

Stalking the Wild Pigeon:
Diffusion of a Word for 'Pigeon' on the Northwest Coast¹

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1. Background

In the spring of 1982, while consulting the vocabulary section of Leo J. Frachtenberg's Lower Umpqua Texts (1914:136), I noticed that the Lower Umpqua word for 'pigeon,' hamú^Em [hamu·ʔm], closely resembled the Lummi (Coast Salish) word which I had recorded as /hámʔu/.² My initial response was — what a fine example of an accidental sound-meaning resemblance between two unrelated languages.

Later, out of curiosity I checked the word for 'pigeon' in three languages in the vicinity of Lower Umpqua: in Alsea, I found [haʔmíʔ]; in both Hanis Coos and Miluk Coos I found [he·mú].³ Intrigued by these additional findings I pursued my search for 'pigeon' words in languages to the north of the Alsea and to the south of the Coos. The results of my investigation are presented in 2.

2. Phonetically Similar Words for 'Band-tailed Pigeon'

Below are the phonetically similar words for 'pigeon' which I have located, arranged by language family and geographically from (roughly) north to south.

Wakashan

Northern (Kwakiutlan)		
Heiltsuk	hàʔm	(Nater, 1977:55)
Oowekyala	hàʔm	
Kwakwala	hmú ⁴	
Southern (Nootkan)		
Nootka	haʔu·min	(Barry Carlson, p.c., 1982)
Nitinat	hiʔí·ʔb	(Barry Carlson, p.c., 1982)
Makah	hiʔí·ʔb	(Barry Carlson, p.c., 1982)
<u>Chimakuan</u>		
Chemakum	himʔō	(Powell, 1974:166)
Quileute	hiʔí·b	(Powell and Woodruff, 1976:173)

Salishan (excluding Interior Division)

Bella Coola	haʔm	(Nater, 1977:55)
Coast Division		
Central		
Seshelt	həmú	(Nater, 1977:55)
Squamish	(n-s-xáʔx̣m)	(Nater, 1977:55)
Nooksack	həmú ⁵	
Halkomelem		
Musqueam	həmʔə	(Elmendorf and Suttles, 1960:24)
Chilliwack	həmá·	(Elmendorf and Suttles, 1960:24)
Cowichan	həmʔə	(Elmendorf and Suttles, 1960:24)
Straits		
Clallam	həmʔú(h)	(Terry Thompson, p.c., 1985)
Northern Straits		
Songish	həmáʔ	(Raffo, 1972)
Lummi	həmʔu·	(Seaburg fieldnotes, 1971)
Samish	həmʔú	(Brent Galloway, p.c., 1985)
Lushootseed	həbúʔ	(Hess, 1976:185)
Twana	həbíʔ	(Nile Thompson, p.c., 1985)
Tillamook	he·mú	(Jacobs, 1933)
	hə·mú	(Harrington, 1942-43:Reel 20:0264)
Tsamosan Division		
Inland		
Upper Chehalis	šəmím	(M. Dale Kinkade, p.c., 1982)
Cowlitz	xəmím	'pigeon, dove' (Kinkade, p.c., 1982)
Maritime		
Quinault	hamím ⁶	
Lower Chehalis	šəmím	(M. Dale Kinkade, p.c., 1982)
	həmhəmím	(Harrington, 1942a:Reel 17:0381)
<u>Lower Columbia Athabaskan</u>		
Kwalhioqua	hum-ehm [xəme·m]	
Tlatskanai	shim-aem [šime·m] ⁷	
<u>Takelman</u>		
Kalapuyan		
Tualatin-Yamhill	háʔmuı	(Jacobs, 1936)
Central Kalapuya	háʔum; anháʔum? ⁸	
<u>Yakonan</u>		
Alsea	haʔmíʔ	(Jacobs, 1935)
	ha:míʔ	(Drucker, 1934:Vol. 4, page 8)

<u>Siuslaw</u> (Lower Umpqua)	hamu·ʔm ha'mū·m	(Frachtenberg, 1914:136) (Harrington, 1942b:Reel 22:0352)
<u>Coosan</u>		
Hanis	he'mú	(Jacobs, 1933-34:Nb. 94, Pgs. 90, 102)
Miluk	he'mú	
<u>Oregon Athabaskan</u>		
Tututni	hebmo 'dove' hebmo-čoh 'pigeon'	(Victor Golla, p.c., 1982)
<u>Ritwan</u>		
Yurok	heʔmiʔ heʔmi·ʔ	(Robins, 1958:289) 'pigeon, and its call' ^{9a}
Wiyot	haʔmík	(Teeter, 1964:196)

3. Scope of Search for 'Pigeon' Terms

I was unable to locate a word for 'pigeon' in the following languages: Eyak, Coast Tsimshian, Nass-Gitksan, Chilcotin, Haisla, Comox, Pentlatch, Molala, Yonkalla, Yaquina, Galice Creek, and Upper Coquille.

