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# ON THE REDUCTION OF KIKA TO KA IN PLAINS CREE

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Wolfart 1973 (Plains Cree: A Grammatical Study), in discussing the Cree preverb ka- which marks subsequence or futurity, notes (p. 77) that "the shape ka also occurs as a contraction (haplology) of the personal prefix ki- followed by the preverb ka-." An example of this is: nīstanaw atimwak kā-muwāwāwak (PCT, p. 8, §13) 'You will eat twenty dogs'. Wolfart mentions no conditioning factors governing the distribution of ka- versus kika-, and indeed none are apparent from an examination of representative examples from Bloomfield 1934 (Plains Cree Texts [PCT])<sup>1</sup> Wolfart, therefore, is proposing a synchronic derivation by which an underlying sequence /ki + ka + + X/ becomes [ka-X] via a haplological shortening. At the same time, although Wolfart himself says nothing about the diachrony of this ka-, it is reasonable to posit an historical derivation for it which is parallel to the synchronic one, and so also involves haplology.

There are, however, some problems with this proposal. First, although haplology is certainly a real and well-attested type of phonological process, it is not an especially common or natural one and does differ from other processes in many respects, such as mode of application; accordingly, it should only be posited diachronically when absolutely necessary and only if well-motivated and warranted by the data; moreover, haplology should similarly be used only sparingly, if at all, in synchronic grammars.<sup>2</sup> This is especially so in

this case, for there does not appear to be any independent evidence for such a systematic haplology of this sort either synchronically or diachronically in Cree.<sup>3</sup> Finally, and this is a point related to the others, there are similar sequences in Cree which do not undergo (or have not undergone) such haplological shortening, such as the preverb sequence kā-kī(h)- 'subordinator + past', or the adverb kākikā 'always', and in addition, kika- itself does occur so that the reduction to ka- is optional. Thus synchronically the haplology rule must be severely restricted and if it reflects a diachronic sound change, that change must be considered to have been a sporadic one.

There are, of course, ways around these problems. Haplology by its very nature is often sporadic, so the occurrence of both the full form kika- and similar sequences like kā-kī(h)- can be attributed to this aspect of haplology. However, there is an alternative way of accounting for ka- as a reduction of kika- which merits consideration since it avoids the need to invoke haplology.

It is well-known that the high front vowel -i- is often syncopated in Cree; this is most likely a fast or casual speech reduction process, though the exact conditioning factors are unclear. Thus, in Bloomfield's PCT, the following representative examples of syncope occur: nāntaw 'at all' (p. 290, §133), mna 'again' (p. 284, §72), mtuni 'very much' (p. 290, §130), and so on, beside full, nonsyncopated forms, nānitaw (p. 284, §67), mina (p. 290, §127), mituni (p. 282, §49), etc. The full and reduced forms can even occur virtually side-by-side, as in npahāw, nīsu nipahāw 'he killed him; he killed two of them' (p. 290, §123). Similarly, the personal prefixes can undergo syncope, as in nnōhtāhka-tān 'I am hungry' (p. 178, §104), kkakwā-nakatonānaw 'we shall have a race' (p. 282, §53). Thus it is possible that ka- for kika- is the result of syncope, giving kka-, followed by a degemination/cluster-reduction, yielding ka-.

In fact, syncope with the personal prefixes is possible before the preverb ka- as in nk-asiskwāsimun 'I shall lay my head down' (p. 8, §13) with the first person prefix, and, more important for the proposal at hand, the syncopated form kka- with the second person prefix is to be found as

well, for example tāpiskōts nipāwinis kk-ā-sihtānāwaw 'you will make something like a bed' (p. 8, §13). Thus, the intermediate stage posited in this account of the derivation of ka- from kika- is not merely hypothetical, but reflects an actually-occurring Cree surface form.

