

the crane must have been uninterruptedly known to the Hupa as far back as the time at which the hypothetical undifferentiated Athabaskan prototype of Hupa was spoken in the far north. Nevertheless, we find that the Hupa do not use the regular Athabaskan stem *del* for crane, but a descriptive term (*xas-len tau*) meaning "he who frequents riffles." Very likely the old non-descriptive word for crane became obsolete because a name taboo enforced its temporary disuse. In general, then, it is safest to use the morphological criterion for the age of a culture word when comparative linguistic evidence does not show that it was preceded in use by a non-descriptive term of like meaning.

*Changes in Application of Culture Words.*

There is, further, a reverse caution to be observed. The culture word may be of undoubtedly great antiquity but, owing to a change of meaning that it has undergone, the culture concept that it at present symbolizes need not, at least in its present form, be as old as the word itself. Thus, it goes without saying that the English word *needle*, which can be traced back to a very remote antiquity, did not always denote the delicately fashioned article of steel that we now know, but was originally applied to a more primitive prototype of bone and, later, of bronze. Still more striking is the history of our English word *Hell* which, in spite of its present characteristic significance, originally referred to a cold and cheerless domain presided over by a female deity. A striking instance of this sort from aboriginal America will further illustrate the necessity of caution. The Athabaskan non-descriptive noun stem *lɛl* is found in both Chasta Costa and Navaho with exactly the same meaning, "matches." It is perfectly obvious from other considerations that this can not possibly be the primary meaning of the word and we learn, indeed, by comparison with other Athabaskan dialects (e.g., Chipewyan) that *lɛl* properly means "fire-drill" and was transferred to "matches" when these came in as a modern substitute for the former. I mention this example not because there is the slightest actual danger here of misinterpreting the evidence, but because the wrong inference (assuming that we had only Chasta Costa