Carrier Monosyllabic Noun Stems

William J. Poser
Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council, Lheidli T’enneh
and the University of British Columbia

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Athabaskan languages have extremely complex and productive morphology based overwhelmingly on verbal roots. There are very few unanalyzable nouns. Monosyllabic noun stems are either unanalyzable, and therefore presumptively old, or, where analyzable, reflect very old derivational processes. For this reason, the idea that they can provide a window into the deeper layers of culture history has floated around the Athabaskanist community for some time. One of the few explicit statements on this topic is by Young & Morgan (1987; 3):

Although comprising only a small proportion of the noun corpus, the stem nouns represent one of the oldest strata in the language, many having close cognates in other Athapaskan languages far removed in time and space from the American Southwest.

The reasoning underlying this approach was laid out by Sapir (1916:434-435):

If we have any method of determining the relative age of a word that has cultural significance, it is clear that we have at the same time a means of ascertaining something as to the relative age of the associated culture element itself. One of the most useful principles for the determination of the age of a word is a consideration of its form; that is, whether it can be analysed into simpler elements, its significance being made up of the sum of these, or is a simple irreducible term. In the former case, we suspect, generally speaking, a secondary or relatively late formation, in the latter considerable antiquity. … We know, for instance, that the objects and offices denoted in English by the words bow, arrow, spear, wheel, plough, king and knight belong to a far more remote past than those indicated by such words as railroad, insulator,
battleship, submarine, percolator, capitalist and attorney-general, but we might have guessed this from the fact that the latter set, unlike the former, are clearly secondary formations, descriptive terms that seem to have been created out of older linguistic material to meet new cultural needs.

In the same vein, it is not surprising that in Carrier it is “canoe” that is ts’i and “helicopter” that is nak’atän dot’en-i nat’o-i (“the thing that resembles a dragonfly and flies around”), and not the other way around.

Although this idea is widespread, to my knowledge no one has actually carried out a detailed study of the monosyllabic noun stems of an Athabaskan language. In this paper, I present a first attempt at this, focusing on the Nak’albän/Dzin’albän (Stuart/Trembleur Lake) dialect of Carrier.¹

The following lists contain the well documented monosyllabic noun stems of Carrier, classified as to type. This list is probably almost exhaustive, as I have extensive lexical material for this dialect. I have, however, omitted a few obscure words known only from old missionary sources, and have not listed every conceivable abstract noun. It is likely that quite a few other verbal roots can, in appropriate circumstances, function as nouns. There are a total of 315. These represent about 8% of the phonotactically possible monosyllables.

Although monosyllables are likely to be old, they can still be borrowed. There are eight clear cases of monosyllabic loans into Carrier.²

### Loans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>?uts</th>
<th>oats</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bel</td>
<td>Father (priest)</td>
<td>French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bus</td>
<td>cat</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mai</td>
<td>berry</td>
<td>Gitksan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sto</td>
<td>stove</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stor</td>
<td>store</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuk</td>
<td>tuque</td>
<td>French via English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts’ak</td>
<td>ceremonial dish</td>
<td>Babine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are the remaining monosyllabic noun-stems, grouped by semantic field.

### Body Parts

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¹ Carrier examples are in the North American variant of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Underscores on /s/, /z/, /ts/, /dz/, and /ts/ indicate lamino-dentals, which in conservative speech contrast with apico-alveolars. Other examples are in the practical orthography for that language, except for Tahltan, which is in IPA. A leading hyphen indicates that the noun is inalienably possessed.