Languages whose words for 'pigeon' do not resemble the forms in 2: Tlingit [nu-kwut] (Tolmie, 1884:20b); Tsetsaut [qabakalá] (Boas and Goddard, 1924:11); Haida [nu-kwt; kuls'-de] (Tolmie, 1884:21b, 31b);^{9b} Carrier [ʔimpIn] (Harrington, 1939:Reel 14); Lower Chinook [-qamEn] (Boas, 1911:599); Takelma [má^at'al] (Sapir, 1909:250); Tualatin-Yamhill [amongéya, amíngi·ya, amíngeya, míngi·ya; am(h)í·nqaya] (Zenk, 1976:114);¹⁰ Upper Umpqua [maiko; her-unt (= [he·yunt] ?)];¹¹ Applegate Creek [k'an/ta/tc'u] (Sapir, 1914:340); Klamath [ʔo·l] (Barker, 1963:492);^{11a} Tolowa [temu(h)] (Seaburg fieldnotes, 1982); Karok [imθayaha·n] (Bright, 1957:432); and California Athabaskan.

I did not search for relevant terms in the Northern Athabaskan languages (except for Testsaut, Carrier, and Chilcotin), Interior Salishan, or Sahaptian because of the geographic distribution of the pigeon.

4. Onomatopoeia or Diffusion?

How does one account for the rather striking resemblance of these forms, ranging in area from northern British Columbia to northern California and representing languages from ten unrelated language families?

One possible explanation is onomatopoeic invention.¹² There is evidence that the speakers of at least two of the languages cited above considered their word for 'pigeon' to be onomatopoeic: Harrington's Lower Chehalis informant provided a partial reduplication of his word for

'pigeon,' [həmhəmím], as the "call of the wild pigeon." My Yurok informant explained to me that the pigeon is called [heʔmi·ʔ] because that is what the pigeon says. Perhaps speakers of other languages on the list similarly regarded their words for 'pigeon' to be onomatopoeic, but investigators failed to inquire about or record such phenomena. (I, for one, have not systematically inquired about animal, and especially bird, vocalizations in my own field researches.) In his note on words for owls in North American Indian languages, Eugene Hunn (1975:238) states: "It is clear that names for owls are very likely to be onomatopoeic. The fidelity of imitation is often striking. This suggests that phonemic imitations will be severely restricted by the pattern of animal vocalizations which serves as a model." Brent Berlin and John P. O'Neill (1981:238) found onomatopoeia to be a pervasive feature of bird naming among the Aguaruna and Huambisa in northcentral Peru. And, according to these investigators, "A rapid perusal of the literature suggests that onomatopoeia of this type is not uncommon in languages spoken by peoples of small-scale, technologically simple, non-literate societies."

It seems improbable, though, that a series of independent onomatopoeic inventions would result in the close phonetic similarity of the words for 'pigeon' exhibited in 2. Mary R. Haas (1969:82), citing the widespread distribution of a phonetically similar word for 'goose' in North America, says, "Sometimes widespread similarities are probably to be attributed to onomatopoeia. But some resemblances are remarkably precise even if one allows for onomatopoeia. Words for 'goose' from the Southeast to California are a case in point. ... Many other bird names show equally uneven but widespread distribution. They deserve further study." If we appeal to "a common human response to a similar stimuli" (Hunn, 1975:239) to account for the similarity of the 'pigeon' words listed in 2, how do we explain those words for 'pigeon' (enumerated in 3) which do not fit the pattern? Haruo Aoki (1975:195), in his study of the East Plateau linguistic diffusion area, notes: "There are a few phenomena which occur outside the area of our immediate concern. For example, bird names such as blue jay and fish hawk are found north and south along the coast. Though they are onomatopoeic in nature, the fact that all the languages of the world do not have the same word for blue jay, for instance, indicates that they are not purely onomatopoeic (no linguistic form really is) and seems to suggest a larger linguistic diffusion area which may be termed the Northwest Coast area, of which our East Plateau diffusion area is a subpart."

