

“At the Neighbors’’: The Etymology of “Chinook”, Language Contact, and Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Abstract: The historically and culturally important word “Chinook” is analyzable as a Lower Chehalis Salish name for the specific Lower Chehalis and Lower Chinookan mixed community that gave rise to the pidgin-creole Chinook Jargon. Its meaning appears to be approximately ‘at the neighbors’ place’. This discovery illustrates how historical linguistic research can recover crucial elements of Indigenous intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Chinook, Chinook Jargon, Indigenous metaphors, intangible cultural heritage, language contact, Lower Chehalis, Lower Chinookan

“ʔasxʷúqʷuʔəl túl ʔənúkʷ”: ‘They’re your relatives from Chinook.’¹
(Nina Bumgarner, elder, speaking Łəwálməš language, Sept. 12, 1978)

1 Introduction

To begin, as one does nowadays, with an acknowledgment: in their own Lower Chinookan language, the only group self-designation of the Chinook Indian Nation of which we are aware is “Natítanuī”, translated as ‘Indians’ by Boas (1894:48, 94, 100 et al.; 1910:669). It is a name I will take up here.²

Among the advantages of this label is that it averts the historically frequent confusion with the pidgin-creole *Chinook* Jargon (autonym: *Chinúk Wáwa*). The persistence of that overlap is symptomatic of how ubiquitous the word “Chinook” is in the Pacific Northwest region of North America. The word, as a noun, colloquially also denotes a warm seasonal wind (Wentworth & Flexner 1975:101) and a major species of salmon (Mathews 1951:315), and as a modifier, an Indigenous dance ceremony (Wynne 1967), a brand of lumberjacks’ crosscut saw (*Seattle Star* 1912:7), a breed of dog (Mathews 1951:315), and so on.

By contrast with “Natítanuī”, as the reader will have inferred, “Chinook” amounts to an exonym. All documentation of its origin is unanimous that this word is a Chehalis Salish name that was originally applied in general to the Natítanuī people on the north bank of the Columbia River in Washington state (Silverstein 1990:533) and in particular to one of their villages, on Baker Bay (1990:544). Specifically this “Chehalis” indicates the hitherto scarcely researched Łəwálməš, i.e., Lower Chehalis, a language spoken in communities bilingual in the genetically unrelated Natítanuī (Zenk et al. 2016:30).

What has never been explained, though, is just what “Chinook” literally means in Salish — its etymology. While there are few clues within latter-day Łəwálməš, the comparative and historical evidence is highly suggestive. Showing how these explain the etymology and original usage of

¹ My own translation. In the decontextualized setting of elicitation, Mrs. Bumgarner translated this for linguist M. Dale Kinkade as ‘You are my people from Chinook’, but the expression patently contains a (numberless) third-person subject and a second-person singular possessor.

² *Natítanuī* is my present-day Americanist Phonetic Alphabet rendering of Boas’ 19th-century notation, <Natē’tanuē>.

“Chinook” is the goal of this paper. The answer has explanatory power for the original naming, and ongoing misperception, of Chinook Jargon.

2 What is the internal structure of the word “Chinook”?

Aside from its frequent occurrence in English- and French-language documents from contact in 1792 onwards (Silverstein 1990:535; Robertson 2015), the word “Chinook” is identifiable in several of the phonetically well-documented languages indigenous to the lower Columbia River region. Thanks in part to these rich data, we can phonologize the word with confidence as *čənúk^w* [tʃiˈnuk^w], varying with *čənák^w* [tʃiˈnok^w].^{3,4}

- (1) a. Lo *čənúk^w*
Chinook
'Chinook'
- b. Up *čənúk^w*
Chinook
'Chinook'
- c. CW <*chinúk*>
Chinook
'Chinook'
- d. QL <[√]chidó•[-]k^w>
Chinook*-LOC
'mouth of Columbia River, lit. Chinook place'⁵

³ Negative evidence should be noted: in the Chinookan languages themselves I have found no forms matching *čənúk^w* in electronic searches of OCR PDF textual data (Boas 1894, 1910; Jacobs 1958–1959; Sapir 1909), nor have I found such in Kalapuyan languages (Jacobs 1945).

⁴ In the following language key, all-capitals names such as “QL” are languages unrelated to Salish. The reference sources are as follows, unless otherwise noted in the text: Cb (Moses-Columbia: Kinkade 1981), Cv (Okanagan-Colville: Mattina 1987), Cz (Cowlitz: Kinkade 2004), Kl (Klallam: Montler 2012), Ld (Lushootseed: Bates et al. 1994), Lo (Lower Chehalis: our LCLP dictionary in progress), Ok (Southern Okanogan: Cline et al. 1938), P-S (Proto-Salish: Kuipers 2002, whose entries I modify such that (˘) indicates variable ejectives), QL (Quileute: Powell & Woodruff 1976), Qn (Quinault: Modrow 1971), SA (Sahaptin (Sahaptian): Beavert & Hargus 2009), Sp (Spokane: Carlson & Flett 1989), Ti (Tillamook: Thompson & Thompson n.d.), Up (Upper Chehalis: Kinkade 1991). Symbols: ← derived from; / observed variation between segments; * (preceding an item) reconstructed form; * (following an item) inferred meaning; ? no clearly inferable meaning; < > form not recorded in a standardly recognized orthography; bracketed segmentations, glosses, and translations such as [-] and '[grass]' are my own; { } curly braces contain infixes; (parentheses) enclose optional material; • reduplication; √ root; : (colon) vowel length; = lexical affix. Abbreviations: A = agent, AFX = affix, ASP = aspect, CTL = control, DIM = diminutive, IMPFV = imperfective, ITR = intransitive, LEXSFX = lexical suffix, LOC = locative, NOMZ = nominalizer, O = object, POSS = possessive, RED = reduplication, S = subject, ST = stative, STEMX = stem extender, TR = transitive, VBLZ = verbalizer.

