretical nor comparative reasons to assume that the Proto-Algonquian speech community was characterized by patrilocal rules or behaviour. In fact two of Hockett's proto-terms and genealogical glosses only have identical meanings in contemporary Algonquian societies characterized by bilocal residential rules where neolocal residence is not prohibited. This will not prove the Proto-Algonquian speech community had bilocal residential rules, but we can be certain that bilocal residential rules are more probable than a unilateral rule of residence.

The other assertion, mother's brother's daughter's marriage, is equally ill-conceived. Again the correlation between behaviour, jural obligations, and social classification is tenuous, and it is best not to assume a causal chain of events on the basis of limited social facts. As such, a behavioural adherence to a marital injunction requires greater justification than social classification. It is not possible, given Hockett's data, to state the regularity with which MBD marriage would have occurred. Similarly, preferential marriage is irreducible to social classifications. There is no reason to expect that marital preferences necessarily lead to a systematic pattern of marriage or that marital preferences may not be contradictory or verging on the impossible.

If we examine the social organization of contemporary Algonquian-speaking groups sharing principles of social classification with

the Proto-Algonquian speech community, we find that a male ego's relationship with his MB is not characterized by affection and friendship but rather by restraint, limited avoidances and, often, resentment. These are hardly the natural preconditions for marriage.

It is possible to determine an implicit categorical injunction in a social classification. Systems of asymmetric prescriptive alliance are easily identifiable by their lineal principles and identifications of prescribed spouse (Needham 1974, pp. 55-56). Such systems of marriage are still often, and unfortunately, referred to as systems of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. In systems of asymmetric prescriptive alliance there is a necessary lineal distinction of at least three lines. At the very least the lineal distinctions must separate the categories with genealogical glosses MBD and FZD for a male ego. The MBD category must be the term of reference for a wife prior to marriage before we may claim an asymmetric prescription. Hockett's reconstruction places the MBD and FZD in the same category and does not indicate the category of spouse prior to marriage. There is no possible way this could be a system of asymmetric prescriptive alliance.

There are neither behavioural, psychological, preferential or formal arguments that justify Hockett's inferences. Hockett's foremost justification for his assertions of patrilocality and MBD marriage rested on an undefined principle of 'natural context' and the separation of the relationship terms for MB and WF. Hickerson (1967) suggested that the relationship terms for MB and WF were probably cognate and that these terms were reducible to a single category with the genealogical gloss MB, WF. I think Hickerson is correct, but I will suggest that, even if Hockett is right on this point, it is sufficiently trivial to have little bearing on the overall system of social classification.

I have placed the reconstructed Proto-Algonquian relationship terms and their genealogical glosses in Table One. Traditional Algonquian-speaking societies have classificatory relationship terminologies, and we may infer the same for the Proto-Algonquians. The relationship terms are in the orthography of Aubin (1975). Each term is in the first person singular, and we may assume that these terms are terms of reference where the terms of address would have corresponded closely or exactly to the terms of reference.

Hockett's analysis is sufficiently complete that we may separate the terms of reference for a male ego and a female ego, and I have done so. I have written the genealogical glosses so that the principles of classification may be more easily identified. Hockett framed his discussion in terms of parallel relations and cross relations where cross-relation terminology had affinal meanings, or vice versa. Exact genealogical glosses are easily determined from such data.

Each number in Table One corresponds to a set of genealogical glosses and the candidates for a Proto-Algonquian relationship term. In most cases the final form of the relationship term was indeterminate and the alternate possibilities are included. This has no appreciable effect on the genealogical glosses.

I have altered Hockett's genealogical glosses in three cases. First I have accepted Hickerson's suggestion that all reconstructions for MB and WF should be treated as categorically identical and I have written the genealogical glosses accordingly.

Secondly, I have equated F and FB while Hockett did not. Hockett did not arrive at a reconstruction for the FB term because he had three candidates for these genealogical specifications that were not cognate. The unconsidered Western Algonquian languages equate F = FB in a relationship term for F which is cognate with the Proto-Algonquian relationship term for F (see Eggan 1955, p. 45). This fact strengthens the case for equating F with FB, which I have done.

