

# Achumawi Database: Summary of August 2021 work

You can download the current backup from

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

(You may need to update your bookmark or your browser's memory of links.) I have updated the webonary at

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

This month I have been able to return to the long process of cleaning up the lexicon, where I have progressed as far as the bare-stem “-ing” participles beginning with *i-*. I have collaborated with Connor on language for domains that will support a family establishing their home as a language nest.

I note here only a few items from this month's work.

1. From hair dye to lean-to to blood quantum: *tóqt*, *yéqt*, *yeq*, *cahyeq* or *cahyeq*, *q<sup>h</sup>ut*
2. Annikadel and Istet Woiche
3. Flint knapping and pumice
4. CCVC

## 1. From hair dye to lean-to to blood quantum and coffee creamer

In Connor's ‘hair-dressing’ domain (“How does my hair look?”), we had to invent a verb for coloring or dying hair. First we tried to construct a stem using *hi* because we're talking about hair growing on one's head. Then I found *aatóqtí tkiyí* “it will stain you (your clothes)”, *s<sup>l</sup>aatóqtí* “I might get (clothes) stained”.

I had a lexicon entry for *toq* glossed as “lean on”, occurring only before *t* as *toqt*. I have re-analyzed this as *tu* “upon” + *qat/qt* “press against” (one of those syllable-shifting CVC/CC roots). This appears in *yánaatóqtí*, a repetitive/intensive 3rd-person verb used as a noun glossed “lean-to”. Compare *ticuuhéqta!* “make a lean-to (of twigs)”, *cuuhe* “a shade (of twigs)” where the ‘heads’ of the branches are emphasized. Some uses of *tóqt* are about ‘blood quantum’: *wínílláatiwí aatóqtí*. “he's part white”; *ís aatóqtí tsmiyí* “am I part Indian”; also

*céemul aatóqti twiyí* for a dog that is part coyote. With the causative, we get *aatóqtayáma* “graft, hybrid, interbreed of two types; half-breed”, and *taatóqtayáma* “add on! put half and half!”, something like “causing two kinds to join together making a mixed kind”, could be used for cream in coffee.

But now consider the similar *yéq̄t*:

- *hímmál tmáciyéq̄tí* “You are ‘blossoming’ gray hair”. (You know already.)
- *hímmál káciyéq̄tí* “You are ‘blossoming’ gray hair”. (You don’t know it yet.)

(Gray at the temples makes a man eligible for meetings and permits him to smoke—tobacco was used respectfully, not ‘recreationally’ or addictively.) The root *ci* “limp object” apparently refers to hair.

I had low-pitch *yeq̄* and high-pitch *yéq̄* with two rather different senses in one lexicon entry. The high-pitch *yéq̄* form, glossed “stuck on”, only occurs with a following *t*, as in the above examples. Hitherto, I have analyzed this *yéq̄t* as *yéq̄* + *t(u)*. However, in light of the reanalysis (above) of *toqt* as *tu* + *q̄at/q̄t*, above, this now looks like *yi* + *q̄at/q̄t*. An example is in *aayéq̄ti* “added on, merging in”. Like *tóq̄t*, above, it can refer to ‘blood’, among many other things, e.g. a mixed marriage, and *ís aayéq̄tí tsiyí* “I have a little Indian in me”. Other examples:

- *lattíwwáté hamís aayéq̄ti* “six” (and likewise other compound numbers by this method)
- *ticááyéq̄ti kú* “cleaning rag”
- *tilúúyéq̄ti* “tie onto”
- *cé tyúúcííní tinnéyéq̄táke* “he was unable to get a grip, unable to attach himself”
- *táyéq̄táyí* “put an extra one on”

The first root is *yi* indicating a change of state or category that is more durative than the more ephemeral condition denoted by the *tu* of *tóq̄t* above. The “go, move” glosses of this *yi* require further investigation to see if perhaps they are better understood as specializations of the stative *ȳ*.