⁵ Quileute *n > d. This term is a folk-etymology, viz. QL <-k^w> (/q^w/) 'at, locational suffix'.

- e. Ok i. <*s[-√]tcENūk'*> ii. <[√]>*tci'nūk*
 NOMZ-Chinook Chinook
 'the Chinook [ethnic group]' 'syphilis'⁶
- f. SA <[√]*chinúk-i-t*>
 Chinook*-VBLZ-NMLZ
 'venereal disease'⁷
- g. NP *cinúk*
 Chinook
 'have gonorrhea'⁸

Several parsing approaches to this noun stem are logically possible, but not all are illuminating or sensible. An example of a dead-end strategy is to take $\sqrt{\text{čənúk}}$ as unanalyzable, an etymologically monomorphemic root, in which event I find no plausible resemblances in sister Tšamosan languages, as the following near-minimal pairs illustrate:⁹

- (2) a. Cz $\sqrt{\text{čənq-}}$
 'stutter'
- b. Up $\sqrt{\text{čənáq-}}$
 'err, make a mistake'
- c. Qn <*chanáaka*>
 'to braid (hair)'

More well-motivated, but ultimately just as much a dead end, is the consideration of forms that may be related to $\sqrt{\text{čənúk}}$ via the historical root- (sometimes stem-)consonant metathesis so amply demonstrated for the family as a whole by Noonan (1997; see also Kuipers 2002:5). One intriguing intra-Tšamosan correspondence of this kind has come to light in my research:

⁶ These terms are absent from Mattina (1987). Regarding the Syilx (Okanagan Salish), Cline et al. (1938:165) report, "Syphilis was called *tci'nūk*, because it was believed to have come from the Chinook Indians. No venereal diseases were known before the whites entered the country." Known events associated with Lower Chinookan territory support the understanding that sexually transmitted diseases new to the region spread from the lower Columbia River zone of intense contact with non-Indigenous men (Boyd 1999:68ff). For evidence of upper Columbia (Plateau) tribes' apprehensions about contagion from coastal "Chinooks" in historical times, cf. treaty commissioner Anson Dart's report of an 1851 council held at The Dalles, Oregon Territory: "[A] variety of arguments were made use of to demonstrate the wrong that would be inflicted upon their tribes were the government to send among them the Indians west of the mountains. The habits and customs of the fishing tribes of the lower Columbia and its tributaries, were all unlike theirs; besides, those tribes were diseased and dying off rapidly. They did not wish their people subjected to those loathsome disorders, &c." (Adams et al. 2002:96).

⁷ See the preceding footnote. The Sahaptin form is neither analyzed, etymologized, nor indicated as a loan in Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (2014), but its phonology (including its short <i> rather than long <ii>) is an excellent match for the other forms listed here.

⁸ Also unanalyzed (Aoki 1994:39).

⁹ Note that the normal shape and size of Proto-Salish roots is CVC (viz. Noonan 1997:475). All three of the cited modern roots likely contain variants of the lexical suffix *-q* 'hair, head, speech, et al.'

- (3) a. Lo $(s-)\sqrt{k^w\acute{a}n\acute{u}l/}\{[-]č\acute{a}č(\acute{a})\}$
 NOMZ-Chinook*(metathesized?)-?
 ‘(horned) owl’
- b. Cz $\sqrt{č\acute{a}n\acute{o}\{?\}k^w}\{[-]šit\}$
 Chinook*{DIM}-?
 ‘owl (hawk?)’
- c. Up $\langle tcinu'k[-]čitem \rangle$
 Chinook*-?
 ‘owl (unidentified)’

Although the segmentation of (3a) is unclear, its stem (or its first several segments) resembles that for Lo ‘Quinault’ ($\sqrt{k^w\acute{a}n\acute{a}t}$), conceivably in a folk-reanalyzing metathesis of ‘Chinook’, viz. the (3b,c) synonyms. But the original root may historically have been more like (3a), cf. in the more distant Tillamook Salish, $\langle kuni't \rangle$ ‘owls’ (Edel 1939:53), such that (3b,c) could represent a later folk etymology. Thus, all of the stems compared in data set (3) remain more or less opaque at this writing, and we are compelled to consider still other parsing approaches.

And we can advance beyond these roadblocks by considering just what size of units we are looking for. No shape bearing an obvious correspondence to $\sqrt{č\acute{a}n\acute{u}k^w}$ appears in the published dictionary of Lower Chehalis’ ancestors, Proto-Coast Salish and Proto-Salish (Kuipers 2002). This is because in Salish, roots, which constitute the bulk of entries in that study, typically reconstruct to a shorter historical form, CVC. By corollary, modern Salish triconsonantal forms such as $\sqrt{č\acute{a}n\acute{u}k^w}$ are most likely the result of affixation that is roughly either C(V)- or -(V)C in form. In deciding between these shape options, we recognize that the Salish languages are predominantly suffixing in nature, as (4) illustrates:

- (4) Basic morpheme order in Salish languages, after Czaykowska-Higgins and Kinkade (1998:23)

POSS/S(-)ASP-LOC-RED- $\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$ -RED-AFX-LEXSFX-TR/ITR/CTL-O-S/POSS-ASP

Relative to the root and any reduplications (RED) of it, the great majority of affixal and clitic material (both are tabulated above) is postposed. Moreover, “as in other largely suffixing languages, prefixes are treated as being outside the principal phonological stem domain in full words in Salish” (Czaykowska-Higgins & Kinkade 1998:25).

