NOUN INCORPORATION IN NATCHEZ

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In an earlier paper I have discussed the problem of noun incorporation in the Muskogean languages (1941). Examples were taken from the several languages. Further examples are cited more recently by Booker (1979). It is generally supposed that the process goes back to the protolanguage. Natchez, a language isolate found in the same general area of the Southeast as the Muskogean languages, also exhibits some examples of noun incorporation.

Before giving examples of Natchez noun incorporation I would like to make brief mention of another characteristic of the Natchez language which must be distinguished from noun incorporation, namely the direct use of some Natchez noun stems as verb stems. Examples:

(1) a. Noun stem: ?ic 'blood'
   b. Verb stem: ?ic-ha·?is 'to bleed' (-ha·?is, copular auxiliary) ?ic-hal?iš 'to make bleed' (-hal?iš, causative, transitive aux.)

(2) a. Noun stem: ?uwah 'fire'
   b. Verb stem: ?uwah-heti·?is 'to get hot, firey'
   ?uwah-halšiš 'to be hot (in the sun)' (-halšiš, indirective-benefactive of -hal?iš)
   ?uwah-helu·?is 'to light a fire' (helu·?is, trans. aux.)

(3) a. Noun stem: ?ihi 'mouth'
   b. Verb stem: ?ihi-heti·?is 'to sound, blow a horn, (rooster) to crow' (-heti·?is, aux.).

In the examples above ?ic, ?uwah, and ?ihi, as active verb stems, are combined with auxiliary verbs but not with other active verb stems. Examples of noun incorporation involve the combination of a noun stem and a verb stem, as in the following use of ?uwah:

(4) ?uwah-le-hal?iš 'to boil...(food, meat)', lit. 'to fire-set' le-hal?iš 'to set...' (-hal?iš).

And the noun ?ihi can also be incorporated, as in:

(5) ?ihi-laku·-haw?iš 'to rinse the mouth' (laku·- is found only here but clearly means 'to rinse', -haw?iš, transitive aux.)

Besides ?ihi above, another body-part stem used in noun incorporation

in this language is 'i·š 'hand' and it enters into several combinations:

(6) a. 'i·šle-hal?iš 'to point', 'i·šle-halši?iš 'to point to'  
(ie- 'to hold out straight, to point', -hal?iš, aux.,  
-halši?iš, indirective-benefactive aux.)

b. 'i·špo·kpo·k-halši?iš 'to clap, slap with the hand'. Cf.  
po·k-hal?iš 'to burst...', po·k-haki?iš 'to pop, crackle'  
(-haki?iš, intransitive aux.)

c. 'i·šwici·helu·ši?iš 'to shake hands' (-helu·ši?iš,  
indirective-benefactive of -helu·iš aux.). An example  
of wici· without 'i·š has not turned up, but it appears  
to refer to grasping. The custom of shaking hands is a  
European one, so this form is likely to have been a  
post-Columbian innovation.

d. 'i·šci·ši·-hešku?iš 'to swear' (-hešku?iš, intransitive,  
transitive aux.). An example of ci·ši- without 'i·š has  
not been found, but the combination probably refers to  
placing one's hand on the Bible or else raising the right  
hand. Hence this form also is apparently a post-Colum­  
bian innovation.

Since 'i·š 'hand' occurs in several combinations one naturally wonders if  
'a·t 'foot' can also be incorporated. Only one such form has been found:

(7) 'a·tša·-hešku?iš 'to step, walk' (-hešku?iš, aux.). No  
separate occurrence of ša·- has turned up.

Other noun stems are also used in noun incorporation but they fit  
into a variety of more general categories and the total number of such  
sterms is, in any event, limited. A common one is 'u· 'road, trail'.
e. "u·toytoy-hetahnu·?iš 'to run a race' (-htahnu·?iš, reciprocal aux.)

Another interesting noun stem found in incorporation is wit 'day', as in:


b. witle-hal?iš 'to set the day (for an event)'. le-hal?iš 'to set...'. Both of these forms appear to be the result of European influence and the second, indeed, is a straightforward calque.

Interestingly enough, 'eN 'fish' enters into several formations:

(10) a. eNcak-hal?iš 'to spear fish; fish-spear, gig'. cak-hal?iš 'to stick, spear...'

b. eNpac-haLsi?iš 'to fish with hook and line'. pac-hal?iš 'to hang...', pac-haLsi?iš 'to hang...on'.

c. eNšo·-hal?iš 'to fish, hunt for fish'. šo·-haw?iš 'to hunt (for game)'.

The noun ?inu 'name' appears in one construction:

(11) ?ino?o'-haWši?iš 'to name...'. ?o'-haw?iš 'to call, halloa'. ?inu has assimilated to the o of ?o·-

The final examples incorporate the noun ?e' t 'house'.

(12) a. ?e·tka-haci?iš 'to enter'. Cf. ka-haci?iš 'to get in, go in' (-haci?iš, intransitive aux.)

b. ?e·tka-haku?iš 'to put...in'. Cf. ka-haku?iš 'to put in, on' (-haku?iš, transitive aux.). All active verb stems have a plural form (implying plural of subject) made according to regular rule. If the plural form of 'e·tka- was regular it would be *e·tka·- (lengthening of final vowel if short). But quite unexpectedly the correct form here is ?e·ca·- (as in ?e·ca·-haci?iš 'several to enter') and there are no other instances of tk being replaced by c.

Noun incorporation in Natchez is not a widespread phenomenon. Still there is greater variation than is found in the Muskogean languages. There are several other interesting differences between Natchez and Muskogean usage. Especially noteworthy is the fact that the Natchez examples all have concrete meanings while the Muskogean examples often have
figurative meanings which refer to emotional states. The variety of stems used in Natchez is greater than in Muskogean and the meaning categories also show greater diversity. Most Muskogean examples make use of body-part terms (often in figurative use, e.g. Creek fiksomkita 'to get scared, frightened', lit. 'to get heart-lost') but Natchez uses only three and these retain their concrete meanings.

Although Natchez may be related to Muskogean in the remote past (Haas 1956), the noun incorporation examples, though not detracting from the possibility, do not really strengthen the argument for relationship.

Although examples of noun incorporation in Natchez are not numerous, it seems premature to suggest that it was a dead process in the speech of the last speakers. The best evidence for this comes from the fact that out of a couple dozen examples, four refer to items or customs of European (hence post-Columbian) origin. These are 'to shake hands' (6c), 'to swear (take an oath)' (6b), 'sundial, clock' (9a), and 'to set the day' (9b). This means that as recently as two or three centuries ago noun incorporated forms could still be innovated. It is possible that if Natchez was still a viable language, innovations might very well still be possible.

REFERENCES


