

## THE SOURCES FOR ESSELEN: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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It was in the year 1954 that the present Department of Linguistics was first constituted here at Berkeley. To be sure, before that time several of us who were affiliated with other departments were associated together under the title 'The Group in Linguistics,' and there was a curriculum of courses which we administered to train students in the dominant structuralism of that day. The series "University of California Publications in Linguistics" had been established several years earlier, and was now reaching its tenth volume; four of us here at Berkeley acted as editors. In that same year of 1954 there appeared in that series a thin volume bearing the title "Papers from the Symposium on American Indian Linguistics," a symposium which had been held here on July 7, 1951 as a special event during the only summer that Berkeley has hosted the Linguistic Institute of the LSA.

I shall now quote at some length from the introduction to that slim volume. The introduction is unsigned but was pretty clearly written by Emeritus Professor Murray B. Emeneau, the man whose action was essential in getting our department established, or, more simply, the founder of this department. The writer of the introduction says, "The Symposium as a whole can be regarded as programmatic...The needs most stressed are those of description - good description before it is too late - and then comparison based on description. The great days of the collection of descriptive data were, without question, those of Boas, Sapir, Michelson, and Leonard Bloomfield. Those days are gone - for the moment at least. World War II has intervened and has to some extent shifted geographical interests. There has intervened too the great refinement of methodology initiated by Sapir and Bloomfield. The need for the collection of American Indian descriptive data, however, still remains, for the great days were not full of enough scholars and enough time to accomplish all that needed to be done in a field where the extinction of languages is almost a yearly occurrence. The refinement of methodology also demands that some, though not all, work be redone or at least retouched, with new field work usually a desideratum. The comparative work that must be done is often impossibly difficult without much revisiting of the field. More description, then, must for the time being remain the great need in American Indian linguistics, and it is hoped that the Symposium may have effectively called attention to this, at the same time that it presented some work developing from this, both in the general field and more specifically in the area represented by this University i.e., the state of California.

The needs just stressed are perhaps, for North America, at their most urgent on the Pacific Coast and not least so in California. The Hokan-Siouan superstock received detailed comparative treatment in three of the Symposium papers...The California part of this superstock was long ago surveyed, but the mere number of languages

concerned, in this stock as well as in the other stocks spoken in the state, has prevented the descriptive work in California from being brought to a successful conclusion. The salvaging of all possible data on these languages, of all stocks, must be a lively concern of linguistic scholars at the University of California during the next generation. At the end of that time practically all the California languages now still spoken will be extinct, or at least, will no longer be "going concerns." Some of them are already on the verge of extinction, being carried by only a few speakers, or even by only one. These must be recorded (for the last or only time) at the earliest possible moment. The Board of Editors of the Series and the Group in Linguistics [this was written in 1953; a year later, in 1954, it would read the Department of Linguistics], University of California, Berkeley, regard work on the California languages as peculiarly their responsibility - as indeed they cannot fail to do, since scholars in other parts of this country have their own local responsibilities. They have seen with pleasure the focusing of certain papers in the Symposium on the California languages. They also point to the field work that has been done under the direction of the Group, by Bright on Karok and Shasta and by Robins on Yurok, as an earnest of what they hope can be achieved...It is hoped that the continuing interest of the faculty concerned, of the University administration, and of the scholarly world in general, will help to push work on the California languages through to the end."

The "next generation" of this passage's writer is now, after twenty four years, about over. The program urged in this statement has been a great success. It can be claimed that just about all of the California Indian languages still spoken in the early fifties have been recorded, and most of these published. This work, steadily supported by the University administration through an annual subsidy which this generation of field workers has known under the name of the 'Survey of California Indian Languages' (later revised by the addition of the phrase '(California) and other'), this work I say, still continues, and we may with confidence look forward to the "end of the work on the California languages" within not many more years. The statement I have quoted at such length well reflects an attitude toward linguistic scholarship that dominated the Berkeley Linguistics Department throughout the fifties and into the sixties, and helped it to achieve the prominent place that it came to occupy in American linguistics. I may add a personal note: it was the prevailing intellectual climate on this campus that influenced me, trained as an Indo-Europeanist, to add field research on a California Indian language to my scholarly activities, with the result that the Chumash language of Santa Barbara, which survived in one speaker until 1965, and is now extinct, received what I hope was adequate attention.