² One of the forms cited below as native arguably belongs among the loans. γ’Ats “cartilage” may be a loan from Babine. In general, coda /ts/ is retained in Babine but became /z/ in Carrier. Two of the four attested cases of coda /ts/ are clearly loans. These are balats “potlatch”, which is ultimately from Nuchamnulth, and ?uts “oats”, a loan from English. The origin of the remaining case, ṭatst’ots “fascia” is unclear, but it is not implausible that it is also a loan from Babine or Sekani as this word is attested only in the Stuart/Trembleur Lake dialect of Carrier.
-?az  groin
-ba?  stomach, belly
-?a  ribs
-?an  womb, vagina
-?e  tail
-?o?  porcupine quill
-?uz  vein
-?aat  gristle
-?a?  lip, beak, brim of container
-de  horn, antler
-das  lungs
-dzat  shinbone
-dzeh  ear (canal)
-dzo  ear (conch)
-dzi  heart
-gan  arm, foreleg of animal
gas  scales of fish
-?a  hair, fur
-?ai  fin, bone of fish
-?u  tooth
-?ak  bone not connected to the spine
-?ats  cartilage
-?wag  shoulder
-?waz  thigh
-g"aat  knee
-ke  foot, hind paw
-xez  egg, testicle
-kadal  female genitalia
-k'i  hip
-k'o  fat
-k'un  fish roe
-k'as  gill, side of throat
-ia  hand, forepaw
-len  ovary
mek  rabbit kidney
-na  eye
-ni  nostril
-nin  face
-tai  inside of skin
-t'a  back
-t’a wing
-t’ak shoulder blade
-ṭ’ā buttocks
-ṭ’i‘et groin
-ṭ’i‘az gall
-ṭsak’ penis
-ṭs’i intestine
-ṭs’i‘az kidney
-ṭsi head
-ṭsAl anus
-ṭsAṭj flesh
-ṭs’e vein
-ṭs’eh tendon
-ṭs’il elbow
-ṭs’u breast
-ṭs’ān bone
-ṭs’āz down
-yaṭ flesh
-yet marrow
-yiḥ larynx, gullet, dewlap, trachea
-yoḥ chest
-yaṭ spine
-yat chest
-zul exterior of throat
-że mouth
-ẓam tonsils, glands
-ẓAṣ skin, hide, case
-ẓAṭ liver

**Bodily Fluids**

-γAz synovial fluid
xAz pus
ku vomit
kwAs mucous
lAz urine, spray of skunk
so saliva
tsan feces
Quasi-Anatomical

čaz  wart, mark from ringworm
lht  scab
sis  wart
šat  scar
ts’az  boil
-zi  corpse

Parts of Plants

?al  needle of coniferous tree
-γaz  root of a fallen tree now above ground
-γih  root
xi  root of spruce tree
-k’i  pod, mollusc shell
-laʔ  bark of tree (inner and outer together)
-t’an  leaf
-t’uz  inner bark of tree, peel of potato

Kinship Terms

?at  wife
-ba  father
-biz  mother-in-law
-čai  grandchild
-čal  younger brother
-dis  younger sister
-dag  parent
-g”az  nephew
ki  husband
-xe  spouse’s sibling
-loh  spouse’s sibling’s spouse
-hu  mother
-tai  FaBr/MoSiHu
-tsu  grandmother, great-aunt
-ťseʔ  man’s daughter
-ťsu  man’s sister’s child
-yat  older sister
-yaʔ  woman’s child
-yeʔ  man’s son
-zaz  father-in-law
-zit  female cross-cousin

Geographical Terms
?an  cave, hole in ground
bin  middle of lake
bas  high-water line of body of water
-dla surface of water
dzal mountain
keh  pond
-koh  river
lu  glacier
nu  island
śag  hill, knoll
tl’oh  bay

Natural Substances

bis  obsidian, flint
dzg  drift-wood
dzan  silt, slime
dzeh  pitch
k’’an  fire
lez  dust, dirt, ashes
łam  piece of ice
łat  smoke
śai  sand
tu  water, liquid
tan  ice over a surface
tsal  soot
tsan  dirt (not soil)
tszaz  firewood
tse  rock
tshih  ochre
t’es  charcoal, coal
tl’as  verdigris
tl’at  musk

Natural Environment

ʔa  fog
ʔo  whirlpool, eddy
can  rain
czaz  snowflake
gwas  foam
ken  den of animal
xaz  windfall
k’’ag  cloud
sa  sun
so  frost
sam star
šal snow drift
ti road, trail
tut lair of bear
tsil blowing snow
tsal the thin layer of floating ice at freeze-up
t’o nest
tsoh brush
ts’al dry underbrush
ya(t) sky
yas snow on ground

Water-Related Artifacts

?qas fish or muskrat trap
čas canoe paddle
gas fish spear
jaš fish hook
k’ai salmon opened with vertebrae cut out
mas beaver net buckle
soh gaff
sas weir
t’az dried, thin-sliced salmon
-tli barb of fish-hook or harpoon
ts’a thwart of canoe
ts’i canoe
-ts’ai blade of canoe paddle
we kind of fish trap
yas mesh of net