Thirdly, and most importantly, I have identified the category of spouse prior to marriage. Hockett did not examine glosses in contemporary Algonquian languages with the meaning potential spouse. In the language chains Cree-Montagnais-Naskapi and Ojibwa-Ottawa-Algonquian the cognate term for Proto-Algonquian MBD, FZD also means potential spouse. The Southern Algonquian language speakers (e.g. Fox) are characterized by social classifications that apparently lack a potential spouse category and the cognate relationship term is best glossed as WZ. Most of the Western Algonquian-speaking groups (e.g. Cheyenne) have cognatic social classifications where the cognate relationship term is best glossed as WZ. The Eastern Algonquian speakers (e.g. Mic Mac, Abenaki) currently have cognatic social classifications. There is good reason to suspect that that is a historical phenomenon and that formerly these social classifications were lineal and perhaps prescriptive. However, more to the point, one of the common spouse terms in Eastern Algonquian languages is cognate with the Proto-Algonquian relationship term glossed MBD, FZD. Lastly, and of least importance, the identification of a potential spouse category in Proto-Algonquian removes a classificatory ambiguity from an otherwise consistent social classification.

Relationship terminologies may be formally separated into those which are lineal and those which are cognatic. Lineal social classifications are identified by the principles that sort jural statuses into descent lines in at least the three medial genealogical levels (Needham 1974, p. 55). Equations and distinctions of status indicate whether or not a lineal principle of classification is involved.

The pattern of equations and distinctions in the Proto-Algonquian relationship terminology is as laid out overleaf for a male ego. In the first ascending and descending genealogical levels there are no lineal equations barring the possibility that F = FB. However there are no cognatic usages. This use of status distinctions is consistent with lineal social classification though the lack of lineal equations would not allow us automatically to infer that a lineal principle of social classification is employed.

In the medial genealogical level there is an exact set of lineal equations and distinctions. Statuses are uniformly and obviously defined by the precise application of the lineal principle

+1	F = FB M ≠ MZ	F ≠ MB M ≠ FZ
0	B = FBS = MZS Z = FBD = MZD	B ≠ MBS = FZS Z ≠ MBD = FZD
-1	S ≠ BS D ≠ BD	S ≠ ZS S ≠ ZD

of opposition; male/female mediated by marriage. The relationship terminology sorts lines of descent into two sections and this characteristic allows us to infer that we are dealing with a lineal relationship terminology. Statuses fall into two formal lines of descent in the three medial genealogical levels.

A lineal relationship terminology is a necessary precondition to prescription. The evidence for a marital prescription consists of the following equations for a male ego:

+1	FB = MZH MZ = FBW	MB = FZH = WF FZ = MBW = WM
0	MBD = FZD = WZ = W before marriage MBS = FZS = WB	
-1	ZS = DH	ZD = SW

The three medial genealogical levels provide the necessary prescriptive equations to demonstrate a symmetric prescription. The gloss for term number seventeen as wife before marriage allows us to show precisely how the lines articulate.

The manner in which the two lines of descent are formed and their articulation can be mostly clearly demonstrated in Table Two.

The binary matrix is divided into the five genealogical levels, male and female relationship terms correspond to the numbers and genealogical glosses of Table One. Female status categories are paired in the central two columns and the flow of spouses is female

