

Consonant Symbolism in Kathlamet and Shoalwater Chinook

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Edward Sapir's account of consonantal symbolism in Wishram Chinook (1911) is well known. The main points are these. With stops, voicing may express the augmentative, while glottalization may express the diminutive. With fricatives and affricates, alternation of sibilant and shibilant is also involved. Shibilant forms (š, č, č', j) may express the augmentative, while sibilant forms (s, ts, tsʔ) may express the diminutive.

In Wishram (or Wasco, the language is the same) the system is rich and productive. With Sapir's account in hand, Boas (1911b) searched his data from the lower Columbia languages for the same sort of thing. He found no evidence of interchange of stops in Lower Chinook (Shoalwater, Clatsop), but one example in Kathlamet. He did find some indications of interchange between sibilant and shibilant in Shoalwater, and perhaps of lateral and dental affricate. It is possible to clarify and augment these three results.

Interchange of stops: Shoalwater Chinook

Boas began his remarks (1911b: 645):

'So far as I am able to discover, the diminutive and augmentative consonantism of the p and t stops does not occur in Chinook'.

It is odd to cite "the p and t stops", not mentioning [k and q]. Voiced labial and dental stops hardly occur in the lower Columbia languages, Kathlamet and Shoalwater Chinook.¹

¹ Boas referred to the latter simply as 'Chinook'. It was these people, centred near the mouth of the river on its north side near Baker's Bay, that the Salish term originally designated, and from which it was extended to the language family as a whole. 'Chinook' has often enough been used by scholars for some other part or for the Chinookan-speaking peoples as a whole, and popularly for the Chinook jargon. It is clearer to have specific names for all the varieties of the language family.

'Shoalwater Chinook' is the other term for speakers of the variety of Chinookan north of the mouth of the river. It was used by Spier (1936: 31) and by Ray (1938: 37) for those around Shoalwater Bay (now Willapa Bay) overland north of Baker's Bay. The term is useful for the language variety as a whole. There are then three Chinookan languages, Lower Chinook (or Coastal Chinook, as suggested by Jacobs), comprising Shoalwater and Clatsop; Middle Chinook, i.e., Kathlamet, which may have had an easterly dialect, of which almost nothing is known; and

For Shoalwater Chinook, Boas did conclude in general terms that (646):
"An examination of the texts and explanatory notes collected from Cultee makes it fairly certain that he did not use the diminutive changes of stops in Lower Chinook".

At least one contrast of voiceless : voiced velar stop, however, does seem to occur in Shoalwater, if in an unexpected place, a nominal plural.

There is considerable variation in the marking of singular and plural of nouns. One pattern is i- in the singular, t-...-kš in the plural. One of the nouns showing this pattern also has q- in the singular, but g in the plural (1911: 604, 606):

i-qoásqoás : t-goásqoás-kš 'crane' (probably great blue heron)

The implication is that plural is augmentative, and lexically indicated by a consonant interchange of the sort productive in Wasco-Wishram.

It is quite unlikely that Boas misheard the phonetic distinction. The initial consonant of the singular form is confirmed by W. E. Myer's recording of 'Chinook' a decade or so later ('ie-qásqas', with breve over the e, indicating a low front vowel, and 'q' representing a labialized stop, hence ~~ie-qwásqwas~~, suggesting the meaning 'his-crane', if the second vowel is not merely a transition to the following velar. The -g may have been diminutive (see below), or dialectal (see below). Unfortunately Myer's lists do not include a plural or any entry for Kathlamet.

It is quite unlikely that the upriver varieties, Clackamas and Wasco, are the source. To be sure, I am not sure about Clackamas. In the two myths in which Crane figures, saving a fleeing child or children, Mrs. Howard does not name him.

In Wasco-Wishram several speakers, those recorded at Spearfish in the early 1930s by Walter Dyk, one of them, Philip Kahclamat, a generation later, and Hiram Smith at Warm Springs, the singular and plural forms of the stem are identical, but are not the same as either Shoalwater stem. The variation is not between singular and plural, but within each. The singular is i-gwásqwaš, the plural it-gwašqwaš-kš. This pattern of one voiced, one voiceless stop is not restricted to 'crane', but found also with 'duck' (i-gwé'xqwex) and a few other words.

