

## Achumawi Database: Summary for September 2020

The current backup can be downloaded (with instructions) from the usual location at <http://zelligharris.org/achumawi-db.html>. I am updating the webonary site, but have not yet entered many examples in the lexicon. For that, use the database, right-click the entry and select **Show Entry in Concordance**.

September's work has led down some unanticipated paths and has produced some solutions long wished for and some wholly unexpected.

1. **laq vs leq̣**. Working with Paul to provide a word meaning “choice”, for a school play, led to resolution of a long-standing uncertainty about *tálílláq̣ti* “desire”. I first heard this word in 1970 in my very first work with Johnny Craig and Craven Gibson. My ear was still learning, and their pronunciation was not as clear as Grandma Lela's. I recorded it with a laryngealized *q̣* and with uncertainty whether it was *láq̣* or *leq̣*. I had the same difficulty with a similar word during that same early experience with them, the place name *q̣óssi ááléq̣ta* “Juniper flat” (the basis of the Alturas band name), and I assumed that the same morphemes were involved. I thought it might mean “juniper-liking”. Thereafter, I ‘recognized’ both words as I had decided to write them early on—that is, even while still struggling to distinguish the sounds I wrote a laryngealized *q̣* and for the vowel sometimes *a* and sometimes *e*.

There are acoustic and articulatory reasons for the uncertainty. In the transition to *q* from Achumawi dark *l* (in which the body of the tongue is raised, as distinct from a light *l* with just the tip raised) the distinction between *e* and *a* becomes hard to hear. The distinction between *Vq̣tV* and *VqtV* is hard to distinguish unless the first consonant of the cluster is emphatically released. (You will recall that e.g. *baṭti* “plums” is frequently pronounced *batti* with no release).

It is clear that the CVC root in *ááléq̣ta* is *leq̣* “lateral, broad, flat”, and having now reviewed the audio record, and it is clear that the CVC root in *tálílláq̣ti* is *laq̣* “turn, reverse, divert”. The display in Audacity shows continuous vibratory energy across the transition after the silence of closure for *q* and before the resumption of voicing in the *t* segment, and Praat shows this to be noise consistent with devoiced airflow and slight postvelar frication, but this transition is very short, barely audible.

This result sheds light on *tíláq̣ti*, a word attested only by Jeremiah Curtin in 1888. His gloss “wizard” (and “witch” for *tíláq̣ti amitt<sup>h</sup>éwcan*) show that the ‘turn’ of *laq̣* here has to do

with working magic. The more familiar word *tálílláq̣ti* "desire, want, like" is formed by adding the CV root *li* "reaching for". Whereas desiring something in the usual way, you reach (*li*) to turn it back (*laq*) to yourself. By magic, your power turns it, or you turn your power to effect your purpose. This accords with certain uses of the volitional which otherwise are glossed with some difficulty, and is consistent with the distinction between the unmanifest and the manifest which I believe is behind the notions translated as 'luck', power, etc. The final *t* of these stems, and some others, is not yet clear. For the present, I have analyzed it as a reduction of *tu*, glossed "upon".

2. *ski*. In the I section of the lexicon are a number of nonsingular imperatives beginning with *ici-*, such as

*icíncéskííla*      *ce* seeing                      *ski la* making a line      "look sharp!"

Also here is the simple verb stem *icéski* "looking, looking for", which again has the CV root *ce* which alludes to the visual modality. Both of these also include the CCV root *ski*, which seems to localize the object of vision.

The following verbs have no preceding CV root such as the *ce* seen above. These verbs have in common a "sit" meaning, focused by *ski* on a location specified by a following suffix:

<i>uskí̄mci</i>	–	<i>ski -m</i>	down to surface	sitting down
<i>uskí̄chí</i>	–	<i>ski -chí</i>	in liquid	sitting in mud
<i>uskístumi</i>	–	<i>ski -stu</i>	upon	sitting upon

(The last example appears to include *-m* "thither", though *-m* "down to a surface" is also possible, and indeed these meanings may not be as distinct in Achumawi semantics as in English.)

In July 1931, Harrington recorded the place name *ćáámíḳ ilúskí̄cháké* with the following note:

*tc'ámek-'iluskit-haké'*. It is upcr. of the hotel, in the little hot spring ck. mg. star is in that ck. there, that star is dumped in that ck. there.

