

Achumawi Database: Summary for April 2021

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Charles Sanders Peirce observed how mathematicians, logicians, and scientists present their findings in tidy pyramidal form, in which conclusions necessarily follow from previously stated premisses, and he proposed that it might be well and would certainly be illuminating and more instructive were they to disclose the paths they actually followed to arrive at those conclusions from those premisses, including blind alleys, concurrent lines of investigation converging (or not), and substitution of better premisses in place of false assumptions. Certainly linguistics is no exception. Perhaps what I am recording here in these monthly reports may one day serve as a record of this sort.

Most of the effort this month has been in the unglamorous work of consolidating one form at a time in the lexicon, removing complex verbal derivatives after analyzing them and chasing down all occurrences of each constituent morpheme. I am continuing to help language activists develop pedagogical material. I don't include here the material that I have sent to them unless it discloses something new in the database.

1. **What is too far to reach?** I'll start here with a little more about the distinction between 'live' morphology vs. morphology that is of etymological value and useful for historical reconstruction but less useful for word-construction today. This is so in every language. In English, though we may jokingly say "he has no couth", meaning uncouth, we can make no lively use today of the etymological connections of *couth* to *kith* (as in "kith and kin", friends and relations), to *ken* "know how", to *can*, *could*, and to *cunning*.

Consider now a word that has a morphological analysis and compositional meaning which is very clear yet inappropriate for today's circumstances: *imáák^húpýi* "stump". In former days, the people broke off dead branches for firewood, and when the natural supply was thin they would sometimes chop a ring around a tree through the bark and the growth layer to kill it. However, to build a new semi-subterranean *ascúy* (winter house), or perhaps to rebuild an old one, they needed entire tree trunks for the center pole and main beams. There are limits to what one can do with an obsidian blade, however heavy and sharp. They accomplished this by chopping around a ring, burning the frayed ends of wood, then chopping some more and repeating the process until the tree fell, leaving a stump. Hence, *ma* "burn" *k^hup* "chop" + *y* "stative" or perhaps "result" or "product": *imáák^húpýi* "stump". We might metaphorically say "he really burned through those trees with his chainsaw, look at the stumps"—but not literally. Culture change pushes such words beyond the immediate productive capacity of the language into the historical relic state called etymology.

Nevertheless, wherever an obsolete word is preserved as part of a place name, we have to keep it. An example is *imáák^húpýíca alússa ú icuukáátí*. “headwaters of stump creek” (Harrington mf2r32:290). The analysis: *imáák^húpýi* “stump” (as above) + *ca* “individual, several”; *alússa* “creek” = probably *lu* “by pulling [of gravity]” + *sa* “push, move”; *icuukáátí* “headwaters” = *cu* “thrust, flow” + *kát* “taper off”.

To move across the border from etymology to something that we can use productively, it is often necessary to understand the Pit River point of view rather than being too influenced by the way the English translations make semantic distinctions. An example is the string *maslí*, which until this month has been glossed, unanalyzed, as “smell”.

<i>tímaslímmá</i>	“smell it! (- <i>m</i> “thither”)
<i>wámaslíkúkwáya</i>	“it stinks” (<i>kúk</i> TBD)
<i>wíc ímaslíicí</i>	“smelling like it”
<i>másliičíínací</i>	“smoky smelling” (- <i>in</i> past?)

So when Craven said *yámaslíyéqti* “It’s sticking onto something” (cp. *áyéqti* “added on, sticking on), was he talking about something smelly?

But then we find *sámássaykí* “I smelled (had an odor)” which has *mas* without the following *lí*. That suggests that the “smell” meaning is associated with *mas*, and *lí* is perhaps the “extend” There are many examples of *ayki* and *aymi* which clearly have the directional suffix -*k* “hither” or -*m* “thither”, and the *ay* appears to be an allomorph of *y* “stative”, indicating the condition, result, or product of the verbal expression; for example, a separately articulated *ayki* is added to *winímma* “see, find” in *winímma^{ay}aykí* “she resembles an ancestor”. If *mas* means something like “smell”, perhaps the above examples have *li* “extending”.

