

Tsimshianic from a Central Northwest areal perspective: I*

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This paper examines Tsimshianic in the context of common syntactic features of the Central Northwest linguistic area. Some surface syntactic parallels are discussed and family internal differences in determiner systems are hypothesized to be the result of North Wakashan linguistic influence, possibly mediated by the spread of the secret society complexes in the historical period immediately prior to European contact.

The Pacific Northwest is home to a well-known and remarkably extensive linguistic area or Sprachbund, extending from Northern California to the Panhandle of Alaska and eastwards into the Rocky Mountains of British Columbia, Idaho, and Montana. In spite of its size and the large number of languages present in the area (or perhaps because of them), relatively little work has been done to set out the features of the Sprachbund as a whole or to chart their distribution (a notable exception being Thompson & Kinkade 1990). Somewhat more progress has been made in mapping out potential sub-areas of the region, particularly Northern California (Haas 1978), the Plateau (Kinkade *et al.* 1990), the Northern Northwest Coast (Leer 1991), and the Central Northwest (Beck 2000). Tsimshianic languages are in an interesting position geographically in this context in that they lie on the border of two of these sub-areas, the Northern Northwest Coast (comprised by Haida, Tlingit, Eyak, and Aleut) and the Central

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Northwest (Salishan, Wakashan, and Chimakuan). Superficially, at least, Tsimshianic appears to have stronger linguistic allegiance to the latter than to the former, and this paper is a first attempt to examine some surface syntactic patterns of Tsimshianic languages with an eye towards answering the question: does Tsimshianic belong to the Central Northwest language area?

1 The CNW syntactic template

A characteristic feature of a linguistic area noted both by Thomason & Kaufman (1988) and Nichols (1992) is the over-all tendency of the languages within that area to converge on a single predominant (unmarked) word-order pattern. According to the statistical survey in Nichols (1992), Sprachbünde tend to show less internal diversity with respect to word-order than do regions occupied by a single language family or phylum, which tend towards a great deal of variation, particularly on their peripheries where languages come into contact with languages from other families. On the whole, word-order is the least genetically stable and most areal of the grammatical features in Nichol's survey. As noted in Beck (2000), the Central Northwest (CNW) linguistic area — occupied by the Salishan, Wakashan, and Chimakuan language families — is distinguished by a number of syntactic patterns or templates, several of which are shared by the languages of the Tsimshianic family. These include patterns for the unmarked matrix clause, the use of non-verbal predicates, and patterns of question formation and negation. These will be discussed in turn in the sections that follow.

1.1 Matrix clauses

In terms of major constituent order, the Tsimshianic and the CNW languages are fairly consistently VSO in the matrix clause. This feature sets Tsimshian and the CNW apart from the rest of Pacific Northwest, which is SOV to the north and east (with the exception of Kutenai, which is also VSO), and predominantly SOV or SVO to the south (excepting Chinookan, which again is VSO). Typical constituent order in main clauses in Tsimshianic is shown in (1):

Sm'algyax

- (1) (a) ni:c=s Nadine=t Isabelle
 see[=D Nadine][=D Isabelle]
 'Nadine saw Isabel'

(Stebbins 2001: 19)

Nisgha

- (b) ʔimóm+ə+(t)=s (t) Màry=t Lucy
 help+CTL+(3)[=D (D₂) Mary][=D₂ Lucy]
 'Mary helped Lucy'

(Tarpent 1989: 191)

Nisgha

- (c) yùk*=t kipá+(t)=s (t) Màry=t Lucy
 PRG=3SUBJ wait.for+(3OBJ)=D (D₂) Mary=D₂ Lucy
 'Mary is waiting for Lucy'

(Tarpent 1989: 212)

These sentences can be compared to the subject-enclitic pattern found in the Central Northwest proper, where the sentence-initial particle can (depending on the individual language) be an adverb and/or an auxiliary, as in (4):

Halkomelem

- (4) (a) ni=cən læm+əθ+ámə
 AUX=1SG look+TR+2SG:OBJ
 'I looked at you'

(Gerds 1998: 311)

Heiltsuk

- (b) w'ál=i=s tátuq"la wísm+á+χi w'ac'+iá+χi
 well=3_{DISTAL:VISIBLE:SUBJ}=ADCT watch man+D₁+D₂ dog+D₁+D₂
 'the man watches the dog well'

(Rath 1981: 101)

Note the appearance of the third-person pronominal on the preverbal element in the Heiltsuk example, where it agrees with an overt third-person post-verbal subject just as in the Tsimshianic examples in (3b) and (3c).

In a number of Salishan languages, third-person subject agreement is realized by verbal suffixes, as in the examples in (5):

Lummi

- (5) (a) χči+t+s cə swəy?qə? cə swi?qə?ət
 know+TR+3 D man D boy
 'the man knows the boy'

(Jelinek & Demers 1983: 168)

Thompson

- (b) sək+t+səm+es
 hit.with.stick+TR+1SG.OBJ+3SUBJ
 's/he hit me with a stick'

(Thompson *et. al* 1996: 622)

These suffixes, unlike the Tsimshianic third-person subject pronominals, are not separable from the verb and do not migrate to sentence-second position.

Tsimshianic also departs from the CNW sentence-second clitic pattern in that transitive subject-markers are not uniformly enclitics, but may appear as proclitics on certain auxiliaries, as shown with the future tense auxiliary *dm*:

- Sm'algyax
 (6) n=dm man+gæd+n
 1SG.SUBJ=FUT up.though.air+take+2SG.OBJ
 'I will take you up'

(Mulder 1994: 51)

According to M.-L. Tarpent (p.c., 2000), Nisgha person-markers are more consistently enclitical than they are in Sm'algyax.

