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Some Notes on Xa'isla\*

1. INTRODUCTION. In this paper we wish to discuss some aspects of Xa'isla (Malsla), the language of Kitamaat village on the northern coast of British Columbia. We will touch on miscellaneous topics as this is a preliminary report on ongoing work: a practical orthography; a few points of comparison between Xa'isla and the more southern Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island; and a few tentative phonological rules.

Kitamaat village is located eight miles from the city of Kitimat on the Kitimat arm of Douglas Channel. The population (according to the Chief Councillor Heber Maitland) is about 150. This figure represents also the villages of Kildala and Kemano, whose entire populations were amalgamated with Kitamaat thirty or more years ago. The language appears to be spoken by the entire adult population but, as far as we know, by none of the children. The villagers consider their language closely enough related to that spoken in Alvars Inlet (Awikhine) to give them a common name, Avikhila. The language of the village itself (Xa'isla) they call Xa'isla'isla. They claim to be able to understand the other dialects of Kwakiutl even as far south as Alert Bay off Vancouver Island, although as we will mention below there are in some instances extensive differences.

Previous work on Xa'isla has been done by at least three people: by Reverend George Raley around the turn of the century; by Mr. George

Robinson at about the same time; and by a Mr. Olsen about thirty years ago.<sup>1</sup>

2. ORTHOGRAPHY. We have worked out an orthography which we believe meets our needs, as linguists and those of the people of Kitamaat as users of the language. We have done this because we believe that our work belongs as much to the speakers of the language as it does to us professionally. We use only letters of a standard English typewriter. By adopting this orthography we hope to make our work--including texts, dictionaries, and discussions of grammar--more readily accessible to speakers of the language.

We use the following symbols (The list is tentative):

<u>ORTHOGRAPHY</u>	<u>USUAL PH. SYMBOL</u>	<u>ORTHOGRAPHY</u>	<u>USUAL PH. SYMBOL</u>
p	b	ph	ɸ
p'	p	m	m
ph	p	m'	m
t	d	n	n
t'	t	n'	n
th	t	w	w
k	g	w'	w
k'	k	y	y
kh	k	y'	y
q	g	s	s, ʃ
q'	q	j	x
qh	q	x	x
c	ʒ, ʃ	h	h
c'	c, ʃ	ʔ	ʔ
ch	c, ʃ	l	l
d	λ	e	e
d'	λ	a	a
dh	λ	o	o
l	l	u	u
l'	l	v	ʊ

The two main distinctions in the consonants are between glottalized (C') and nonglottalized (C); and between aspirated (Ch) and nonaspirated (C). The sounds represented in the list as voiced (p, t, etc.) are always unaspirated, but vary as to voicing, while the sounds we have written with 'h' are heavily aspirated. The letters we have used to represent pairs of sounds in

NW symbols represent sounds on which speakers consistently--but nonsignificantly--vary. There are also labialized front and back velars which we represent simply with a following 'w' (This gives kw, k'w, khw, q̄w, q'w, qhw). In our linguistic discussions we will generally mark stress.

3. SOME COMPARISONS. There appear to be extensive differences between Xa'isla and the southern Kwakiutl dialects.<sup>2</sup> Most obvious perhaps are pervasive differences in the lexicon. A few typical examples follow:

<u>English</u>	<u>Xa'isla</u>	<u>Kwakiutl</u>
sleep	k'alha	moxa
sing	hana	tvaxvia
woman	qvnvm (= Kw. 'wife')	c'vtaq
wolf	d'asiaqumé	adhanva
mink	kwvmax	mvcha
seal	sakvwm	mikvath
black bear	t'exwa	d'a'i
big	on'as	walas
angry	qhwiq'a	lhawis
mountain	waw'es	nike
chief	hem'as	kiqame

There are also differences in the meanings of shared words (as in 'qvnvm' above). Many items are identical, and many can be related by simple phonological conversions. Thus, spirantization of kh and qh in Xa'isla (see next section) accounts for items like these:

bone	xax	xaqh
house	kuju	kulhu

A contraction rule in the southern dialects (See Boas, 1947) accounts for comparisons like these:

<u>English</u>	<u>Ka'isla</u>	<u>Kwakiutl</u>
cockle	cvwali	c li
urinate (women)	iyasa	"asa
fish	niya	na"

A number of suffixes show an apparent loss of s between x and following stops in Ka'isla:

desiderative	-ext	-ext
mouth	-xt	-xst (voicing)
backside	-xt (glottalizing)	-xsth (glottalizing)

The last two examples, 'mouth' and 'backside', show the effect of another rule of Ka'isla (Deaspiration, see next section). Since Deaspiration applies in Ka'isla, the sole difference between the two suffixes is their effect on the final consonant of the stem: haxh'vite 'moustache'; hax'vite 'hairy backside'.

Kwakiutl is well known for its rich system of demonstratives and pronouns. In Ka'isla we have found 3rd person forms for the categories: visible, invisible, near to speaker, and 'gone'--the last also noted by Boas for Bella Bella. In addition, we have found a nominal affix, -ch<sup>3</sup>-- for objects not yet in sight ('to appear'):

khithathvn sakhaxe 'I shot the (invisible) grizzly bear'

khithadhvn sakhach 'I'm going to shoot a grizzly bear (to appear)'

Some of the personal suffixes may be seen in the following typical paradigm (plurality is regularly marked by a reduplication of the verb stem or some part of it):

lan	1st person
lanujw	exclusive
lanis	inclusive
lasu	2nd person
lu	3rd person, visible
li	3rd person, invisible
lij	3rd person, near to speaker
lakhi	3rd person, gone

There are distinct sets of endings for object pronouns, possessives, and subordinate verbs.