Other Artifacts

?qalh snowshoes
bat mittens
bil snare, net
ban roof, shingle
-tcan handle
dzut coat
guh deadfall trap
g“az runner of sleigh, sleigh
kas shank of arrow, shaft, handle
k'a  blade (arrow, bullet, blade of knife)
k'as  bullet pouch, quiver
k'en  plaited bark rope
k'an  wattle of high-bush cranberry
xaz  ceremonial apron
xe  grease, lard
xeṣ  grease container
xal  dub
xas  handle, shank
les  flour, bread
las  churn of wood
naih  clothes
se  belt
sih  wall
tel  bed of spruce boughs
tel  small basket
tes  bed, bedding
ti  handle (as of axe or knife)
tas  blunt-headed arrow
taz  walking stick
tus  fish-skin water container
t'oh  pocket
t'oh  hunting blind
tlak  double-edged knife
tle  oil, ointment
tluk  drawstring of sack
tl'uł  rope
tgan  breechcloth
t'san  trap trip
tse  fringe
tgał  awl
t's'oh  hat
ts'at  blanket
yil  splitting wedge
yil  marmot trap
yoh  house
yu  medicine

Mammals

goh  rabbit
li  dog
sas  black bear
šas  grizzly bear
tsa  beaver
tsis  otter
yas  wolf

Aquatic Organisms
bit  char
čil  old male salmon
ges steelhead
łbài dentalium shell
lo  fish
lōh  Lake Whitefish
łúz  perch

Birds

del  crane
xōh  Canada Goose
gōh  American Robin
ts’Al  Red-necked Grebe

Invertebrates

guí?  bug, worm
ya  louse
tś’ih  mosquito

Plants

ʔāh  fiddlehead fern
č’ok  Sitka Mountain Ash
dlat  water weed
gās  Cow parsnip
k’en  Saskatoon bush
k’i  Paper Birch tree
k’āg  Green Alder
xāg  Fireweed
xul  water lily roots
tāz  leafless waterweed at bottom of streams
tl’o  grass
tś’al  Common Red Sphagnum Moss
tś’oh  Mountain Balsam
tś’u  spruce tree
xʷas  wild rose, thorns

Abstract Verbal
bál sleep, dream
-če sleep
dli cold
dli’z stewing
dlo laughter
gal running
jan age
kal slipping
sal shouting
sal heat, steam
ti freezing
tal kicking

I suspect that further investigation of the rather specialized constructions in which abstract verbal nouns are used will reveal that quite a few verb roots can also function as abstract verbal nouns. In some cases, as with dliz above, the nominal form is not the bare verbal root but has the d-valence prefix attached.

People
čil young man
k’o? hunchback
t’et young woman

Miscellaneous
? Alma dam
ba edge
ban edge, side
boh war
-da words of song
daí famine, starvation, hunger
daŋ summer
dzin day
gul dear, sweetie
g’an concupiscence
jeh witchcraft
ka harm
xel load, pack
xít winter
k’oh footprint, track
me taboo
mak sudden and complete darkness
ni mind
șih breath, energy
șin early summer
There are a few morphologically complex monosyllables. *tl'u* "rope" consists of the verb root *tl'u* "tie" plus the old instrumental suffix -l. Such formations are no longer productive. *xe* "fish-skin grease container", *tu* "fish-skin water container", and *k'ag* "quiver, bullet pouch" represent the nouns *xe* "grease", *tu* "water", and *k'a* "blade, arrow, bullet" to which the suffix *-g* a reduced form of "skin", has been added. This is not productive, but is apparently an old process in Athabaskan. White Mountain Apache has an exact cognate to Carrier *tu* in *tu* "water container", derived from *tu* "water".

The distribution of the monosyllables over semantic fields is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Field</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anatomical</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>body parts</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bodily fluids</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quasi-anatomical</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parts of plants</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>artifacts</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water-related</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biological</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mammals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>birds</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invertebrates</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plants</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miscellaneous</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kinship</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural environment</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural substances</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abstract verbal</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geographical</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loans</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In general, the monosyllables do reflect what are probably very old aspects of the culture. By far the most heavily represented semantic field is anatomical terms. Other than the rather diffuse field of artifacts, the next most heavily represented field consists of kinship terms; most of the basic terms in these areas are monosyllables. Similarly, much of the terminology for describing the natural world is monosyllabic. The monosyllabic technological terms are suggestive of a cultural emphasis on water and on trapping; in general they reflect a very old layer of technology.

