Achumawi Database

Summary of October 2021 work

You can download the current backup from

- [http://zelligharris.org/Achumawi/achumawi-db.html](http://zelligharris.org/Achumawi/achumawi-db.html)

I have updated the webonary at

- [https://www.webonary.org/odissi/](https://www.webonary.org/odissi/)

Much of my time went into getting an overlooked story into the database, Mary Martin’s story about Coyote’s race with Porcupine. Based on Gui de Angulo’s comments (the Afterword to *Indians in overalls*), her father Jaime ‘collected’ this story on his first field trip in about 1921.

A number of things which I spent some time trying to figure out nevertheless went into a growing file of ‘out-takes’ that I expect will become ripe for reporting in coming months. The topics below represent a scattering of interesting material that seems more presentable.

1. *pal* from *pa* + *lq*
2. Temporal expressions with *pal* and *laq*
3. Indefinites
4. I guess, maybe: *će m-*
5. Hanging in the wind
6. Mythical past

### 1. *pal* from *pa* + *lq*

Among the CVC roots that I had previously identified was *pal*, which I glossed “overturn, flip” based on these two examples:

- *wačiipalčúci.*  “turned it over with foot”
- *tikuupalčúcó.*  “try to flip (cement slab, car) over!”

I had no other examples that looked like *pal*, until I encountered this sentence in the course of entering de Angulo’s Porcupine story.

- *ckwíncaapalqáké púlléewí.*  “he had power” (de Angulo’s gloss)
De Angulo’s gloss refers to magical power. The basic verb stem looks like icaapalqi, plus the intensive/iterative in- before, and -dáké after it making it an attribute, in this case a personal attribute. The ca suggests doing something with the grasping hand. (It could possibly be the motion root ca, which is still rather vaguely defined with a range including movement of air, movement through air, and (according to de Angulo) traveling or boating downriver, but I have no other occurrences of ca in the first template position as a motion root.)

If the central root is pal, we are left with an inexplicable q. I conclude then that the stem is ca “by using hand/fingers” + pa “throw, drop, place” + lq “while turning/reversing”. Corroborating this, I find tíliaqti "sorcery" (Curtin: dílékti) = láq "turn, reverse" + t "directed" with no root in the first template slot, and the familiar táliláqti “want, desire”, which has li “reach with hand/arm” in the first slot.

This analysis turned my eye back to reconsider the only two examples of pal in the database, listed above. Both occur before ču “rise, lift; go along with”. Consider reanalyzing these stems as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\hat{c}i & + pa + laq/lq + \hat{c}u + c & \text{“turn over with foot”} \\
ku & + pa + laq/lq + \hat{c}u + c & \text{“press to turn over”}
\end{align*}
\]

As above, the core meaning derives from pa “throw, drop, place” + laq/lq “while turning/reversing”.

The loss of q (or my not hearing it) in the environment l_č is phonetically plausible, and there are no counterexamples in the database. This is one of about a dozen CVC roots which are reduced to CC after a CV root. The first consonant of the resulting CC cluster is then pronounced with the preceding CV root, forming a closed (heavy) CVC syllable. The second consonant either forms a cluster with a following CV (as in táliláqti “desire it”), or is followed by an epenthetic vowel (as in tikuutlqicí “overturn it”). This is probably a function of syllable weight and stress which I have not yet investigated. The lexicon presently lists allomorphs laq, lq, lqa, and lqi (with both high and low pitch). Loss of the unstressed vowel in either -palaqčú- or -palqčiú- yields *-palqčú-, which is prohibited because there can be no more than two consonants in a cluster. Loss of q yielding -palčú- is phonetically plausible because for Achumawi l the dorsum of the tongue is normally raised (a ‘dark’ l is a phonetic characteristic of Achumawi), so that any speech gesture moving the dorsum up and back for q is inaudible. But this remains an exception that bears watching.
2. Temporal expressions with *pal* and *laq*

In the course of working this out, I looked at occurrences of the syllable *laq* in temporal expressions.

- *paláq* immediately, soon
- *paláqmí, paláqmim* long ago, originally (*mim* “”)
- *palaqcáálů* teenage boy
- *palaaqícaní* old-timer

Many such temporal expressions have *pal* without *q*:

- *palá* already
- *páálá. pálááwí* now, today
- *pálńas* sometime, already, a little while ago, now, at the beginning
- *pi pálńas* now, already, a little while ago

Perhaps this occurs in *páláyuucólogo* “young man, young people” (*pálá yuucólogo*: *y*- + *uc* + *wálů*, but also *plíyuucólogo*) and *páládíci* “son”

We also have *lóqmím, lóqmí* “early, early in the morning, tomorrow”, *úúlόgma* “in the evening”. There is more on *pálńas* in the next section.