Syntactically, Ka'isla conforms to the general type of Kwakiutl: verb-initial, extensive use of auxiliary verbs, attachment of personal suffixes to subordinating and coordinating verbs. Noun phrases are characterized by the use of a connective -s on attributive adjectives and possessed nouns: ames w'ac' 'little dog'; amaks mayas 'mother of cat'. Transitive verbs are classified as to whether 1) they require an instrumental object (marked by -s or has) or 2) a simple direct object: q'ac'ukhwins K 'I like K'; khithan K 'I shoot K', respectively. These two verb types require different passive suffixes. There is a third passive suffix for verbs of perception. Like Bella Bella (Boas, 1947), Ka'isla lacks the pronominal affixes of southern dialects and follows a rigid word order for subject/object distinctions in noun phrases. There is a final question particle la.

4. SOME PHONOLOGICAL RULES. In common with other Kwakiutl languages, Ka'isia shows a neutralization of the nonglottalized stops in final position. Although these stops are usually voiceless and unaspirated in this position, informants will accept released and unreleased, aspirated or unaspirated renderings of the final consonants in such words as the following:

oph 'father'	cf. ophus 'your father'
p'aladh 'work(fut)'	p'aladhi ditto, 3p.sg. invisible
cij'it 'push with a pole'	cij'itvaukwa ditto, 1 p. sg.
sakhach 'grizzly bear' (to appear)	

There must therefore be one or more rules effecting this neutralization: either a final devoicing rule, a final deaspirating rule, or both. So far we have not found any conclusive evidence bearing on the choice.<sup>4</sup> Since the choice has no bearing on the rest of our paper, we simply refer to Final Neutralization.

There are two kinds of 'velar' spirants; some alternate with stops, some do not, as in the following examples:

saj 'grizzly'	sakhako 'this here grizzly'
-nujw 1 p. excl.	-nujwudh ditto, + 2.p. object
khitújw 'thing shot'	khitukwins 'my thing shot'
qax 'raven'	qaqhach ditto (to appear)
sákhax 'grizzly' def.	sákhako 'this here grizzly'

If we assumed the spirants were the underlying segments, there would be no way to predict the alternation. We therefore take the stops as the underlying segments and postulate a rule of Velar Spirantization which changes kh, qh, khv, qhv to j, x, w, xw respectively in final position and before at least some other consonant<sup>5</sup>.

Velar Spirantization affects only the aspirated velars. For example, notice the following instances in which no alternation takes place:

nukw	X	'I am X'	nukwa	'I, me'
c'aq		'mountain goat'	c'aqac	'mountain goat (to appear)'
saxk		'want'	saxkin	'I want'

Since the environments for Final Neutralization and Velar Spirantization partially overlap (i.e., in final position), they are crucially ordered. If Neutralization were ordered before Spirantization, it would be impossible to tell which final consonants are affected by Spirantization. We therefore assume the ordering Velar Spirantization followed by Final Neutralization:<sup>5</sup>

	saxk	'want'	sakh	'grizzly'
Velar Sp.	----		saj	
Final Ne.	saxk		----	

There are alternations between aspirated and unaspirated initial stops in a number of suffixes. Thus we have:

Mikethl 'Mike, invisible'  
 Jefftl 'Jeff, invisible'  
 saxkikhi 'wants, 3rd person, gone'.  
 oq'weski 'believes, subordinated, 3rd person, gone'

These alternations seem to be the result of a quite general rule which deaspirates the stops in the immediate environment of spirants.

This rule, which we call Deaspiration, interacts with a rule postulated by Boas (1947) which turns ss into ch. An example from Ya'isla for this rule of Affrication is the following:

'big'	'grizzly'	
om'as	s	sakh base form (with connective <u>s</u> )
om'ach		sakh Affrication
om'ac		saj Velar Sp. and Final Ne.



Affrication and Deaspiration can be seen in the alternations of the second person suffix -su:

lasu Auxiliary + su

k'uchu Negative k'us + su cf. k'usu =Neg. +u 3 p/ vis.

ekhinxvlastu 'you are pretty'

The derivation of the last item is as follows:

ekhinxvlast + su

ekhinxvlastu Affrication

ekhinxvlastu Deaspiration

Spirantization of velars before other consonants occurs in the southern dialects also (Boas 1947). We have shown that the rule must be ordered before Final Neutralization, a rule (or collection of rules) which is common to all the Kwakiutl languages. If Ka'isla's more general rule of Velar Spirantization is an innovation, then we have a case of synchronic ordering which does not reflect historical ordering. If the rule spread in the other direction, then we have an interesting case of change by specialization, that is a rule which became less general as it spread.

## Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup>We know that George Raley and George Robinson wrote on the language. Members of the Robinson family have kindly made available to us a dictionary written by Mr. Robinson (which includes shorter Chinook Jargon and Tsimshian --Port Simpson?--word lists). We have heard that Dr. Raley wrote extensively on Ka'isla during his eighteen years of residence and we hope to locate this work. We know nothing of Mr. Olsen.

<sup>2</sup>Our remarks draw upon the published materials of Boas, and Boas and Hunt, and on two weeks of work by the first author with informants from Alert Bay.

<sup>3</sup>We do not know whether the underlying form for this suffix is aspirated or not, since we have found it so far only in final position.

<sup>4</sup>The decision is inextricably bound up with decisions as to the underlying system of Ka'isla consonants and the theory of markedness. It seems likely that both rules will be needed and that both are examples of universal rules. We have recorded one example of final devoiced *l*, which if genuine, will tend to show the necessity for a general devoicing rule. On the other hand, speakers will normally not aspirate final stops, but if asked to repeat the ending distinctly will selectively aspirate some.