*ilúskí̄cháké*      *lu* pulling                      *ski -chí* in liquid      *-áké* reflexive

There are verbs for pouring and spilling in which *lu* indicates the linear pull of gravity, whence also a word for generic containers (into which things are dropped), so that here it appears that by falling the star was "dumped there" and now situates itself in the water.

In the following verbs, the meaning of *ski* is so narrowly specialized that I have to treat it as a different morpheme.

<i>slhiskííní qa pahá</i>	we chewed on epos root
<i>sla'óská pahhá</i>	I crave to chew on root!
<i>tykwaaskééćumi</i>	ate while going along
<i>ḱiskí</i>	you should eat some

It may have to do with biting off pieces to chew (which I suppose might be 'local' bits in the larger mass). The meaning of *ska* in the following word may be related:

<i>tíuskáwti</i>	<i>tú</i> hitting with fist	<i>ska</i>	<i>t(u)</i> to, toward	break it off
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It is my back-formation based upon *sintuskáwt'ooyí* "I used to break it off" in the database (Radin: *sint'óskàpt'ó'i*, *sint'óskàto''ó'i* with his gloss "I break [knock] it off") . In a number of words, such as *sááleqáíw'tí* "I almost covered it", *w't* appears to signify incompleteness—another rabbit that I am not presently going to chase.

Rather than the usual CVC form, the central root *ski* is in CCV form. With a few roots, such as *laq* "turn, reverse" (which we saw above in *tállílláqti*), there is an alternate CCV form *lqi* as in *tíimállqí*, *tíimállqíci* "look back". However, I have not found appropriate occurrences of *sk* in CVC form such as *sik*, *sak*, or *suk*.

This anomaly may be related to variation in the vowel. In the following verb, what appears to be the same root conveys a similar meaning of location or situation, except for the *a* vowel—*ska* instead of *ski*.

<i>iliskááti</i>	<i>li</i> extending hand	<i>ska</i>	<i>t(i)</i> toward	pointing at
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In other examples with *ska* the vowel *a* may be determined in some way by an *a* vowel in an adjacent morpheme. Indeed, in *iliskááti* rather than *ti* "move toward" the root in *the* 3rd template position may be *ta* "form a line, linear motion", with its *a* vowel lost before the *-i* vowel that is required at the end of the verb stem. We'll turn to those other verbs with *ska* next.

3. ***ska*, *-wa*, *w-***. In the next set of examples, several issues intersect, one of which concerns what de Angulo listed as *-áswádz-* with the gloss "habituaive". Only 18 verb stems have their final vowel (usually the default *i*) replaced by *as* + *wac*, but the 41 with *wac* alone may end with a consonant or with a vowel not limited to *a*. The verb stem *am* "eat" occurs both ways: *mimú íé támwací* "your habitual eating that way" (said to Coyote, of course) where the stem ends in a consonant, and *ál*



doorway”—where apparently the *m* of the *wum* allomorph was lost or became nasalization which Curtin either didn't hear or didn't record, and the *u* of *tánu* is assimilated to phonetic [ɲ] before *m* as usual.

In light of this, I have changed all instances of what I had discontentedly analyzed as *skau* + *-m* to *ska* + *wam*. There are a number of other occurrences of this reduced allomorph of *wam*, such as *tahtúúúúumi* “continuing to flow full” in one of the stories that de Angulo recorded, which is now written *tahtúúúúúwumi*. (Compare *ahtúúúmi* “full”, etc.)

There are many other instances of the root *wam* that await investigation. For example, Lela Rhoades said in English that in autumn the trees “push” the leaves off. The word for autumn is *iíwáámak*, where *-ak* “time of, time for” is used in names of seasons and months. (Language activists should be alert to such clues. Even elders of today who do not speak the language are likely to have ways of saying things in English which, by way of their parents and grandparents, give us a reflection of the way things were said in Achumawi.)

This analysis of *skáum* as *skááwum* suggests how to consider the anomalous falling tone in e.g. *tit<sup>h</sup>alúúumi* “work”. It can be analyzed as *tit<sup>h</sup>alúúúwumi*, where *wum* is an allomorph of *wam*. The reduction of unstressed *wum* to [um] in the second half of a diphthong is a fact of pronunciation that will be stated in the phonology description, and must be learned for language revitalization.

