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# COMPARATIVE HOKAN-COAHUILTECAN STUDIES

*A survey and appraisal*

*by*

MARGARET LANGDON

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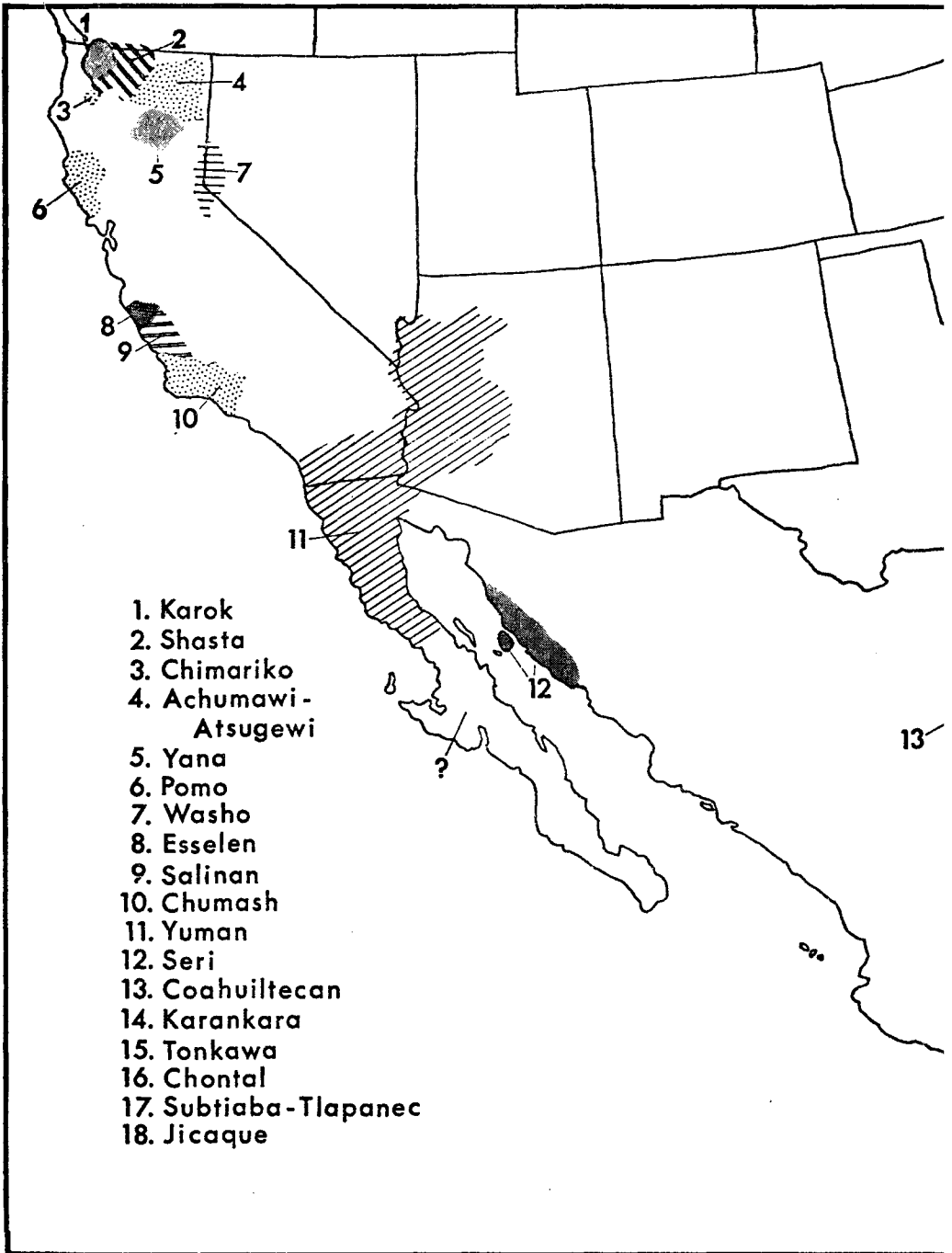
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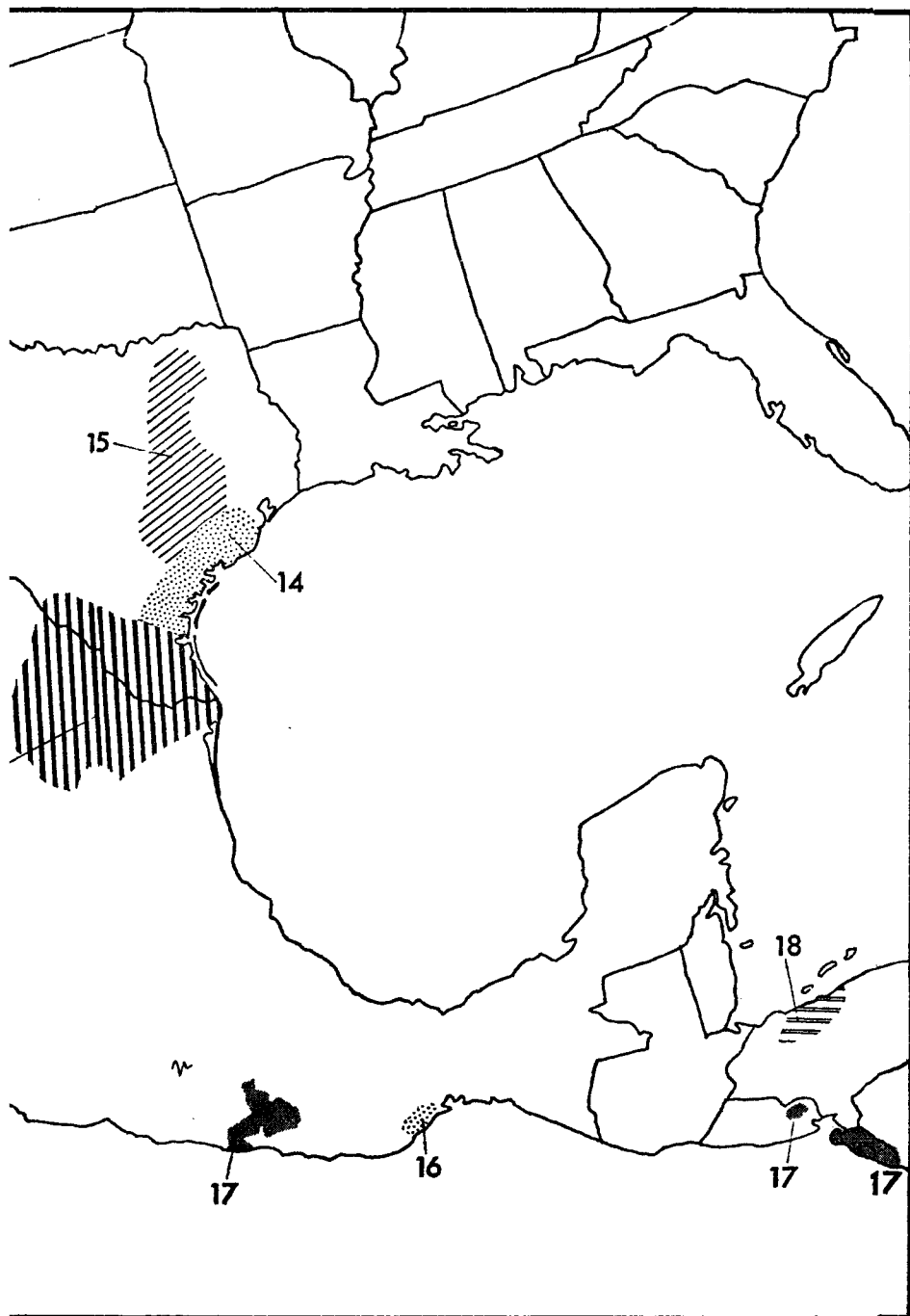
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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this monograph is to survey the literature pertaining to the group of American Indian languages included under the label *Hokan-Coahuiltecan* (also sometimes referred to as *Hokaltecan*)<sup>1</sup>, with specific emphasis on the evidence adduced for their common genetic origin. These languages are most highly concentrated in the present state of California, but have representatives spread over a wide geographical area – as far south as Nicaragua and as far east as Texas and northeastern Mexico. Some are separated from the nearest member of the group by great distances; even those in geographic proximity tend to be remarkably divergent in structure. The term STOCK is used here to characterize the group as a whole in that it is meant to include several distinct language families and LANGUAGE ISOLATES. The term FAMILY is reserved for groups of languages so closely related that their affinity is undisputed and can readily be ascertained by inspection of vocabulary items. The term *language isolates* (following the usage of HAAS *e.g.* 1966) refers to a language not so obviously related to others, *i.e.*, a family with a single member.

