

they are greatly ramified into subdivisions or not.¹ The procedure in estimating the relative chronological significance of further linguistic ramifications is analogous to the above. To put it briefly, we must aim to weight the historical equivalence of languages at every step rather than to make historical inferences from their number.

To show how these considerations affect the reconstruction of earlier movements of linguistically related tribes we may briefly take up two or three actual problems. The geographical centre of distribution of the Algonkin tribes proper would seem to be the upper Great Lakes, but before we can attach an historical interpretation to this purely descriptive fact it is well to weight the linguistic evidence. As far as we can see at present, the Algonkin languages (aside from their more remote kinsmen, Yurok and Wiyot) fall into four equivalent groups—Blackfoot, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Central-Eastern Algonkin,² the last including the greater number of Algonkin languages. In other words, the divergence between Arapaho and Blackfoot, despite the fact that their speakers are in both cases typical Plains tribes, reflects a linguistic (and tribal) differentiation of greater antiquity than that of two such distant tribes as the Naskapi and Shawnee. At best, therefore, the Great Lakes can be considered as the historical centre of distribution of only the Central-Eastern tribes; while the linguistic equivalence with this group of the Blackfoot, Arapaho, and Cheyenne, each of which lie to the west of the former, pushes the historical centre of distribution of the Algonkin tribes proper considerably to the west.³ We

¹ I am assuming here that it is possible to determine the linguistic divisions which are historically equivalent; further, that a distinction can be drawn between a historically fundamental divergence and a relatively secondary one, even though the latter is of greater descriptive magnitude (e.g., English seems, on the whole, more distinct from German than does German from Danish, yet it can be shown very convincingly that the English-German divergence is historically secondary to the German-Danish, better West Germanic-Scandinavian, one). To justify these assumptions would lead us too far into the technique of comparative philology.

² Since this was written, I have come to consider it highly probable that Cheyenne and Arapaho belong to a single group of Algonkin.

³ This naturally has its significance in view of the presence of Yurok and Wiyot still farther west. It is hardly an accident that the greatest linguistic differentiation of Algonkin proper is found in the west, not in the Atlantic region.