

TALKS WITH TRIBAL ELDERS

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“As we walked through deep pine forests / on a silver winter’s morn /

We talked with tribal elders / in the most subdued of tones /

Of how the houses of the old land / had all scattered to reform /

In this new world, at a new time, / in this new land we call home /”

--John Sase, “Silver Winter’s Morn,” *Aessence* (Freezer Theatre Records, 1975)

In this episode, we continue with the theme of History, Legend, and Myth (HLM) that we introduced in our previous episode. In response to the noise leading up to, surrounding, and spread during a most profound national-election season, I (Dr. Sase) decided to focus on the HLM that I know best by addressing the evolution, spelling, and pronunciation of a handful of old names. We call this study Onomastics or Onomatology. I suspect that, like me, most of us begin such a study out of curiosity regarding our surnames.

I returned to contemplating the HLM theme following the low-grade pronunciation of the family surname of Senator Benjamin Eric Sasse (R) of Nebraska by President Donald J. Trump who said it sarcastically to sound like “ass.” Wolf Blitzer of CNN scored at the high-end with his pronunciation of the Sasse name Shaw-se (lower case “a” and “e”). In humility, I have come to accept most pronunciations of my surname. To quote the short story “Mercantile Drumming,” published in the *Republican Farmer and Democratic Journal* (Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania) on 10 July 1833, “You can call me what you wish, but just don’t call me late for dinner.” It seems much more comfortable for everyone to pronounce the surname “Sase” as rhyming with the surname Case (long “A” as in “suitcase”) in North America.

Since kindergarten, I have survived a range of pronunciations of my surname. Since joining 23andMe.com, International Society of Genetic Genealogy (ISOGG), and other DNA-research sites, I have reviewed *The General Armory of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales* by Sir Bernard Burke (Harrison, 1884); *The Armorial General* by J. B. Rietstap (Reitstap, Holland, 1861, 1884, and 1887); and related works. From these sources, I have learned to discern various pronunciations regarding the speaker’s ancestral homeland rather than my personal preferences. Now I have come to accept most pronunciations.

Oral History

Most of my knowledge of early family history comes from my father and my paternal grandfather. The latter arrived in the Au Sable Valley in Michigan, just north of Tawas from the region of Eastern Bavaria, Bohemia, and Moravia in 1885 when he was eight years old. Early on, my grandfather grew up in the area around the lumber-camps in the valley and learned much of the lay of the land from his playmates, who belonged to the region’s indigenous tribes (Chippewa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi). Another memorable piece of my early

education came while standing along the shore of Tawas Bay. Here, my father pointed out a bright star that the Native Americans called “Tawas.”

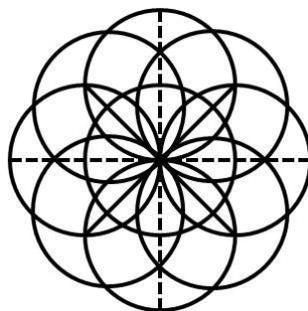
In more detailed lessons, the evolution of “tribal” surnames from Europe and other continents was taught to me through a long oral tradition that my family’s male ancestors kept alive. Many aspects of these lessons remained vague and confusing until I began to explore pre-Pythagorean sources of music, mathematics, and general philosophy. The writings on this subject that influenced me include Marcus Vitruvius in *De Architectura* (Rome, 20 BCE); and Andrea Palladio in *The Four Books of Architecture* (1570 CE); Otto Eduard Neugebauer’s works on Egyptian and Babylonian mathematics, including *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Princeton University Press, 1952); and Antonio T. de Nicholas in *Four-Dimensional Man, The Philosophical Methodology of the Rigveda* (Dharmaram College, 1971). For those interested in these intertwined subjects without delving too deeply, I recommend *Sacred Geometry: Philosophy & Practice* by Robert Lawlor (Thames & Hudson, illustrated paperback ed., 1982).

Acronyms and Circles

An acronym is a word or a name formed from the initial components of a longer term or phrase; usually, the acronym uses individual initial letters, as in NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). In some instances, surnames have developed to identify the trade or process in which a family is involved. Much older names like Butcher, Baker, Hunter, and Fisher have an “r” or an “er” added to the identifying word. Others, such as Hoffman or Chapman, relate to a place or to a type of work. A man who worked on a *hoff* (farm in German) would use the name Hoffman, while one who worked for a mercantile concern (*chap*) might use the name Chapman.

