IS NUXALK /-UKS/ A CHINOOK SUFFIX?

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1. There is in Nuxalk a pluralizing suffix /-uks/,[1] without any known cognates in other Salish. None of the neighboring (Wakash, Athapaskan) languages possess a similar morpheme either. On the other hand, Nuxalk has not only been influenced by Wakash and Athapaskan, but has also derived a portion of its lexicon from the Chinook Jargon.[2] This Jargon, however, appears to be quite rudimentary morphologically: even in Chinook Jargon sentences elicited in Bella Coola in the early seventies, no suffix /-uks/ was ever used. Now, while considering the origin of the Chinook Jargon itself, I found that Wishram (Upper Chinook) has /-ukš/,[3] with the same function as Nuxalk /-uks/. How has this suffix made its way into Nuxalk? Below, I will consider two possibilities: either /-ukš, -uks/ existed in (older versions of) the Chinook Jargon, or Nuxalk /-uks/ is one of a few elements originating from languages spoken south of Salish.

2. Nuxalk is known to display certain archaic features: (a) although Nuxalk is a Coast Salish language in most respects, /k, k', x/ ([k^y, k^y', x^y]) have not shifted to /č, č', š/ here; (b) several non-Salish lexical items appear to have been imported from (pre-)proto-Athapaskan and Athapaskan-Eyak;[4] (c) some prosodic features and phonetic shifts have their roots in (pre-)proto-Athapaskan;[5] etc. Is the suffix /-uks/, then, a relic preserved in Nuxalk (but gone elsewhere), i.e., was this morpheme once productive in the Chinook Jargon? However, I have not found any evidence of such a suffix in the Chinook Jargon data available to me; unless a Chinook Jargon pluralizing */-uks/ has been recorded, Chinook Jargon origin of Nuxalk /-uks/ thus remains unproven.

3. The second scenario, direct borrowing from Upper Chinook, makes sense only if it can be shown that there was once close contact between speakers of Nuxalk and Upper Chinook. According to my late informants, the Nuxalk had traded, and waged wars, as far south as Victoria (although the Wishrams as such were not mentioned by name). In addition, there are a few similarities between languages spoken south of the Salish area and Nuxalk (and Salish in general), e.g., Yurok /s'o·p-/ 'hit' (cf. Nuxalk /sp'/ < */səp', sap'/), Yurok /-et-/ 'transitive marker' (cf. common Salish /-...t-/), and Wiyot /boɫàk/ 'salmon' (cf. Nuxalk /smɫk/, Kalispel /səmɫíč/).[6] Nevertheless, one

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[1]Nater 1984, pp. 55-6. [2]Some such borrowings are /tulu/ 'to succeed, win', /kusu/ 'pig', /saplin/ 'flour, bread', /cikcik/ 'wheeled vehicle', /laplit/ 'priest', /lisaak/ 'sack', /lamatu/ 'sheep', /lam/ 'rum', /musmus/ 'cow', /paaɫac/ 'potlatch', /suk^{w}a/ 'sugar', /tintin/ 'bell'. [3]Sapir, e.g. pp. 204-26 (iɫt!ua´nxayukc 'Paiutes', itki´udaniukc 'horses', iɫka´lukc 'men'). [4]Nater 1994, pp. 177, 181-2. [5]Nater 1994, pp. 177, 186-8. [6]Goddard, pp. 4, 11.

should keep in mind that such resemblances are - however interesting - rather sporadic, and may have been contributed by factors other than borrowing, e.g., common origin. (For instance, within the once debated Mosan super-stock, Goddard's Algic might, like Kootenay, be considered as a missing link between Algonquian and Salish.) Here, too, speculation may lead to erroneous assumptions.

4. There can be no doubt that Nuxalk /-uks/ is indeed genetically linked with Upper Chinook /-ukš/. However, we must conclude for now that the *exact* etymology of Nuxalk /-uks/ will remain obscure until additional data, especially concerning the Chinook Jargon and languages of the Washington-Oregon coastal regions, become accessible. Note also, that the occurrence of /-ukš/ is limited in Upper Chinook itself.[7] Indeed, further research may reveal that /-ukš/ is originally not Chinookan at all, and that Nuxalk /-uks/ and Wishram /-ukš/ have both been borrowed from a third (now extinct?) source.[8]

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[7]Throughout Sapir's Wishram texts, -ukc = /-ukš/ is seen frequently only in the two tales found on pages 204 through 226, and then mainly in reference to i(ɫ)t!ua´nxayukc 'Paiutes' (= ʔi(ɫ)t'uánχa-y-ukš). Elsewhere in his book, the allomorphs -ikc, -kc = /-(i)kš/ are encountered on occasion. [8]Otherwise, pluralizing suffixes having the shape /-(V)k.../ are relatively common: Tonkawa -ka 'indefinite plural' (Hoijer, p. 302), Cree -ak (< *-aki '3rd pers. an. pl. ending' - Aubin, p. 8), Eskimo -k 'dual' (Swadesh, p. 39), Hungarian -k (Bánhidi, p. 35), etc.

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