Admittedly, this degemination/cluster-reduction process has no parallels in Cree except in these cases which seem to involve syncope (though see below), but once syncope is recognized in the derivation of ka- from kika-, degemination becomes a necessary step. Moreover, utilizing the syncope of -i- in the explanation of ka- has the advantage of allowing one to account for the sequence of kVkv- which do not haplologize -- in particular, a sequence like kā-kī(h)-, while certainly a candidate for haplology, could not undergo syncope since the vowel -ā- is not one that can syncope; accordingly a "contracted" form kī- for kā-kī(h)- should never arise. Similarly, since syncope is optional (conditioned probably by tempo), the full form kika- would be expected to occur at times, as it in fact does.

All that would be needed, then, to account for this use of ka- from a diachronic standpoint is for some surface occurrences of ka-, arising by the tempo-conditioned syncope and subsequent degemination, to have been re-analyzed as special variant forms of kika- and thus be free to occur in places where a derivation via syncope would not necessarily be warranted (e.g. in more careful or slower speech). This would explain why synchronically no conditioning factors for the use of ka- as opposed to kika- can be found. Thus, if the diachronic derivation of ka- from kika- is as posited here, haplology need not be invoked at all. Moreover, even a synchronic rule becomes unnecessary. for ka- can be treated simply as a specially-listed variant form of kika- which is not related to it systematically by means of such a rule.

Finally, in parallel fashion to the reduction of kika-, syncope can be used in an account of the optional reduction of the future preverb kita- to ta-. The variant form ta- could well represent the result of syncope followed by cluster reduction, i.e. kita- → \*kta- → ta-, even though the intermediate stage in this case is

apparently unattested and syncope does create some unusual clusters which are not reduced, e.g. nstumitanaw 'thirty' (PCT, p. 166, §18). Still, the reductions of kika- to ka- and kita- to ta- seem to be related phenomena, inasmuch as they both involve the loss of an initial syllable ki- (although the lost ki- is not the second person prefix in the case of kita-). If they are in fact related and if, therefore, the reduction process is not restricted to phonetically alike syllables, then the use of haplology in the account of the kika- to ka- development must be rejected, for it does not extend naturally to the kita- to ta- reduction while syncope plus cluster reduction can do so.<sup>4</sup>

Admittedly, there are some problems with the account of ka- given here and the extension to ta-. However, given the nature of the problem addressed here and the available data bearing on it, it is impossible to prove conclusively that one explanation or another for ka- (etc.) is the correct one; thus it is important to consider all possible and reasonable explanations. It is in this spirit that the account given here for ka- involving syncope is offered. Further research may well decide the issue.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. The preceding environment (especially -k#) was checked and found to have no effect on the reduction of kika- to ka-.

2. In fact, David Stampe (personal communication) has gone so far as to suggest that what in many instances can be described as haplology synchronically and diachronically is more often than not a two-step process of syncope and consonant cluster simplification, and may involve even more phonetic stages. 3. However, there are some instances of

haplology of a sporadic nature more on the order of speech errors. Bloomfield (p. 222, footnote 2) notes that the form tit-otāmi-yān is "an error of speech or record for tit-ōtōtāmiyān, from utōtāmiw: 'he has a kinsman' and the sentence should be translated 'to have a Plains Cree in my family'. Thus, it may be that the sequence /tō-tō/ was reduced via haplology in this nonce form to [to]. Also (p. 228, footnote 1) Bloomfield suggests that ākā uh-pih-wīhta-mākawiin should read ākā

k-ōh-pāh-wīhtamākawiyin with the second person prefix k(i)- being lost in this instance possibly due to the preceding like syllable -kā-; if so, then this could be another haplological nonce form.

4. Another possible case is the form uhpwāmāyiw 'he lifts his ham' PCT (p. 300, footnote 1) which Bloomfield considers

incorrect, the correct form being uhpipwāmāyiw. In that case, syncope plus degemination/cluster reduction (uhpipw --> uhppw --> uhpw) could explain the incorrect form in the text. However, since this seems to be an isolated instance of this kind, it is possible that the reduced form is more like the forms cited in footnote 3.

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