Thus, parsing $\sqrt{č\acute{a}n\acute{u}k^w} / \sqrt{č\acute{a}n\acute{a}k^w}$ in the way that seems most typical of Salish, we look for a stem-initial CVC root shaped like $\sqrt{č\acute{a}n}$ *. A search among the existing Tsamosan data reveal the root $\sqrt{č\acute{a}n} \sim \sqrt{k\acute{a}n}$, both apparently meaning ‘not know how; be incapable’.¹⁰

- (5) a. Up $\acute{a}ac-\sqrt{č\acute{a}n'}-s-\acute{a}n\acute{a}y$
 ST-not.know.how-NOMZ-woman
 ‘he cannot know a woman, impotent’

¹⁰ Proto-Salish *k > Up k, Cz k/č (Kuipers 2002:3). For further instances of these roots, see ‘stutter’ and ‘err, make a mistake’ in (2) above.

- b. Cz $\sqrt{k\acute{a}n'-mn}$ ¹¹
 ‘make a mistake’

This root does not seem to me semantically relevant to the Chinook ethnic group in any obvious way, though it is not hard to imagine an origin in Proto-Salish $\sqrt{k\acute{a}n}$ ‘to touch, hold, keep steady; hit’ and/or the P-S content-interrogative root $\sqrt{ka(n)}$ ‘to do; do what?[,] do something; (be) where, how?’. (As it happens, the latter root reenters our consideration below in an unforeseen way.)

Still more problematically, we find the modern $\sqrt{\acute{c}\acute{a}n}$, $\sqrt{k\acute{a}n}$ (thus Proto-Tsamosan $\sqrt{k\acute{a}n}$) attested only next to suffixes that differ from the entailed shape $/-úkw \sim \acute{a}kw/$. The latter in any case matches no Cz or Up inflectional, derivational, or “unclear” suffixes in Kinkade’s exhaustive dictionary appendixes thereof.

Specific to the Tsamosan branch of Salish is the further possible root shape, CVCV (where V_1 and V_2 tend to be identical), and thus a parse like $\sqrt{\acute{c}\acute{a}n\acute{a}-k^w}$. This shape seems confined to two root classes. The first encompasses imperfective-aspect allomorphs of otherwise CVC verbal roots (Kinkade 1991:ix–x, 2004:229):

- (6) a. Cz $s-\sqrt{p\acute{a}ta-w-n}$
 IMPFV-fall-ITR-3.S.IMPFV
 ‘it’s falling (off)’*
 b. Up $s-\sqrt{n\acute{a}ma-w-n}$
 IMPFV-done-ITR-3.S.IMPFV
 ‘it’s ending, stopping’*

To validate this analysis, our $\sqrt{\acute{c}\acute{a}n\acute{a}}$ would have to be a variant of $\sqrt{\acute{c}\acute{a}n}$, and cooccur with Imperfective morphology similar to the preceding examples. But the few inflected forms from Proto-Tsamosan $\sqrt{k\acute{a}n}$ in the Up and Cz dictionaries do not match those criteria; following are all of the imperfective forms attested in the root entries:

- (7) a. Up i. $s-\sqrt{\acute{c}\acute{a}n-w-n}$
 IMPFV- $\sqrt{\text{be.incapable}}$ -INTR-3.S.IMPFV
 ‘[not know]’
 ii. $s-\sqrt{\acute{c}\acute{a}n-mis-n}$
 IMPFV- $\sqrt{\text{be.incapable}}$ -REL-3.S.IMPFV
 ‘not know’
 b. Cz $s-\sqrt{kan-\acute{a}l=xan-n}$
 IMPFV- $\sqrt{\text{be.incapable}}$ -STEMX=foot-3.S.IMPFV
 ‘[not know how, make mistakes]’ (intransitive)

And our hypothesized disyllabic root shape would entail a suffix $-k^w$, no productive or obviously relevant instance of which is documented by Kinkade in Cz or Up. Here are the known instances of such forms:

¹¹ $\sqrt{k\acute{a}n}$ is involved also in one apparent Cz pun (regarding which in Coast Salish cf. Robertson 2018) on $k\acute{a}n$ ‘three’: $kan-\acute{a}l=xan-$ ‘make mistakes’, literally ‘not know how with the feet’ as well as ‘(have) three feet’.

- (8) a. Up =*k*^w
(unglossed)¹²
b. Cz -*k*
(unglossed)¹³

The second Tsamosan CVCV class is recent loan roots, nearly all being nouns from Chinuk Wawa, as are the following examples:

- (9) a. Cz i. $\sqrt{pípa}$
'paper'
ii. $\sqrt{k^w ušú}$
'pig, hog'
b. Up $\sqrt{mási}$
'thank you!'

But no Chinuk Wawa form shaped similarly to $\sqrt{čənə}$ is found in the compilation of CW dictionaries presented by Johnson (1978), nor in the authoritative Grand Ronde Tribes (2012).

To summarize, what we took as the default Salish parsing strategy — attempting to isolate a word-initial root — yields no promising results. Does this, then, undermine the claim that $\sqrt{čənúk^w}$ is a Salish word?

Hardly. There exists a less common, yet also solidly attested structure in the Salish family, each member of which uses a few prefixes. Since Proto-Salish times, there have been prefixes for non-third-person possession, for stative aspect, the nominalizer *s-*, and so forth (cf. (4) above and Kuipers 2002:17, 129 et al.), which precede stems. Individual modern Salish languages have distinct prefixal inventories.

Because we are analyzing an ethnonym, we might suggest the known lexical prefix in Tsamosan for 'people of' (in tribe names), whose phonological shape is close to what we expect in $\sqrt{čənúk^w}$:

- (10) $\sqrt{čət} = \sqrt{nək^w/núk^w}$
people.of=other*

This proposed parse is broadly believable, as the root leads to a literal gloss like 'the neighboring tribe', which would describe the relationship between the Natítanui and Łəwálməš peoples. Problematically, however, it would be exceptional for a /t/ to be dropped; we have no known examples of that happening in the Tsamosan branch.