Searching for more examples of *maslí*, we find

<i>sámaslíik^háátí</i>	I’m dry, choking with thirst (<i>k^hat</i> = “cut”)
<i>slhímaslíicatáq</i>	let’s play smudge! (<i>catáq</i> TBD)
<i>i</i>	

‘Smudge’ is a challenge game taking turns inside with a smoky fire to see who can stand being choked with smoke the longest. These verbs suggests *mas* + *lí* describes a drying up of the mouth and throat.

In *tmásliikáátí* “you (evidently) drank it all up!” (*kát* = “taper off, reach the end”) has more in common with *tisliítaaka* “suck (an orange or grapefruit)” and *masliítaakí* “did pitch draw out the

boil?” Now here is an interesting clue: the word for pine pitch is *isíí*. Is that noun actually a participle that names pitch for its use to draw out or extract? Is that the root meaning of *síí*? Consistent with this, some other words describe consequences of moisture having been “extracted” from wood or skin:

wamáslillááti "(wood) is cracked, split", compare *yállaati* "(wood) is split, broken",
lat lat uci "splitting"

wamáslicpáhí "(skin) has cracks", compare *yácpáhí* "(glass) is cracked",
lááqac cpah cpah wisyí "ice goes 'crack-crack'"

wamaslííílayí "it twists", compare *wacacílayáké* "he twists it", *iicíílayí* "twisting"

Perhaps here also belongs Radin’s *ts’o’l’a wama’tslóhai laq’a’ts* “ice melts in the sun” if it is rectified as *çulla wamáslííhí lááqac* or *çulla wamáslííhayí lááqac* perhaps referring to some head-like (*hí*) lump of ice.

2. Speak/say/tell/narrate. At the beginning of the month there were some questions about speak/say verbs. The analysis of the verb *ílaháámi* “conversing, talking business”, etc. is unclear. A complex suffix gets it to the gloss “talk to”, e.g.:

kílaháámiyéwací “Did you talk to him?”

kílaháámiyíwacíccka “Did he talk to you?” (Were you talked to by him?)

If we analyze these as having *yí* + *wá* + *c*, a careful pronunciation would be *kílaháámiyíwací* and *kílaháámiyíwicíccka*, and we have vowel changes in unstressed syllables to account for. To explain this as dissimilation of *yí* to *yé* and assimilation of unstressed *wa* to *wi* between two front vowels and before palatal *c* requires a search for exceptions to such a rule.

I reported my current understanding of *yí* and *wací* in the report for March. The contribution of a stative or durative meaning to the gloss “talk to” depends on an analysis of the stem *-laháám-*, which remains obscure. It might be *la* “make a line, put in line, move linearly” + *ham* or *ha* + *-m*. Or it might be *lah* + *-m*. If the appropriate root does not emerge in due course, the complex stem *laháám* will be an unanalyzed item in the lexicon, with some speculation about its etymology.

The analysis of *itámmaaki*, *intámmaaki* “telling about, narrating” is a little more accessible. It is probably *ta* “sequence, make a line, use long implement” + *ma* “look, see, find” + *-k* “hither”. Stories string together one to the next like beads. The length of the *a* vowel after the CVC root requires explanation here, and also in *ílaháámi* if it has a CV root *ha* + directional suffix *-m*. The CV roots *la* and *ta* have similar meanings. The distinction between them is suggested by e.g. *tílahlúúpi* “skin (an animal)” vs. *tilahlúúpi* “scrape a hide”.

Radin and de Angulo both have a word glossed "tell a story/myth": *tilisinííqi* (Radin), *tilasinííqi* (de Angulo). The first root is probably *la* as above, and *si* may be a form of the main “say, speak” root in e.g. *ó tissi.*, but I have not identified the remainder of the stem, presumably a CVC root *niq.* I was not able to re-elicite this verb and did not hear it myself, so I do not have a cross-check on the transcription or gloss.