There were indeed other forms. David French recorded -gwásqwaš in both singular and plural from Matilda Stacona, resident at Warm Springs, while the singular form attested from Louis Simpson (Sapir 1909: 170: 20-1) is -gwásqwaš.

Upper Chinook (Kiksht is the native name), comprising Clackamas and Wasco-Wishram. Wasco is the term commonly used today by people on both sides of the river.

It remains that none of the attested variation or alternation is between a singular and a plural. And if a speaker with the Louis Simpson form, *-əwásəgwás* were to make a symbolic contrast, it would have to be in the direction of the diminutive, away from normal voiced velar stop, not in the direction of the augmentative. The semantic motivation would not be in terms of the category of number, but of size as such.

The most likely explanation for the Shoalwater Chinook form from Charles Cultee is that awareness of the possibility of diminutive/augmentative contrast, associated with change of stops led to its use along the line of plurality as augmentation, and that at least this one instance became conventional in at least one person's speech.

Phonologically and grammatically, the example is isolated, so far as one can tell from the instances of singular/plural contrast given by Boas (1911a: 604ff). It does not appear for the plural of other stems with initial *-q*.

Semantically, or expressively, however, the example is not unique. Another isolated expression of diminutive/augmentative contrast is found in the narratives Louis Simpson dictated in Wishram to Sapir (see Hymes 1985). There the masculine and feminine singular prefixes, *i-* and *a-*, take on a secondary significance of largeness and smallness with the stem for canoe, *-kánim*, in one text.

This use of gender prefixes is an ad hoc instance of a relation which Boas reported as lexicalized for some stems in Shoalwater Chinook.

At both ends of the Chinookan spectrum, then, the mouth of the river (Shoalwater) and the edge of the plateau (Wasco-Wishram), the idea of turning variation to account to express a polarity of augmentative/diminutive, seems to have been alive and productive, beyond particular means.

Interchange of stops: Kathlamet. At the end of his remarks (646) Boas reports 'one very clear case' of consonantic change from Kathlamet, analogous to those found in Wishram':

ksəmm taxi t-kúnát-max óxoaxt 'small are those little-salmon'¹
 "Here the *s* in *ksəmm* indicates smallness and *tgúnátmax* SALMON has been changed to *tkúnátmax*."

That is, the glottalized [k] signals smallness in contrast to the [g] of the ordinary stem, as in *t-gúnat* (sg.), *t-gúnat-max* (pl.).

This line is from the myth, 'Seal and Crab' (98.8 in the 1901 texts). In point of fact, the example is not isolated. An entire passage centers on just this contrast in form and

¹ I have added hyphens to show the morphemic composition of the noun, and slightly modified the transcription.

meaning, making the example overwhelmingly convincing. Seal kills two salmon, large salmon (*makšt t-gúnat*, *i-tá-qaiłax t-gúnat*). She sends her younger sister, Crab, to fetch them, using the expression 'those small fish' (*táxi t-kúnátmax*). Crab reaches 'those salmon' (*táxi t-gúnátmax*), and hangs them on her fingers, saying the line quoted by Boas: 'Small those little-salmon are' (*Ksəmm táxi t-kúnátmax óxoaxt*). Her fingers are broken. She hangs 'those small fish' (*táxi tkúnátmax*) on other fingers, but they are broken as well, all her fingers are broken. On her return, Seal goes down with her to the water, puts the fingers on again and carries 'those salmon' (*táxi t-gúnat*) up, which they then cut and roast.

(The myth to this point is given in lines and verses as an appendix).

Notice that the very point of the scene involves play with the initial consonant of the stem for Chinook salmon. Presumably this is yet another instance of a younger sibling misunderstanding an older sister's instructions (cf. 'Split-his-own-head' in Nehalem Tillamook (Hymes 1991)). (In this case the result is the kind of legs crabs now have).