Therefore, we might consider a more exact match, albeit involving a previously undocumented Tsamosan prefix shape $\sqrt{čə-}$:

¹² Only one example is known, glossed uncertainly by Kinkade:

- (i) $níš = k^w$
here=?
'another (?)'

¹³ Only one example is known:

- (ii) $čó:šm[-]k scámcaln$
always-? he's.hugging.me
'He's always hugging me.'

- (11) *čə-√nək^w/núk^(w)
 ?-other*

The following sections examine evidence that this is, indeed, the proper analysis of “Chinook”.

3 Explaining *čə-

This raises the issue of the meaning and source of *čə-. Here I suggest we can return to P-S *√ka(n) ‘to do; do what?[,] do something; (be) where, how?’. The proto-root has evolved into the following modern Tsamosan forms, with the optionality of final *n still in evidence:

- (12) a. Up √čá:-
 ‘where?’
 b. Cz √ká:/kán
 ‘where?’
 c. Lo √čán
 ‘where?’
 d. Qn √čán
 ‘where?’

While these are stressed, as we expect roots to be, the data from one Tsamosan language, Qn, additionally include certain words that may hold special relevance for our inquiry; these are deictics bearing an unstressed prefix kə-:

- (13) a. kə-√tí
 ?-√this
 ‘here; over here’
 b. kə-√tá
 ?-√that
 ‘there; over there’

This kə- would then seem a locative element (contrast Qn xə-√tí ‘this’, xə-√tá ‘that’), perhaps grammaticalized from P-S *√ka(n). A few Qn forms are known to preserve, unlike (12d), P-S */k/ as exceptions to a general shift to modern [č]:

- (14) Qn i. √kám'-tn
 √nurse-INSTR
 ‘breast’
 ii. √kə
 √mother
 ‘mother’

Thus, Qn kə- could be the counterpart of a Lo *čə-, with both meaning approximately ‘at’.

With these facts in mind, our reconstructed *čə- ~‘at’ prefix, while somewhat hypothetical, is the least problematic parse so far.

We might hypothesize that this prefix in the word √čənúk^w is either:

- a somewhat rare Quinault morpheme, or full word, borrowed for some reason into an older stage of Lower Chehalis to refer to the latter group’s southern neighbors, and then subjected to the latter language’s virtually exceptionless **k > č* shift, or
- its cognate, endogenous to Lower Chehalis, otherwise nearly vanished from the modern language due to the reorganization of the spatial deictic system into a different arrangement from that in Quinault. (Viz. Lo *š[-]i?* ‘here’, *š[-]ján* ‘there’, with *š < *x* [Kuipers 2002:3], cf. the aforementioned Qn *xə-√tí* ‘this’ and *xə-√tá* ‘that’.)

I think the second of these notions is the simpler and more plausible, for at least two reasons:

1. Keeping in mind the semantics of **√nə́k^w/núk^(w)* as ‘other’, Quinault has never been the immediate ‘neighboring tribe’ of Natítanui in the known ethnographic record (Earl Davis of Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe and Tony A. Johnson of Chinook Indian Nation, personal communications; Hajda 1990:504), so it is hard to see why Quinaults would call Chinookans ‘the neighboring tribe’.
2. The loaning of a single unproductive morpheme between two languages already evincing high cognacy and mutual intelligibility seems poorly motivated.

Outside of the word for ‘Chinook’, so far we have only detected Lower Chehalis **čə-* in *<Chíhlá ‘k>*, evidently *čə-láʔq*, “(‘descend’), as the Shoalwater Bay Indians call the spirit-world” (Curtis 1970:90). Interestingly, that word too seems to be something of an exonym, in that it uses not a Salish root but a Chinookan ideophone particle, cf. neighboring Shoalwater-Clatsop Lower Chinookan *láq* ‘to step aside, to turn, to cut off, to fall off, to take out’ (Boas 1910:633).

We should inquire whether our supposed Lo **čə-* ~ ‘at’ is supported by any Salish comparative data beyond Qn and beyond Tsamosan. It appears that the answer is strongly affirmative, as all of the following show regular developments from an older locative prefix **k-*:

- (15) a. Kl i. *s-č-√tə́ŋx^w-ən* ii. *č-√ʔiyá*
 NOMZR-be.from-land-INSTR be.from-there
 ‘from/in/of the territory’ ‘to be from there; ever since’
- b. Cv *k-√cw=ínaʔ-nt*
 at*-be.put.somewhere*=area.that.covers-TR
 ‘put something under a cover’
- c. Sp *č-√taʔ=qín[-n]*
 at*-hit=head-1.SG.A
 ‘I hit him in the head’
- d. Cb *k[-]həm[•]√hə́mp[=]jávš*
 at*-RED-fall.off=be.in.contact*
 ‘fall off’
- e. Cr *č-*
 ‘on, attached to but not part of, at a point’

This prefix shows signs of productivity in the northern Olympic Peninsula (Central Coast Salish) language Klallam, where it appears in a goodly number of location words such as (15a). In Southern

Interior Salish languages, it appears even more productive, being found on many dozens of action verbs, viz. (15b–e). Such broad geographic distribution suggests a Proto-Salish prefix **kə-* across the family, not previously reconstructed in the literature.