Tsimshianic languages also differ from CNW languages in that they are morphologically ergative, marking intransitive subjects with the same series of absolutive pronominal affixes used for transitive objects, as shown in (7):

- Sm'algyax
 (7) (a) æ ɬæ yæ:+yu=dæ n+du:b=æ æmæp'æs+m
 and PAST walk+1SG.SUBJ=D POS+base=D beautiful+ADJ
 sgæʔni:s
 mountain
 'and I walked at the foot of a beautiful mountain'

(Mulder 1994: 47)

- (b) dm=t næksg+u æmi=m dzi ænoχ+t
 FUT=3SUBJ marry+1SG.OBJ if=2SG.SUBJ PRT agree+3OBJ
 'he will marry me, if you agree to it'

(Mulder 1994: 93)

The absolutive suffixes, like the Salishan third-person subject suffixes in (5), do not migrate to sentence-second position, but remain attached to the main verb. The full set of Tsimshianic person-markers is given in Tables 1 and 2:

	ERG		ABS/POS	
	SG	PL	SG	PL
1	n	dp	-u	-m
2	m	m- -sm	-n	-sm
3	t			-t

Table 1. Sm'algyax person-markers (Mulder 1994: 50, 63)²

² Mulder (1994:50) gives a third set of pronouns which she terms "definite objective". These seem to be used primarily in inverse-like situations that violate a 1PL > 1SG > 2PL > 2SG > 3 person-hierarchy, although the situation is again complicated by a number of other factors. Stebbins (2001) analyzes this series of pronominals as being a combination of the absolutive series with an additional morpheme, -ʔ (see the example in (9) below). Note that Salishan languages show remnants of an inverse system (or at least a person-hierarchy — Jelinek & Demers 1983; Forrest 1994) and some languages (particularly in the Interior branch of the family) have ergative properties.

	ERG		ABS/POS	
	SG	PL	SG	PL
1	nə	tip	-y'	-m'
2	mə	mə- -sim	-n	-sim'
3	t	t (-ti:t)	-t	-t (-ti:t)

Table 2. Nisgha person-markers (Tarpent 1989: 461, 611)

Like many CNW languages, Tsimshianic fails to distinguish number in the third-person, although Nisgha has a 3PL pronoun *-ti:t* that can optionally be used to mark the plurality of either transitive subjects or objects (Tarpent 1989 — cf. Nuxalk *-it* '3SG.OBJ:3SG.SUBJ', *-tít* '3PL.OBJ:3PL.SUBJ', *-tis* '3PL.OBJ:3SG.SUBJ'). Note also that the identity of the Tsimshianic absolutive (i.e., intransitive subject) and possessive paradigm parallels a development in Nuxalk, where intransitive subject markers and possessive affixes belong to the same paradigm.³

Salishan languages also use suffixes for transitive objects:

Lushootseed

- (8) (a) ʔu+gʷəč+tu+but ti sqʷəbay?
 PERF+looked.for+CS+1PL.OBJ D dog
 'the dog looked for us'

(Hess 1993: 53)

Upriver Halkomelem

- (b) meyθ+áč cəxʷ
 help+1OBJ 2SG.SUBJ
 'you help me'

(Galloway 1993: 178)

The example in (8b) highlights another difference between Tsimshianic and the typical CNW pattern for subject-clitics: in the absence of a pre-verbal particle, the clitic in most CNW languages follows the verb. In Sm'alg yax (and less commonly in Nisgha and Gitksan — M.-L. Tarpent, p.c. 2000), the subject clitic can be sentence-initial, as it can in a few Salishan languages such as Squamish:

Sm'alg yax

- (9) (a) t wə:y+i?+nu hæ:s+it
 3SUBJ find+INV+1OBJ dog+DEM
 'the dog found me'

(Boas 1969a: 385, interlinear gloss based on Mulder 1994: 70)

³ An additional wrinkle to person-marking pattern in Sm'alg yax which will be glossed over here is the distinction between two orders of clause, dubbed indicative and subjunctive by Boas (1969a), which show different patterns of person-marking. No mention of this is made for Nisgha by Tarpent (1989).

Squamish

- (b) čn sāt+šit+umi
1SG.SUBJ give+DTR+2SG.OBJ
'I give it to you'

(Kuipers 1967: 303, cited in Kroeber 1999: 30)

Note once again that in Squamish and most other Salishan languages, agreement with a third-person subject in such constructions would be marked with a verbal suffix $(-(ə)s)$ rather than with a sentence-second clitic.

1.2 Non-verbal predicates

Another salient characteristic of CNW syntax that Tsimshianic seems to share is the use of non-verbal predicates, as in these examples from Nisgha:

Nisgha

- (10) (a) k'utác'+y' t+kùn
coat+1SG D+this
'this is my coat'

(Tarpent 1989: 255)

- (b) nóχ+y'=t Mary
mother+1SG=D₂ Mary
'Mary is my mother'

(Tarpent 1989: 248)

- (c) Máry=ł wà+y'
Mary=D name+1SG
'my name is Mary'

(Tarpent 1989: 202)

- (d) q'almó:=ł kíkfp+ən+y'=əst
crab=D (RDP)eat+CTL+1SG=AFF
'I'm eating crab' (lit. 'what I'm eating is a crab')

(Tarpent 1989: 262)

In each of these constructions, the sentence predicate is a noun which appears sentence-initially, followed by a verb phrase introduced by a determiner. The examples in (10) are paralleled exactly by the Salishan examples in (11):

Lushootseed

- (11) (a) bəščəb tʔit
mink D
'that is a mink'

(Hess & Hilbert 1976: I, 2)

Kalispel

- (b) p'oxút+s Ø
father+3PO 3SG
'[he is] his father'

Spokane

- (c) ppátíqs ɬu sk*é+t+s
Ppátíqs that name+STAT+3POS
'Ppátíqs was his name'

