

# Achumawi Database

## Summary of March 2023 work

You can download the current backup from

- <http://zelligharris.org/Achumawi/achumawi-db.html>

I have updated the webonary at

- <https://www.webonary.org/odissi/>

I see that the webonary upload dialog reports these numbers currently:

Clicking Submit will send 9297 dictionary entries and 8216 English reversal entries to Webonary.

This has not been a month for very much productive work in the database.

- I have continued to work with [FLEx\\_errors@sil.org](mailto:FLEx_errors@sil.org), providing video of my activities just prior to those unexplained crashes. At Ken Zook's recommendation, I capture the video by using [OBS Studio](#) (part of the open source Open Broadcaster Software project).
- I have installed FLEx release 9.1.19.1290, which they hoped might resolve the issue. It apparently hasn't: the the work that I have been able to do in the database has been much interrupted, but some changes I made while preparing the last part of this report did generate a crash. (There was also a hiccup in the installation process, but that cleared.)

Work other than in the database was devoted to

- Modifying the budget for the new grant, as requested by Mary Paster, the NSF Program Officer. To summarize briefly, the reviewers gave our project the highest possible marks, and were only concerned that we were not paying staff enough, hence, a budget increase. A reviewer of the 2019 proposal remarked that no one was getting rich from it; the sentiment now is that we should at least be paid minimum wage for a 30-hour week.
- Providing a public-facing abstract of the project. Mary says that NSF publicity folks will modify what I provided, probably beyond recognition. I wrote briefly as follows:

*In the north end of California for about 12,000 years numerous small foraging communities lived in equilibrium. Their languages are among the oldest in the Americas. Using resources created in this project, linguists can reconstruct their relationships and history, and community members are regaining language and culture, a vital gesture of restorative justice and healing of generational trauma.*

*This project delivers a linguistic database to the indigenous community, with a grammar, dictionary, collection of oral literature (translated, analyzed, and annotated), and a range of materials and processes created by project staff for the people to make each of their homes a 'language nest' in which the language is used and nurtured. For several other languages in the area, it provides the example and explicit instruction for indigenous language activists to create a database of the same sort for their respective languages. These databases together will enable researchers to reconstruct the*

*linguistic history of the earliest inhabitants of the north end of California with specificity, completeness, and confidence that have until now been impossible.*

- Collaborating with the Indigenous Language Network (ILN) to plan optimally productive use of residual funds under the 2020 grant, with approval of the Endangered Language Fund (ELF). (A principal reason for unspent funds was that the pandemic prohibited travel.)

The end of the 2020 grant will be extended from 5/31/2023 to 8/31/2023, with Connor added to payroll for the three months of summer. ILN will rent and provision a house (preferably in the Burney, California area central to Pit River territory) for an intensive language learning environment during the three summer months. Labeled language domains will be set up and take-home materials provided, with Zoom-hybrid evening classes and specific domain intensives on weekends. For learners who cannot attend the scheduled events, and for security of equipment and the premises, at least one teacher will be in residence at all times. Staff will collect audio and visual records of the processes of learning Achumawi phonology as data for Connor's PhD work at UC Davis. Campsite domains will be set up at three major cultural events that occur during this period.

- The 2023-2026 grant term will start on 9/1/2023. That plan is laid out in the [summary](#) and [description](#) sections of the proposal.

A question for the month: *mállista* has diverse meanings, including: 'brother-in-law', 'previously married spouse', 'co-wife, second wife'. What do these meanings have in common?

A major function of kinship terms is to identify relatives who you can't marry. In exogamous communities, like those in our area, any *taqqám* is off limits. However, there are obligations as well as prohibitions. A marriage is a social contract between families. In our area, if a woman's husband died his brother was obligated to provide for her economic well-being. Many societies around the world expect a man to marry his deceased brother's widow. This is called levirate marriage, after the Hebrew word for brother-in-law.

In Pit River country, and many other places, she was not obligated to accept the brother, she had to agree to accept him. Grandma Lela said "After her husband dies, if the widow didn't want to marry her husband's brother, then he can sell her," where by "selling" he recoups the bride price and transfers the obligations and benefits of the marriage to another man and his family. These are incumbent on the husband even if he who moves in with the wife's family. Samson Grant is an example due to the dislocations of colonialism.

Like many Achumawi kinship terms, *mállista* is reciprocal, referring to both parties in the relationship. On this basis, then, I reconstruct the meaning as including 'husband's brother', 'brother's wife', 'brother's widow', and 'levirate spouse' (husband or wife).