The falling tone is not anomalous when high pitch on a prefix precedes low-pitch *u* in *uw* “be” or *uc* “do”, e.g. *táq túuwí*, *háy sinúuwí*, *háy sinúúúú*, *cé suyúúwúumá*, *q<sup>h</sup>uc q<sup>h</sup>uc wícúuwí* and the like. The transition from high pitch on a prefix to low pitch on the stem could be a contributor to the laryngealization (or re-articulated vowel) sometimes heard in *táq tísi* “what did he say?”, if the verb is *tí* 3<sup>rd</sup> person ‘subordinate’ + *issi*, although the possibility of a laryngealized *ś* is still unresolved—e.g. *sisýi* “I said” may be *siśí*. The disentangling of the similar verbs for “say”, “sing”, “drink”, and “hunt” is a task still deferred to the future, and likewise the probably related difference between verbs that have *sáwá-* in the 1<sup>st</sup> person vs. those that have the reduced form *sóó-*.

5. **Thinking, trying, and *umá*.** Radin's *linoh'a'o-oma* looks like the volitional *linahú* “I'll hang it!” plus *umá* which is usually translated “perhaps”, but Radin's gloss is “he tried to hang it.” To say in Achumwawi that someone is trying to do something, you say that they're thinking “I'll do it!” An example is *luuk<sup>h</sup>á tykwapsíwci*, glossed “she tried to climb” but translated literally “‘I'll climb!’ she thought”. If Radin accurately captured the phrase *linahú umá* and its gloss “he tried to hang it”, it

looks like *linahú wapsíwci umá*, literally “maybe he thought ‘I’ll hang it!’” with *wapsíwci* “he thought” omitted.

I do not yet know the analysis of the word *umá*. Some other examples:

- *mááćímcí kúćí umá*. “I guess it might rain” (compare *mááćímcí kúćí*. “it might rain”).
- *wálarhúúsá ’ka umá tmiyí máámá qá wattu*. “A mole must have eaten the roots.”
- *hew umá muwí*. “He must have forgotten.”
- *té umá muwí*. “Maybe that’s it.”

**6. True confessions.** At NILI 2019 I organized an intensive course around the traditional text which may be seen at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/ndk9gmj94k9hyu0/Beginning.pdf?dl=0>

In the database, this is the text deA: Creation (Henry Wohl/Wool, Fall River). An interlinear analysis and translation may be seen at <http://zelligharris.org/Achumawi/deA-Creation-Wool.pdf>

Several folks who were at NILI read this text at a recent AICLS virtual event, a wonderful team performance that gave me great pleasure. However, it was evident that the orthography does not give sufficient phonetic detail for the remote past pronominal prefixes that are presently written with *tyk*. They were pronouncing it as the unstressed syllable [c<sup>h</sup>ək] in every case. When the next morpheme is a 3rd person prefix such as *w-*, *y-*, or *t-*, or the iterative/intensive *n-*prefix, do not insert a schwa, but rather pronounce e.g. *tykwa-* as [c<sup>h</sup>gwa]. Some examples:

<i>tykwakúllúúlí</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> kwagúllúúlí]	<i>tykisýí</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> agisýí]
<i>ckyáásá</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> kyá <sup>h</sup> sá], [c <sup>h</sup> kiyá <sup>h</sup> sá]	<i>tykáácá</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> agá <sup>h</sup> cá]
<i>tyktinááyá</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> kidinááyá]	<i>tykápté</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> agáp <sup>h</sup> té]
<i>tykinánca</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> kinánca]	<i>tykáásáámí</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> agá <sup>h</sup> sáámí]
<i>tykyááqaćcúmí</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> kiyá <sup>h</sup> qaćscúmí]	<i>tykááqaćcí</i>	[c <sup>h</sup> agá <sup>h</sup> qaćscí]

I have been inconsistent, writing epenthetic *i* before *n-* but not before *t-* (nor before *y-*, where it is optional). The reason for writing it is that it must be present before applying the general rule that before a consonant a plain step is voiceless released. If I wrote *tyktnááyá* and *tyknánca* this generalization would prescribe [c<sup>h</sup>k<sup>h</sup>t<sup>h</sup>nááyá] and [c<sup>h</sup>k<sup>h</sup>nánca].

When am able to clean this up, I must also make a global replacement of “remote past” *ty* with *c*. I made a premature assumption a few years ago that the “evidential” *t-* is involved. Even if this is true (and that is not at all clear), it should be handled in the Analysis view of the database. Worse, there is also the present-tense combination *t-* + *y-* which is pronounced [t<sup>h</sup>y]. (The “present tense” is actually timeless, as in English, e.g. “she writes poetry”.)