Some of you may have observed that all the interest of the writer of the quoted statement was placed on "field work." Anyone familiar with work performed during the generation now ending, however, will know that a prominent place in the research on California

aboriginal speech is coming to be occupied by work not based on data which the student has himself collected from native speakers, but upon that which older workers have left in written form; such workers may never have had first hand acquaintance with the languages they study. Anyone familiar with the bigger libraries and archives of this state, of Mexico and of Spain knows that copious material collected in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on the state's native languages awaits analysis and publication. As time passes and more and more forms of native speech die out this kind of library (not field) research is bound to become more and more important. As recent examples of such work based on documents rather than data assembled directly from speakers I will cite two full-scale grammars using data derived from the field notes of John P. Harrington (1885-1961), the reknowned and indefatigable collector of Indian linguistic material: I refer to Richard Applegate's grammar and dictionary of Inezeno Chumash and to Mark Okrand's description of the Costanoan once spoken at Mission San Juan Bautista. There is still a vast amount of Harrington material awaiting study, most of it reposing in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. C. Hart Merriam was another industrious worker active during the first half of this century and who, like Harrington, did not take time to publish the data he gathered. There is a very great number of manuscript records of data collected by other workers which, though known to exist, have never been analyzed and published. I cite the papers of the Franciscan missionary Felipe Arroyo de la Cuesta (1780-1840), California's first great linguist, whose interest it was to note down the languages with which he came in contact; his recordings of about twenty such languages have survived, and not much more than half of these have appeared in print. And recordings whose existence has been quite unsuspected turn up from time to time. We will not have as complete a picture of California's original linguistic diversity as is possible until such records have been studied and published.

This concern with other collectors' records, with the data at second hand, as it were, is properly called philology. The technique of extracting from such writings all the information they can be made to yield is quite a different one from the field situation. My department has been training students in field methods for this past generation: perhaps a course in Indian philological method as well is now becoming a desideratum. Over the past twenty years I have done work of this kind, and the paper that I read this evening is another essay in this discipline.

The subject this time is the language of the Esselen Indians. The Esselen were a small group who lived in the mountainous country of northern Monterey county, the upper valleys of the Carmel and the Big Sur Rivers, along the steep coast of the Pacific south of Point Sur, and, to the east, in the Arroyo Seco valley, tributary to the Salinas River. They are supposed never to have numbered more than four or five hundred individuals. This small group, living in their mountainous home, was surrounded on three sides by peoples of different tongues, Costanoans and Salinans; they make the impression of

being a relic population, driven into their remote habitat by more numerous and more powerful neighbors. After the coming of the Spaniards, about 1770, Esselens were taken to three of the missions: San Carlos, at Carmel; Soledad in the Salinas Valley; and San Antonio, to the south in Salinan country. The Carmel mission was near Monterey, the Spanish and Mexican capital of California; and the Indians who were there became an object of curiosity to the foreign travelers who visited that port. At all these missions the Esselens were brought together with Indians of different speech; it is reported from Carmel that there was continual dislike and hostility there between the Costanoan natives of the region—the Rumsen—and the Esselens. By 1833, sixty four years after the arrival of the whites, we learn—from Father Arroyo—that there were already few Esselens left. Kroeber reports (1904: p. 50) that when he attempted to obtain Esselen material at Monterey in 1902 he found only an old Costanoan woman "who after considerable effort succeeded in remembering half a dozen Esselen words." He therefore concluded that the "extant Esselen material was not likely to be increased;" a romantic aura often seems to attach to individuals who are thought to be "the last speaker(s)" of some language, and judgments like Kroeber's about these "last speakers" are frequently made without an intense examination of the evidence. Kroeber's sketch of the Esselen language, the only one ever written, is based only on five (or six, if the Costanoan woman who gave him some six Esselen terms be included) sources; one of these five (or six) sources he knew only at second hand and in an incomplete form. And there are four additional documents that I shall describe below: this experience, when added to others, makes it advisable to be circumspect in making judgments about moribund languages. No such a one is made here.