The usual word that is glossed “tell a (traditional) story” is recorded three ways: *tíliyahtúúmi*, *tílayahtúúmi*, and *tílyahtúúmi*. (with presumed epenthetic vowel before the *y*). The initial CV root could be either *la* as above or *li* “reach, extend”. The remainder of the stem is seen with the directional suffix *-m* “thither” in *ahtúúmi* = “added on (to a sequence)”. We see this in one way of making the compound numbers, as in *látíwwáté hák ahtúúmi* “seven”. The stories string together like beads. With the directional suffix *-k* “hither” we get *ahtúúkí* “full” (more properly “filling”), and *kac^hú pínnúk yáhtúúkí*. “his belly was full”. Assuming this is correct, I have now rectified the word for telling a story as *tíliyahtúúmi*. The *y* glide that is phonetically present confirms that the first root is *li*; if it were *la* then the resulting long *aa* would be shortened before the consonant cluster (**tilaahtúúmi* > **tilahtúúmi*). I believe that after *la* if the *ah* were a stressed syllable a glottal stop would mark the morpheme boundary (**tila’ahhtúúmi*), but it is unstressed as well a low pitch.

3. Glottal stop. The question of variable glottalization came up in an exchange with Connor, Paul, and Lisa at the end of the month. The variable glottalization of the glides *m n l w y* (and I think *s*) probably involves an interplay of pitch, stress, and morpheme boundary.

Glottal stop is a marginal phoneme in the language. It is optional before a word-initial vowel and after the final vowel of a verb stem functioning as a participle (the ‘-ing’ participle). e.g. *’ámmí’ / ’ámmí’ / ’ámmí / ámmí’* “eating”, but (’) *ál ámmí*. “Klamath Indian (lit. ‘fish-eating’)”. Even without fluent speakers to consult, it may be possible to identify contexts for glottal stop to be present or not at word boundary by tabulating phonemic, morphological, and syntactic (in the sense of prosodic stress contours) contexts. I did not consistently record word-initial glottal stop when I heard it, and in other cases where the variable presence of glottalization was well known to me, like initial 3rd person pronoun *y-* and *w-*, I sometimes wrote glottalization even when I did not clearly hear it.

Some words have an intervocalic glottal stop, for example *sasúúla’áyi* “I’m happy”, *sat^heelaa’áyi* “I’m glad to hear about it”, *tit^héelaa’áyi* “it sounded good”, and words with the suffix *-o’oy* “former, done”.

De Angulo has a verb *tá’áá’i*, which he glosses “beat clap-stick”. Elsewhere, this is *tanaacáási*. The root *cas* appears to be onomatopoeic in e.g. *cas cas tuci* “make sound of clap-stick”. (Homophony with e.g. *tóólol cas ýuwí* “everything was quiet” is probably coincidental.)

When a glottal stop occurs after pronominal prefixes and before the stressed, high pitch first vowel of a verb stem, the first vowel is epenthetic. In most cases, I have written a vowel there,

usually *a*. The problem with this is that an unstressed epenthetic vowel is centralized and of variable height. Examples include *táq sla'ám* "what shall I eat?", *tí'áaca* "would that there were", *í'áacahalo'oy* "would that there had been" (built on the *c* "do" root). In one collection, the database has *táq sl'ám* "What shall I eat?", *c^hááwa sl'ís as* "where can I drink water?", *c^hááwa sl'uskím?* "where can I sit?", *c^hááwa l'uskím qá piq^há* "where can this (person) sit?", but in the same notes from the 1971 'evening literacy class' we find *ta'álcí q^hé k^hatím taqqám sinááyá* "Poor thing! That's all the relations I have!" and *tí'álcí* "Poor thing!".¹ The vowel is necessary in these latter forms because writing *t'* (a consonant cluster) would tell a reader to pronounce the *t* with voiceless release. In fact, there is a voiceless-released *t* in e.g. *kí t'umá íícóo* "Do anything you want! (if you want to)", *kí t'umá kiccí* "Do anything you want! (if you feel like it, if you feel it's all right)", but this is because the *t* closes the syllable initiated by *ki*.

