

The sound in the sky of cranes approaching: II verbs with animate adjuncts in Meskwaki

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In the National Anthropological Archives' Truman Michelson collection of early-twentieth-century Meskwaki manuscripts there is a recurring trope of II verbs (intransitive verbs taking an inanimate subject) which describe soundscapes or tableaux and which are accompanied by overt animate adjuncts naming a group of creatures producing the sounds and/or creating the tableaux.

In the following examples, red marks II verbs; blue marks adjuncts of those II verbs; green marks the author's initials, the manuscript number, the relevant page and line numbers, and the translator's initials.

- (1) e·h=wi·škwē·we·kah+ki me·yo·+čiki [AK 2693 160I]
 AOR=be.great.noise+0/CONJ weep+3s/PPL(PRXpl)
 'there was a din of people weeping' [IG]

The adjuncts in these "sight/sound tropes" or "SSTs" are invariably plural. Typically, they're both grammatically and semantically plural; more rarely, they're grammatically singular but semantically plural. Meskwaki singulars-as-plurals are generic plurals, as is "man" in the English sentence "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person." (Oscar Wilde.)

- (2) pe·hki =meko mehtose·neniw+a e·h=wi·škwē·we·kah+ki [AK 2154 44C]
 really =EMPH person+PRXsg AOR=be.great.noise+0/CONJ
 me·yo·+ta.
 weep+3s/PPL(PRXsg)
 'Indeed the cryings of the people was a great noise.' [TB]
 'There was a great din of people who were weeping.' [LT]

- (3) e·ški =mekoho mehtose·neniw+a, "hawo," e·+ta [AK 2957 666E]
 lo&behold =EMPH person+PRXsg all.right say.so+3s/PPL(PRXsg)
 e·h=ni·sehkwe·+ki.
 AOR=be.a.roar.from.the.crowd/be.a.rumble.of.assent+0/CONJ
 'The people joyously said "Alright" in a chorus.' [HP]
 'Lo, there was a roar from the crowd of people saying, "All right."' [LT]

- (4) e·hki =meko wa·wa·kah+ami[ni]čini [JB 2830.1A 14K]
 lo&behold =EMPH whoop+3'/PPL(OBVsg)
 e·h=wi·škwē·we·kate+niki.
 AOR=be.great.noise+0'/CONJ
 'And they heard the men whooping. And they heard a lot of noise.' [HL>TM]
 'Lo, there was a din of men whooping.' [LT]

- (5) kapo·twe· =’ni e·h=a·mi·hete·+niki [LL 2794.57 1Q]
 at.some.point =then AOR=be.a.moving.of.camp+0’/CONJ
 te·kwa·keši·h+ani pa·pekwa.
 autumn.hunter+OBVsg immediately

‘Then at some point the fall hunters broke camp, without delay.’ [LT]

The verbs in SSTs are typically inflected for the aorist conjunct mood—a narrative mood. One of the few exceptions, in 6, relates how a winter story hero invokes illusions which then take effect.

- (6) “manahka =ča·hi me·škwe·hpi·hi+čiki [LL 1875.1 15KL]
 over.yonder =so play.with.the.throwing-stick+3s/PPL(PRXpl)
 wi·h=tanwe·we·kat+wi,” e·h=i+či.
 FUT=be.loud.noise{there}+0s/IND AOR=say{so}+3s/CONJ
 “wi·h=pekeše·ya·hkwa·wi+wi.”
 FUT=be.a.misty.forest+0s/IND

...

man= e·na·pi+či, e·hki =či·h =meko [LL 1875.1 16BCD]
 this+INANsg= look{thither}+3s/CC lo&behold =POV =EMPH

e·h=pekeše·ya·hkwa·wi+niki, e·h=tanwe·we·kate+niki
 AOR=be.a.misty.forest+0’/CONJ AOR=be.loud.noise.there+0’/CONJ

me·škwe·hpi·hi+ničini.
 play.with.the.throwing-stick+3’/PPL(OBVsg)

““So there will be a din of people playing with throwing-sticks over yonder,” he said. “The woods will be misty with the smoke of cooking fires.” ... As soon as he looked that way, oh! Lo and behold, the woods were misty with the smoke of cooking fires, and there was a din of people playing with throwing sticks.’ [LT]

Another instance of an SST with an independent order verb is in 7. Conjunct order moods do not distinguish number for inanimates, but the future indicative verb in 6 and the independent indicative verb in 7 make it plain that in SSTs the subjects of the verbs and the adjuncts of those verbs are number-discordant as well as animacy-discordant. The sentence in 7 is the only instance I have yet seen in which the SST verb and its adjunct are proximity-discordant as well as animacy- and number-discordant.