Some old names such as Koenig (King) originated as tribal positions in much earlier times. According to Sir James George Frazer in his massive work *The Golden Bough* (Macmillan, 1890), the surname King describes one who serves as the priest, shaman, and medicine man of the forest and who communes with the tree spirits. In more practical terms, the King would protect and ration the trees for cutting as needed to build habitats, boats, and other wooden products. After cutting down a mature tree, the King would paint a red “X” on the stump. The parties involved could use this mark to estimate the circumference of the tree for valuation in trade.

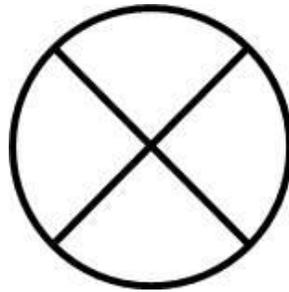
Other older names seem more complicated because they originated as clusters of words pronounced in full. Eventually, our human ancestors discovered that acronyms constructed of simple symbols served them better in their early attempts at writing. This approach appears when there is a structured interrelationship among a series of names in a familial/social structure, such that they could be organized and graphed in forms to which we refer as “the Seed, the Flower, and the Tree of Life.”



In the following example, surname analysis represents a condensed explanation of what I learned orally from my father, grandfather, and others. The acronymic surnames have survived through the ages because of our ability to regenerate extinct lines through Line Breeding of distantly related pairs of humans and animals that we can trace back to one common ancestor.

For illustration, let us begin with symbols described by Plato. Humankind has known about so-called “Platonic solids” since antiquity. Some observers have suggested that individually carved stone balls that were created by the late Neolithic people of Scotland used these same shapes. Earlier people relied upon these shapes to symbolize the Universe as a whole as well as the four collective elements of Sea (water), Air, Fire, and Earth.

We begin constructing interlapping circles with one that resembles the stump of a tree marked by the red “X” emblazoned on it. The division of the Universe into four sections provides a representation by which the Universal Consciousness unfolds into Sea, Air, Fire, and Earth while allowing the further development of the less-apparent Core of the planet. The surface upon the Core separates into areas of two-third Sea and one-third Earth. Air exists mostly above the surface of Sea and Earth.



Suppose we envision the development of the camp of humankind as a series of overlapping, interlocking circles. In this case, we can create an “X” that generates a central fire by taking two hard, dry sticks; notching the center of one; and then rapidly rubbing the other stick across the first at a 90-degree angle. This process ignites embers that feed a series of tinder, such that the two large pieces of wood provide the base for building a massive fire (I’m that glad I joined the Boy Scouts!)

We now have basic symbols that represent Sea, Air, Fire, and Earth, which serve to develop the Core of humankind. Also, the verbalization of Sea-Air-Fire-Earth takes much less time than writing out the words in most languages. Therefore, let us consider the evolution of letters that emerged as elements of the Anglo-Saxon language. The following table represents an abbreviated characterization from older through newer as seen in dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other varied sources.

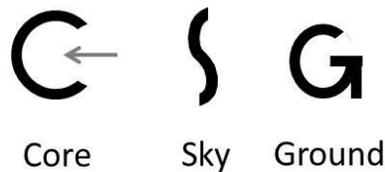
W	V	X	E
• S	A	X	E
˘ S	A	X	E

In the first row, we find our symmetrical “X.” The older letter “E” in the first row reminds me of plants or trees growing upward from the surface. Rotation leads us down to the character that we currently recognize as the letter “E.” The first version of the letter “A” reminds me of a person raising his or her arms upward above the head, reaching higher into the Air. This version also resembles vectors extending from the Core through the curved surface of the Earth (lost ancient knowledge?) The first version of “S” reminds me of a jagged wave crashing leftward against a cliff onshore. The image mellows to a calmer horizontal wave associated with a

single point. The third characterization of “S” with a dot remains in use today throughout many parts of the world. The pronunciation produces a “sh” sound, which sounds like the Sea.