One artifact in particular calls for comment. This is ʔaːh “snowshoes”, which in the anthropological literature, have been claimed to have been unknown to Carrier people prior to European contact. This claim is surprising on cultural grounds; surely Carrier people had a use for snowshoes and the technology to make them. Moreover, they cannot have been unaware of their construction and use by neighbouring peoples. The point that I would like to make here is that it is unlikely on linguistic grounds that snowshoes are a recent innovation.

The noun ʔaːh is an unanalyzable monosyllable and therefore presumptively old. It appears to be cognate to equivalent terms in other Athabaskan languages, e.g. Sekani ʔaː, Beaver aːh, Kaska ah, Mountain Slavey 'ah, and Dogrib ʔaːh.

What is especially striking is that ʔaːh is morphologically irregular. In Carrier there are several sets of possessive prefixes, the choice of which is determined, with only a few exceptions, by the initial segment of the noun stem. In general, nouns beginning with glottal stop behave differently from nouns beginning with other consonants; they take a set of prefixes ending in the vowel /e/. The four sets of prefixes for the Stuart/Trembleur Lake dialect are illustrated below:

Class 1 — dayi “chief”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1s</th>
<th>2s</th>
<th>3s</th>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Rec</th>
<th>Areal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1p</td>
<td>s-dayi</td>
<td>u-dayi</td>
<td>dx-dayi</td>
<td>h-dayi</td>
<td>x*-A-dayi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ne-dayi</td>
<td>n-dayi</td>
<td>3p</td>
<td>Obv</td>
<td>PLo bv</td>
<td>Ind</td>
<td>ʔA-dayi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 2 — ʔusaʔ “pail”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1s</th>
<th>2s</th>
<th>3s</th>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Rec</th>
<th>Areal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1p</td>
<td>se-ʔusaʔ</td>
<td>nye-ʔusaʔ</td>
<td>be-ʔusaʔ</td>
<td>dale-ʔusaʔ</td>
<td>le-ʔusaʔ</td>
<td>x*e-ʔusaʔ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neye-ʔusaʔ</td>
<td>2p</td>
<td>3p</td>
<td>Obv</td>
<td>PLo bv</td>
<td>Ind</td>
<td>ʔe-ʔusaʔ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class 3 — uziʔ “name”
Class 1 consists of the nouns beginning with a consonant other than glottal stop; Class 2 consists of the nouns beginning with glottal stop; Class 3 consists of the vowel-initial nouns. Class 4 contains a handful of irregular nouns slightly different from Class 3. In some dialects there is no distinction between Class 3 and Class 4.

There are two exceptions to the generalization that nouns beginning with glottal stop take Class 2 prefixes, both of which take Class 1 prefixes. One is ḥal “wife”. The other is ḥalih. Thus, we have for example sẖai “my snowshoes”, not *shaii. For this reason, it is very unlikely that ḥalih is a recent loan.³

Perhaps surprising is the relatively small amount of monosyllabic biological terminology. Names of organisms and types of organisms make up only 11% of the monosyllables; most names of organisms are polysyllabic and morphologically complex. Even items for which Athabaskan speakers have surely had words for a very long time sometimes are often complex. This can be seen in the Carrier terms for the mammals listed below.