In what follows I describe in brief the nature and the contents of all ten sources of Esselen which are known to me. They are arranged chronologically.

The earliest in time is an account of a visit to Monterey in September 1786 (about sixteen years after the establishment of Spanish settlement there) of members of a French exploring expedition under the leadership of the Comte de la Pérouse; the report of this visit was published, in French of course, in Paris in 1797. I have consulted the original edition, which is in the Bancroft Library on this campus. There are twenty two words of Esselen here presented, including the first ten numerals; no sentences or phrases. An interesting comment concerns the sound [f], which, we are told, is employed by the Esselens and pronounced by them as by Europeans. Since we do not have the original manuscript notes, we must reckon with the possibility of some distortion of the record in the transfer from manuscript to typescript.

The second in time is the story of an expedition of the Spanish government sent out in 1792 to explore the strait of Juan de Fuca (between Washington state and Vancouver Island), an expedition which called at Monterey on its return in October. The printed account of its voyage appeared in Madrid in 1802, in a book also in the Bancroft; this work is known to bibliographers under the name of

D. Dionisio Galiano, one of the two ship captains of that voyage. Thirty-one words of Esselen, again including the first ten numerals, are found on pp. 172-173. Here of course the matrix language is Spanish.

Now in 1973 I was asked by Harry Lawton, the Managing Editor of the Journal of California Anthropology, to examine a xerox of a manuscript he had discovered in the Naval Museum in Madrid; when I did, it turned out to contain the original field notes made in Monterey in 1792 from which the text printed ten years later had been derived. These turned out to be much more copious than the published version: there are 105 lexical items, as well as some nine short sentences forming part of a religious catechism. It is clear that there should be a greater number of such sentences in a complete text; they fail to appear, however in the copy sent to me. This copy also contains notes of historical and ethnographic interests; all this material, including the vocabularies and texts in both Esselen and Rumsen, I shall publish in the JCA, and do not comment further on it here, except to say that it constitutes a precious addition to our Esselen corpus. I will, however, remark that there are some differences between the printed version and the manuscript original.

The third item on my list, overlooked by Kroeber, is contained in the reply by the priests at the Carmel (San Carlos) mission to an Interrogatorio, or questionnaire, submitted to the fathers of all the California missions by the Spanish government in 1812. The Carmel respondents illustrate the fact that there are Indians of two totally different linguistic stocks resident at their establishment by giving translations both into Esselen and Rumsen of the following Spanish sentence: "Los hombres que tiran bien la flecha, son estimados y bien queridos." (In English, Men who shoot well the arrow are highly thought of and much loved.) The Esselen version consists of eight segments separated by spaces, but except for the words 'man' and 'bow', little can be understood. No original manuscript version is known to me, and my text comes from printed copies.

Next we come to the record written by Father Felipe Arroyo de la Cuesta at Mission Soledad on May 18, 1833. It contains seventy words. The matrix language is of course Spanish. It is the only Esselen we have which is explicitly identified as from the eastern part of Esselen territory, from the Arroyo Seco. Father Arroyo's text appears to show some deviations from the Carmel norm which we know from several reports; his informant may have come from a village as far as fifty miles from Carmel, and the differences observed may be due to differences of dialect. Father Felipe's original manuscript has survived as one part of a longer collection which he called "Lecciones de Indios," and which contains recordings of a dozen or more California languages; this original manuscript is preserved in the Bancroft library, where I have used it often. Father Arroyo's hand is one of the most difficult I have ever tried to decipher, and uncertainties remain in my text despite repeated examination.

My fifth recording consists of only the first ten numerals of Esselen; they bear a label that identifies them only as coming from 'Mision del Carmelo', i.e. they are not called Esselen. The collector

was Eugene Duflot de Mofras, a man on the staff of the French embassy in Mexico City; he was sent, at the end of the 1830's, to scout the territory now lying along the Pacific Coast of the United States. France was one of the great powers politically interested in those lands, which some thought Mexico would not be able to hold much longer. His report constituted a work in two volumes published in Paris in 1844. The 'Carmelo' numerals are printed on p. 401 of vol. II. This work is also in the Bancroft. Any manuscript original has not been accessible to me. The matrix language is of course French.