Confirming phonological evidence is found, too, in the shape of the stem for ‘Chinook’ in the conservative Tenino dialect of Upper Chehalis, as documented in Kinkade’s 1991 dictionary (16):

- (16) TUp i. <*k·a nokw[-]lot*>
 Chinook-dish/spoon
 ‘Chinook horn spoon’
- ii. <*K·yano kʷ[-]qʷ*>
 Chinook-voice/talking/language/word
 ‘Lewis River language and Chinook Jargon’¹⁴

TUp maintains Proto-Salish **k/* (Kinkade 1991:v), whereas the rest of Up has developed that phoneme to /č/, as have Lo, neighboring Lushootseed and Twana, and (albeit incompletely) nearby Qn and Cz (cf. Kuipers 2002:3). Thus, we have here, in a dialect of the language most closely related to Lo, the preservation of the postulated original morpheme **kə-* of ‘Chinook’.

4 The meaning of **√nákʷ/núkʷ*

Having found a plausible prefix, we can easily account for the meaning of the remainder of the word. The historical **√nákʷ/núkʷ* indicated by our parse must descend from the only phonologically corresponding form reconstructed by Kuipers (2002), a Proto-Salish root that he shows as follows:

- (17) **√nakʷ/*√nkʷ-uʔ*
 ‘one, another, (in derivatives:) family, tribe’
 [for **√nakʷ*:] ‘to change, differ’¹⁵

The Lo labialization of the final consonant is likely due to the following **u/*. De-ejectivization of the same segment is unremarkable; in the ancestors of Lo, Kuipers (2002) reconstructs several roots

¹⁴ The formulation ‘Lewis River language’ would at first blush appear to mean a tribal language of the northern Cowlitz Salish territory bordering on Taidnapam Sahaptin. But with this word being equated with Chinook Jargon, it is more likely that this gloss should be taken as a reference to the early- and long-established creole CJ-speaking Métis community occupying the lands between old Forts Vancouver and Nisqually. (Cf. *Centralia Daily Hub* 1915, Bureau of Indian Affairs 1997.)

¹⁵ Kuipers does not explain his hyphen in P-S **√nkʷ-uʔ*, nor provide an entry for a putative P-S suffix *-uʔ*, but juxtaposes a comment “[Interior] S[alish] **√nkʷuʔ*”, a form which means the numeral ‘one’ in, e.g., Spokane. I suspect all of this represents his trying to reconcile the reconstruction of two distinct yet obviously related root shapes, the latter being more recently formed via the well-known Salish phenomenon of historical metathesis (Noonan 1997), in particular the characteristic development from Proto-Salish **CVC* → Interior Salish *CCV* in the case of “stress-shifting roots” plus “variable-stress suffixes” (see Carlson 1972:26ff for a good discussion of these). For the semantic range ‘one; another’ within a single morpheme, cf. a third locally spoken language, the pidgin-creole Chinuk Wawa, in which *íxt* means both ‘one’ and ‘a (certain) other one’ (Robertson 2012:189), and further afield Proto-Arawakan ‘one; another’ (Aikhenvald 2019:109).

likewise manifesting a variably ejective velar stop — tellingly, all also in coda (or at least non-initial, viz. (18b i)) position:

- (18) a. P-S
- i. *√cák(ʼ)^w
‘to pull out, drag’
 - ii. *_s-√cik(ʼ)
‘fir or pine cone, acorn, nut’
 - iii. *√wat(ʼ)k(ʼ)
‘to pry/lever up; vomit’
 - iv. *√x^wi/ak(ʼ)^w
‘to wipe, brush, smooth, clean, bathe’
 - v. *√yəw^wk/*√yuk^w/*√?awk^w
‘property, stingy’
- b. P-C-S
- i. *√məxk(ʼ)n
‘(head)louse’
 - ii. *√p(ʼ)k(ʼ)
‘mosquito’
- (c) C-S-Li-Th *√qəp(ʼ)x^w/k(ʼ)^w
‘to crunch (when chewed)’

For examples of this P-S root being used to refer to an ethnic collectivity in modern Salish languages of respectively the Interior and Coast branches, cf. the following:

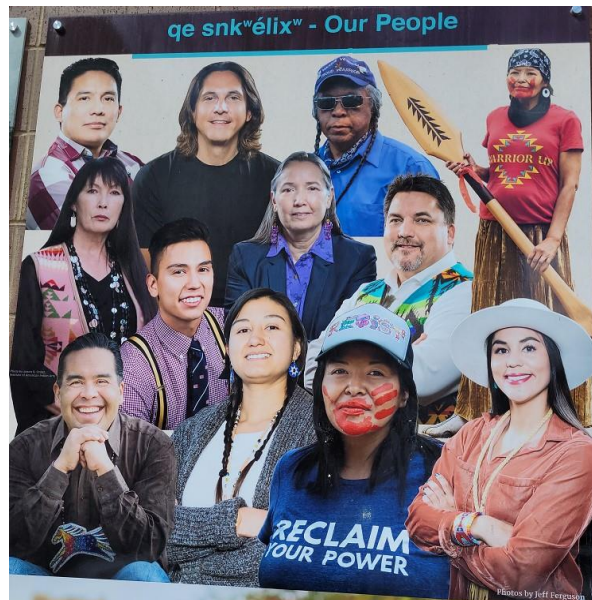


Figure 1: *qe snkʷélixʷ* in Spokane Tribe of Indians signage at Huntington Park in Spokane, WA, photographed by me on April 20, 2023.

