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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 (hapology) of the personal prefix ki— followed by the preverb ka—." An example of this is: nistaw 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]). Wolfart, therefore, is proposing a synchronic derivation by which an underlying sequence /ki + ka + + X/ becomes [ka-X] via a hapological 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 hapology.

There are, however, some problems with this proposal. First, although hapology 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, hapology should similarly be used only sparingly, if at all, in synchronic grammars. This is especially so in this case, for there does not appear to be any independent evidence for such a systematic hapology of this sort either synchronically or diachronically in Cree. 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 hapological shortening, such as the preverb sequence kā-kif(h)— 'subordinator + past', or the adverb kā-kikā 'always', and in addition, kika— itself does occur so that the reduction to ka— is optional. Thus synchronically the hapology 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. Hapology by its very nature is often sporadic, so the occurrence of both the full form kika— and similar sequences like kā-kif(h)— can be attributed to this aspect of hapology. 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 hapology.

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, §13), mna 'again' (p. 284, §72), mtunī 'very much' (p. 290, §130), and so on, beside full, nonsyncopated forms, nānitaw (p. 284, §67), mna (p. 290, §127), mtunī (p. 282, §49), etc. The full and reduced forms can even occur virtually side-by-side, as in npahāw, ntsu nipahāw 'he killed him; he killed two of them' (p. 290, §123). Similarly, the personal prefixes can undergo syncope, as in nndōthkak-tān 'I am hungry' (p. 178, §104), kkakwā-nakatunānaw '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-aspēskwāsimun '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-
sihtānaw 'you will make something like a
bed' (p. 8, 13). Thus, the intermediate
stage posited in this account of the deri-
vation of ka- from kika- is not merely
hypothetical, but reflects an actually-oc-
curring 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 syn-
cope is recognized in the derivation of ka-
from kika-, degemination becomes a neces-
 Cassary step. Moreover, utilizing the syncope of -i- in the explanation of ka- has the advantage of allowing one to account for the sequence of kVVV- which do not haplo-
gize -- in particular, a sequence like
kā-kī(h)-, while certainly a candidate for
haplogy, could not undergo syncope since
the vowel -a- is not one that can synco-
pate; accordingly a "contracted" form kī-
for kā-kī(h)- should never arise. Simi-
larly, since syncope is optional (condi-
tioned 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 dia-
chronic standpoint is for some surface
occurrences of ka-, arising by the tempo-
conditioned syncope and subsequent degem-
nation, to have been re-analyzed as special
variant forms of kika- and thus be free to
occur in places where a derivation via syn-
cope would not necessarily be warranted
(i.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, haplogy need not be
invoked at all. Moreover, even a syn-
chronic 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--→ k̊ta- --→ ta-, even though the
Intermediate stage in this case is
apparently unattested and syncope does cre-
te some unusual clusters which are not
reduced, e.g. natumitanaw 'thirty' (PCT,
p. 166, 118). 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
haplogy 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.*

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 expla-
nations. It is in this spirit that the
account given here for ka- involving syn-
cope is offered. Further research may well
decide the issue.

FOOTNOTES

1. The preceding environment (especially
-ki̊ ) was checked and found to have no
effect on the reduction of kika to ka.
2. In fact, David Stampe (personal commu-
nication) has gone so far as to suggest
that what in many instances can be
described as haplogy 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
haplogy of a sporadic nature more on the
order of speech errors. Bloomfield (p. 222,
footnote 2) notes that the form tit-otâmi-
yân is "an error of speech or record for
tit-otâmiyan, from utotâni: 'he has a
kinsman' and the sentence should be trans-
lated 'to have a Plains Cree in my family'.
Thus, it may be that the sequence /t̊ο-t̊ο/
was reduced via haplogy in this nonce
form to [to]. Also (p. 228, footnote 1)
Bloomfield suggests that k̊ka uh-pih-ẘhta-
mâkawiyan should read k̊ka
k-Oh-pah-wIhtamakawiyin 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 haplogological nonce form.

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