3. Indefinites

The enclitic postposition *mím* occurs in diverse idioms with a sense of completion or closure of a set.¹

- *tóólol mim* “all of them”
- *hák mim* “two of them, a pair”
- *it mim* “I myself”
- *ní mím* “you yourself”
- *kac mím* “she herself, he himself”
- *q̓é mím* “just that”
- *aamím* “right away”
- *aamímmi* “pretty soon”
- *paláqmím* “formerly”

---

¹ There may be an etymology that is consistent with this for *lóqmím* “in the morning, early in the morning, early, earlier”, involving the same *lóq* as is heard in *lóqmí* “tomorrow”, *úúlόgma* “in the evening”, *úúlόgmaymí* “in the early evening” (the stem-initial *u-* may derive from the stative *w*), *tikúúlόgwa* “brightening before dawn”, possibly *luł̓q̓ yuwí* “it flashes”.

---
qʰamımim  “many individuals; some of, a lot of” (cp. qʰam “many”)
loʰqá mím  “any old stick” (loʰqá “long stick, staff”)
tóólólla qʰaymím  “all around in that area”
haw haw tissi mím watʰééwíní  “he even could hear a whisper”.

However, with táq “what?” it makes an indefinite noun:
táq mím  “anything”
titáq mím  “various things, anything”
taqqávcanaymím  “just anything”

An indefinite noun can also be formed with a question word plus mas:
táq mas  whatchamacallit, something
kiinās  whatsisname, someone, no-one
cʰáráñas  someplace

In these combinations with a question word, the delimiting sense of mím or mas / rínas seems to identify an individual (as can does), and the indefiniteness stems from the question word. This is borne out by the combination with pal in pálínas “sometime” (whence also the glosses “already, a little while ago, now, at the beginning”). I did not record a difference between the deictic qʰé “that, that one” and qʰééñas “that one”. It could assert individuality, or ignorance as to precisely what or who the individual is. (*piínas was not accepted as a word.)

Indeed, without specifying context, can asserting individuality or severality is naturally glossed with an English indefinite noun “someone” or “something”:
ucíícaní  something done; something that used to be
twílcán  sometime (twíl “once”, twíl wa “from time to time”)
taqqálcán  something
íll ahtúkcaní  somewhat less than a handful

Other expressions are naturally translated with indefinites:
qʰáwwa yályú  some men (qʰáwwa, an indefinite number “some”)
qwáytu  from someplace (qʰé + wáytu “from”)

It is even possible for an interrogative pronoun to be an indefinite agent pronoun:
sináwíštíníuma táq wáka  something helped me

The English gloss for an implement or product noun in final -é or -it may include an indefinite noun (táláátaawé “something to dip with”, tínaatoqíí “something to lean things on”), but this due to the abstractness of nominalized verbs generally when they are decontextualized.

---

2 See the complex example with mím in the next section.
4. I guess maybe, čé m-

As a 3rd person pronoun, the m- prefix is either a question or a supposition: twiyí “he is”, but tmiyí “is he?” or “he might be”.

There are a number of idiomatic expressions with čé followed by this m- as a 3rd person pronoun. In the following idioms with čé the idiomatic translation is followed by a literal translation in parentheses:

čé mucci “Why not?” (“Might it not be?” “It might not be.”)
čé mucci qa ís. “Did you ever see and Indian who didn’t?” (“An Indian might not do”)

However, many idioms with čé múw, čé mów (from čé muwí) and čé micííní (with -ín “past”) are glossed with expressions of inference, doubt, uncertainty, or ignorance. Contrast allu suwi nísí “he might say ‘I’m hungry’,” with allu suwi čé micííní tissi “he might say ‘I’m hungry’, I suppose.” Here are other examples:

čé micííní tinúmmáámi tucci. “I don’t think he got burned up.”
cʰúúsaya tícííní čé micííní “I don’t know what he did.”
qu’e îtépté čé micííní tissi. “‘Go back there’ he must have said.”
ó tissi ya čé micííní halác sitwáátumá “He must have glanced at us because of talking.”
malússi titáácími čé micííní “maybe ten steps”
čé micííní tákacúícími qa qússi “I guess he grabbed up his gun”
qáálta’i palá’ čé múw tukʰááti “Our mother must have already died”
maháánu can čé micííní nán čókcanówakam “I guess she became an orphan while still a little one.”
amqʰááwa čé múw tícúusacíičí “I guess that’s why he got scared”
čémicíí tíçiíčí tūúsaaayí “I guess that’s the kind they dig”
čéemul ká tkiíčí čé micí “You are Coyote, aren’t you?”
(qa ní mícííní “You’re indeed Coyote, might it not be?”)

