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A New Translation of Canestrelli's *A Kootenai Grammar*

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Abstract

Philip Canestrelli's grammar of Kutenai (a language indigenous to northern Idaho), *A Kootenai Grammar*, was originally published in Latin in 1894. The grammar's few English translations have not been linguistically informed, which has rendered the grammar, the earliest documentation of Kutenai, unavailable for revitalization efforts. To make Canestrelli's work accessible to English speakers, I am referencing multiple editions of the grammar, a partial translation, and modern linguistic work on Kutenai to produce an English translation that is true to Canestrelli's original meaning but still useful for modern linguists.

A Kootenai Grammar contains 144 pages. By May 2020 I will have completed translation of approximately 50 pages. I am supplementing the English translation with notes that compare Canestrelli's analysis of Kutenai, which is based on Latin grammatical categories, to modern analyses of Kutenai. These annotations include notes on Canestrelli's interpretation of various proximate and obviative morphemes—key features in the grammar of Kutenai. The translation and annotations I provide are equally informed by knowledge of Latin and modern linguistics so that *A Kootenai Grammar*, a key part of the documentation of the Kutenai language, is accessible in English.

A NEW TRANSLATION OF CANESTRELLI'S *A KOOTENAI GRAMMAR*

Emma Halverson
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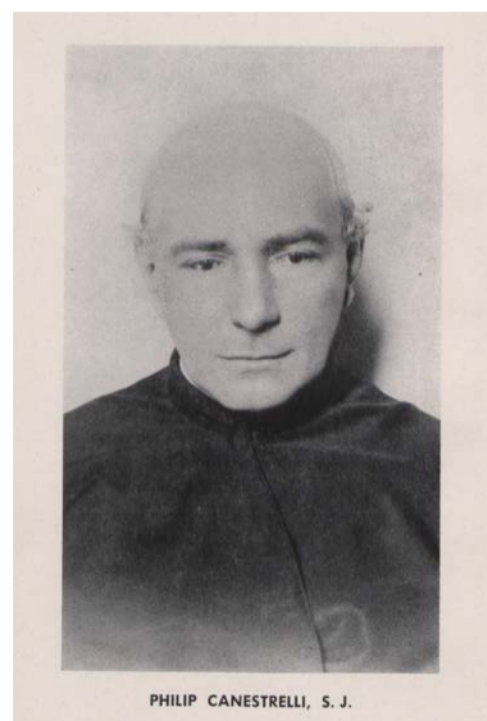


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ABSTRACT

Philip Canestrelli's grammar of Kutenai (a language indigenous to northern Idaho), *A Kootenai Grammar*, was originally published in Latin in 1894. The grammar's few English translations have not been linguistically informed, which has rendered the grammar, the earliest documentation of Kutenai, unavailable for revitalization efforts. To make Canestrelli's work accessible to English speakers, I am referencing multiple editions of the grammar, a partial translation, and modern linguistic work on Kutenai to produce an English translation that is true to Canestrelli's original meaning but still useful for modern linguists.

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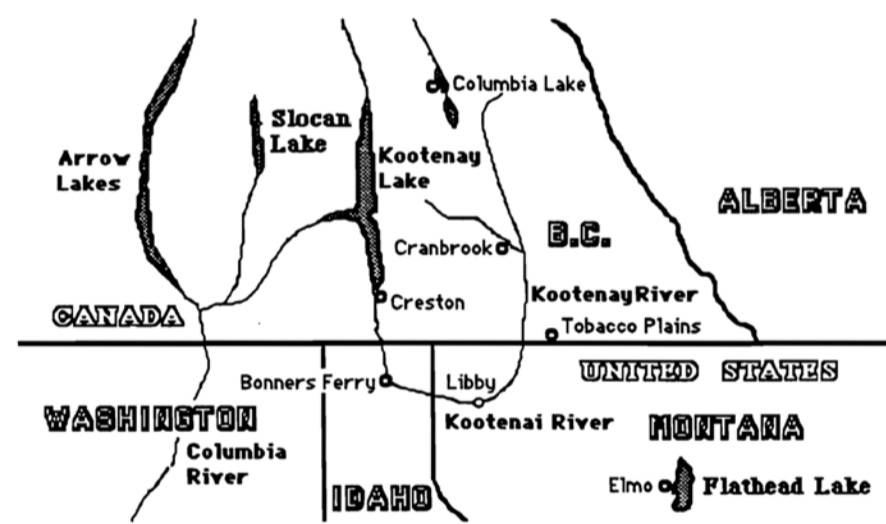
A photograph of Philip Canestrelli, reproduced on the frontispiece of *A Kootenai Grammar* (1959).