(Kinkade 1983: 28–29)

Nuxalk

- (d) ti+?imlk+tx ti+sp'+is ci+xnas+cx
D+man+D D+hit+3SG:3SG D+woman+D
'the man [is the one] the woman is hitting'

(Davis & Saunders 1978: 39)

Of particular interest here are the sentences in (10d) and (11d), which have a nominal predicate and a subject formed from a subordinate clause introduced by a determiner. These structures seem to follow a pattern familiar from a number of CNW languages in which a rhematic element is made the sentential predicate, irrespective of its lexical class, and the topical portion of the sentence is realized as subject (see Davis & Saunders 1978; Beck 1997 for discussion). The information structure of (10d) and (11d) is shown in the question and answer pairs in (12):

Nisgha

- (12) (a) ʔakú=ɬ kikíþ+ə+n=əst
what=D (RDP)eat+CTL+2SG=AFF
'what are you eating?'
- (b) q'almó:=ɬ kikíþ+ən+y'=əst
crab=D (RDP)eat+CTL+1SG=AFF
'I'm eating crab'

(Tarpent 1989: 262)

Nuxalk

- (c) wa+Ø+ks ti+sp'+is ci+xnas+cx
who+3SG+INT D+hit+3SG:3SG D+woman+D
'who is the woman hitting?'
- (d) ti+?imlk+tx ti+sp'+is ci+xnas+cx
D+man+D D+hit+3SG:3SG D+woman+D
'the man [is the one] the woman is hitting'

(Davis & Saunders 1978: 39)

Such sentences can be quite commonplace in Salishan languages and are at the heart of the perennial controversy over the relevance of a noun–verb distinction in the family. Other than the Nisgha examples found in Tarpent (1989), such constructions in Tsimshianic seem to have gone largely unnoticed, although it is hard to say whether this is due to relative textual infrequency or to the fact that, given the morphological distinctions between verbs and nouns, there is no doubt that the class distinction exists in these languages.

For Sm'algyax, Boas (1969a) makes no mention of predicate nominals at all, although Stebbins (2001: 15) does identify several examples of non-verbal predicates, including the complex NP *tʰæ:lpʰa k'ooʔ* 'four years' in (13):

- Sm'algyax
 (13) ʔæ tʰæ:lpʰa=a k'ooʔ ndæ dzæk=æ nag^wæ:t+u
 IMPF four=D year when die=D father+1SG
 'it was four years ago when my father died'
 (Stebbins 2001: 15)

The enclitic on the word *tʰæ:lpʰa* 'four' in this example, which appears on the modifier of the NP rather than on its head, illustrates a pattern noted by Stebbins (2001) where determiners can appear associated with a modifying element in an NP (see Section 2.2 below).

Both Mulder (1994) and Stebbins (2001) analyze a number of predicate nominal constructions as "topicalization," although judging from the glosses provided these sentences have the opposite effect — that of focalizing or rhematizing the fronted NP:

- Sm'algyax
 (14) (a) æwtæ uks+hytg+it gi=sgæ laχ maʔi:tg+m k'o:χ
 porcupine toward+stand+3SUBJ DEM=D top green+ADJ grass
 'it was porcupine who stood at the edge on the green grass'⁴
 (Mulder 1994: 135)
 (b) niʔni:=sgæ k'ʔink'ʔinæm+t gi=sgæ ʔguʔg+m
 DEM=D (RDP)give+3SUBJ DEM=D (RDP)small+ADJ
 ʔyuʔtæ+t=gæ
 man+3PO=DEM
 'those are what he gave his son'
 (lit. 'that which he gave to his son [are] these')
 (Boas 1969a: 80)

Rather than being simple nominal-predicate constructions, however, a number

⁴ There seems to be a determiner missing from the predicate *æwtæ* 'porcupine', although it have been removed by the same phonological process responsible for the absence of the determiner in (3) above.

of the structures labeled topicalization appear to be more cleft-like, as in (15):

Sm'algyax

- (15) (a) y'æGæy w'i: g'isiyæ:sg+at in=t deentg=æsgæ
 instead great northwind+3ABS CFT=3ERG avenge=D
 †gu ælæsg+m yecisk
 little weak+ADJ animal
 'instead, it was great North Wind that avenged the weak little animal'
 (Mulder 1994: 135)

- (b) nu:yu dm=t in naksg=a †gi:†g+n+t, Gawo
 1SG FUT=3ERG CFT marry=D daughter+2SG+DEM Gawo
 'I am the one who will marry your daughter, Gawo'
 (Boas 1969a: 198 — interlinear gloss based on Mulder 1994: 69)

Sentence (15a) begins with a sentential adverbial, *y'æGæy* 'instead', and has a nominal predicate, *w'i: g'isiyæ:sg* 'great North Wind', affixed with the 3SG.ABSOLUTIVE pronominal *-t*. Following the predicate is the particle *in* (which I have re-glossed here as 'CLEFT' rather than Mulder's 'TOPIC'), bearing the ergative subject marker *=t* for the embedded clause. Example (15b) shows much the same construction predicated on the independent pronominal form *nu:yu* 'I'. Note that here the subordinated clause contains the future auxiliary *dm* and, as expected, the third-person ergative subject pronominal migrates to clause-second position and appears associated with the auxiliary as an enclitic. According to Mulder (1994), clefts with *in* are restricted to those based on the transitive subject of the embedded clause, other arguments of the verb becoming ordinary nominal predicates following the pattern shown in (14) when clefted.