- (7) kehkinawa·či =pi =mekoho e·h=nepa·+čini, [AK 1786 73H]
 indicatively =HRYSY =EMPH AOR=sleep+3s/PPL(LOCpl)
 mahwe·w+aki wi·škwe·we·kate+niwi.
 wolf+PRXpl be.great.noise+0’s/IND

‘Indeed where ever he would sleep the wolves would usually howl so loud.’ [TB]

‘The places he slept could be known by the howling of wolves.’ [IG]

Soundscape SSTs are more common than vista SSTs. There are 51 attested instances of SSTs with *wi·škwe·we·kat-* ‘be great noise’ (see e.g. 1, 2, 4, 7). There are 12 with *ni·sehkwe-* ‘be a roar from the crowd, be a rumble of assent’ (see e.g. 3). There are six with *tanwe·we·kat-* ‘be loud noise ({there})’ (see e.g. 6). There are six with *men(w)ipya·kahkiwi-* ‘be a shout from the crowd’, three with *pye·twe·we·kat-* ‘be loud noise approaching’, two with *če·če·kahkamikat-* ‘be cries, sobs, screams’, two with *pakwe·we·kat-* ‘be a burst of loud noise’, and one apiece with *anemwe·we·kat-* ‘be loud noise going away’, *inwe·we·kat-* ‘be {such} loud sound’, *ka·hka·hkihkwē-* ‘be sounds of scratching’, *nanamahkwē-* ‘be a roar’, and *ši·we·we·kat-* ‘be an abating din’.

Seven of these twelve II stems describing soundscapes contain the II final *-we·we·kat* ‘be a loud noise’. Three contain the II final *-we-* ‘be a sound, be noise’. Initial *če·če·k-* in II *če·če·kahkamikat-* means ‘cry out, sob, scream’, and initial *men(w)ipya·k-* in II *men(w)ipya·kahkiwi-* means ‘give a shout in unison, give a war-whoop; cheer, jeer, crow over’.

Vista SSTs are more disparate than soundscape SSTs. There are four attested SSTs with *ma·wa·sen-* ‘be a village, group of lodges’, three with *keta·pihka·te-* ‘emerge into view in single file’, two with *mama·tan-* ‘be continual motion, be seething motion’, and one apiece with *a·mi·hete-* ‘be a moving of camp’, *a·šowa·wanete-* ‘be an en masse going across’, *a·ya·kwe·ya-* ‘be a bunch, be a mob’ (initial *a·kwe-* ‘pile up’), *ina·wanete-* ‘be an en masse going thither’, *kepwa-* ‘be a closed hole’, *keta·wanete-* ‘be an en masse emerging’, *nata·ya-* ‘be a milling around’ (initial *nata-* ‘stir’), *po·ni·hete-* ‘be a camping’, *pye·tahkiwi-* ‘be an arrival’, and *wa·wa·ka·pihka·te-* ‘be in zigzag single file’ (initial *wa·wa·k-* ‘repeatedly crooked, multiply bent’; *wa·wa·ka·pye-* ‘be jagged lightning’).

Three of these thirteen II stems describing tableaux contain the II final *-a·wanete-* ‘be an en masse motion’. Two contain the II final *-a·pihka·te-* ‘be in single file’ (literally, ‘be a string’). The remaining eight have abstract or bleached finals. Three of these describe collections of houses; one describes a mass of people; three describe motion. The SST involving *kepwa-* ‘be a closed hole’ falls into none of these categories.

- (8) e·hki =meko e·h=kepwa·+niki šama·kaneš+ahi. [JB 2838 19G]
 lo&behold =EMPH AOR=be.a.closed.hole+0’/CONJ soldier+OBVpl
 ‘[T]he soldiers were so crowded.’ [?>TM]
 ‘The way was blocked by soldiers.’ [IG & HB]

One short passage in a text by Jim Peters contains two SSTs which each consist of two IIs plus an adjunct.

- (9) e·h=wi·škwe·we·kate+niki na·hka, [JP 1722C 59PQR]
 AOR=be.great.noise+0’/CONJ again/and
 e·h=nata·ya·+niki mehtose·neniw+ahi.
 AOR=be.a.milling.around+0’/CONJ person+OBVpl
 kapo·twe na·hka e·h=ši·we·we·kate+niki,
 at.some.point again/and AOR=be.an.abating.din+0’/CONJ
 e·h=aka·wi·pakwe·we·kate+niki mehtose·neniw+ahi.
 AOR=just.for.a.short.time-be.a.burst.of.loud.noise+0’/CONJ person+OBVpl

‘They made a lot of noise again, the people were stirring around. [HP]
Soon they quiet down, the people yelled and cried only a little while.’