- (19) a. Sp *qe* $s[-\sqrt{]nk^w[-]}\acute{e}lix^w$
 I.PL.POSS NOMZ= \sqrt{one} =people
 ‘our people, our tribe’
- b. Ld $s-\sqrt{duk^w}=\acute{a}l[-]bix^w$ ¹⁶
 NOMZ= $\sqrt{change/transform}$ =STEMX=people
 ‘Snoqualmie; (member of the) Snoqualmie people’
 (DDR: approximately ‘the other tribe’)
- c. Ti i. $du\acute{c}[-]j\acute{e}t$
 other*-*?
 ‘different’
- ii. $s-du\acute{c}[-]j\acute{e}t$
 NOMZ-other*-*?
 ‘another way’ (direction of motion)¹⁷

As a root, the footprint in modern Lo of $*\sqrt{nak^w}/n\acute{u}k^w$ is evidently limited to the word for ‘Chinook’ plus, I suggest, one affective mutation:¹⁸

- (20) $s-\sqrt{n\acute{i}\acute{c}}-a$
 NOMZ= $\sqrt{sink}/\sqrt{together}$ -AFF
 ‘a character in Nellie Walker’s story; partner’

The two glosses for (20) reflect dual etymologies, with only ‘partner’ tracing to $*\sqrt{nak^w}/n\acute{u}k^w$. The story-character gloss is probably to be identified with ‘loon’,¹⁹ cf. Up and Cz $\langle .snicha \rangle$, based on

¹⁶ The Ld root is glossed by Bates et al. (1994) thus, with a long note appended to this word suggesting that coastal Indians thought the upriver-dwelling Snoqualmies ferocious. However, this root is almost certainly of the same etymology as Ld $\sqrt{duk^w}$ ‘strange, bad, worthless, unsatisfying’, with a unifying semantics of ‘other’, and to be traced to P-S $*\sqrt{nak^w}/*\sqrt{nk^w}(u?)$. (P-S $*n >$ Ld d , Kuipers 2002:3.) Another, presumably quite old, Ld word using this root is the myth character’s name $D\acute{u}k^wib\acute{a}t$ ‘Transformer, Changer (The being who changed the world from what it was to its present form)’ (Bates et al. 1994), as it uses the root in a sense more like that in P-S and its suffix appears to be otherwise unused within Ld but is cognate with Olympic Peninsula Salish forms: Kl $-ij\acute{a}t$ ‘perform a customary activity’, Proto-Tsamosan $*-m(‘)\acute{a}t$ ‘Implied Transitive’, i.e., forming “unergative” verbs whose sole argument is Agent. Because I have mentioned the common Coast Salish myth element of punning, it is worth pointing out that Ld $-ib\acute{a}t$ strongly resembles Ld (and Central Coast Salish) $\sqrt{\gamma}ib\acute{a}t$ ‘walk, travel or journey over land by any means’; $D\acute{u}k^wib\acute{a}t$ stories prominently involve his “stalking through the world and asking everyone, ‘What are you doing?’” (Conrad & Langen 1996:63).

¹⁷ Although he does so for most modern Salish languages and dialects thereof, Kuipers (2002) unfortunately does not itemize the phonological developments from P-S to modern Ti. I find it plausible that $/d/$ here reflects P-S $*/n/$.

¹⁸ Earlier Lo $*\sqrt{nak^w}/n\acute{u}k^w > \sqrt{na\acute{c}}$ by the regular development from P-S $*k$; by a widespread AFF process in the language, $\acute{a} > i$ in roots.

¹⁹ Loon is an Olympic Peninsula Salish myth character, e.g., among the Skokomish (Allen & Allen 2008) and the Klallam (Lévi-Strauss 1990:200).

the homophonous $\sqrt{n\acute{o}\check{c}}$ ‘sink’. (Whereas the usual Lo and Qn name for this diving bird is $\sim x^w\acute{a}t\acute{\lambda}al(i)$.)²⁰

In point of fact, the various meanings of P-S $*\sqrt{nak}'/*\sqrt{nk}'-u?$ are now normally borne by other modern Lo roots:

- (21) a. $s-\sqrt{x^w\acute{u}q^w-t}$ (with a pan-Tsamosan root)
 NOMZ- $\sqrt{gather-INTR.PERF}$
 ‘relatives’ (compare the quotation at the Introduction of this paper)
- b. $\sqrt{p\acute{a}w}$ (cf. P-Ce-S $*\sqrt{pala?}$ ‘one’)
 one
 ‘one’
- c. $\sqrt{\lambda x^w[-]il=ap\check{s}}$ (cf. P-S $*\sqrt{\lambda i/ax^w\acute{a}l}$ ‘some, different’)
 other[=]STEMX=stream
 ‘Willapa’ (literally ‘the other stream’, a place name)

But ancient $*\sqrt{nak}'/*\sqrt{nk}'-u?$ retains an additional presence as an unstressed Lo prefix that, like $*k\acute{o}-$ from P-S $*\sqrt{ka(n)}$, has grammaticalized from a root, here into a Lo affix $n\acute{a}k^w-$, now signifying pluractional ‘together’:

- (22) a. $n\acute{a}k^w-\acute{a}l'$
 together-?
 ‘people staying together’
- b. $n\acute{a}k^w-\sqrt{\acute{\lambda}ak^w}$
 together- $\sqrt{sit.PL}$
 ‘[female] spouse, wife, person living with you; call my co-wife the same’

The semantics of the above are compatible with our proposed etymology, and with an ethnonym.²¹

²⁰ ‘Sink’, as a Salish pun (cf. Robertson 2018), may have influenced both (i) the nickname of a local boy remembered for falling into an outhouse and (ii) which, like many personal names in Lo, is of uncertain etymology:

- (i) $s-\sqrt{n\acute{o}\check{c}-i}$
 NOMZ- $\sqrt{sink/\sqrt{together-AFF}}$
 ‘the nickname of one community member’
- (ii) $(\sqrt{)}n\acute{o}\check{c}[-]\acute{\lambda}q\acute{t}[-]ju?$
 $\sqrt{sink/\sqrt{together-?-DIM}}$
 ‘[personal name]’

Also to be considered in light of a pun in (ii) is the noun $s-=\acute{n}\acute{o}\check{c}$ (NOMZ-=buttocks) ‘area around rectum’. (Although suffixes normally occur with a root, Lo indeed has rootless words formed with the historically incorporated nouns now functioning as “lexical suffixes”, e.g., $\lambda\acute{a}c-=\acute{o}\check{c}$ (ST=house) ‘inside the house’.)

