

Achumawi Database

Summary of May 2023 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/>

The sections in this report are

1. True confessions and etymologies
2. Proximal and distal syntax
3. Metalinguistic uses of pro-form *amq^há*

I've tossed out a couple of sections because they need to ripen more.

1. True confessions and etymologies.

An example of etymology vs. derivation starts with root *máh* 'dark' and the word *máhhí* 'night' in the phrase *máhhí' issi* 'midnight'. When we add the agentive root *ka* as a postposition, we get *máhhí' ka* 'during the night, all night long'. This imparts agency to what makes it dark.

Commonly, adverbs are formed by postposing the agentive *ka* after a bare-stem '-ing' participle. An example is *íniíwíwci' ka yáámá* 'he eats while competing in a race'. (When he was losing a race to Porcupine, Coyote's tapeworm says *íniíwíwci' ka yáámá tkiyí* 'you're [the] one eating while racing'.) The bear mother who chased the deer children to the *iipuuri' / iipuuli* 'rock pillar at Montgomery Creek gnawed on the base of the rock all night: *máhhí' ka ckwačwaqhúúltiyá*. It seems likely that the noun *máhhí* 'night' derives from the unattested participle *immáhhí* 'being dark' (cp. *wincúúmááhá* 'it's getting dark'). This accounts for the word-final glottal stop which (as usual for such participles) is not always heard.

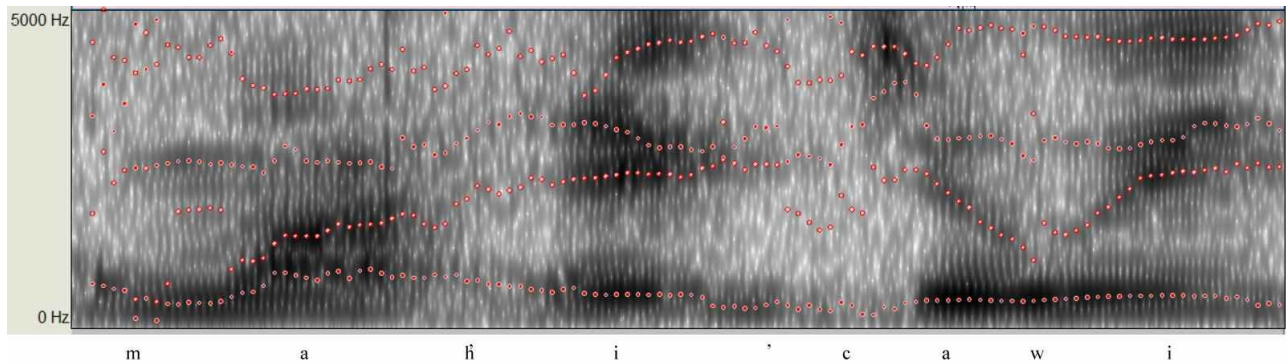
However, if *mááhí* derives from *imááhí* 'being dark', the derivation is etymological rather than productive. There are a few words which retain the initial *i* of *imá* (e.g. *imássaykí*, *imáálimci*), so it is not an expectable phonological reduction.¹

When we add the individuating postposition *can*, *ca*, we get *mááhí' can* 'night, a night' (a piece or period of being dark). This occurs frequently in *mááhí'ca wí'cul* 'moon' ('night-dwelling sun'). For fifty years, I have written this as *máhhí'kcawí'cul*. However, there is unequivocally a glottal stop, not a *k*. A good recording of a very clear pronunciation is at 0:5.2 of the recording LA49.003 (LR: From the Moon to the Earth), and may be heard in a sound clip [here](#). There is no lowering of F2 for *k* in the sound spectrogram produced by Praat (below, p. 2), only the attenuation of all formants as the vocal folds shut down for the glottal stop.

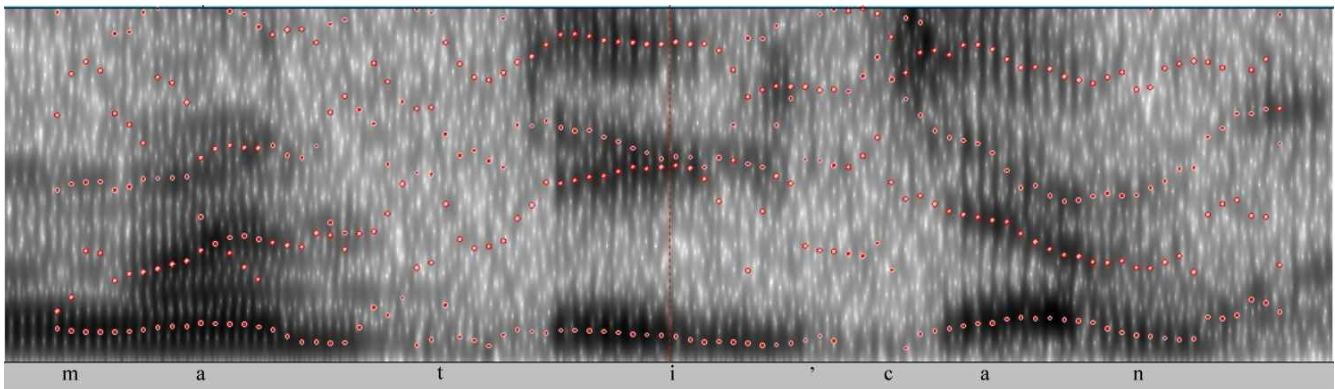
I have often cautioned learners of Achumawi pronunciation against the English-language tendency to pronounce a glottal stop allophone of an oral stop, as in the American pronunciation of "hit me" as [*hi'miy*]. It is evident that I made this mistake myself in the earliest months of my experience in 1970. To this error I added the novice mistake of continuing to write a word that I had come to recognize in the way in which I first transcribed it, without listening closely. I did observe a glottal stricture before what I thought was *k* (and once I wrote *k*), but though this was a puzzling anomaly, I attributed it to the effect of the epiglottal *h*, and in *máhhí' issi* 'midnight' it was confounded with the predictable, optional glottal stop before a word-initial vowel. So the proper forms are

1 There are other instances of final ' that may have a similar origin (e.g. *tánci'* 'that kind' vs. *itánci'*, *witánci'*, *čissí'* *týánuwí* vs. *čis yuwí*) but word-final glottal stop has a wider distribution that is not yet well understood.

mááhi' ká ‘during the night, all night long’; *mááhi' issi* ‘midnight’; *mááhi' can* ‘night, a night’, with the second mora of the long vowel devoiced.