Here is a more complicated example:
má qa alílláqí’ ka aawáta cʰú sa ahhá icí mim, čé mów uuḵuwwací twiyí má itaawaayí twiyí. “But I guess she stays home cooking only when she likes it, whether you do right or not.”

More literally, and with some reordering of the phrases:
cʰú sa ahhá icí mim “But no matter what you do
uuḵuwwací twiyí má itaawaayí twiyí she is staying home and cooking
qa alílláqí’ ka aawáta only when she wants to”
In that sentence, Lela Rhoades inserted čé mów as a correction when we transcribed the tape. It is Coyote’s disclaimer on the entire sentence (he’s pretending he had nothing to do with her disappearance), so it could occur before or after any of the three phrases.

The čé negates the saying rather than the thing said, and in this way it denies direct knowledge and invites inference. We may expect elision (a zero allomorph) of a performative “I say” verb over every utterance (Z. Harris A grammar of English on mathematical principles, pp. 99-100, 164). This accounts for many otherwise puzzling results (ibid. p. 79), such as for example in English Sadly, John can’t come, where it is the speaker and not John who is sad: I say sadly, John can’t come. The use of čé here expresses the culturally important distinction between witnessed attestation and inference or hearsay. The elided sisyí “I say” accounts for the subordinate-clause 3rd person t- pronoun:
cʰúúsaya tűcíńi čé sisyí mící̓ ni. “I don’t say that whatever he did might be”

5. Hanging in the wind

There is a pitch contrast between ḥu “run” and ḥú, which has now three ranges of meaning. With a directional, ḥú refers to the wind blowing, the most common meaning.

\[ tihúimi \] wind

The association of wind and spirit is familiar in many languages. With n- “iterative/intensive” ḥú we have this range of meanings.

\[ tínīhúwa \] make something of yourself, acquire power, test your luck
fight for power, fight for your life in a vision quest

\[ tínīhúwít \] spirit place, sacred place

\[ wínīhúwí \] he found/has a power;

\[ woh wínīhúwít’ \] bear doctor

\[ sánīhúwí \] I’m searching for power

\[ wánīhúwí twi'yí \] he’s looking for power again

A third range of meaning came newly into focus this month, ḥú in combination with c as well as the intensive n- means “hang”. (Literally do in the wind?)

\[ tínāhúúci \] hang something up

\[ tánahhóócít, tínahúúcít, \] hanging place, closet (sapling with limbs cut short)

\[ tánahhóócé \] hanger

\[ wanahhúúcáké \] it’s hung, it’s hanging
When the auxiliary c “do” is made a full-fledged auxiliary verb (the so-called “continuative” waci), the intensive n- is apparently unneeded:

*wa*húwacáló* vine, hanging plant (< *ihúwaci*)

In the Porcupine story, de Angulo recorded *ckwiná*húktami, which he glossed “he caught himself” and more imaginatively translated as “he caught hold of the canyon-wall and hung there”. This seems to have three directional morphemes: -k “hither”, -ta “extending in a line”, -m “downward” (or perhaps “thither”). I glossed it “he dangled full length”, an original Wile E. Coyote episode.

Some additional words with *hú* are less easy to parse at present:

- *ticaa*húlúúlamí sliver
- *sía*caaa*húlúúlamí I have a sliver in my (finger, toe)
- *cimhúúči* percussion cap (for gun), gunpowder
- *cimhúúčáálo* arrow-shaft polisher (made of stone)
- *húúra* midriff (where diaphragm is)
- *isuuhúkwacic, sisúíhúúkí* boring, I was bored

### 6. Mythical past

I have been writing *tykw-, tyky-, tyk-* for the three forms of the ‘mythical past’ 3rd person. I am in process of reverting these to *ckw-, cky-, ck-* (The third, *ck-* is realized with an epenthetic schwa.) I recognized the need to do this in September 2020 (section 6 of that report).

Radin has *cwaslaqʰáci* “He snored” (not witnessed, hearsay) without the *k* but otherwise corresponding exactly to *ckwaslaqʰáci* “He snored” (mythical past) in a traditional story.

It follows that the mythical past is unwitnessed hearsay, plus *k-* because neither I nor you do anything in the mythical past.