That leaves the low-pitch *yeq̄*, which occurs in the database only with a helping verb. Grandma Lela said that *yeq̄ yeq̄ yuwí* described a soft, wet place where water comes down. I glossed it “boggy”, but the verbs in *tacah̄yeq̄q̄áké qa cíkkoḥ* “wash your feet!” and *ís t<sup>h</sup>iyí tacah̄yeq̄q̄ákóó’oy* “where people washed their hair” are unlikely to refer to boggy water.

Instead, the salient feature of a *yeq̣ yeq̣ tuci* place may be “where water comes down”, e.g. a waterfall.

The familiar root *ca* “grasping, using the fingers” seems almost necessary in these washing verbs, but analyzing e.g. *tacaḥyeq̣q̣áké* that way leaves *ḥ* difficult to resolve. Deriving this *ḥ* from *hi* “head” clearly does not work for washing feet. A CCVC *ḥyeq̣* is unlikely because the loss of the initial *ḥ* from *yeq̣ yeq̣ yuwí* would require special explanation. CCVC monosyllables are rare or nonexistent, other than sCVC (more on this below). The initial *q* of *tikuqḥóóti* “crunch (chalk-like stuff)” is retained in *qḥot qḥot tuci* “crumbly, like chalk”. This *qḥot* turns out now to be a root *qḥu* which is not always followed by *t*:

*tikuuqḥóóti* “crush (chalk)”

*qḥot qḥot yuwí* “it’s chalky, crumbly”

*uuqḥútcani* “crumbly”

*qḥuc qḥuc tuci* “crispy (e.g. carrots)” with *c* “do”

*santiqḥúúmumi* “(agent) crushed me” with *-m*, probably “down” rather than “hither”

*iqḥooyi’ yuwí itṭḥú íṇíq̣q̣atil* “my knife is dull” with *y* “stative”.<sup>1</sup>

The initial root of *tacaḥyeq̣q̣i* might be *caḥ* “in water”. Harrington wrote *thiyíraṭsaḥyeko’oy* (= *ṭḥiyí tačaḥyeeq̣o’oy*), but he did not always hear laryngealization. I wrote *tacaḥyeq̣-áké qa číkkoḥ* “wash your feet!” with Grandma Lela, but even at that fairly early stage (1971) I was thinking of *ca* as an ‘instrumental prefix’ and might have missed the laryngealization. If this bears up—e.g. if I find other instances of *caḥ/čḥ* in the first template slot—it suggests that for “shower” in the bathroom domain we might say something like *tičaḥyeq̣tánumi* or maybe *ticuuyeq̣q̣i*.

---

1 Consider that an obsidian or flint blade is made dull by crushing the cutting edge—true also of a steel blade, though not so obviously so. Curtin’s *yuḥúm* “knife of stone” looks like a mistaken gloss for “it is dull”. The onomatopoeic root *qaḥ* “knock” is probably not related: *qaḥtáṿ* “limb, dry wood”, *qaḥtáṿyóo* “tree for timber”, *qaḥtáṿwi* “club”, *qaḥ qaḥ wiṣyí qá iica* “teeth are chattering”, *ticaaq̣áḥwací* “Stone-catching game”. Also probably of different origin are *qoḥwáy* “elbow, knee”, *wakaqḥóymíci* “falls on knee”, *kakalaqḥóymíci* “you fell on your elbow”. The *q* in *waqḥéélí* “pulls/cuts tops of plants” is problematic if *hi* refers to the heads or tops; possibly it is the stem-initial *q̣* noted in the “CCVC” section below.

## Annikadel and 'Istet Woiche'

C. Hart Merriam, M.D., zoologist, botanist, and ethnographer, recorded words of a number of indigenous languages in a peculiar way. He had a lifetime endowment from the Harriman family (railroad money), freeing him to conduct field research as he pleased, essentially answerable to no one. Kroeber said that Merriam “did not set out to do linguistics, did not profess to, and obviously would not have known how” and “He employed the 'common' usage of Webster's Dictionary,” or as he put it “The alphabet employed ... gives the usual sounds of the letters of the English alphabet,” because “a hundred million people understand the alphabetic sounds of the English language and are able to pronounce unfamiliar words provided the letters have their normal sounds and the syllables are properly separated by hyphens”.