Table 1
The Proto-Algonquian Relationship Terminology

	<i>male ego</i>	<i>female ego</i>		<i>male ego</i>	<i>female ego</i>
1. *nemehso:ha *nemehso:ma *nemehso:meha	FF,MF	FF,MF	16. *ni:ʔtaiwa	MBS,FZS,WB	
2. *no:hko *no:hkoma *no:hkomehsa	FM,MM	FM,MM	17. *ni:θemwa	MBD,FZD,WZ, W, before marriage	MBS,FZS,HB, H, before marriage
3. *no:hθa	F,FB,MZH	F,FB,MZH	18. *neta:nkwa(?)		MBD,FZD,HZ
4. *nekyā *nekyā?siwa	M	M	19. *-a:nkw	WB	HZ
5. *neθwihsa *neθwihsē:nha	MZ,FBW	MZ,FBW	20. *ona:pe:mali		H
6. *nesihSa(?) *nesihSe:nha(?) *nesiNehsa *nesiθehsa	MB,FZH,WF	MB,FZH,HF	21. *ni:wa	W	
7. *nsekwihsa *nsekwihsēhsa	FZ,MBW,WM	FZ,MBW,HM	22. *nekiwi?sa	S	S
8. *ne?θ- *ne?θehse?sa	eB,eFBS,eMZS	eB,eFBS,eMZS	23. *neta:na *neta:nehsa	D	D
9. *nemihsa *nemihse:ha	eZ,eFBD,eMZD	eZ,eFBD,eMZD	24. *neni:cya:nehsa	S,D	S,D
10. *nehSi:ma *nehSi:mehsa *nehSi:menha	yB,yZ,yFBS,yFBD, yMZS,yMZD	yB,yZ,yFBS,yFBD, yMZS,yMZD	25. *ni:cya: *ni:cya:na	S,D	S,D
11. *-i:tesya:n	B,Z,FBS,MZS, FBD,MZD	B,Z,FBS,MZS, FBD,MZD	26. *neto:sima	BS	ZS
12. *netawe:ma:wa	Z,FBD,MZD	B,FBS,MZS	27. *neto:simeθkwe:ma	BD	ZD
13. *-i:tekeHkw		Z,FBD,MZD	28. *neθenkwaθa *neθenkwaθehsa *neθenkwaθema	ZS,DH	BS,DH
14. *neθkwe:ma	Z,FBD,MZD		29. *ne?θem- *ne?θemya	ZD,SW	BD,SW
15. *ni:θka:na	B,FBS,MZS		30. *naha:nka	DH	DH
			31. *naha:nkaniθkwe:wa *naha:nkanizkwe:wa	SW	SW
			32. *no:hsihsa	SS,SD,DS,DD	SS,SD,DS,DD

(Hickerson 1967, Hockett 1964, Aubin 1975)

Table 2
Proto-Algonquian Categories of Alliance and Descent
for a Male Speaker

	<i>male</i> ←	<i>female</i>	<i>female</i> →	<i>male</i>
+2	1	2	2	1
+1	3	4,5	7	6
0	Ego 8,10,11,15	17,21	9,10,11 12,14	16,19
-1	22,24 25,26	29,31	23,24,25 27	28,30
-2	32	32	32	32

to male. This version of the binary matrix is one of many equally appropriate representations and should not be treated as implying either a unilineal principle of descent or implicit jural obligations. The flow of spouses from female to male reflects the normal pattern and the Proto-Algonquian ideology of spouse exchange remains unidentifiable.

The Proto-Algonquian relationship terminology is best interpreted as a social classification ordered by symmetric prescriptive alliance. The adherence to the marital prescription is uncertain. Marital preferences such as those inferred by Hockett are not confirmed in this analysis though we cannot claim that such preferences are not possible. Indeed we do have contemporary examples of symmetric prescriptive social classifications with a preference for asymmetric alliance (Needham 1967, p. 43). Though asymmetric alliance cannot be excluded from the possible uses of a symmetric prescriptive social classification, the fact that the social classification is symmetric and prescriptive excludes an asymmetric interpretation except in those cases where preferences and behaviour show a unilateral consistency. This is not the case for the Proto-Algonquians nor is it ever likely that such evidence will be adduced. Similarly, further examination of lexical items and glosses in Proto-Algonquian (Aubin 1975) does not show any great promise of indicating what Proto-Algonquian jural obligations would have been. There simply are not lexical items in Proto-Algonquian that correspond to specific jural obligations. The only relationship terms that have any apparent associations with jural obligations, terms nos. 30 and 31, are found in contemporary symmetric, prescriptive, social classifications in Algonquian-speaking societies where the relationship terminology is accompanied by bilocal, post-marital residential obligations and frequent neolocality.

Further advances in comparative Algonquian linguistics may help to clarify certain points on Proto-Algonquian social structure. It also now seems certain that resolution of structure and symbolic problems in Algonquian-speaking societies with social classifications ordered by symmetric prescriptive alliance should point the way to further advances in our comparative analysis of the Proto-Algonquian society.

As linguistic, archaeological, and structural analysis become complementary, a consistent picture is beginning to emerge of a hypothetical Proto-Algonquian-speaking society that flourished in the third millennium B.C. and whose descendants emigrated from the Lake Forest to occupy much of North America. As research continues, the possibility emerges that further structural analysis may disclose the system of symbolic classification and cosmology of Proto-Algonquian society.

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