1.3 Wh-questions and pronominal predicates

As is typical of verb-initial languages, CNW languages form Wh-questions making use of a clause-initial question word. In many languages of the area, this Wh-word acts as sentence predicate and the remainder of the clause follows it and is introduced by a determiner, giving rise to the same sort of construction illustrated for predicate nominals seen in the preceding section. Tsimshianic languages show a similar pattern, illustrated for Nisgha in (16a) and (16b) and for two Salishan languages in (16c) and (16d):

Nisgha

- (16) (a) tip ná:=† tim náks+(ə)t
 D₂ who=D FUT get.married+3
 'who are getting married?'

(Tarpent 1989: 319)

(b) ntà=t qó?+ə+n
 where=D go+CTL+2SG
 'where did you go?'

(c) ?akù=t qó?+ə+n
 what=D go+CTL+2SG
 'what did you go get?'

(Tarpent 1989: 324)

Nuxalk

(d) wa+s=ck ti+ka+λ'ap
 who+3SG=DUB D+IRR+go
 'who, I wonder, will go?'

(Nater 1984: 118)

Kalispel

(e) stém' †u?=wíç+t+x"
 what D=see+TR+2SG.SUBJ
 'what did you see?'

(Vogt 1940: 27)

In addition to structures like these, Tarpent gives a number of examples of questions which lack the determiner introducing the following clause. It is not clear from her examples if the conditions governing this pattern are purely syntactic or if they have to do with semantic or other factors.

The situation in Sm'algyax looks much the same, although the subordinated clauses do not appear to be introduced by a determiner (again, perhaps due to a phonological process of vowel-deletion), and the Wh-word shows overt agreement (cf. the Nuxalk example in (16d)):

Sm'algyax

(17) (a) go:+yu g^wæ?æ
 what+3.INDEF this
 'what's this?'

(b) ndæ+yu k^wdu:s
 where+3INDEF knife
 'where's the knife?'

(c) næ:+yu dm ædæwχ+t
 who+3INDEF FUT tell.story+3
 'who's going to tell a story?'

- (d) næ: +yu in=t c'ilæ:yk+d+n æsdæ g'ic'i:p
 who+3INDEF CFT=3 visit+PERF+2OBJ PR yesterday
 'who visited you yesterday?'

(Stebbins 2001: 53 – 54)

Note that, as with clefts, Sm'algyax Wh-questions make use of the particle *in* when the focus is the transitive subject of the embedded clause.⁵

Tsimshianic also makes use of another pattern that is common among languages of the area. This is a special series of independent pronominals which can serve as sentence predicates, once again subordinating the remainder of the clause, as in these examples in (18a) and (18b), which can be compared to the Salishan examples in (18c) and (18d):

Nisgha

- (18) (a) n'i:y'=t kipá+ə+t
 1SG=D wait.for+CTL+3
 'he's waiting for *me*'

(Tarpent 1989: 262)

Sm'algyax

- (b) ?nu:yu næh ælg'æg+æd=æ sm'ælg'ax
 1SG FUT speak+3=D Sm'algyax
 'I was the one who was speaking in Sm'algyax'

(Mulder 1994: 65)

Lushootseed

- (c) ?əca k'i t̥u+k*əda+t+əb
 1SG D IRR+take+ICS+MD
 'the one who will be taken [is] *me*'

(Bates *et al.* 1994: 10)

⁵ Another parallel in question-formation between Nisgha and its neighbours is the use of the interrogative particle *a* (cf. Nuxalk =*a* (Nater 1984), St'át'imcets =*ha* (van Eijk 1997), Heiltsuk =*a* (Rath 1981), K*ak'*ala =*a* (Boas 1969)):

Nisgha

- (i) w'a+yə+n=t ?antitlá:la+y'=a
 find+CTL+2SG=D purse+1SG=INT
 'Did you find my purse?'

(Tarpent 1989: 491)

The Nisgha interrogative particle appears clause-finally, while the interrogative in the other languages mentioned here is a sentence-second clitic. In all of them, however, the interrogative appears in an otherwise unmarked matrix clause. Yes-no interrogative particles are identified as an areal feature of the Northwest Coast by Thomason (1983).

Nuxalk

- (d) ?inu ci+xnas+c
2SG D+wife+1POS
'my wife [is] you'

(Nater 1984: 112)

As in the examples with Wh-questions, the Nisgha sentence introduces the subordinate clause with a determiner, whereas the Sm'algyax sentence lacks one, at least on the surface. Also like Wh-questions and clefts, sentences formed on pronominal predicates in Sm'algyax use the cleft-particle *in* (and lack a determiner) when the pronominal corresponds to the transitive subject of the subordinated clause:

Sm'algyax

- (19) (a) ?nu:n dm in=t ga: ?wi:le:kst
2SG FUT CFT+3 take be.big:3
'you take the biggest one'

(Stebbins 2001: 31)

- (b) ?nur:yu dm=t in naksg=a ?gi:lg+n+t, Gawo
1SG FUT+3 CFT marry=D daughter+2SG+DEM Gawo
'I am the one who will marry your daughter, Gawo'

(Boas 1969a: 198 — interlinear gloss based on Mulder 1994: 69)

This use of the cleft particle with a pronominal predicate seems similar to a sentence type Kroeber (1999) refers to as a "semi-cleft" in Comox:

Comox

- (20) ?əni ?ə=t'ut'u+t+ut tə=qigaθ
1SG CFT=shoot+TR+PAST D=deer
'it's me that shot the deer'

(Kroeber 1999: 267)

So far I have not come across other precedents for this type of cleft-construction in any of the other languages of the area.