BACKGROUND

What is Kutenai?

The Kutenai language is the native language of the Kutenai people, and it is spoken in southeastern British Columbia, northwestern Montana, and northern Idaho, around the **Columbia River Plateau**. The language has a variety of names and spellings of those names, including Kutenai, Kootenai, Kootenay, Ktunaxa, and Ksanka.

Kutenai is a **language isolate**: it does not have a known historical or genealogical relationship to any other language. It is similar to other Native North American languages in that it is a polysynthetic language that allows complicated sentences to be expressed in one single, morphologically complex word.



A map of the Kutenai area, including British Columbia, Washington, Idaho, and Montana (Morgan, 1991, p. 2)

Who was Canestrelli?

Pater Philip Canestrelli, a Jesuit priest, was sent to St. Ignatius Mission in 1887, where he learned Kutenai and wrote a grammar titled *Linguae Ksanka Elementa Grammaticae*, known in English as *A Kootenai Grammar*. Canestrelli chose to write *A Kootenai Grammar* in Latin because the primary audience for the grammar was other Jesuit missionaries, who spoke different native languages but were familiar and comfortable with Latin. Latin was therefore the most accessible language for Canestrelli's audience at the time.

PROCESS

Methodology

Step 1: Translation. I consider modern linguistic terminology and how it aligns with Canestrelli's Latin. I use modern linguistic terms in translation whenever they closely align with or clarify Canestrelli's meaning. For instance, Canestrelli refers to the object of a verb as a **persona patiens**, literally 'patient,' but 'patient' in modern linguistics denotes a receiver of an action whether or not the receiver is the grammatical object. Because Canestrelli uses *persona patiens* to refer only to grammatical objects of verbs, I translate it as 'objects' and not 'patients' to avoid confusion.

Step 2: Annotation. I compare Canestrelli's description of Kutenai to modern linguists' analyses, and add annotations that explain major differences between perspectives. I also note places where Canestrelli's Latin translations of Kutenai example phrases express shades of meaning that are not as apparent in the English translation.

Example Section

Original Text (Canestrelli, 1959, p. 16).

significata per verbum, si verbum est formae passivae. In lingua ksanka subiectum verbi distinguitur a termino eiusdem per duplicem formam, quam nomen assumere potest, alteram ordinariam, alteram secundariam; ita ut forma ordinaria in lingua ksanka idem praestat ac casus nominativus in lingua latina, et forma secundaria idem praestat ac casus accusativus vel ablativus. Declaremus rem ex-

English Translation: In the Kutenai language, the subject of a verb is distinguished from the same verb's object through a twofold form that the noun can assume, either ordinary or secondary,¹ so that the ordinary form in Kutenai applies the same as the nominative case in Latin and the secondary form applies the same as the accusative or ablative.²

Annotations

1. i.e., the proximate ("ordinary") and obviative ("secondary").
2. Because of his strong Latin background, Canestrelli equates the proximate and obviative to Latin case marking, even though Kutenai does not use a case marking system. The proximate form specifies the most topical participant of a clause, and the obviative occurs on the clause's less topical participants.

LANGUAGES

Four languages are involved in translation: **Kutenai**, **Latin**, **English**, and **Italian**. When Canestrelli provides an example Kutenai sentence, he gives a Latin translation and, infrequently, an Italian translation. Below, Canestrelli shows how the **Kutenai definite article na** is used when a speaker lists items. Because Latin has no definite article to fully illustrate the principle, he gives both Latin and Italian translations (Canestrelli, 1959, p.14). The English is my resulting translation.

- **Kutenai:** na gapi, na k'kikul, na akulak, kapi sukni
- **Latin:** bulbi, panis, caro, omnia sunt bona
- **Italian:** la gamasce, il pane, la carne, sono tutte cose buone
- **English:** the onions, the bread, the meat, all are good

FURTHER PLANS

As of April 10, 2020, I have translated and annotated approximately 30 pages of *A Kootenai Grammar*. I will continue with translation and annotation, with the short-term goal of completing 50 pages by May and the long-term goal of producing a translation of the full book.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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