A man married with no children can marry his sister-in-law = *wat'úúlawi* 'brother's wife's sister' if she's unmarried. He goes directly to the girl to ask, and pays her father. This may be reciprocal: an unmarried woman's sister-in-law = 'sister's husband's brother'. So long as she's unmarried she's part of the family obligation. I think *wat'úúlawi* is also 'wife's sister' and 'sister's husband'.

Grandma Lela said: "After the husband dies, if the widow didn't want to marry the husband's brother [*mállista*], then he can sell her. After the wife dies, if husband didn't want to marry his wife's sister [*wat'úúlawi*], then he can sell her. He can't refuse; she can refuse to marry him, but can't marry another without his permission. Children make a woman's claim stronger. If he runs off, refuses, he is sick three days and dies (due to doctor)." I think I have the correct terms in square braces.

A 'woman's sister-in-law, husband's sister' *waacaawi* may be reciprocal, 'brother's wife'. This is an unrelated woman brought into the family by an exogamous marriage. A woman's co-worker and ally, perhaps. She might not speak the language well.

Marriage, children, death, divorce, and other changes invoke these kinship relation terms in a unified way, but because the expectations and obligations of marriage are different in the English-speaking world the English glosses in diverse circumstances seem unrelated to each other.

Now, what if anything does *mállista* have to do with *mállis* ‘fire’? Does it include *ta* ‘make a line, move in a direction’? The person moves ‘linearly’ to the family fire?

This came up because an elder working with Paul remembered ‘fire’ as *mállisti*. This would be unique in the database, where *mállis* ‘fire’ occurs more than 50 times, recorded by six different linguists from 11 different people over almost a century of time.

The final syllable may have been a form of *tíiyi*, e.g. *mállis tíiyi kú* ‘something that you can make fire with’, *mállis tíiyá!* ‘make fire!’ Grandma Lela said *tíiyi wa kíuwi?* ‘Do you want to have it?’ and *tíiyá!* ‘Have it!”, and in a story when *Céémul* sees where light is coming in through a little hole in the roof he says ‘What’s this?’, *táq tíiy’ qá piqq<sup>h</sup>á*, with the final vowel of *tíiyi* elided. (Another pronunciation is *táq t<sup>h</sup>tíiyi*. Sensory evidence was present; if it were not, he would say *táq tíiyi qá piqq<sup>h</sup>á* or maybe *táq tíy’ qá piqq<sup>h</sup>á*.) So perhaps what he heard was *mállis tíiy<sup>h</sup>* with a devoiced final syllable.

A possibility is *mállis tíiyá!* ‘make fire!’, but the volitional *-a* is typically (always?) fully voiced, so it would more likely be the participle ending in *-i*. The *t-* may be an impersonal or ‘absolute’ pronoun something like the hypostatized *it* of English ‘It’s raining’. It is used in subordinate clauses, as in *cé suwí tállílláqti qa céémul wímmaawí tíiyi* ‘I don’t want to make Coyote my son-in-law’. Sometimes a generic *t-* enables the speaker to avoid a complex pronoun sequence. (Where this occurs sequentially in a narrative, what Sapir called the ‘narrative infinitive’ in Yana, the basis might be tacit assumption of a higher-level narrative-making verb in the ‘say’ family.)

The *y’* ‘manifest’ is familiar from e.g. *twiyí*. ‘he is’. A frequent usage is with a question word, such as *táq tíiyi* ‘what is it?’ there are phrases like *qa tatýi tíiyi*, *qa waayí tíiyi*. I believe that an uncle or aunt who could also be called ‘father’ or ‘mother’ in extended family care and of course adoption as well, so I believe the glosses for these are ‘birth mother’ and ‘biological father’. In the Burney story of a woman being abducted *qa yályú tíiyi* means ‘her proper man, her real husband’. Possibly one’s proper fire or hearth would be *kac<sup>h</sup>ú mállis tíiyi*.

The word for re-making a fire in a hearth is *tóhyi*, *sowáhyi*. A hearth (= *mállis tóhýit*) constrains the fire (*w* ‘stative’ + *hy* ‘constrain’), so *mállis tíiyá!* ‘make fire!’ might be best for making an open fire, maybe a controlled burn.

In *ticúmyóhyi qa mállis* ‘poke/stir the fire’ the participle looks like it might include *hy* ‘constrain’, but it has *cu* ‘thrust’ + *myóh* ‘poke, nudge’ + *y’* ‘manifest, attain state’.