1.4 Negation

Tsimshianic (or at least Nisgha) also resembles many CNW languages, primarily those of the Salishan family, in the way it forms negative sentences:

Nisgha

- (21) (a) ?aq=ʔ tá:la+y'
NEG=D dollar+1SG
'I have no money'

- (b) ?aq=ɬ wɪl+y'
 NEG=D act+1SG
 'there is nothing I can do'

(Tarpent 1989: 369)

Lushootseed

- (c) xʷiʔ kʷi gʷ+ad+s+χəɬ
 NEG D SBJ+2POS+NM+sick
 'you will not get sick'

(Hess 1976: 567)

Nuxalk

- (d) ?aχʷ ti+ka+ɬalas ?ala:c
 NEG D+IRR+boat here
 'there is no boat here'

(Nater 1984: 122)

In the Nisgha examples, the negator *?aq* appears sentence initially, in predicate position, and the negated element follows, introduced by a determiner. The same pattern is illustrated for Lushootseed in (21c). Nuxalk also shows this pattern in existential negatives where the negated element is a noun (21d).

When negating propositions (as opposed to negating the existence of something), Nuxalk seems not to make use of the negative particle as a syntactic predicate, but instead employs it in an adverbial role, following the pattern of the neighbouring Wakashan languages, as in (22a) and (22b). Nisgha uses its negator as an adverbial in some subordinate clauses (22c):

Nuxalk

- (22) (a) ?aχʷ ksnm+ak+s
 NEG work+hand+3SG
 'he is not working'

(Nater 1984: 36)

- (b) ?aχʷ ka+puʔ+c
 NEG IRR+come+1SG
 'I will not come'

(Nater 1984: 122)

Nisgha

- (c) ná:=t ?an ?aχ wílá:x+n w'i: kát
 who=3SUBJ REL NEG know+2SG.OBJ great man
 'who doesn't know you, Giant?'

(Tarpent 1989: 388)

There is some evidence to suggest that Nuxalk may once have used the negative

particle as the main predicate of negative sentences. Note also the close phonological identity of the negative particle in the two languages in (22).

2 Determiners

The second major syntactic feature of Tsimshianic that seems to be of areal significance is the family's system (or, rather, systems) of determiners or nominal deixis. As noted in Beck (2000), determiner systems in the Central Northwest languages, and particularly in the northern sub-area, show signs of likely mutual influence and convergence, most strikingly in the case of the Salishan language Bella Coola, which appears to have been strongly influenced by the deictic systems of Northern Wakashan languages. One feature of Tsimshianic that finds a close parallel in K^ak^ʷala (already alluded to in connection to the earlier examples in (1) above) is the enclitical nature of Tsimshianic determiners, which precede the phrase of which they are part syntactically, but are attached phonologically to the end of the last word of the preceding phrase. Also significant for our discussion are some family-internal differences in the determiner systems of Nisgha and Sm'algyax, particularly the existence of two separate sets of determiners, the "plain" set used in ordinary speech and the "elaborate" set used in storytelling and formal oratory. Nisgha, on the other hand, has only the plain set. This is highly suggestive of a contact-induced origin for the elaborate determiners in Sm'algyax, particularly given the linguistic and cultural context of the North Central Coast during the period immediately preceding European contact.

2.1 Nisgha

Of the two Tsimshianic languages I have data on, Nisgha has the simpler determiner system. Unlike the CNW languages, Nisgha makes no spatial distinctions in its determiners, but instead distinguishes two noun classes which correspond roughly (but not exactly) to the traditional grammatical distinction between common and proper nouns, or in Tarpent's (1989) terminology, indeterminates versus determinates. The latter class encompasses the names of individuals, a few interrogative and demonstrative pronouns, kinship terms, and personal pronouns (elements that have "unique reference"), while the former encompasses everything else. In the discussion that follows, I will continue to use the traditional terms common/proper noun introduced by Boas (1969a) rather than determinate/indeterminate to avoid confusion with similar-sounding terms like "determiner" and "(in)definite," keeping in mind that the distinctions between the two noun classes are not precisely the same as they are in Indo-European languages.⁶

⁶ As far as I know, Tsimshianic is the only group in the area that makes an inflectional distinction between common and proper nouns, although Nuxalk does have an interesting construction in which a prefix *s-* appears in front of proper nouns in certain contexts:

For all common nouns in all syntactic roles, Nisgha uses the “primary” determiner =*ʃ*. For proper nouns, on the other hand, Nisgha uses the primary determiner =*s* for transitive and intransitive subjects and appears not to use primary determiners with proper nouns as direct objects. In addition to the primary determiners, Nisgha also makes use of a set of what I will call here “secondary” determiners. These also apply only to proper nouns and encode an additional distinction of number. The distribution of the two types of Nisgha determiners is illustrated in (23):

- Nisgha
- (23) (a) wil límx+(t)=s (t) Mary
 SBD sing+3=D D₂ Mary
 ‘as Mary sang’
- (b) wil límx+(t)=s=tip Mary
 SBD sing+3=D=D₂ Mary
 ‘as Mary and them sang’
- (c) wil límx+(t)=ɬ hanàq’
 SBD sing+3=D woman
 ‘as the woman sang’
- (d) ɬimó:m+ə+(t)=s (t) Mary=ɬ hanàq’
 help+CTL+3=D D₂ Mary=D woman
 ‘Mary helped the woman’
- (e) ɬimó:m+ə+(t)=s=tip Mary=ɬ hanàq’
 help+CTL+3=D=D₂ Mary=D woman
 ‘Mary and them helped the woman’

(Tarpent 1989: 481)

-
- Nuxalk
- (i) pa:ɣ+ic x+a+s+John
 name+3SG:1SG PR+D+NM?+John
 ‘I will name him John’

(Nater 1984: 101)

The prefix here is analyzed by Nater (1987) as the pan-Salishan nominalizer *s-*, perhaps carrying out the nominalization of an embedded sentence in which *John* serves as a predicate nominal (Beck 1995). The Nisgha data seems to open the door to an alternative analysis in which the *s-* is merely a vestige (or importation) of a strategy for marking certain uses of proper nouns. This seems a bit less far-fetched in the context of more than a few (albeit sporadic) Tsimshianic *ɬ*, Salishan *s* morphological correspondences.