Another possibility is that our word for 'pigeon' may have been an onomatopoeic invention in one language or proto-language which subsequently diffused to other languages.¹³

5. Diffusion: Speculations on a Source

If we turn to diffusion as a more likely explanation for our pigeon phenomenon than independent onomatopoeic invention, we need to consider a source language or proto-language. Of the ten language families involved, I believe that the two most likely sources are Salishan and Wakashan and that the best candidate of these two is Salishan.

Each of the languages of both the Coast Division of Salishan (except for Squamish, and for Pentlatch and Comox—for which we have no data for 'pigeon') and the Tsamosan Division has a word which fits the generalized pattern: $hV_1M_1(?)V_2(M_2)$, where $V_1 = [ə]$ (except [a] in Quinault and [ε] in Tillamook); M = a bilabial nasal (or homorganic stop in nasalless languages); when an M_2 is present, the V_2 is always [i], otherwise V_2 is often [u], but sometimes [a]. (Cowlitz [x] may represent a shift from [h] to [x] because of the infrequency of [h], while Upper and Lower Chehalis represent a normal shift of [x] to [ʃ].)¹⁴ The close similarity in all the Salishan forms suggests that a proto-Coast-Salish 'pigeon' form could be reconstructed. A proto-form is further supported by the fact that the northerly Bella Coola, which separated early from the central group of Salish (Thompson, 1979:695), exhibits a cognate form: /haʔm/. Similarly isolated, Tillamook, at the southern extreme of the Salish family, also retained the common Salish word for 'pigeon'. Further, the wide geographic distribution of Salishan languages and their contiguity to the Wakashan, Chimakuan, Lower Columbia Athabaskan, and Yakonan language families provide ample possibility of contact and subsequent borrowing.

Since there is ample evidence of contact and borrowing between Bella Coola and Northern Wakashan (Jacobsen, 1979:773-775), Bella Coola could have been the source for the Northern Wakashan forms. If the Southern Wakashan forms are not reflexes of proto-Wakashan (q.v. below), they may have been borrowed from Central Salish. Knowledge of the Pentlatch and Comox words for 'pigeon' would be particularly useful here in shedding light on the Southern Wakashan words.

The second possible candidate for the source of the 'pigeon' forms is Wakashan. I do not know if the divergence of the forms in the Northern Wakashan branch from those in the Southern languages (viz. Nitinat and Makah), pose a problem for the reconstruction of a proto-Wakashan form. If Wakashan is the source, the form would have to have been borrowed very

early, before the break-up of the Coastal Salish languages, in order to account for the distribution of the form all the way from Bella Coola to Tillamook. At this point in my research I do not have enough data to firmly establish either language family as the definitive source.

6. Directions for Further Research

In my search through the various dictionaries, grammars, and unpublished fieldnotes for 'pigeon' words, I noticed other words which have diffused across several language family boundaries. I have not had the time to check the extent of their distribution but I list them here as possibilities for further study: 'canoe,' 'crow,' 'bluejay,' 'fishhawk,' 'frog,' 'goose,' 'raven,' and 'skunk'. The following additional candidates for investigation were taken from Mater (1977). They are the glosses of Bella Coola forms which show phonological resemblances and gloss equivalents in languages representing at least two other language families besides Salishan. Page references are listed in parentheses. 'to suck' (19), 'to go by wagon' (21), 'basket' (22), 'long snowshoes' (23), 'intestines' (23), 'clam' (23), 'to kiss' (24), 'ray, skate' (24), 'bush of dwarf blueberry' (26), 'quill of porcupine' (28), 'barnacle' (32), 'mallard duck' (34), 'soapberries' (35), 'edible seaweed' (37), 'eulachon grease' (40), 'humpback salmon' (41), 'crow' (42), 'herring-rake' (43), 'potatoes' (44), 'fur seal' (45), 'starfish' (47), 'rabbit' (48), 'hat, cap' (48), 'fence' (49), 'crane' (51), 'goose' (51), 'carving-knife' (51), 'raven' (52), 'whiteman' (54), 'pigeon' (55), 'a mythical bird' (55), 'turnips' (61), 'throat' (63), and 'well, OK' (64).

