

There are chiefly two ways in which linguistic data may yield results of chronologic interest to the history of culture. We may either take a single linguistic element (word, grammatical element, morphological peculiarity, phonetic characteristic) and study its cultural associations and geographical distribution; or we may take a language or linguistic group as such and work out its geographical distribution and, in most cases, differentiation into smaller units with a view to deducing from this certain historical facts. The method of association of culture elements corresponds to one aspect of the former of these linguistic problems, the method of distribution of culture elements to another aspect thereof and to the second linguistic problem. Roughly speaking, linguistic elements correspond to culture elements and complexes, linguistic groups to culture areas.

INFERENCES FROM ANALYSIS OF WORDS AND GRAMMATICAL ELEMENTS.

Descriptive and Non-descriptive Terms.

ANALYSIS OF CULTURE WORDS.

If we have any method of determining the relative age of a word¹ that has cultural significance, it is clear that we have at the same time a means of ascertaining something as to the relative age of the associated culture element itself. One of the most useful principles for the determination of the age of a word is a consideration of its form; that is, whether it can be analysed into simpler elements, its significance being made up of the sum of these, or is a simple irreducible term. In the former case we suspect, generally speaking, a secondary or relatively late formation, in the latter considerable antiquity. We assume here, of course, that we are able to eliminate borrowed words, which,

¹ In applying linguistic data to culture-historical uses in many Asiatic and European languages we are, of course, immensely aided by documentary evidence, inasmuch as the changing form and content of language are more or less adequately reflected in datable records. For aboriginal America, however, documentary linguistic evidence, while not altogether wanting, is relatively scanty. The methodology of linguistic reconstruction is, therefore, bound to restrict itself in the main to inferential evidence. Such evidence alone, indeed, is here considered.