- (f) ʔimó:m+ə+(t)=ʔ hanàq'=t Mary
 help+CTL+3=D woman=D₂ Mary
 'the woman helped Mary'

(Tarpent 1989: 480)

Note that missing from this set is the case with a common noun transitive subject and a plural proper noun direct object. From the exposition in Tarpent (1989), we would expect the primary determiner =s to be absent, as in the example in (24a) below. However, as the example in (24b) shows, there do seem to be circumstances under which =s and =tip co-occur:

Nisgha

- (24) (a) naxn'á+(y)ə+n tip Mary=a
 hear+CTL+2SG D₂ Mary=INT
 'did you hear Mary and them?'

(Tarpent 1989: 476)

- (b) wil tip ʔimó:m+ə+(t)=s tip Mary
 SBD 1PL.SUBJ help+CTL+3=D D₂ Mary
 'as we helped Mary and them'

(Tarpent 1989: 482)

It is unclear what lies behind the different patterns, although it may be due to the fact that (24a) is a matrix clause while (24b) appears to be a subordinate clause. In Sm'algayax the distinction between so-called indicative and subjective orders of clause does play a role in the distribution of person-markers. A parallel distinction between two orders of clause in Nisgha, however, is not described by Tarpent (1989), so for the moment the motivation for the two patterns will have to remain unresolved.

Leaving aside the issue of plural proper nouns as direct objects for the moment, the combined pattern of determiners in Nisgha can be summarized as in Table 2:

	Common Noun	Proper Noun	
		SG	PL
Intransitive Subject		=s (=t)	
Direct Object	=ʔ	=t	=s=tip
Transitive Subject		=s (=t)	

Table 3: Nisgha determiners

Although the secondary determiner =t is not usually overt following =s, Tarpent (1989: 478 – 79) argues that it is eliminated by a cluster simplification rule and that it surfaces in some cases where another element such as a modifier intervenes between the primary determiner and the =t, as in (25):

- Nisgha
- (25) ni:+ti: lĩmx+(t)=ł łku=t Märy
 not+INTS sing+(3)=D little=D₂ Mary
 'Little Mary didn't sing'

(Tarpent 1989: 479)

The primary determiner here is not =s but =ł because the modifier łku is not itself a determinate (Tarpent 1989: 479).

Two-part determiner systems have some precedents in the area, although none of these are close structural parallels. Both K'ak'w'ala and Nuxalk have circumfixal determiners (see (2) above for K'ak'w'ala and (27) below for Nuxalk), and both Heiltsuk (Rath 1981) and Haisla (E. Bach, p.c. 2002) have a system which involves a two-part suffixal determiner, as in (26):

- Heiltsuk
- (26) hĩm'as+ka+χka
 chief+D₁+D₂
 'the/a chief here with me'

(Rath 1981: 79)

The primary deictics (D₁) distinguish various types of spatial distinctions, and the secondary deictics (D₂) mark a reduced set of the distinctions indicated by the primary deictics (Rath 1981: 78).

Nuxalk also has a set of "secondary" deictic enclitics, based on -łatay 'slight or increased distance', which gives forms such as:

- Nuxalk
- (27) ci+xnas+c'atay+cs
 Df+woman+Df₂+Df
 'the woman over there (quite close)'

(Nater 1984: 44)

Note the NP+D+D pattern, which parallels that seen in the Heiltsuk example in (26) above. Neither of these systems bears much structural resemblance to Nisgha, other than in the use of double determiners within a single NP.

2.2 Sm'algyax

Determiners in Sm'algyax differ from those in Nisgha in a number of respects. The most obvious of these is the existence in Sm'algyax of two distinct systems of determiners. The first of these is the "plain" set used in everyday speech, given in Table 4:

	Common Noun	Proper Noun
Intransitive Subject	=æ	=æs
Direct Object		=æt
Transitive Subject	=dæ/=æ	=æs/=dit

Table 4: *Sm'algyax plain determiner system (Mulder 1994: 39)*

This system looks very much like the Nisgha system of primary determiners outlined in Table 3, with the exception of the two transitive subject determiners, =dæ and =dit, whose distribution appears to be conditioned by the TAM system and the distinction between indicative and subjunctive orders of clause. It is also interesting to note that the distinction between the common noun and proper noun sets is the presence of -s (cf. Nisgha =s) for intransitive and transitive subjects and -t (cf. Nisgha =t) for transitive objects. This is consistent with M.-L. Tarpent's impression that Sm'algyax has undergone a good deal of phonological reduction in its plain determiner system (p.c., 2001), perhaps resulting in the reanalysis of the primary and secondary determiners as single units.

Syntactically, these determiners have an interesting property also found in some of the other languages of the area: when the NP contains a pre-nominal modifier, the determiner appears suffixed to the modifier rather than to the noun, as shown in (13) above and in (28):

Sm'algyax

- (28) æ:m=æ χaldæwχk=æ səhæk*dæk
 [good=D medicine]=[D yew.wood]
 'yew wood [is] good medicine'

(Stebbins 2001: 26)

A similar pattern is seen in St'át'imcets (29a) and Heiltsuk (29b):

St'át'imcets

- (29) (a) ti χðúm+a citx"
 D big+D house
 'the big house'

(van Eijk 1997: 197)

Heiltsuk

- (b) p'ác'uá+ya=s wísem+χi
 diligent+D₁=ADJUNCT man+D₂
 'that diligent man'

(Rath 1981: 87)

In the St'át'imcets example in (29a), the determiner appears completely inside the NP, whereas in the Heiltsuk example the primary determiner appears on the modifier and the secondary determiner appears on the noun.