NOTES

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The species of pigeon referred to in this paper is the 'wild' or 'band-tailed' pigeon (*Columba fasciata*). According to Udvardy (1977:699) the range of the band-tailed pigeon is from "... southern British Columbia to Baja California in and near coastal forest and hills; in mountain chains extending from Utah and Colorado south through Mexico to Central America." Farrand (1983:138-141) indicates the range of the band-tailed pigeon to be "Southeast Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California primarily west of crest of Sierras into Baja California. Inland race occurs from Utah and Colorado south to Arizona, New Mexico, and central Mexico."

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³Alsea forms from Jacobs (1935), Alsea Slip File. Coos forms from Jacobs (1935-34), Notebook 94, pages 90 and 102.

⁴Oowekyala and Kwakwala forms: from Neville Lincoln via M. Dale Kinkade, p.c., 1982.

⁵Nooksack: Laurence C. Thompson via Brent Galloway, p.c., 1985.

⁶Quinault: James A. Gibson via M. Dale Kinkade, p.c., 1982.

⁷Kwalhioqua and Tlatskanie forms and phonetic interpretations in letter from Victor Golla to Seaburg, 5/13/82.

⁸First Central Kalapuya (Santiam) form from Jacobs (1928-36), Kalapuya Slip File; second form from Jacobs (1928), Notebook 33, page 56.

^{9a}Seaburg's Yurok fieldnotes, 1982.

^{9b}Carol Eastman, p.c., suggests that the first Haida form may be a loanword from Tlingit.

¹⁰The first and third forms were recorded by Albert S. Gatschet in 1877; the second and fourth forms were recorded by Leo J. Frachtenberg in 1915 and were intended to be "corrections" to Gatschet's transcriptions. The fifth word was recorded by Frachtenberg in 1913-14. These Tualatin forms do not agree with the Tualatin form recorded by Melville Jacobs in 1936, although both Frachtenberg and Jacobs utilized the services of the same informant, Louis Kenoyer, who was the son of Gatschet's main informant, Peter Kenoyer (Zenk, 1976:76).

¹¹Upper Umpqua: the first form is from a Hale ms., the second from a Milhau ms., NAA; both forms cited by V. Golla, letter to Seaburg, 5/13/82.

^{11a}The Klamath word means 'dove'. No word for 'pigeon' was listed.

¹²It is not always clear from the literature what is meant by the term

'onomatopoeia'. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1983:825) defines the word as: "1: the naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it (as buzz, hiss) 2: the use of words whose sound suggests the sense". The following words for 'crow' (from Nater, 1977:42) provide an example where onomatopoeia (sense (1) above) is clearly involved. This example is particularly indicative of onomatopoeia for English speakers because the various forms resemble the English imitative call, 'caw-caw'.

Bella Coola	kaqas
Heiltsuk	kaqa
Kitimat	kanqas
Nootka	ka·k
Sechelt	skikak
Lushootseed	ka?-ka?

Boas (1911:655), on the other hand, sees onomatopoeia more in structural terms: "The most important trait of the Chinook vocabulary is the abundance of onomatopoeic terms. [¶] There are many nouns of onomatopoeic origin. All of these contain the imitative group of sounds doubled. ... This class of nouns includes particularly names of birds, of a few other animals, and a miscellaneous group of terms among which are found names of parts of the body and a few terms of relationship. Some of these are not strictly onomatopoeic, but may be included in the class of doubled stems for the sake of convenience." Among the list of animals with onomatopoeic names Boas includes 'skunk' [o·pənən], 'porcupine' [e·šəlqšəlq], 'oyster' [iə·xəlx], and 'butterfly' [səqəlo·lo·]. If these forms are onomatopoeic in the dictionary sense (1), they are of a different order or degree than the 'crow' example.

Jewett (1953:335) indicates the call of the band-tailed pigeon to be: woot wooo! or whoot woowoo! Peterson (1961:152) reports the voice of the pigeon to be: "A hollow owl-like oo-whooh or whoo-oo-whooh, repeated." Larrison (1968:145) reports the call to be: "an owl-like hoop-ah-whooh."

¹³It might be useful to explore the possible role of onomatopoeia in the diffusion process. For example, is there any evidence that onomatopoeic words diffuse more easily or readily than non-onomatopoeic words do? (Note the widespread occurrence of the Chinook Jargon words for 'cow' moosmoos and 'wagon' chikchik, tsiktsik (Thomas, 1935:113, 162).) Also, many of the words identified in the literature as onomatopoeic are reduplicated forms. What is the relationship between reduplication and onomatopoeia? Are reduplicated words (onomatopoeic or otherwise) more easily diffused?

¹⁴M. Dale Kinkade, letter to Seaburg, 6/16/82.

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