‘There was a great din again, of people milling around. Presently the [LT]
din diminished, with the people just emitting short bursts of sound.’

More instances of SSTs are given in 10-27.

- (10) e·h=menipya·kahkiwi+niki oškinawe·h+ahi. [AK 2959 259A]
AOR=be.a.shout.from.the.crowd+0’/CONJ young.man+OBVpl
‘The young men shouted with laughter.’ [HP]

- (11) ke·htena =’pi kapo·twe e·h=pye·twe·we·kate+niki [JB 2677.2 38H]
truly =HRSY at.some.point AOR=be.approaching.noise+0’/CONJ
ahpemeki ateča·hkw+ahi.
up.aloft crane+OBVpl

‘Sure enough, they say, soon there came the sound from the sky [LT]
of cranes approaching.’

- (12) mehtose·neniw+aki e·h=če·če·kahkamikah+ki [AK 2794.32 43LM]
person+PRXpl AOR=be.cries/sobs/screams+0’/CONJ
me·yo·čiki, e·h=mawim+a·wa·či.
weep+3s/PPL(PRXP) AOR=bewail+3s-3’/CONJ

‘The air was filled with the cries of people weeping, [IG]
as they mourned him.’

- (13) ma·ne =meko mehtose·neniw+aki e·h=peminehkaw+a·wa·či. [AK 2794.60 30CD]
many =EMPH person+PRXpl AOR=chase+3p-3’/CONJ
e·h=anemwe·we·kah+ki pe·minehkaw+a·čiki.
AOR=be.loud.noise.going.away+0’/CONJ chase+3s-3’/PPL(PRXP)

‘Many people pursued her. The noise of those pursuing her went off.’ [IG]

- (14) e·h=wi·škwē·we·kah+ki me·yo·+čiki [AK 2764.5 7NOP]
AOR=be.great.noise+0’/CONJ weep+3s/PPL(PRXP)
e·h=mawim+a·wa·či wa·sesi·h+ani. e·nemi- ’na·pye·+ki =meko
AOR=bewail+3p-3’/CONJ bullhead+OBVsg continue- string{thither}+0’/PPL(INANsg) =EMPH
si·po·w+i e·h=anemi- ’nwe·we·kah+ki me·yo·+čiki.
river+INANsg AOR=continue- be{such}loud.sound+0’/CONJ weep+3s/PPL(PRXP)
ča·k= e·šiki+ta neme·s+a e·h=mayo·+či.
all= be.so+3s/PPL(PRXSg) fish+PRXSg AOR=weep+3s/CONJ

‘There was a din of people weeping, bewailing Bullhead. [LT]
Along the length of the river rose the din of people weeping.
Fish of every kind wept.’

- (15) e·h=pye·či- ka·hka·hkihkwē·+ki =’pi [SK 1861 14N]
 AOR=hither- be.sounds.of.scratching+0/CONJ =HRSY
 nenemehkiw+aki e·h=pye·čisa·+wa·či.
 thunderer+PRXpl AOR=fly.hither+3p/CONJ
 ‘There was the scratchy rattling sound of the thunderers
 as they came flying up.’ [LT & IG]
- (16) kapo·twe =na·hka nekoti e·h=pe·pye·či- nanamahkwē·+niki. [SK 2794.49 16H]
 soon =again one AOR=1RED+hither- be.a.roar+0’/CONJ
 ‘Next, at some point a roaring sound made by someone
 came to their ears over and over again.’ [LT]
- (17) kapo·twe e·h=owi·ki+či pye·ya·+či, [AK 2384 38C]
 at.some.point AOR=dwell{there}+3s/PPL(LOCsg) come+3s/CC
 e·h=ma·wa·se+niki mehtose·neniw+ahi.
 AOR=be.a.village+0’/CONJ person+OBVpl
 ‘Soon when he came he saw a large camp of Indians by his home.’ [HP]
 ‘At some point, when he arrived at his house, there was a village
 of people there.’ [LT]
- (18) kapo·twe =wi·nwa·wa meškwaški·h+aki [AK 2122 117MN]
 at.some.point =3pl.emph Meskwaki+PRXpl
 e·h=pye·či- keta·pihka·te·+niki mehtose·neniw+ahi,
 AOR=hither- emerge.into.view.in.single.file+0’/CONJ person+OBVpl
 e·h=pye·či- ni·mahw+a·niči mi·kon+ahi.
 AOR=hither- set/carry.on.a.stick+3’-3’’/CONJ feather+OBVpl
 ‘Suddenly those Masquakies beheld the chain of people
 as they came holding aloft on sticks, the feathers.’ [TB]
- (19) ihkwe·w+aki e·h=mama·ta+ki. [AK 2794.38a 4K]
 woman+PRXpl AOR=be.continual.motion+0/CONJ
 ‘There was a seething bustling of the women.’ [LT]
- (20) kaš= e·ški =či·h =meko e·h=o·hkwe·wi+niči. [CH 2794.5 3AA-CC]
 why!= lo&behold =POV =EMPH AOR=be.maggoty+3’/CONJ
 e·h=no·teno·hi+niki =’yo =ke·hi. pe·hki =či·h =meko
 AOR=blow+DIM+0’/CONJ =for =moreover really =POV =EMPH
 e·h=mama·ta+niki o·hkwe·w+ahi.
 AOR=be.continual.motion+0’/CONJ maggot+OBVpl
 ‘Why! Lo and behold, he saw that it was maggoty. Now, a breeze
 was blowing. And he saw that there was a swarming of maggots.’ [LT]