The Mammals

³ There is another aspect of the possessed forms that seems at first glance to offer an argument for antiquity. This is the fact that the possessed stem is not ḥalih as in the unpossessed form, but ḥail, with the final /h/ replaced by a glottal stop. This alternation is found in other Carrier nouns, e.g. zoh “goose”, possessed stem xoch and ḥazih “knife”, possessed stem ḥazih but has ceased to be productive, probably due to the introduction of numerous non-alternating final /h/ as a result of the sound change by which /x/ in most environments became /h/ around the turn of the 20th century. The fact that “snowshoes” undergoes this now archaic alteration is not, however, clear evidence of the use of the term prior to contact, as it apparently persisted productively post-contact. Not only does it seem to have been rendered opaque only around 1900, but there is one mid-nineteenth century loanword that undergoes the alternation. This is mandah “canvas, tarpaulin”, possessed stem mandaḥ, which is a loan from Spanish manta introduced by Mexican pack-train men in the 1860s.
Bat  
Bear, Black  sas
Bear, Grizzly  šag
Beaver  tsa
Cariboo  xʷaadziḥ  “it scrapes ground”
Chipmunk  soljəs  ?
Coyote  čantali  “forest dog”
Deer  yests’e  ?
Dog  li
Elk  yezih  ?
Fisher  čaníhó  “big marten”
Fox  mängaz  “it drags (tail)”?
Lynx  wași  loan from Gitksan
Marmot  dətəni  “it makes a sound”
Marten  čaníh  ?
Mink  tečas  ?
Moose  dəni  ?
Moose, Bull  jeyo  
Moose, Calf  tsiyɛ  “yellow thing” (probably from Sekani)
Moose, Dry Cow  dets’it  ?
Mouse  ʔdal’gək  ?
Muskrat  ċseḵ’et  stone-?
Otter  təsí
Packrat  dhunco  “big dhun”
Porcupine  ʔəč’akʷ  “it is quilled”
Rabbit  goh
Sheep  ʔəshbai  “it is white”
Shrew  dats’ux  “it squeaks”
Skunk  hunliz  “it sprays”
Squirrel  tsałək  “beaver dog”
Squirrel, Flying  ts’ənəlbaʔ  “it stretches ?”
Weasel  nohlbəi  “white noh”
Wolf  yas
Wolverine  nustel  ?
Woodchuck  k’ani  ?

Other dialects provide additional examples. In the Lhk’aññ (Ulkatcho) dialect, “otter” is 闪过uk, literally “it slides around”. Here a descriptive term has apparently replaced the old monosyllabic ʔsis. A particularly striking example is the Lheidli dialect term for “bat” ʔiyəb ʔat’i. This is literally “devil bird”, where ʔiyəb “devil”, is borrowed from French le diable. Here a clearly recent descriptive term has replaced the monosyllable used in all other dialects.

It is important to note that even terms for animals with which Carrier people have been familiar for thousands of years are often analyzable. Moreover, even where the terms are not analyzable, there is tremendous variation. It is not the case that culturally ancient organisms are necessarily named by unanalyzable monosyllables.
This point is nicely illustrated by the terms for “porcupine”, whose range includes every area in which Athabaskan people have plausibly lived for millennia, from the Arctic to the American Southwest. The Carrier dialects show considerable diversity in the terms for “porcupine”.4

Carrier Words for “porcupine”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Nak'alun</th>
<th>Shyuk'uz</th>
<th>Nadleh</th>
<th>Stelakoh</th>
<th>Cheshlatta</th>
<th>Lheidli</th>
<th>Likh'acho</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dace'ak?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daneza?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yats'an</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>tsiit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?junuh</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?junuh</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a similar range of terminology when the full range of languages in the family is considered.

Some Athabaskan Words for “porcupine”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Etymology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athna</td>
<td>neghadiye</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nuuni</td>
<td>creature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apache (White Mountain)</td>
<td>dahszine</td>
<td>it stands up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dena'ina (Inland)</td>
<td>nini</td>
<td>creature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cook Inlet)</td>
<td>qanchi</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Seldovia)</td>
<td>nk'eggi</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogrib</td>
<td>ch'oh</td>
<td>quill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ts'oh</td>
<td>quill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ts'i'h</td>
<td>quill?/cognate of Lheidli ts'ú'?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>diedah</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hupa</td>
<td>ky'oh</td>
<td>quill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashka</td>
<td>dech'ue</td>
<td>it is quilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo</td>
<td>dahsáni</td>
<td>old dah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sekani</td>
<td>duch'gwe</td>
<td>it is quilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slavey (Mountain)</td>
<td>ch'üg</td>
<td>it is quilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahltan</td>
<td>dace'ua</td>
<td>it is quilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witsuwit'en</td>
<td>dic'ikw</td>
<td>it is quilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'ugumi</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'agumi</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sum, the idea that the monosyllabic noun stems reflect an archaic cultural layer is generally borne out. However, the converse is clearly not true; Carrier (and

4 The word daneza? properly refers to a noble in the clan system; it is applied to porcupines as an epithet since they are regarded as the chiefs of the small animals.
probably Athabaskan languages more generally) frequently uses morphologically complex terms, and not infrequently innovates complex terms, for items that have long been familiar. This tendency seems to be especially pronounced in the area of biological terminology, perhaps reflecting the exploitation of the rich morphological resources of the language in service of an interest in the behaviour of animals.

References


