A Syncopating Conjugation *k- Stem in Lakota

In Buechel's (1970) Lakota Dictionary are two irregular and obsolete inflected forms phú 'I come' (1970:449) and škú 'you come' (1970:465). Neither these forms nor their paradigm are known from any other source; however, we can deduce from gloss and shape that the stem is either ū 'come' or the corresponding vertitive kú 'come back'. Buechel elects ū, though he seems to have known only the inflected forms, and these only in an exchange of greetings used formerly on one person "seeing and recognizing another," a context in which the vertitive kú seems as likely.

In Modern Lakota (La) and in other Dakotan dialects both ū and kú are regular conjugation actives, with agent prefixes reflecting Proto-Siouan (PSi) *wa 'first agent' and *ya 'second agent'. Buechel's peculiar monosyllables clearly represent the Proto-Siouan syncopating conjugation, with *w and *y instead (Koontz 1983). The syncopating conjugation occurs in Siouan with certain classes of C|-initial stems, especially those reflecting Proto-Siouan *r- and *h-stems, for which the conjugation is widely attested. Rarer are syncopating *?- and *y-stems, restricted to the three branches of Mississippi Valley: Dakotan, Dhegiha, and Winnebago-Chiwere. Rarer still are syncopating *p-, *t- and *k-stems, so far known only in Dhegiha and Winnebago-Chiwere.

The hypothesis that phú and škú are syncopated personal forms of ū or kú is reasonable, since these reflect Proto-Siouan *hú and *kú (Taylor 1976), both with syncopating reflexes throughout Dhegiha and Winnebago-Chiwere. It is thus more than likely that the modern regularity of Dakotan ū and kú is secondary, but the question remains which of the two stems phú and škú these actually represent.

We can answer this by a comparison with the paradigms for the reflexes of *hú and *kú in the typical Dhegiha dialect Osage (Os). The first persons are unhelpful, since La phú matches regularly both Os phú < PSi *phú = *w + hú and Os ppu < PSi *wpu = *w + pú, where *pú is a mutation of *kú. In the second persons, La škú's comparability with Os šú < PSi *shú = *y + hú is not immediately clear, since PSi *sh is little understood. However, Os škú < PSi *škú = *y + kú matches La škú regularly, suggesting strongly that the Dakotan stem is kú. This is confirmed by the paradigm of Dakotan's single syncopating *h-stem, kú 'say' < PSi *e + hA. This has second-person ehé < PSi *ešhé = *e + y + hé (cf. Os ešé, parallel with šú).2 This eliminates any remaining suspicion.

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2 For the phonological developments consult Matthews (1958), as modified by Rankin (1974).
that La šk might represent PSi *šh, and allows us to conclude that Dakotan has a remnant syncopating paradigm for kū of the form phū/škū/kū. Presumably this was once only one of a number of similar *k-stems, the rest of which have been regulated without trace.

What implications does this Dakotan syncopating *k-stem have? First, Dakotan and Dhegiha agree in implying *k-stem first persons with mutation of *k to *p. In contrast, Winnebago-Chiwere lacks the mutation, cf. Winnebago (Wi) kūu/šgūu/gūu. The Dakotan-Dhegiha pattern is clearly an innovation, since (1) neither Dhegiha's nor Winnebago-Chiwere's *p- and *t-stems have any mutations, showing the latter's *k-stem pattern to be the more regular one; (2) PSi *wkē > La kkē~ Os kkē ~ Wi kēe, showing that *wk does not simply fall together with *wp in Dakotan and Dhegiha; and (3) Dhegiha dialects all preserve one conservative *k-stem with the expected kk < *wk——the compound kā + da 'desire', cf. Os kkāpda 'I desire'. In addition, the most plausible explanation for the Dakotan-Dhegiha *k > *p mutations is analogy with the much more numerous syncopating *p-stems'3 first persons in *wp, so that Dakotan must have lost not merely syncopating *k-stems, but syncopating *p-stems and perhaps *t-stems as well. Before this evidence for syncopating stop-stems in Dakotan, it might have been argued that syncopating stop-stems were a development of a Dhegiha-Winnebago-Chiwere subgroup in Mississippi Valley; but if stop-stems occur throughout Mississippi Valley, and the *k-stems actually show peculiarities uniting Dakotan-Dhegiha against Winnebago-Chiwere, that is, cross-cutting the subgroup previously most likely, then it is increasingly probable that syncopating stop-stems are simply an inheritance from Proto-Siouan. This probability is important, since knowing the precise domain of the syncopating conjugation is undoubtedly critical to an understanding of Proto-Siouan phonology and morphology (cf. Rudes 1974).

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3 The numbers of distinct Cj-initial syncopating morphemes in Mississippi Valley languages are small for all values of C, but two *p- initial instrumentals are very productive, a circumstance without a parallel among the syncopating *r- and *k-stems.

REFERENCES