When caught by Seal, the salmon are *i-gúnat*, the ordinary form. Chinook are ordinarily large, but to underline what is to follow, an added phrase says that these are large even for Chinook.

When Seal tells Crab to get them, she speaks of them, ironically or with superior modesty, morphophonemically as small: *t-kúnátmax*. What Crab reaches is again named with the ordinary stem, *t-gúnat-max*¹. When Crab speaks, she repeats the form used by her sister, and emphasizes it with a particle meaning 'small' (put first for emphasis). Presumably she hangs them on her fingers because she takes the (diminutive) word for the thing. For a moment the narrative lets her mistake be the

¹ The shift of stress from the first to the second syllable of the stem is not expressive. Chinookan words are normally stressed on the penultimate syllable, and the shift is the result adding the distributive suffix, *-max*.

The presence of the distributive suffix, however, may be part of the expressive play. There is a recurring semantic polarity in Chinookan between that which is unitary, whole, a set, and that which is multiple, dispersed, not unified. Perhaps here there is a sense that the distributive, introduced with the diminutive stem, is part of something less. If so, the combination of normal stem and distributive suffix for the salmon as reached by Crab would suggest a reality as perceived by her in terms of the form spoken by her sister. When she herself then says the form and underlines it with *ksəmm*, the salmon are named entirely in terms of that perception, diminutive consonant and distributive suffix both.

thing: "She hung those small fish [t-K'unát-max] on other fingers" (line 23 of the verse analysis). And the other fingers are broken as well.

Perhaps it is this context of diminutive perception that accounts for the first mention of 'her-fingers' (98: 8) to have the stem as -ksi, whereas all the mentions that follow have the normal shape, -kši. See discussion of fricatives below).

When Seal carries up the salmon, when they cut the salmon for roasting, the salmon are t-gúnat again, as they were when first caught.

As to the š in ksám̄m, which Boas says indicates smallness: no contrast is not found in the Kathlamet texts, but Boas may have had in mind the corresponding Shoalwater form, gán̄m 'small' (1911: 637), which he has just mentioned in connection with an interchange of š and s. Both Shoalwater gán̄m and Kathlamet ksám̄m are used only for plurals. The difference of between initial k- and g- would be because the k of the Kathlamet form precedes š. Two forms, in other words, with the same meaning and grammatical restriction, differing only as to n and s. The relation between the n and s does appear to be one of substitution. The relation is otherwise unattested in Chiookan, and, pace Boas, it is difficult to say that one is diminutive to the other. Perhaps an answer will be found in other languages of the region. In Sahaptin there is a ks with the meaning 'small'.

(Boas mentions gán̄m as an introduction to the generalization that Cultee did not use diminutive changes of stops in Lower Chinook, viz.: "It is, however worth remarking that this plural ['young cedars'] occurs with the particle --gán̄m i-sgán̄ma 'small young cedars' without strengthening of the g of gán̄m. Nor with alternation of the -g- in the following stem, one might add. I do not know other occurrences of the word. Note the identity of -gán̄m in both words, following in the second what could easily be construed as a prefix (dual). Rhyme can perhaps not be ruled out as a factor contributing to the shape of this one phrase.)

Interchange of affricates and fricatives: Kathlamet. Boas found indications that changes between š and s and the corresponding affricates, occurred,

'although the significance of the process does not seem to have been very clear in the mind of my sole informant, Charles Cultee' (645-6).

In Clatsop (the variety of Lower Chinook on the Oregon side),

"my only informant considered changes of this type as distinguishing characteristics of the [Shoalwater] Chinook and Clatsop dialects. For instance, Clatsop, é-šalqšalq; Chinook é-salqsalq PORCUPINE."

In Shoalwater, "the most characteristic case that I have found is the following:

i-tsá'lanča y o-góla 'the waves are too bad' (too great)

i-tsá'lantsa y o-góla 'the waves are a little bad'

The other case (Shoalwater) that Boas cites is the one noted with gán̄m:

é-šgan 'cedar' : i-sgán-ma 'young cedars'.

