



Selk'nam Kinship Terms

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ancient Mexico. No other single work so fully carries us into the living past as that of Sahagun. He is our chief contemporary authority on the Aztec culture and no other approaches him. He may truthfully be said to be the first ethnologist in the American field. Dr. Wissler writes in his Foreword,

His method should please even the ultra-modern field worker because he gathered about him selected native informants, first writing down in the original language what these informants narrated. Yet, not content with this procedure, other informants were sought out to listen to these texts and comment on their accuracy. Further, natives were encouraged to sketch and write in their own symbols, and finally with all these original materials in hand, the good father sat himself down to write.

Using the Bustamente edition, Mrs. Bandelier has translated most successfully the first four books. She has thoughtfully included in the present volume a biography of Sahagun from Icazbalceta and Chavero, a geographical sketch of the province of Leon where the birthplace of Sahagun is located, and the very useful and necessary material from the bibliography by Icazbalceta. The latter states that the bibliography of Father Sahagun is perhaps the most difficult one in Mexican literature, for not only did he write a great number of books, essays, and articles on many different subjects in almost half a century, but he changed, rearranged and often extracted them for publication in so many diverse ways that they were often taken as parts at least of different books.

Finally there is an excellent index.

It is certainly to be hoped that the second and concluding volume will not be long delayed. Promise is given that further additions will be made to the Bibliography. Here we hope to find an account of the laborious and painstaking work of Pasoy Troncoso on the Sahagun manuscripts and the publication of these by the Mexican Government. No one is better fitted than Mrs. Bandelier to compare the texts of the Bustamente and the Troncoso editions.

A. M. TOZZER

SELK'NAM KINSHIP TERMS

Dr. Gusinde's list of Selk'nam (Ona) kinship terms¹ suggests a number of interesting points.

Eliminating phonetic refinements and in the interest of economy substituting for the author's rolled "velar guttural" the symbol "ρ" we may rearrange his data as follows:

aïnh	father	a'me	mother
tca'nyik	stepfather	po''onh	mother's sister, stepmother
po''ot, okwa'n	father's brother	kan	father's sister
tc'ë	mother's brother		
ho'o	grandfather	ra'mhkep	grandchild
hoho'nh	grandmother	lal	son
		t'am	daughter

¹ Martin Gusinde, *Die Selk'nam; vom Leben und Denken eines Jägervolkes auf der Grossen Feuerlandinsel*, 418f., 1931.

a'pek	elder brother	āpka'n	elder sister
a'tce	younger brother	a''anh	younger sister
a'nenk	{ stepson, brother's son (m.sp.) sister's son (w.sp.)	a'nxen	{ stepdaughter, brother's daughter (m.sp.) sister's daughter (w.sp.)
a'nuet	{ sister's son (m.sp.) brother's son (w.sp.)	anue'ten	{ sister's daughter (m.sp.) brother's daughter (w.sp.)
wi'yekar	male cousin (first to third degree)		
ka'nkar	female cousin (first to third degree)		
a'unk'en	father-in-law	wai	brother-in-law
a'remc	mother-in-law	wai'kter	son-in-law
namkc	sister-in-law	tamwe'xen	daughter-in-law

At a first glance it is obvious that the Selk'nam nomenclature is neither of the Hawaiian (Generation) nor of the more usual Dakota-Iroquois (Bifurcate Merging) type. In the first ascending generation, which experience indicates as of crucial importance, maternal and paternal kin are distinguished *both* from the parents and one another. To that extent then the system is Bifurcate Collateral, or—in Dr. Kirchhoff's terminology—of type A.² Correlatively with the distinction in the first ascending generation, there are distinct words for son, brother's son, and sister's son; though the term used by a man for his brother's son is equivalent to a woman's for her sister's son. Further, there are distinct words for daughter, brother's daughter, and sister's daughter; men again designating a brother's daughter by the term a woman uses for her sister's daughter. In Ego's generation we have the Lineal principle—Kirchhoff's type B or our English system—of separating siblings from more remote kin.

Functionally, we note first that the Selk'nam were not organized into exogamous clans of the ordinary type but into 39 localized paternal lineages, each exploiting a topographically delimited hunting territory. Superficially it might appear as though these lineages (called by Gusinde *Sippen*) were virtually true clans composed of blood-kin. Actually they differed in the crucial trait of looseness: blood-relatives were not allowed to marry, but no one knew the precise limits of kinship, hence rigid local exogamy with a predilection for mates from remote territories. To quote our author:

Die nächsten Verwandtschaftsgrade bilden uneingeschränkt ein Ehehindernis. Niemand aber weiss die Grenzen genau zu ziehen. Immer klingt die Mahnung wieder: "Der Bursche muss sich sein Mädchen aus weitabliegender Gegend holen! Je grösser die Entfernung, aus welcher die Braut genommen wird, um so besser für die Heirat!"

² Paul Kirchhoff, Verwandtschaftsbezeichnungen und Verwandtenheirat, ZE 64: 41-71, 1932.

The localized lineages, ranging from 40 to 120 persons, do not however imply major settlements in which the membership is permanently united. On the contrary, the normal phenomenon is economic exploitation by a single migratory family.³

These facts in their totality harmonize with the relationship terminology. The family, in the narrowest sense, is set off from collateral kin: uncles and aunts are not merged with parents; nephews and nieces are not confounded with one's children; cousins remain distinct from siblings. Further, the emphasis on local exogamy quite naturally leads to a division of maternal and paternal relations.

Levirate and sororal polygyny were both orthodox. The latter occurred "not infrequently," the former represented an obligation on the part of the deceased husband's brother, especially if single, to support the widow and her offspring.⁴ The terminological effect of these twin institutions is different from that commonly assumed. Instead of merging father and paternal uncle, the Selk'nam keep them distinct; and they merge not the mother and the maternal aunt, but—in consonance with sororal polygyny—the stepmother and the mother's sister. A similar effect of the levirate appears in the nepotic terms.

Dr. Gusinde's data are likewise suggestive from the angle of distribution. Systems with three separate terms for father, father's brother, and mother's brother, and corresponding terms for the female relatives in this generation, are by no means common. Some of the Eskimo tribes conform to this type, and so do a number of Californian and Basin peoples, e.g., the Paviotso. Although Dr. Kirchhoff, like myself, considers Bifurcate Collateral systems rare, I have found indications of such nomenclatures in the literature on the Araucanians and the Sipibo (Ucayali river area).⁵ It thus seems desirable to determine the precise South American range of this type.

In conclusion I should like to refer to the Selk'nam rule tabooing direct intercourse between a man and his wife's *father*. Though the mother-in-law is likewise held in high esteem, the avoidance rules apply particularly to the father-in-law. Conversation with him is possible only with the wife as an intermediary; and any orders by the older man are addressed to the air, as though in soliloquy. During the first year of marriage a similar taboo holds for a woman and her mother-in-law. Subsequently it is relaxed, but never to the point of permitting speech beyond what is absolutely required. As usual, the psychological justification given by the natives is the necessity for showing esteem to these connections by marriage.⁶

Gusinde's work is a veritable treasure-trove for comparative ethnographers. I earnestly hope that other specialists on North American tribes will examine it for features significant from a wider point of view.

ROBERT H. LOWIE

³ Gusinde, *op. cit.*, 302, 319, 419, 425.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, 338, 343, 347.

⁵ R. H. Lowie, *Culture and Ethnology*, 130*f.*, 1917; Otto Bürger, *Acht Lehr- und Wanderjahre in Chile*, 86, 1909; Karl von den Steinen, *Diccionario Sipibo*, 1904.

⁶ Gusinde, *op. cit.*, 332.