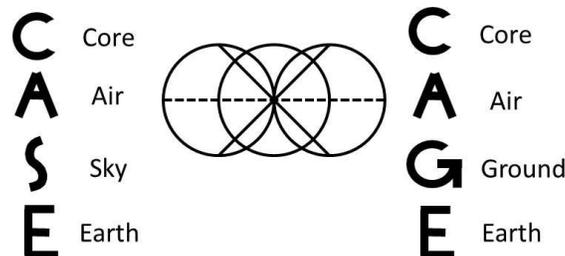
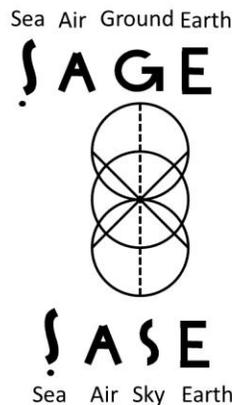
The First Generation

The following diagram contains three additional symbols for use in our discussion. The letter “C” represents the Earth’s Core (the arrow may suggest a movement toward the inner space). We differentiate the second letter, “S,” from the previous version, which includes a dot above or below. This second “S” shape without a dot produces a sound that resembles the word “hiss,” but with the letters “h” and “i” removed. The shape of the letter reminds me of a curl of smoke or steam ascending upward toward the Sky. The “G” that represents Ground reminds me of the observed movements of the Sun, the Moon, and other celestial bodies. However, the circular direction of this arrow more correctly suggests the daily revolution of our planet on its axis and Earth’s annual revolution around the Sun (as perceived in the Northern Hemisphere).

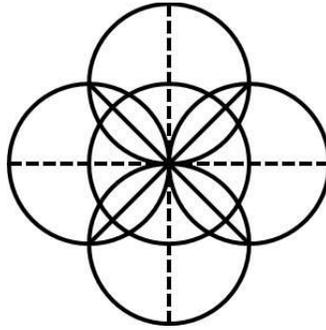


Myth, Legend, and Oral History

According to Myth, Legend, or Oral History, the first human being known as Sea-Air-Fire-Earth (S.A.X.E.) produced two sons. The elder has been known in the western world by the name spelled “Stuart” or “Stewart” and the younger by “The Fair Child” or, simply, “Fairchild.” Each of the two sons of the S.A.X.E. begat two children. Though there may be literal truth to this account, this HLM may have evolved symbolically as the second son developed the Earth’s Core. Assuming that one son continued the legacy of the Sea while the other formed the Core, each of the two lines produced a child of the Sky and one of the Ground.

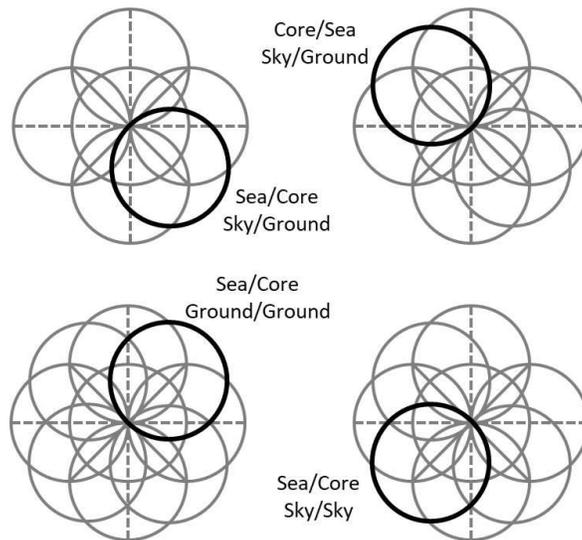


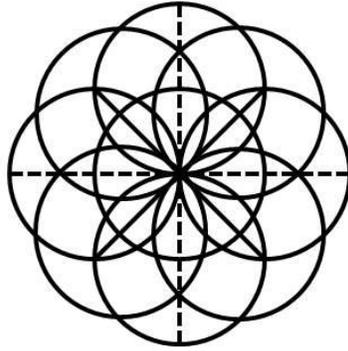
Together, this first generation of S.A.X.E. appears as follows:



The Second Generation

The HLM remains quiet as to the identity of the spouses of S.A.X.E., C.A.G.E., C.A.S.E., S.A.G.E., and S.A.S.E. Nevertheless, it appears that the Second Generation required the coupling of first cousins. First-cousin marriages remain less common today. Viewers of the television series *Victoria* on PBS may recall that Victoria and Albert were first cousins (Victoria of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld/Kent and Strathearn and Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha/Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg). Nevertheless, the earlier expansion of S.A.X.E. probably led to greater diversity in successive generations.