Another language of the area that places determiners inside the boundaries of a complex NP is Nuxalk:

(30) Nuxalk
 ta+ya ta+ʔimilk+t'aχ
 D+good D+man+D
 'that good man'

(Nater 1984: 47)

Here, the determiner *ta-* is iterated on each element in the NP, while the suffixal determiner *-t'aχ* appears only once phrase-finally.

Sm'algyax elaborate determiners present a considerably more complicated picture, showing a consistent distinction between indicative and subjunctive clauses, a fairly consistent ergative split, and three additional degrees of deixis not found in the plain system at all. The elaborate determiner system is given in Table 5 (question marks indicate forms that are not attested in the data):

		Common Noun			Proper Noun		
		NDEM	PRES	ABST	NDEM	PRES	ABST
Indicative	ERG	=æ	=sdæ	=sgæ	?	?	=s
	ABS		=dæ	=gæ	=æt	=dæt	=gæt
Subjunctive	ERG	=æ	=dæ	=tgæ	=dæt	=dæt	=tgæt
	ABS		=sdæ	=sgæ	=s	=dæs	=s

Table 5: Sm'algyax elaborate determiner system (Mulder 1994: 33)⁷

One thing to note about the forms in Table 5 is that, like the forms in Table 4, a number of the distinctions between the common noun and proper noun determiners are made by the presence of *-s* or *-t* in the proper noun series. It can also be seen that the INDICATIVE-ERGATIVE series quite consistently corresponds to the SUBJUNCTIVE-ABSOLUTIVE series, and that the ABSENT series for common nouns (as well as the INDICATIVE-ABSOLUTIVE and SUBJUNCTIVE-ERGATIVE, which add *-t* to the common noun forms) contain the element *-g* (or *-gæ*). The Sm'algyax *-gæ* resembles an element *-ka* found in the K'ak'ala proximal invisible determiner-series — *=ka* (subject), *-χka* (object), *-ska* (oblique) — and to a lesser degree the Heiltsuk proximal invisible determiner *-k'ac^h*. A slightly more far-fetched resemblance holds between the Sm'algyax *-gæ*, and the Salishan *k^h*- which often forms a part of the distal/hypothetical determiner in a number of languages of this family.

Probably the most salient feature of the elaborate determiner system

⁷ The ergative split in the determiner system is not entirely dependent on clause type, but also depends to some extent on the TAM system. Boas (1969), Mulder (1994), and Stebins (2001) all present different analyses of these patterns, and sorting out the differences (let alone settling on a preference) among them is beyond the scope of this paper.

from the areal point of view is the three-way deictic split shown by both the common and proper noun sets.⁸ A deictic system marking three spatial degrees is very typical of languages of the area such as Nuxalk, which distinguishes three spatial categories — PROXIMAL, MIDDLE, DISTAL — subdivided into DEMONSTRATIVE–NON-DEMONSTRATIVE categories, as shown in Table 6:

	PROXIMAL		MIDDLE		DISTAL	
	DEM	NDEM	DEM	NDEM	DEM	NDEM
non-fem	ti—t'ayx	ti—tx	ta—t'ax	ta—t	ta—tix	ta—tx
fem	ci—c'ayx	ci—cx	ʔiʔ—ʔiʔayʔ	ʔiʔ—t	ʔiʔ—cix	ʔiʔ—ʔiʔ
plural	wa—ʔac	wa—c	ta—t'ax ^w	ta—t	ta—tax	ta—tx ^w

Table 6. Nuxalk nominal deictic clitics (Davis & Saunders 1980: 254)

Another similar system is Heiltsuk, which closely parallels Nuxalk but marks VISIBLE–INVISIBLE rather than DEMONSTRATIVE–NON-DEMONSTRATIVE and manifests the ABSENT category (as does St'át'imcets):

	PROXIMAL		MIDDLE		DISTAL		ABSENT
	VISIBLE	INVISIBLE	VISIBLE	INVISIBLE	VISIBLE	INVISIBLE	—
D ₁	-k ^w a	-k ^w ac ^h	-iax	-iaxc ^h	-ia	-iac ^h	-i
D ₂		-xka		-x ^w		-xi	-xka

Table 7. Heiltsuk nominal deictic suffixes (Rath 1981: 77)

As noted above, Heiltsuk also parallels Nisgha in having a two-part determiner system, although in terms of the spatial categories involved, the Heiltsuk and Nuxalk systems bear a more striking resemblance to the Sm'algyax elaborate determiners.

A final point to make about the elaborate determiners is that they most likely do not, as is often assumed to be the case, represent an archaic feature of formal language which has been lost in causal speech. The use of plain determiners is attested in the earliest records of Sm'algyax (T. Stebbins, p.c. 2001) and the plain system encodes grammatical distinctions that are found in other parts of the grammar. The elaborate system, on the other hand, seems to introduce new grammatical categories into the language, categories found in the neighbouring CNW languages but not in the other members of the Tsimshianic family. This is very suggestive of grammatical borrowing, an impression that is reinforced by fact that the elaborate determiner system is specific to story-telling

⁸ Note that Mulder (1994) characterizes the series labeled here “non-demonstrative” as “indefinite,” although semantically they seem to mark things with unspecified location as opposed to things which are referentially indefinite.

and ritual or formal speech, an area of Tsimshianic culture that was subject to a great deal of cultural influence from the neighbouring Wakashan peoples in the historical period immediately before and after European contact. In this period on the Central Northwest Coast, the secret society complexes, probably of North Wakashan origin, were becoming features of a number of the cultures of the area (Guedon 1984a). According to Tsimshianic oral history, the dancing societies were introduced by the Heiltsuk and Haisla (Halpin & Seguin 1990), and many shamans from the coastal Tsimshianic peoples sought out Heiltsuk "masters" to initiate them into ritual societies (Guedon 1984b). The names of many of the moieties came from the Heiltsuk, as did the moieties themselves (Halpin 1984). Under such circumstances, it is not unlikely that there would have been other linguistic influences in the domain of ritual and ritual speech, and these influences would naturally have been greater on the Sm'algyax, who were in more frequent and more direct contact with the Heiltsuk and Haisla, than the upriver Nisgha. Thus, the elaborate determiner system (or, more precisely, the spatial categories in that system) may have been imported from Heiltsuk as part and parcel of the secret society complexes, perhaps as a way of marking particular registers of speech as more appropriate for ritual or formal purposes, or possibly for making spatial/deictic distinctions that were themselves important for ritual purposes (for instance, visible versus invisible or present versus absent).