²¹ Further apparent developments from P-S $*\sqrt{nak}'/*\sqrt{nk}'-u?$ in the neighboring Tsamosan Salish languages also carry a sense of ‘together; neighboring; etc.’ For example, the Upper Chehalis lexical suffix $=nuk^w$, presented without a gloss (Kinkade 1991:358) but appearing only in the stem $\acute{q}i^w=nuk^w-$ ‘call; invite’ (the root has this same gloss) appears to be a cognate. The Up lexical suffix presented as $=nuk^w\acute{s}n$ ‘blanket’ (1991:358) also perhaps traces in part to the ‘together’ root, viz. its occurrence only with the root for ‘stick

Extrapolating from our understanding of the longtime adjacency of Łəwálməš with Natítanui, *čə-√nákʷ/núkʷ might mean approximately ‘the neighbors there; the tribe there’ and even ‘those relatives’. These senses appear probable, given the traditional intermarriage and village-level asymmetrical bilingualism of Lower Chinookan and Lower Chehalis speakers.²²

5 Historical usage of “Chinook”

Importantly, the Lower Chinookans themselves may have used this same term in speaking of both themselves (Silverstein 1990:544, citing Ray 1938:35–36) and their Salish neighbor-interlocutors. This could help explain the very real confusion over which ethnic group or groups the name “Chinook” denoted in the first several decades of contact with Europeans. A good illustration thereof is that various of the earliest collected vocabularies of southern-dialect Lower Chehalis are labeled as “Chinook”; in that era the well-known word “Chehalis” normally meant specifically the northern Lower Chehalis, inhabiting the estuary of the Chehalis River:

- British naturalist John Scouler’s comparative wordlists of Pacific Northwest languages label as “Cheenook[:] entrance of Columbia River” what is a clearly southern-dialect Lower Chehalis vocabulary (1841:243, 245, 247 [1825 data]).

in; pin’ in *sác=nukʷsn* ‘blanket pin, brass pin’. Another possible grammaticalization from the P-S root is the Up preverbal particle *nkʷs* ‘habitual action’.

²² Two corollaries of my analysis:

(1) Certain widely cited 19th-century phonetic representations of “Chinook” as beginning with a <ts> or <t’s> (in present-day Americanist Phonetic Alphabet /c/, IPA [t͡s]), seem untenable. (The <t’s> variant is not to be understood as ejective /č/ [t͡sʰ], simply because Euro-American scholars of that early stage in Pacific Northwest research did not notate that manner of articulation.) All such appear to be in secondary sources. Perhaps the earliest is <Tsinuk> in Gallatin (1848:15), summarizing Hale, who himself consistently wrote <Tshinuk> (1846:143 et al.). The variant using an apostrophe goes at least back to <T’sinuk> in Powers (1877:445). Both appear to be revisions based on misunderstanding Hale’s careful phonetics and/or assuming that [t͡s] is an especially “Indian” syllable onset. It may be remarked that /c/ is a legitimate diminutive sound-symbolic consonant alternation of /č/ within Chinookan languages (viz. Boas 1910:639), but the reader is reminded of footnote 3’s finding that *čənúkʷ* is not attested in the Natítanui language, not to mention that motivation for a diminutive form is not obvious. More puzzling is Boas’s nonce rendering of the name, with an ejective affricate notation, as <Ts!inu’k> in the Salish language of “their northern neighbors, the Chehalis” — a vague reference, cf. §5 — in the same work (1910:563). It is the primary-source literature’s sole suggestion of a /č/ in the word, and it conflicts with Boas’ own clearly non-ejective <*tcenu’k*> /čənúkʷ/ in Charles Cultee’s Lower Chehalis (Boas 1890:12).

(2) The “stem” or root <-ənux> ‘others, apart’ in Natítanui Lower Chinookan (Boas 1910:659; e.g., in <tf-*Jánux*> ‘the others’, Boas 1894:167) is perhaps a loan from Lower Chehalis Salish √nákʷ/núkʷ, as the meanings and phonetics correlate well. (Lower Chinookan dorsal stops such as /k/ frequently alternate — independently of sound-symbolic diminutive and augmentative mutations (Boas 1910:638ff) — with fricative realizations such as /x/, surely having to do with their tendency to a “decided affricative character”, Boas 1910:566.) It is just one, less frequently occurring, member of a set of synonymous roots and stems in Natítanui, a distribution which could be due to its relatively recent borrowing. I have not found it in my electronic searches of text collections in the other three, upriver, Chinookan languages (Boas 1894; Jacobs 1958–1959; Sapir 1909). It is one of a large number of apparent Salish-to-Chinookan loans that I have found, the large majority of them confined to Lower Chinookan and thus to likely Lower Chehalis sources, in my unpublished ongoing research, viz.