There is one other word in the database where the last pronominal prefix before the stem is *t-*, de Angulo's *sta'áámá* "I already ate". I have omitted the epenthetic vowel in all cases except for these few words where the stem-adjacent prefix is *t-*. As a compromise in the practical orthography, in these few words I will continue to write the epenthetic vowel as though a full vowel, though that is somewhat misleading as to the vowel quality. In a grammatical description this will be a function of the descriptive order of the phonological rule inserting the epenthetic vowel vs. that for the voiceless release of the stop.

These words are exceptions to a semantic generalization as well. I believe that the manifest/unmanifest axis is important in this language (shown in aspects of culture including spirituality, magic, courtship, and gambling). Expressions like *sla'ám* "would that I eat; I might eat; might I eat; if I eat" refer to unmanifest potential.

4. Enclitics. It is possible that the *áyi* of *sasúúla'áyi* "I'm happy" should be written as a separate word, as an enclitic. There are other morphemes that look like suffixes because of morphological alternations at the boundary but otherwise behave like separate words, such as the locative *waté* and instrumental *wa*. This is for future consideration.

5. Hand-washing. This shows how important it has been for me to keep a record of the original transcription in a note. "Wash your hands!" is *ticalaaquíúúccóo*. I had rectified this as *ticalaaquíúúccóo*, parallel to *Ticapsáácó* "wash your face!" with the *psa* "face, eye" root, on the assumption that I had misheard the initial CV root *ca* "using hands, grasping", or that the unstressed vowel was centralized and palatalized in the phonetic context. However, I recorded this verb with *ci* on more than one

1 I don't know the analysis of the stem *álcí*. This is identified as a Big Valley word, and a note speculates that Ilmawi speakers imitating that dialect may have hypercorrected what should actually be *taqálcí*. This is not immediately any more enlightening.

occasion. I had rectified *ci* to *ca* before I had identified the root *ci* "being limp, using a limp object" i.e. a rag or rope.

Perhaps the meaning is that each hand and its fingers are handled by the other in turn as though a limp object, rather than as grasping something (*ca*). Or it could refer to using a washcloth or equivalent. We would need insight into the actions of hand-washing in times before sinks with running water, bars of soap, washcloths and towels. In lakes and streams? That *ci* also occurs in some words for crawling, maybe referring to the floppy use of limbs or the person flopped on the ground crawling.

The verb occurs without a CV root in e.g. *sáálaaqúc kúci*, "I will wash my hands", *tílaaqóo* "wash your hands!". This demonstrates that the final *c* is a separate morpheme. If it contained a CVC root *quc*, the imperative would be *tílaaqúúca*.

Semantically, it might make sense to analyze this is *laq* "turn". However, a *u* vowel generally occurs before *c* "do" only when it forms a separate word (*tuci*, *tinúúci*, etc.). It is also a bit anomalous phonologically, because other occurrences of *laq* / *lq* are not glottalized. Glottalization is variable in some environments; is this one of them?

So let us consider *la* as an allomorph of the root *li* "extend hand" (related to the noun *íl* "hand"), as in *sóólááci* "I shared", *stiilaacóo* "give it to me". That would account for the glottalization, but it would leave *q* unexplained. Another word with *la* is *ýalaat^hóowací* "he's lying down", where *la* might refer to use of the arms and hands to achieve that posture, or their disposition while established (*wací*) there.

6. Rememberers. It is exciting to hear of present-day elders remembering words and phrases that they heard in their childhood. Traditional linguistic fieldwork with them is utterly impracticable, but language activists in the tribe can visit their elderly relatives, talk, and ask questions. Connor visited an aunt, who remembered that her grandmother used to say *C^hááwa shúpta móuw?*, which she said means "Where are you going?", and the person coming to her would say *p^hííwa* "here". From her childhood perspective, his aunt understood this as a greeting and its appropriate response. *C^hááwa shúpta móuw?* is "Where might it be you and I are going?" (excluding anybody else).

The boundaries between literal construction, idiom, and metaphor are fluid. In the literal meaning, *pahhá úúsaayi* "Digging epos" or *shámmáaca!* "Let's go eat!" would also be appropriate responses, and *p^hííwa* has something of a humorous flavor. An in-joke is an idiom within the small speech community of friends and family who are in on it.