These two examples in Shoalwater Chinook can be matched by two in Kathlamet. In 'Salmon's myth' (Boas 1901: 50-3, 54-7) the young Chinook salmon comes up river in the spring. He is greeted five times in turn from the riverside by plants which insult him as one with maggots in his anus (spring salmon do spoil quickly), and assert that without them in his absence, his people would have died. He learns their names, and lands to place them where they will later be found and to give them gifts which fit their appearance.

Throughout the myth the plants use the same form, iá-poč 'his anus', in reference to Salmon. In two cases there are gifts to be put at the rear of a plant, the small and the large sagittaria root. The stem for the large sagittaria root is the same: i-čá-poč-pa 'her-anus-at'. In the first of the two tellings (1891) Cultee uses the same form for the small sagittaria root (1891: 51: 4). In the second of the two tellings (1894: 55: 3) the form of the stem appears to shift in accord with the size of the root: i-čá-pots-pa 'her-anus-at'.

The 1894 telling is more expansive and expressively marked than that in 1891. The use of a diminutive alternation may be a part of that.

A second Kathlamet example occurs in the account of 'Cultee's grandfather visits the ghosts', told in 1891. The text appears to be that of an important family tradition. The opening section relates the coming of an epidemic. Forms for 'their-sickness' and 'his-sickness' occur. In each case the sickness is followed by death. In the case of Cultee's grandfather, however, he revives to tell people for the first time about the country of the ghosts.

While in the country of the ghosts, he meets a woman he had wanted, but when he sees her, says, "I do not like her. (She looks) just like her mother. Her face is always sore".

In the cases of sickness followed by death, the stem has -č: i-lá-čqam 'their sickness', i-lá-čqam 'their sickness', iá-čqam 'his sickness' (1901: 247: 9, 10, 12, 12). In the case of the woman's face, the same stem occurs, but with ts-. Indeed, the form is consistently diminutive, for the possessive prefix, ordinarily -štá- is stá- as well: i-stá-tsqam.

Both Kathlamet examples seem clearly motivated. The diminutive is the marked form for 'anus' and occurs in the second telling with the small sagittaria root, in contrast to the larger (which follows). The diminutive is the marked form for 'sickness', and occurs in regard to facial appearance, as opposed to fatal illness.

An interchange of affricates. Boas noted the possibility of a relation between lateral affricates [ʃ, ʃ'] as augmentative, and [ts, ts'] as diminutive. For example, -

ia-qoiã 'its-largeness' : ia-qoait 'its-smallness'. Such a case is found also in Wasco-Wishram: ia-gaiã : ia-kait, although not mentioned by Sapir (1911). This particular lexical contrast is common and could not have escaped Sapir's attention. Presumably it was not mentioned because such cases appear to be etymological rather than productive. A parallel relation elsewhere in Penutian was noted by Swadesh (cf. Hymes 1957).

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Seal and Crab

[i] [Hungry, they go to the water]
One day now hunger acted on Crab, her older sister Seal.

Seal was the older, the Crab the younger.

She cried,

hunger acted on Crab.

She told her older sister,

"Let us go,

"Let us bathe."

5

The two went down to the water.

They bathed.

Crab became cold.

She went up.

Seal dived several times.

She killed two salmon, large salmon.

10

Seal went up.

Oh, there was Crab sitting.

"Quick, go fetch those small fish."

15

[ii] [Crab's fingers]

Crab went down to the beach.

She got to those salmon.

She hung them on her fingers.

"How small these salmon are."

Her fingers were broken off.

20

She hung those small fish on other fingers.

Her fingers were broken off.

All her fingers were broken off.

She went up,

she cried.

She wept,

she opened the door.

She told her older sister,

"What are you doing?"

"Ah, they broke off my fingers."

25

30

Seal and her younger sister went down to the beach.

They got down to the beach.

There were Crab's fingers.

Seal took them.

She put her fingers on her.

They were on that Crab.

35

[iii] [Eating the salmon]

Seal carried up those salmon.

They cut those salmon.

They roasted them.

40

