Achumawi Database

Summary of October 2021 work

You can download the current backup from

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

I have updated the webonary at

- 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: *ċé 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:

waċiipalċúci. "turned it over with foot"

tikuupalċúcóo. "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 púllééwí. "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 -*áké* 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 *tílaqti* "sorcery" (Curtin: *dilékdi*) = láq "turn, reverse" + t "directed" with no root in the first template slot, and the familiar *tálílláqti* "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 *ċu* "rise, lift; go along with". Consider reanalyzing these stems as follows:

  ċi + *pa* + *laq/lq* + *ċu* + *c*   "turn over with foot"
  ku + *pa* + *laq/lq* + *ċu* + *c*   "press to turn over"

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_ċ* 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 *talíllaqti* "desire it"), or is followed by an epenthetic vowel (as in *tikuutílqíci* "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 -*palaqċú-* or -*palqiċú-* yields *-*palqċú-*, which is prohibited because there can be no more than two consonants in a cluster. Loss of *q* yielding -*palċú-* 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
paláqmi, paláqmim	long ago, originally (*mim* "")
palaqcáálu	teenage boy
palaaqíícaní'	old-timer

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

palá'	already
páálá. pálááwí	now, today
pálṁas	sometime, already, a little while ago, now, at the beginning
pi pálṁas	now, already, a little while ago

Perhaps this occurs in *páláyuucóólu* "young man, young people" (*pálá yuucóólu*: *y-* + *uc* + *wálu*, but also *pílíyuucóólu*) and *pálááci* "son"

We also have *lóqṁim, lóqṁi* "early, early in the morning, tomorrow", *úúlóqma* "in the evening". There is more on *pálṁas* in the next section.

3. *Indefinites*

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

tóólol mim	"all of them"
hak̓ mim	"two of them, a pair"
it mim	"I myself"
ṁi ṁim	"you yourself"
kac mim	"she herself, he himself"
qʰé ṁim	"just that"
aamím	"right away"
aamímmi	"pretty soon"
paláqmim	"formerly"

---

1   There may be an etymology that is consistent with this for *lóqṁim* "in the morning, early in the morning, early, earlier", involving the same *lóq* as is heard in *lóqmi* "tomorrow", *úúlóqṁa* "in the evening", *úúlóqṁaymi* "in the early evening" (the stem-iitial *u-* may derive from the stative *w*), *tikúúlóqẇaki* "brightening before dawn", possibly *luḷoq ẏuwí* "it flashes".

qʰammim	"many individuals; some of, a lot of" (cp. *qʰam̓* "many")
loḣą́ mim	"any old stick" (*loḣą́* "long stick, staff")
tóólólⱡa qʰaẏmim	"all around in that area"
ḣaw ḣaw tissi mim watʰééwíní	"he even could hear a whisper".

However, with *táq* "what?" it makes an indefinite noun:

táq mim	"anything"[2]
titáqmim	"various things, anything"
taqqáẇcanaymim	"just anything"

An indefinite noun can also be formed with a question word plus *mas*:

táqmas	whatchamacallit, something
kiim̓as	whatsisname, someone, no-one
cʰáám̓as	someplace

In these combinations with a question word, the delimiting sense of *mim* or *mas / m̓as* 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 *pálm̓as* "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 *qʰéém̓as* "that one". It could assert individuality, or ignorance as to precisely what or who the individual is. (**piim̓as* 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
tw̓ílcan	sometime (*tw̓íl* "once", *tw̓íl wa* "from time to time")
táqqálcan	something
íⱡ aḣtúkcaní̓	somewhat less than a handful

Other expressions are naturally translated with indefinites:

qʰáwwa yályú	some men (*qʰáwwa*, an indefinite number "some")
qwáẏtu	from someplace (*qʰé* + *wáẏtu* "from")

It is even possible for an interrogative pronoun to be an indefinite agent pronoun:

sináw̓ístiníuma táq ẇáka	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", *tínaatoq̓tít* "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 *mim* in the next section.

4. *I guess maybe,* ċé m-

As a 3rd person pronoun, the *m-* prefix is either a question or a supposition: *twiẏí* "he is", but *tmiẏí* "is he?" or "he might be".