Merriam recorded a collection of story episodes entirely in English, with occasional Achumawi words, from Halsey Bill (William Halsey, Bill Halsey), a Madesi doctor. He published these as:

Woiche, Istet (1928). *An-Nik-A-Del: The history of the universe as told by the Achumawi Indians of California*. Recorded and edited by C. Hart Merriam. Boston: The Stratford Company, Publishers. [Repr. 1992 *Annikadel: The history of the universe as told by the Achumawi Indians of California*, Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.]

Annikadel is *íníq̄q̄atil*, which Lela Rhoades glossed “pocket knife, folding knife, ‘knife for cutting’” (*ni-* “iterative/intensive” + *q̄at* “approach, press against, compress” + *il* “by extending the hand and arm”). Taking this analysis together with the modern translation together suggest a small blade for close work kept conveniently handy like today’s pocket knives. Was it used in close fighting? The story character is small, easily concealed, solves problems in clever ways, and when he appears from hiding it is a surprise to adversaries. J.P. Harrington (see below) quotes Halsey saying that *íníq̄q̄atil* is “A small lizard sp. — he is smartest people in the world. He has 2 names: *’ínik’atél* and *sumt’áli*.” This seems to confound *íníq̄q̄atil* with *séqtáná* “lizard” in Lela’s story about Spider and Lizard settling a conflict among people dwelling over toward the west, which has its echo in Halsey’s version.

Fortunately, Harrington also worked with Halsey and recorded many of the same story episodes, also in English.

The main corpus of textual material collected by Harrington is an epic-length creation myth related by the Achomawi speaker William Halsey. Some of the original notes and

transcriptions still survive. A portion of these were discovered on the reverse side of pages used to record Atsugewi and Mutsun field data. Most of the original notes were apparently destroyed after typed copies were made. A manuscript of 269 pages entitled "How the World Grew" was prepared from these notes for publication as a Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin. The myth was evidently recorded only in English; a few Pit River terms were given for specialized vocabulary, such as the names of mythological figures and the words of songs.

I have asked the NAA for help locating this 269-page manuscript, with as yet no success. The microfilm/PDF image of the remainder of his notes, microfilm 2, reel 26, is in the NAA archive at <https://tinyurl.com/eu53cvss>. (My local copy is in Dropbox at <https://tinyurl.com/w23r8mpt>.) At the end of this reel is the following commentary on Halsey Bill's name:

Halsey's Indian name is 'ístétwó 'òht'fi (ch. Forever). It means someone was killed at Halsey's father's place. Halsey's right name is 'ákási'nanákt'fi, but 'ístétwó 'òht'fi is his used name, the one that the Indians call him by. The name 'ákási'nanákt'fi is derived from a placename on the Pit River, one-half mile east of where the coyote track is (the coyote track is on Susie Waters' ranch). The placename is 'ákási'nanákt'fi = Hcr. -Niji. Halsey agrees. [Halsey].

My initial reconstruction of Merria's 'Istet Woiche' was *Is tétwó'oy tsiyí* "I'm the one who killed a person; I used to kill people; I'm a murderer." Harrington indicates *ís tétwó'oyci* "one from where someone was killed". The "one who lives there" suffix is *-ayci*. Compare e.g. *t<sup>h</sup>isayci* "Yana people" from *t<sup>h</sup>is* "salt" (presumably for those around Salt Creek).<sup>2</sup> The evident reduction of *-o'oy + -ayci* to *-o'oyci* is so far unparalleled, that is, unique to this epithet.

## Flint knapping and pumice

The root *pah/p<sup>h</sup>* "face, eyes" (a doublet with *pas/p<sup>s</sup>* "face, eyes", as mentioned in July) appears in *iphááké* "flint". This seems literally to signify "made into a face or surface". For a knapper, does this accord with perceptions of a knappable chunk broken from a volcanic mass?