The sixth recording is one of the longest - ca. 140 items - and one of the most important. It was made at Monterey on July 27, 1878. The collector was a young Frenchman, Alphonse Pinart, then traveling in California to gather linguistic and ethnographic data - Esselen is but one of several languages he recorded. This important vocabulary escaped the attention of Kroeber, and has never been linguistically studied. Although Pinart was French, Spanish was the language he used with his California informants. His original field notes written in pencil and now almost 100 years old, are preserved in the Bancroft, where I have worked with them. From them Professor R. F. Heizer published in 1952, in the "Anthropological Records," 15:1, "The Mission Indian Vocabularies of Alphonse Pinart." The Frenchman's handwriting is often not easy to read, and this allows some latitude in interpretation; my readings occasionally vary somewhat from those given by Heizer. Particularly characteristic of Pinart's spelling of Esselen is the frequent occurrence of post-vocalic geminate consonants. I may point out also, in connection with the statement quoted earlier that [f] is common in Esselen, that Pinart's record has only two occurrences of that spelling in his 140 words. Pinart's informant was a woman named Omesia, born in the pueblo of Guacaron, near the present site of Castroville. Since that is in a part of the region never inhabited by the Esselen, she may have been by birth a speaker of Rumsen; she is said to have been married to an Esselen man.

In 1888 H. W. Henshaw, an investigator working for the Bureau of American Ethnology, was able to gather, in Monterey and in the neighboring Salinas Valley, some 110 words and 68 phrases of Esselen. His report on this quest is entitled "A New Linguistic Family in California;" it states that he tracked down two or three speakers, the principal one of which had Rumsen as her first language. This, apparently the longest of all recordings of the language, was a primary source for Kroeber's monograph of 1904. Kroeber used Henshaw's original manuscript; this document, of which I have obtained a xerox copy, has numerous handwritten entries in Kroeber's hand. It employs the alphabet used by the Bureau of Ethnology in the nineteenth century, which is familiar to anyone who has worked with languages recorded under the Bureau's auspices. It is the first of the sources for Esselen which uses English as the matrix language. Henshaw's hand is not very hard to read, but some uncertainties remain; in a few cases my text differs from Kroeber's.

The next two can be summarily dealt with. The first is the six words, mentioned above, secured by Kroeber at Monterey in 1902 "from an old Costanoan woman". Most of these six expressions appear to have been suggested by corresponding terms given by Henshaw. I

have seen only Kroeber's printed version, not his original field notes: these are probably also in the Bancroft collection. All of Kroeber's papers went there after his death in 1960. Second is a list of nine expressions, obtained by C. Hart Merriam at Monterey in July, 1906 from "the Kah-koon woman." The manuscript I have used is a typed copy, now in the Merriam Collection in the custody of the Department of Anthropology on this campus. Most of the nine items in Merriam's list are not duplications of words occurring elsewhere in Esselen. Merriam did not use the BAE alphabet; he had his own script, based on one form of the pronouncing guide once employed in the 'Webster' dictionary published by the G. and C. Merriam Company. It is characteristic that Merriam does not refer to Kroeber's list nor Kroeber to Merriam's, though both investigators were at Monterey within a few years of each other. These two men, who would soon be joined by a third, carried on their work during the first half of the twentieth century with almost no intercommunication.