- French diplomat and polymath Eugène Dufloy de Mofras labels his Lower Chehalis word list “Tchinouks” (1844:401 [early 1840s data]).
- Influential American frontier linguist George Gibbs, in tabulating ostensibly Lower Chinookan placenames of the Columbia River’s north bank, includes a number of typical southern Lower Chehalis Salish ones, notably one for “Chinook” Point (1863:22 [1850s data]).
- American settler James G. Swan, who lived in intimate contact with the Shoalwater Bay Natítanui and southern Łəwálməš community for three years, makes an effort to distinguish the “Chehalis” and “Chenook or Jargon” languages, yet still has major confusion between them (1857:412–421 [1854–1857 data]).
- Scotsman and former Hudson’s Bay Co. trader William Fraser Tolmie’s word list of the “Tshinook” language of the “Tshinook Tribe” — tellingly printed next to a column of “Tsheheilis: Stáktámish Tribe” (this being Upper Chehalis) — is southern Lower Chehalis (1884:51–61 [circa 1833–1859 data]). In a particularly fascinating detail, this vocabulary was collected from “a Songis[h] woman who had long been as a slave among the *Tshinook*”, which shows that this native Northern Straits Salish speaker from the Victoria, Vancouver Island area understood the owners with whom she spoke Salish to be “Chinooks” (1884: 121)!

By contrast, references throughout early decades of contact to a “Chehalis” language and people typically speak of these as being somewhat to the north of these Salish “Chinooks” (cf. footnote 17). These take some effort to track in the early literature, as that Salish place name was spelled haphazardly. Examples include:

- <Chiltz> (MacGregor 1997:169 [Gass 1806])
- <Chee-hee-lees> (Belcher 1843[1839]:307)
- <Tsihailish/Chickailis/Chilts> (Hale 1846:569 [1841])

These are more logically interpreted as the northern dialect(s) of Lower Chehalis, such as Wynoochee and Humptulips, but especially that of the Grays Harbor area (the Chehalis River estuary), than as the southern-dialect Lower Chehalis who were intermixed with the Natítanui. The very name “Chehalis” is Lo *čəxíls* ‘sandy’, universally understood as the name of a major village near modern Westport on Grays Harbor at the mouth of the Chehalis River, in far northern Lo territory. Even Hale, a perceptive and industrious linguist who first perceived the unity of the farflung Salish (<Tsiheili-Selish>) language family, confusingly reports the “Western Branch” of it, coterminous with modern linguists’ “Tsamosan”, as split simply between Cowlitz and <Tsihailish> (1846:211). The latter branch he reports to inhabit “the middle of the [Olympic] Peninsula” (loc. cit.), comprising (1846:569) these groups:

- <Kwaiantl> (*kʷəyáñt- kʷəyáñt* ‘Oyhut’ in Lo, the name of the farthest northern dialect thereof, north of the Chehalis River’s mouth in the Grays Harbor estuary)
- <Tsihailish> (which Hale seems to mean as all Salish along the Chehalis River, including northern Lower Chehalis and Upper Chehalis, which is now reckoned a separate language)
- <Kwenaiwitl> (Quinalt, which is now considered a distinct language)

Thus, “Chinook” may well have become the commonly accepted outsider designation of all Indigenous peoples of the southwestern corner of present Washington state, without regard to their self-identification or language. It would seem from its ubiquity that both Native neighbors and new Euro-American arrivals employed this broad terminology.

Among other applications of it, the name of the pidgin-creole language containing large amounts of both Natítanui and Łəwálməš is therefore quite appropriately “Chinook Jargon” and *Chinúk Wáwa*.²³

6 Summary

In summary, the most plausible etymology for the exonym “Chinook” is a Lower Chehalis (Łəwálməš) Salish *čə-√nə/úk^(w) ~ ‘at the neighbors’.

This word uses a prefix not productive in modern Łəwálməš. But the prefix *čə- is still reflected elsewhere in Salish, and seemingly is reconstructible to Proto-Salish. Possible reflexes of it in Tillamook, Nuxalk, Northern Coast Salish, and Central Coast Salish (beyond the Klallam variety of Straits) remain to be researched. Also awaiting investigation is the possible cognacy of a broad set of forms:

- Lo/Qn/Kl (the presence of the latter implying Proto-Olympic Peninsula Salish, a grouping broader than Tsamosan, that is not hitherto noted in the specialist literature) *kə- ‘at’.
- Two P-S forms already highlighted by Kuipers (2002:38) as perhaps interrelated:
 - *√ka(n) ‘be where [etc.]’.
 - *k ‘clitic...to which [non-subjunctive] personal subject-suffixes are added’.
- k/č-shaped morphemes in Southern Interior Salish analyzed by modern linguists variously as particles, clitics, and prefixes, with a range of glosses.
- čə/at- forms meaning ‘tribe; habitual occupation; at’ in Coast and Southern Interior Salish.

The root in “Chinook” is likewise P-S in vintage, rare in modern Lo, but appearing in numerous words denoting tribes and groups of people across this language family.

I have further suggested that the etymology of “Chinook”, as an exonym par excellence, likely reciprocally employed by the jointly Lo-speaking Natítanui and Łəwálməš, may help explain the enduring confusion among Euro-American newcomers over the precise identity of those labeled by it. By corollary, a new understanding of “Chinook” as having designated simultaneously the Lower Chinookans and Lower Chehalis Salish tends to clear up longstanding analytical simplifications that have held that Chinook Jargon is a pidgin (and creole) having only the Natítanui language as its target, a.k.a. superstrate, a.k.a. lexifier. (Cf. Harris 1994; Robertson 2007:153; Lang 2008)

It is my hope that this first-ever contribution of a historical meaning behind “Chinook” will be of use in the ongoing efforts at revitalization of Southwest Washington State tribal language and culture. This is one small example of the need to repatriate Indigenous intangible cultural heritage, here in the form of Native metaphors that would have been difficult, or impossible, to recover from English-language sources.

²³ Perhaps further supporting my analysis of this word as a generic for Natives of modern Pacific County, Washington, the Athabaskan tribes whose historical territory abuts Natítanui and Łəwálməš lands, the Willapas, are traditionally considered part of the “Chinook Nation” as well (T. Johnson, p.c.).

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