- (21) *če·wina·h =meko ki·ši·hta·+wa·či wi·h=mawinahkya·+čiki*, [CH 2658.14 9OPQ]
 same.time =EMPH finish.working+3p/CC FUT=go.to.the.attack+3s/PPL(PRXpl)

kekikhwe·we =meko, e·h=a·šowa·wanete·+ki
 including.the.women =EMPH AOR=be.an.en.masse.going.across+0/CONJ

wi·h=wa·pam+a·čiki ki·ši·nes+emete.
 FUT=look.at+3s-3'/PPL(PRXpl) PERF-kill+X-3'/SUBJ

‘At the same time the would-be attackers got all set, including women, [IG]
 a mob of people wanting to look at them after they were killed went trooping across.’

- (22) *kete·nahi e·h=ki·wi- a·ya·kwe·ya·+ki* [AK 2794.8 4R]

reversingly AOR=around- be.a.bunch/mob+0/CONJ

mehtose·neniw+aki.
 person+PRXpl

‘Unlike before, the people were crowded together in groups.’ [IG]

- (23) *o·ni =’pi či·ki- nepis+e e·h=ina·wanete·+ki* [X6 2794.13 25BC]

and.then =HRSY near- lake+EXOC AOR=be.an.en.masse.going.thither+0/CONJ

mehtose·neniw+aki wi·h=wa·pam+a·čiki,
 person+PRXpl FUT=look.at+3s-3'/PPL(PRXpl)

wi·h=wa·pam+a·wa·či wi·h=natone·hika·+ničihi.
 FUT=look.at+3p-3'/CONJ FUT=seek.indef+3'/PPL(OBVpl)

‘And then, they say, a mob of people who wanted to watch them [LT]
 trooped to the edge of the lake, in order to watch the ones who
 would go questing after (the stolen child).’

- (24) *aškači·meki·hi e·h=pye·či- keta·wanete·+niki* [AK 2764.10 5MN]

a.little.later AOR=hither- be.an.en.masse.emerging+0'/CONJ

ne·topa·h+ahi, e·h=pi·te·ya·hkwi·+niči.
 person.on.warpath+OBVpl AOR=enter.the.woods+3'/CONJ

‘A little later they saw a large party of warriors come into view [IG]
 and enter the woods.’

- (25) *i·ya·ma·haki =wi·na e·h=po·ni·hete·+ki* [SK 1861 27B]

that.visible+PRXpl =but AOR=be.a.camping+0/CONJ

a·mi·+čiki =’pihi.
 move.camp+3s/PPL(PRXpl) =HRSY

‘Meanwhile, there was a setting-up of camp by those people [LT]
 who had moved.’

- (26) aškači·me·hi e·h=pye·tahkiwi+niki neniw+ahi. [AK 2794.60 19E]
 a.little.later AOR=be.an.arrival+0'/CONJ man+OBVpl

‘A little later there was an arrival of men.’