3 Tsimshianic in the Central Northwest language area

This paper started with a question that, of course, can never have a simple yes-or-no answer: is Tsimshianic properly a part of the Central Northwest language area? The answer, predictably, is "yes and no". Tsimshianic languages do share a number of features of the Central Northwest language families, including predominant VSO word order, some use of sentence-second clitics, and patterns of nominal, pronominal, Wh-word, interrogative, and negative predication. On the other hand, many of the resemblances are only partial and from an overall perspective Tsimshianic grammatical patterns seem less like those of the CNW families than the patterns of these families are like each other. Nevertheless, the sum total of resemblances speaks strongly of areal influences, and certain particular features do seem to be excellent candidates for being the result of some sort of grammatical diffusion.

At this early stage of the game it is not quite clear what this tells us about contact patterns on this part of the coast, although the presence of the elaborate determiner system in Sm'algyax, coupled with the available ethnographic data, does suggest a particular intensification of Northern Wakashan influence on the coastal Tsimshianic group in more recent times. This is also interesting in that, at least on the impressionistic level, some of the deeper grammatical parallels between Tsimshianic and the Central Northwest appear to be with the Salishan family. Salishan makes heavier use of sentence-second clitics and pre-predicate particles than does Wakashan and the Salishan family shows some vestiges of ergativity (stronger in the Interior and Southern Interior

than in other branches of the family) and inverse person-marking. It also may (or may not) be significant that most of the candidates for cognate lexical and morphological material (pointed out throughout the paper and in the appendix) seem to be shared between Tsimshianic and Salish (particularly Nuxalk). This may indicate a longer-standing or more ancient relation between Salishan and Tsimshian, followed by more recent influences from Wakashan, due either to a more recent arrival of Wakashan peoples in the area or to an increase in their influence, wealth, or status. Of course, this idea needs some serious lexical comparative work before it can become anything but rank speculation. It will also be worth looking northwards at Haida and Tlingit to see what effects these languages might have had on Tsimshianic, given the close cultural and economic ties between these peoples. These languages present a quite distinct typological profile, and bringing them into the picture should give us an interesting perspective on Tsimshianic as a transition group between the Central Northwest and the Northern Northwest Coast linguistic areas.

Appendix: Lexical and morphological parallels

Below are some parallels between lexical items and morphological elements in Tsimshianic and other CNW languages (mostly Nuxalk) stumbled across during the research for this paper. These are offered here only as some potential starting points for more systematic investigation.

- 1) Sm'algayax and Nisgha have a rather fossilized *-t* suffix associated with transitivity — cf. K^wak^wwala *-t* (Boas 1969), *-t/-n* transitivity morphemes in many Salishan languages; Nisgha also has *-tk^w*, variously passive/transitivizer/middle (Tarpent 1989) — cf. Nuxalk, Lushootseed *-tx^w* 'CAUSATIVE'.
- 2) The attitudinal markers in Nisgha and Nuxalk line up very nicely:

<u>Nisgha</u> (enclitic)	<u>Nuxalk</u> (enclitic)
= <i>a</i> 'INTERROGATIVE'	= <i>a</i> 'INTERROGATIVE'
= <i>ma?</i> 'DUBITATIVE'	= <i>ma</i> 'DUBITATIVE'
= <i>əst</i> 'AFFIRMATIVE'	= <i>(s)tu</i> 'EMPHATIC' (Thompson <i>tu?</i>)
= <i>qat</i> 'QUOTATIVE'	= <i>k^w</i> 'QUOTATIVE' (Thompson <i>ek^wu</i>)

- 3) Nisgha proclitics have some weak parallels with Nuxalk enclitics:

<u>Nisgha</u> (proclitic)	<u>Nuxalk</u> (enclitic)
<i>sa:</i> = 'suddenly, unexpectedly'	= <i>su</i> 'SURPRISE'
<i>hux^w</i> 'again'	= <i>k^w</i> 'REPEATEDLY'
<i>k'a</i> = 'very, INTENSE'	= <i>k(a)</i> 'CONTRASTIVE'
<i>k^wac'</i> = 'carefully, thoroughly'	= <i>k^w</i> 'REPEATEDLY'

- 4) A few Nisgha proclitics look vaguely like some Nuxalk prefixes (which are themselves mysterious in origin):

<u>Nisgha</u> (proclitic)	<u>Nuxalk</u> (prefix)
<i>q'am</i> = 'only, just'	<i>tm-</i> 'just [time]'
"	<i>k'am-</i> 'the same; simultaneously'
<i>sim</i> = 'intense'	<i>sm-</i> 'already, right away'
<i>si:=</i> 'newly present'	"
<i>?anu</i> = 'in the direction of, towards'	<i>?anu</i> = 'locative distributive'

- 5) A few Tsimshianic words seem to have obvious cognates in Salishan: Sm'algyax *wayii* 'well (interjection)', Nuxalk *way* 'well (interjection)'; Sm'algyax *miis* 'red', Nuxalk *muks* 'red'; Nisgha *qa:q* 'raven', Nuxalk *q'a:x* 'raven, Lushootseed *qaw'qs*, *q'aq* 'raven'

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