FLOWER OF LIFE

Wrapping Up the Fish

Let us return to the theme that involves the pronunciation of the family surname of Nebraska Senator Benjamin Eric Sasse by President Donald J. Trump (originally *Drumpf* in German). In considering the various permutations of Sea-Air-Sky-Earth, we point out that the recurring alliances between the king of the wood and the family of fishers who form the egalitarian crew of the wooden boats used to harvest the fruits of the Sea. These crews include navigators known as S.A.S.S.E., S.A.S.S., and S.A.S. For names having a double “S” following the “A,” the second “S,” which is dotted, represents Sea. Sound confusing? Let me explain.

These names constitute a combined navigational system. Let us imagine ourselves standing waist-deep in the Sea, not far from the beach. Below the waterline (our waists), we have the Sea, while above that line, we stand in the Air. Therefore, Sea below and Air above imply “S.A.” --the first two letters of these names. The primary letter “E” at the end of some of the names represents Earth—i.e., land. As we stand in the water, the Earth along the shore and the Sky (the simpler “S” without a dot attached) serves as a navigational point. The level at which Sky and Earth meet is our horizon line along the shore. Now, let us get on the boat!

Facing out to the open water, the Sea-Air-Sky-Sea (S.A.S.S.) team member performs his/her duty by standing at the head of the craft while guiding it outward to the fishing grounds. Therefore, with the Sea below and the Air above, the S.A.S.S. focuses on the horizon line between the Sky above and the Sea below.

As the crew returns home from deep-water fishing, a navigator, Sea-Air-Sky-Earth (S.A.S.E.), stands at the head or figurehead of the boat (note: the head is the vertical piece atop the bow connected to the keel along the bottom). The S.A.S.E. focuses on the Sky/Earth horizon in order to guide the boat back home safely to the sands along the shore. The upside of this position is the great view. However, the downside includes getting hit in the face with large waves and, depending on wind direction, being in the “line of fire” when other crew members go to the head to relieve themselves. The navigator at the head of the boat allows positioning to transfer part of the catch to the dole (a separate boat) for distribution among the fishing community. The remaining catch is brought to shore, unloaded, and stacked for trade.

The shortest of the names listed above remains S.A.S. The second “S” is Sky, and the name suggests the person who has studied the Sky, stars, and planets with a wisdom that comes with age. Reclining on his/her back, this individual helps to navigate the boat. Significantly, this person’s knowledge offers a greater probability of not getting lost as the craft ventures further into the more expansive open Sea.

The last name, Sea-Air-Sky-Sea-Earth (S.A.S.S.E.), inspired me to write this missive. Preferably, a crew has two of the Sea-Air-Sky-Sea-Earth on board, preferably with one on each side of the boat. Their primary duty is to guide it past rocks, shifting sand of shoals, and other dangers (such as a rare Kracken-like creature) that could sink the vessel.

Back to the Top

We hope that you have been amused and enlightened by this piece of obscure ancient history. Names are more than a jumble of letters: they help us to define our more extensive social web of human interrelationships. Such a web is fundamental to creating a level of sufficient affluence in a sustainable economy because such systems are necessary for continued human existence. For attorneys, such systems remain fundamental to define laws, their structure, and their application. Additionally, the consideration for a person's background is inherent to the civilized handling of a case. This act leads to respect for the client, the opposing counsel, various experts, and all members of the legal community.

Let this observation bring us back to Republican Senator Ben Sasse, who ramped up his criticism of the Trump election-strategy in mid-October only to be brushed aside in a fiery tweet in which the President described him as "stupid and obnoxious." On a later news broadcast, Trump pronounced the Senator's name in a tone that could start a row on a grade-school playground. He slammed the Senator following the leak of an audio recording in which the Nebraska lawmaker leveled harsh criticism against the President. Hopefully, education, honesty, kindness to fellow beings, and other attributes that helped our forefathers to develop America continue to remain vital, valued attributes today. In this spirit, we want to wish our readers a Happy Thanksgiving Day, however you celebrate it during these extraordinary times.

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