[IG]

- (27) kapo·twe neniw+a [JP 1722B 25P]
 at.some.point man+PRXsg

e·h=pye·či- wa·wa·ka·pihka·te·+niki neniw+ahi.
 AOR=hither- be.in.zigzag.single.file+0'/CONJ man+OBVpl

‘So the man saw the people coming, marching in a crooked single file.’ [HP]

‘At some point, from our guy’s point of view, here came
 a zigzag file of men’.

[LT]

Examples 28-31 provide food for thought.

- (28) ke·htena =meko kapo·twe [JP 1722B 22M]
 truly =EMPH at.some.point

e·h=pye·či- wa·wa·ka·pihka·so+niči mehtose·neniw+ahi.
 AOR=hither- be.in.zigzag.single.file+3'/CONJ person+OBVpl

‘Soon, surely he saw the people coming in single file
 in a crooked line.’

[HP]

- (29) meše·nah= nekotenwi e·h=wi·škwe·we·kate+niki. [SH 2794.63 32ABC]
 perhaps= once AOR=be.great.noise+0'/CONJ

kwi·yese·h+ahi ačitamo·h+ani ... e·h=taši- pepye·škonaw+a·niči.
 boy+OBVpl redsquirrel+OBVsg ... AOR=there- 1RED+miss.by.shot+3'-3'/CONJ

‘At some certain time there was a racket. Boys were ... a red squirrel,
 shooting at it and missing.’ [LT]

- (30) meše·nah= na·hka kapo·twe e·h=wi·škwe·we·kah+ki. [SH 2794.63 33BC]
 perhaps= again at.some.point AOR=be.great.noise+0'/CONJ

kwi·yese·h+aki anikw+ani e·h=taši-pepye·škonaw+a·wa·či.
 boy+PRXpl graysquirrel+OBVsg AOR=there-1RED+miss.by.shot+3p-3'/CONJ

‘Soon again there was a racket. Boys were shooting at a gray squirrel
 and missing it.’ [LT]

- (31) meše·nah= na·hka= kapo·twe e·h=wi·škwe·we·kah+ki. [JP 2724.2 93HIJ]
 perhaps= again= at.some.point AOR=be.great.noise+0'/CONJ

kwi·yese·h+aki ačitamo·h+ani e·h=pi·pemw+a·wa·či, e·h=wi·škwe·we·kah+ki.
 boy+PRXpl redsquirrel+OBVsg AOR=1RED+shoot.at+3p-3'/CONJ AOR=be.great.noise+0'/CONJ

‘At some point again there was a racket. Boys were shooting at a
 red squirrel, making a racket.’

[LT]

Abbreviations

Curly brackets { } mark the translations of relative roots. 0 = inanimate proximate. 0s = inanimate proximate singular. 0' = inanimate obviative. 0's = inanimate obviative singular. 1RED = one-syllable reduplication. 3 = animate proximate. 3s = animate proximate singular. 3p = animate proximate plural. 3' = animate primary obviative. 3'' = animate secondary obviative. AK = Alfred Kiyana. AOR = aorist proclitic. CC = changed conjunct mood. CH = Charley H. Chuck. CONJ = conjunct mood. emph = emphatic pronoun. EMPH = emphatic enclitic. EXOC = exocentric. FUT = future proclitic. HB = Helen Bullard. HL = Harry Lincoln. HP = Horace Poweshiek. HRSY = quotative enclitic. IG = Ives Goddard. II = intransitive verb taking an inanimate subject. INAN = inanimate. IND = independent indicative mood. JB = Jack Bullard. JP = Jim Peters. LOC = locative. LL = Lucy Lasley. LOC = locative. LT = Lucy Thomason. OBV = obviative. PERF = perfective preverb. pl = plural. POV = point-of-view marker. PPL = participial mood. PRX = proximate. RED = reduplication. sg = singular. SH = Ša·poči·wa. SK = Sa·kihtanohkwe·ha. SST = “sight/sound trope”. SUBJ = subjunctive mood. TB = Thomas Brown. TM = Truman Michelson. X = indefinite person. X6 = “Anonymous Six”.

Bibliography

The cited manuscripts by Jack Bullard, Charley H. Chuck, Alfred Kiyana, Lucy Lasley, Jim Peters, Sa·kihtanohkwe·ha, Ša·poči·wa, and Anonymous Six, and English translations of some of the manuscripts by Thomas Brown, Horace Poweshiek, and Harry Lincoln and others advising Truman Michelson, can be found by the relevant manuscript number under Truman Michelson's name in the Smithsonian Institution's National Anthropological Archives. Some of these manuscripts have been digitized and can be found by searching for “Michelson” and the relevant manuscript number at the website <https://collections.si.edu/search/>.

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