The third man referred to in the last sentence is John Peabody Harrington, who was introduced above. Among all else which we owe to him are numerous - perhaps three hundred - sheets containing Esselen linguistic material. Those on deposit with the Department of Linguistics in Berkeley were brought to my attention two or three years ago. My examination of a fairly small part of them shows that Harrington proceeded in his usual systematic and painstaking fashion when commencing work on Esselen. All the previous vocabularies known to him were excerpted, and, word by word, were pasted onto large sheets. These were then gone over with the informant one by one, and the phonetic inaccuracies of his predecessors were corrected. He called this operation 'rehearing.' Not often did he elicit previously unrecorded words. Harrington is famous for the care he devoted to phonetic detail, and we have here - most fortunately - the results of his labors applied to some of the Esselen lexicon. There also emerges from my scrutiny of his Esselen papers a heightened respect for his skill and his ingenuity as a philologist, and his infinite capacity for taking pains. He had discovered - how I do not know - the original manuscript of the 'Galiano' expedition which was 'rediscovered' by Harry Lawton a few years ago and passed on to me: he refers to it under the label Costanzó, why I do not know. He is notorious for attempting to veil in his notes the identity of his sources and of his informants by the use of mysterious abbreviations. It is clear, however, that his Esselen informant was Isabel Meadows, a native speaker of Rumsen Costanoan who must have been an elderly woman when she worked with Harrington in the 1930's. The dates on his Esselen sheets vary between 1930 and 1936. Although it is difficult to be precise because of his secretiveness, it would appear that she had heard more or less Esselen in the 80's and 90's of the nineteenth century, probably one of her sources being the Omesia who was Pinart's informant in 1878. She had obviously not heard or spoken Esselen for a very long time, and is represented as being uncertain on many points. Her testimony is nevertheless invaluable on many crucial questions. That an Esselen speaker, even though one far from perfect, should still be alive one full century after Father Arroyo reported the fewness of such speakers, and thirty years after Kroeber and Merriam

could obtain only a handful of words each, is an unexpected piece of good fortune. It will illustrate once again that the death of a language - I suppose we may now be sure that Esselen is dead - is a very gradual process, one long protracted; some fragments of knowledge of it may survive in the memories of elderly people long after it is commonly supposed to be extinct.

This paper was given the title "The Sources for Esselen." All such sources known to me have now been here reviewed, and I shall consider my task done. The data presented to us by these documents consist of about three hundred words and a few score short phrases and sentences. In the time remaining to me I will give some of the conclusions which may be drawn from this material. I suggest that the language may have had a series of three affricated consonants (i.e. pf, kx, tp) which were apprehended sometimes as stops and sometimes as fricatives. Esselen also seems to have had one kind of the retroflected stops with more or less assibilation that occurred in many languages of central California, commonly written ɕ in Costanoan, Miwokan, Yokuts. Among the vowels apparently the five "cardinal" ones can be identified, with a quantitative contrast between -VC and -V̄C. The language does not seem to have marked grammatical cases by means of affixes, but Arroyo gives two or three examples of an instrumental case suffix -nu- and of a comitative suffix -manu. It did not, apparently, incorporate pronominal affixes within the verbal complex. There is no indication that the category of number was overtly marked in either nouns or verbs. There may have been a future suffix in -la.

Many terms in the lexicon, especially names of plants and animals, are shared with the neighboring Rumsen, or with other, more remote, Costanoan languages. Cf., e.g. Rumsen zummir 'cypress' with Esselen zummir id., Santa Cruz li-ti 'bow' with Esselen lottos, id., Juichun umu 'sea' with Ess. imila id., and SJB Pippi 'rattlesnake' with Ess. ippis-iksa. Some years ago it was pointed out that the terms for 'man' and 'woman' in Karkin, the northernmost of all Costanoan languages, were not like those of their Costanoan relatives but bore a remarkable similarity to the corresponding words in Esselen. These similarities are, I think, to be explained as borrowings, although it is not clear in which direction. The following hypothesis has been put forth: in the remote past, before the expansions of Penutian speakers from the central valleys into the regions along the coast between Marin and Monterey counties, these territories were held by groups speaking Esselen-like languages. At the time of initial white contact the remaining Esselen speakers may be thought of as last survivors, inhabiting the remote valleys of the northern Santa Lucias, a relic group. As for the remoter affinities of their language, it has been classified by Sapir with the other California Hokan idioms.

Much remains to be done in the exploitation of the resources described above. When that is accomplished, we will know much more about Esselen, now that it is extinct, than was ever known when there were still speakers of it.

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