The name translated Pumice-Stone Man is *sát wićíllúúyí'*, which looks like "obsidian smoother", cp. *luy luy tuci* "smooth" (possibly *lu* "pull" y "stative"). At an earlier stage of analysis, when *ći* was

---

2 Except for these few words, reel 26 is among the few known archival sources not yet entered in the database, because it is almost entirely in English, and is written in a rapid scrawl. Much of it corresponds to LR: Spider and Lizard (LR9 = MP3 029).

taken to be an instrumental prefix “with the feet”, it was puzzling how this being might smooth obsidian with his feet. More appropriate is the meaning “atop, upon”g that is typical with *ci* occurs in the central slot or the third slot of a stem. This suggests that this name conserves a less specialized meaning which was typical in all three slot positions at an earlier stage of the language. The route for the specialization to “feet” is by way of “standing upon”.

The English name “Pumice-Stone Man” suggests that pumice was used to polish flint or obsidian implements by “pulling” it across the surface, and of course *sát* has the specialized meaning “knife” as well as the more general “obsidian”. The word *wičíluúyi’* says nothing about pumice. Merriam writes *chah’-hek’* “pumice”. The initial *ch* could be either *c<sup>h</sup>* or *č*. The *e* vowel suggests that the medial consonant is *ḥ*. Assuming his accents for ‘stress’ correlate with high pitch, the rectification could be *čááhík*, *čááhík*, *c<sup>h</sup>ááhík*, or *c<sup>h</sup>ááhík*. The analysis of *čááhík* as *čaḥ/čḥ* “in water” + *-k* “hither” has some plausibility: in the aftermath of eruptions pumice arrives floating on water. I have added *čááhík* “pumice” to the small ‘Merriam’ collection in the database, with these caveats stated in a note.

## CCVC

As noted above, CCVC monosyllables<sup>3</sup> are rare if they occur at all. (For simplicity I do not write CCVVC here.) When preceded by an open syllable (CV), some CVC roots occur as CC, with the first consonant closing the prior syllable. Examples include *čaḥ/čḥ* “in liquid”, *haẉ/hẉ* “breath, whisper, light weight, agile”, *k<sup>h</sup>ay/ký* “up from below”, *kíl/kíl* “crooked, sharp”, *laq/lq* “turn, reverse”, *(paḥ)/pḥ* “brush off, knock off”, *paḥ/pḥ* “eyes, face, front”, *pas/p̣s* “eye, face”, *pic̣/ps* “pinch”, *qat/q̣t* “press against”, *qay/qy* “itch, scratch”. I have given examples of these in prior reports, and of course you can find them in the database. In the following, *pak/pk* appears to be an example, though the evidence is sparse:

- *ipkaayi’* “heavy, stout, broad-built”
- *pakay*: *astaymi pakay pakay tykitáwáácumi* “They were plodding along slowly”
- *pakíw*: *pakíw pakíw tykwáácíwklí* “He came along, loaded down”

---

3 Other than sCVC roots such as *sčák* “sharp pointed, sticking into”, *sčup* “sharp, slender”, perhaps *sčaḷ* in *usčaaḷ* “small hole”.

This predicts another word *ipkaawí*. The *w* and *y* both appear to be stative roots. Some examples suggest that *w* is more durative and *y* more ephemeral, but it is unclear what distinction of meaning might be made in this case.

The following superficially similar examples involve a stem-initial *q* followed by a CVC root.

- *tap* “feathery, fluffy” occurs in *iqtaapi* “soft, fluffy”, *tap tap walaatíwí* “(bird) flops around on the ground” (*walaatíwí* “move around”), *k<sup>h</sup>alaatáátaapilóo* “cottonwood tree”.
- *wal* occurs in *iqwaałí*, *iqwáł* “weak”. Perhaps this is the root seen in *walwaałí* “butterfly”, *wal wal tuci* “flapping, flopping”, *yánaawaałí* “he’s flapping his wings”, *tawálcé* “wing”.

The *q* seems to be a separate morpheme, but at present I have neither gloss nor etymology for it. Possibly relevant is *qíl* (perhaps *qi* + *la*) in *iiqíiláw* “net for small game”, *iiqííla* “net bag, carrying net”.