Achumawi Database: Summary for May 2020

The current backup can be downloaded (with instructions) from the usual location at http://zelligharris.org/achumawi-db.html

1. My DEL grant resumes Monday 1 June. Work since 1 June last year has given me a head start on the morphological analysis, though the primary intention has been to clean things up so the analysis can proceed more efficiently.

2. I’ve continued working through the lexicon, merging duplicate entries, allomorphs, and dialectal variants, and cleaning up inconsistencies. Sometimes I have to reconsider (again) whether a given morpheme is a suffix or a word. Examples that I now consider postpositions include wáka, ka “agentive”, wa “by, with”, wáté “at, on, ...”, wáýtu “from”, có “plural”, can “individual, discrete, several”. All of these except có have allomorphs that extend a preceding word-final consonant.

When I come to an entry with a complex word, such as an inflected verb, I use the Show Entry in Concordance function. After I break each of the concorded items down in the Analysis view, I remove that entry from the lexicon, unless it has some marked irregularity of form or meaning, or a prominent function (e.g. the names of the bands). When a given morpheme within a word is not in the lexicon yet, so that I can’t analyze the word completely, I go on a search for instances of that morpheme and create an entry for it. In this way, inflected verbs and other complex words are coming out of the lexicon, and individual morphemes are being added to the lexicon. It’s a slow process with lots of rabbit holes to chase through, but when I do get to the entries for verbs it will go more quickly because the “show entries in concordance” function doesn’t find any if I have already analyzed them.

I’m up to the H section of the lexicon, where I found some verbs beginning with h-, the shortened form of lh-, hence the next topic.*

3. I’ve been setting the complexity of pronominal affixes aside for later analysis, but this month I’ve worked out a bit more of their semantics. You may be familiar with how prefixes refer to the subject or agent and (for transitive verbs) the object or patient. For example, s- says that I, the speaker, am involved, k- involves you, sk- says you are the agent and I the patient (skituu’íísi “you shot me”). (This suggests OSV word order, which is typologically very rare.) In 1st person the nonsingular is lh-/h- (lháámá “you and I ate”, slháámá “he and I ate”), and in 2nd person it is k- + c- (kádmá “you ate”, kicámmá “you two ate”). Nonsingular is sometimes used as plural. With transitive verbs, the lh- or h-prefix says that I and one or more other people are involved, but is ambiguous as to number and as to which is the agent. The 1st person prefix s- in slh- asserts that the other person or persons indicated by lh- are on my side, not yours. Because the s- prefix identifies who is included, not who is excluded, the conventional ‘inclusive/exclusive’ label contradicts the semantics.

The -umá suffix (-tumá after vowel) asserts that some additional 3rd person is involved as an agent. With intransitive verbs, or when no patient is asserted, adding -uma to the nonsingular makes it plural (lhámmuímá “We ate”, kicámmuímá “You pl. ate”). With a transitive verb, the additional 3rd person is the agent and the prefix identifies the patient (witappʰááci “he’s teaching, he’s a teacher,”

* The 1st person nonsingular lh- (with epenthetic schwa) is reduced to h- downriver sometimes, upriver always, but slh- becomes sah- upriver.
yitappʰáácumá, “he’s teaching him”; sóócá “I bit it”, súcíumá “something bit me”). Less frequently, this agent may even be pleonastically indicated by a 3rd person prefix in OSV pronoun order (syetwíumá “he killed me”, syitúuíísísumá “he shot me”). These transitives cannot be construed as plural, because the 3rd person plural ending is the reciprocal -íwci, and the 1st person nonsingular is lh-.

In the H section of the lexicon there were some transitive verbs beginning with h-, designating a 1st person participant plus at least one other, and ending with -icka (-icka after vowel). Below is a subset of the examples of -icka in the database (and you can search for more). As with -umá, there is a relatively simple path through the appearance of confusing complexity. A description follows the examples.

1. hámísqʰám hínímmáá c̓iíc̓i I saw you alone, just you
2. hakmim hínímmáácicka I saw you two
3. it̓tʰééká lháwwicka I gave it to you
4. it̓tʰúúlééká slháwwicka we gave it to you two/plural
5. hiículʰáático I cut you (the t is in the root kʰá)
6. hicóókʰáático I cut you pl.
7. hicúnímmaácicka we two saw you
8. hakmim hicúnímmaácicka I saw you two
9. hicúnímmaácicka tóólol I saw you all
10. tóólol vákam hicúnímmaácicka they and I saw you
11. hakmim tóólol vákam hicúnímmaácicka they and I saw you two
12. hicúnímmaácicka hák wákam you two saw me
13. it̓tʰúúlééká lhcááwático we gave it to you
14. it̓tʰúúlééká yá lhcááwíc̓íka we gave it to you plural
15. it̓tʰééká lháwwicka I’m the one who gave it to you
16. mícístʰú lhcáwwicka I gave it to you two/plural
17. tóólol lhçááwíc̓íka. I gave it to you all
18. it̓tʰúúlééká lhcááwíc̓íka we gave it to you
19. lhçááwíc̓íka he and I gave it to you and him
20. it̓tʰúúlééká lhçááwático we’re the ones who gave it to you
21. mícístʰú lhçáwwicka I gave it to you two
22. tóólol lhçáwwicka I gave it to you all
23. it̓tʰééká lháwwicka I’m the one who gave it to you
24. it̓tʰúúlééká (yá) lhçáwwicka we gave it to you plural
The -icka suffix adds a 2nd person patient to a transitive verb with a 1st person subject. It makes a 2nd person prefix the patient relative to an implicit 3rd person agent.

The lh-...icka construction asserts that the participants are 1st and 2nd person, but is ambiguous as to which is plural. Because the -icka suffix places the 2nd person in the patient role, lh-...icka asserts the ‘exclusive we’ as agent (1st person + 3rd person) and slh- (the usual exclusive form) does not usually occur. However, in (4) itʰúúlééka slháwwicka “we gave it to you two/plural” the s- may affirm that both the 1st and 2nd persons are plural, or it could also be the pleonastic emphasis that we saw in syétwímá. That’s the only example of slh-...icka in the database, but considering e.g. mícistʰúúlééka skicádwá “you plural gave it to me” I think the corresponding verb with roles reversed would be mícistʰúúlééka slháwwicka “you plural gave it to me/us” and probably itʰú čó mícistʰúúlééka slháwwicka “you plural gave it to us”. Context usually resolves the ambiguity of these constructions, so that an independent pronoun like itʰééka “1st person agent” has or can have the effect of emphasis: “I’m the one who gave it to you.”