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

ċé ṁuccí	"Why not?" ("Might it not be?" "It might not be.")
ċé ṁuccí qa ís.	"Did you ever see and Indian who didn't?" ("An Indian might not do")

However, many idioms with *ċé múw, ċé mów* (from *ċé muwí*) and *ċé micííní* (with *-ín* "past") are glossed with expressions of inference, doubt, uncertainty, or ignorance. Contrast *allu suwí ṁisẏi* "he might say 'I'm hungry'," with *allu suwí ċé ṁicííní tissi* "he might say 'I'm hungry', I suppose." Here are other examples:

ċé ṁicííní tinúmmáámi tucci.	"I don't think he got burned up."
cʰúúsaya tíícííní ċé ṁicííní	"I don't know what he did."
qʰe itépté ċé ṁicííní tissi.	"'Go back there' he must have said."
ó tissi ya ċé micííní ḣaláċ sííẇáátumá	"He must have glanced at us because of talking."
malússi titáácimi ċé micííní	"maybe ten steps"
ċé micííní tácaċúúcini qa q́ussi	"I guess he grabbed up his gun"
ittʰúúni tatẏí palá' ċé múw tuukʰááti	"Our mother must have already died"
maḣáánu can ċé micííní ṅáṁ ċókcanówaḱam	"I guess she became an orphan while still a little one."
amqʰááwa ċé múw ticuusaċci.	"I guess that's why he got scared"
ṫáncí' aṁá ċé múw titúúci túúsaayi	"I guess that's the kind they dig"
céémul ká tkiẏí ċé micí	"You *are* Coyote, aren't you?"
	("You're indeed Coyote, might it not be?")

Here is a more complicated example:

má qa alíílláq́tí 'ka aawátca cʰú sa aṁá icí mim, ċé mów uuḱuuẇací twiẏí má itaaẇaaẏí twiẏí.
"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 aṁá icí mim	"But no matter what you do
uuḱuuẇací twiẏí má itaaẇaaẏí twiẏí	she is staying home and cooking
qa alíílláq́tí 'ka aawátca	only when she wants to"

In that sentence, Lela Rhoades inserted *ćé 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 *ćé* 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 *ćé* here expresses the culturally important distinction between witnessed attestation and inference or hearsay. The elided *sisy̓í* "I say" accounts for the subordinate-clause 3rd person *t-* pronoun:

cʰúúsaya tíícííní ćé sisy̓í m̓icííní.　　　　　　　"I don't say that whatever he did might be"

5. *Hanging in the wind*

There is a pitch contrast between *h̓u* "run" and *h̓ú*, which has now three ranges of meaning. With a directional, *h̓ú* refers to the wind blowing, the most common meaning.

　　tih̓úúmí　　　　　　　　wind

The association of wind and spirit is familiar in many languages. With *n-* "iterative/intensive" *h̓ú* we have this range of meanings.

　　tíní̓h̓úwa　　　　　　　make something of yourself, acquire power, test your luck
　　　　　　　　　　　　　fight for power, fight for your life in a vision quest
　　tíni̓h̓úúwít　　　　　　spirit place, sacred place
　　wíni̓h̓úwí　　　　　　　he found/has a power;
　　woh̓ wíníi̓h̓úúwí'　　　bear doctor
　　sáni̓h̓úwí　　　　　　　I'm searching for power
　　wáni̓h̓úwí twiy̓i　　　he's looking for power again

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

　　tínáh̓úúci　　　　　　　hang something up
　　tánah̓h̓óócít, tinah̓úúcít,　　hanging place, closet (sapling with limbs cut short)
　　tánah̓h̓óócé　　　　　　hanger
　　wanah̓úúcáké　　　　　it's hung, it's hanging

    tinaȟúúciiwáké   swing

When the auxiliary *c* "do" is made a full-fledged auxiliary verb (the so-called "continuative" *waci*), the intensive *n-* is apparently unneeded:

    waȟúúwacáló   vine, hanging plant (< *iȟúúwaci*)

In the Porcupine story, de Angulo recorded *ckwináȟúktami*, 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 *ȟú* are less easy to parse at present:

ticaaȟúúlúúpamí	sliver
síncaaȟúúlúúpamí	I have a sliver in my (finger, toe)
címȟúúċi	percussion cap (for gun), gunpowder
cimȟúúċáálo	arrow-shaft polisher (made of stone)
ȟúúṁa	midriff (where diaphragm is)
isuuȟúkẇací, sisúúȟúúkí	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 *cwasłaqʰáqci* "He snored" (not witnessed, hearsay) without the *k* but otherwise corresponding exactly to *ckwasłaqʰáqci* "He snored" (mythical past) in a traditional story.

    It follows that the mythical past is unwitnessed hearsay, plus *k-*. It only occurs with the 3rd person because neither I nor you do anything in the mythical past.