In addition to listing and summarizing the relevant contributions, this survey is critical in that it attempts to state not only the claims of each investigator, but also the quality and quantity of data on which the conclusions are based; the validity of results is also

<sup>1</sup> The question of nomenclature is always a vexing one in an area where conflicting practices prevail. In the case of Hokan-Coahuiltecan *versus* the shorter and more euphonious Hokaltecan, I have chosen the longer and more awkward term as more descriptive of the degree of doubt that still remains about the actual relationship between Hokan and Coahuiltecan.

discussed, when appropriate, in the light of methodological and theoretical considerations. While the main emphasis is on the verification of Hokan-Coahuiltecan as a genetic unit, no attempt is made to exclude typological and areal considerations as they have direct, though often negative, bearing on the question of genetic affinity. The comprehensive Bibliography lists, in addition to items dealing with matters of classification, the pertinent descriptive work on individual languages, with particular emphasis on recent work. A map identifying the location of the various groups discussed is appended.

Although all known suggestions for extension of the stock by the addition of individual languages or by consolidation with other stocks are surveyed in a separate chapter (Chapter 4), they are not submitted to detailed scrutiny. The present study will make clear that a cogent evaluation of such far-flung relationships is best postponed until such time as the more central relationships are better understood.

Problems of classification are of central importance in the field of Amerindian linguistics as a bewilderingly large number of languages dot the linguistic map of the New World. Attempts to bring some order into this situation (most frequently by postulation of genetic relationship) have therefore been a recurrent preoccupation of those scholars concerned with the native languages of America,

not because this is eternal or immutable, or based on any ideal principle, but because it is an invaluable tool, a fixed point in what would otherwise be a chaos, and therefore a practical necessity (KROEBER 1913: 400).

Several schemes have been proposed ranging from conservative groupings not exceeding the level of "family" (*e.g.*, POWELL 1891) to the postulation of single origin for all American languages (*e.g.*, BRINTON 1891, RADIN 1919, SWADESH 1954a). Most influential was that of SAPIR (1929a) whose investigations led him to propose a classification of the languages of North America into a small number of stocks and superstocks. In his scheme, Hokan-Coahuiltecan is a stock grouped with other stocks into the Hokan-Siouan