The same pair of errors has clouded the word for ‘day’ also since my very earliest exposure to the language, and because these words are related both in form and meaning, each has seemed to confirm the other. It occurs a bit farther along in the same recording, at 2:39. A sound clip is [here](#). Examining the sound spectrogram of the word, below, we can see that what I have always written as *máttikcan* is better represented as *mááti'can*.



Again, instead of dropping to a lower frequency, as they would if the tongue were moving back for a *k*, the upper formants are simply attenuated.² Subjectively, it is difficult *not* to hear this sequence as *kc*.

But there’s more. In both sound spectrograms it is striking that what sounds like a geminate consonant is actually devoicing of the preceding vowel. As I have noted elsewhere, where the second mora of a long vowel is devoiced the relevant cue is the vowel quality, which is more centralized for a short vowel. In both words, I hear an open *a* as in the first syllable of *áásá* ‘eye’. In 1970 when I established my way of writing these familiar words (writing quickly as I focused on unfamiliar words) I still took de Angulo’s word that duration is the cue. These considerations bring us to

- *mááhi' can*, *mááhi' ká*, *mááhi' issi* from *mááhi'* and probably **immááhi'*
- *mááti'can*, *mááti'y ka*, **mááti issi*, apparently from **mááti'* and perhaps **immááti'*

Mááti' may be a stem *ma* + *t*, as in daylight one can ‘look, see, find’ (*ma*) directionally toward things (*ta*, *t*).

The agentive *ka* has another twist. I have many times recorded it as *'ka*, for example in *kí 'ka mów stituwáátumá'é tūci* ‘Who would do that way to me?’, because there is no justification for attributing the glottal stop to the preceding word. The choice between *ka* and *wáka* is generally based in phonology, *ka* after a vowel

² It is a poor defense, but it should be noted that de Angulo the same error, and that may have influenced me. Although I did not see it until recent years, on a single occasion in 1922 during his first month of exposure to the language (along Wintu, Yana, and Atsuge) Harrington wrote a *k* in both words. Oddly, along with *mááhi'ca* and *mááti'ca* he has *mááti'ca wí'čul* ‘daytime sun’ but not *mááhi'ca wí'čul* ‘moon’. Curtin wrote *mahaikdja wi tsul*. Records from Curtin, Radin, and Harrington have *čul* for ‘moon’ as well as ‘sun’.

and *wáka* after a consonant. There are exceptions. For example, Craven also said *ki' wáka* (or *ki wáka*), and *q'hé wáka*. and Lela said *qá kac'hú hatááci wáka* and *c'hú tíyí qa cókca wáka*. The *wáka* form is one of a family of 3rd-person 'impersonal' verbs, like *waci* 'one does (or it happens) continuously or habitually'. My supposition here is that *'ka* not an allomorph of the root *ka*, it is reduced from the participle *'ika* 'expressing will' which contains that root. The initial glottal stop of the '-ing' participles is optional. It coincides with the glottal stop which is optional after the end vowel of some words that occur in this construction, such as *hééwísi 'ka* or *hééwísi 'ka*. This word-final glottal stop may be the stative *y'* in e.g. *qá t'iyí wáámíci* '(her) hair hangs down'.

I have no instances of *can* as a root. It may have originated as an indefinite noun glossed 'one, someone, something', which is now restricted to this usage as an individuating postposition.

A glottal stop is often recorded at the end of a bare-stem participle (glossed with an '-ing' participle in English). It may occur after a *w-* initial construction used as a nominal expression. (*sát wíci'llúyí* 'Obsidian smoother' =Pumice-Stone Man, *wínúúci'macúúké* 'one who values himself'). It is usually found in *ámé* 'without, lacking'; *áké* 'reflexive'; *háné* 'preferably'; *pala* (*pililá*) 'already'; *pámmé* 'ignorant, unknowing' (*pámmé* *suwí* ~ *pámmé suwí*); *lúmmé* 'maiden, bride, first wife'; *pí taqcihé*, *mékcihé*, *wítáqyé* (indications of size); *kuukú* 'thirsty (baby talk)' and a few other expressions. It occurs after some exclamations: *háyya* 'hello!', *nááná* 'uh-oh!'; *yá* ~ *yá* 'indeed!'; and occasionally in an imperative such as *titma* 'weave it!' or vocative such as *nínitca* 'papa!' After front vowels *e* or *i* it may be the stative *y'*, but that is not plausible after *a*, *o*, *u*.

2. Proximal and distal syntax

A construction like *yánáapiicúmi* 'he's sticking things upright in a row' can stand as an entire sentence (*y'* '3rd person' + *n* 'go; iterative' + *pi* 'stick upright' + *cú* 'rise, lift, accompany, while going along' + *m* 'thither'), yet at least some of the root morphemes in it can also occur as free standing words (*pi* 'this; Here!'). This opens the question whether it is appropriate to use the term 'word' for both *yánáapiicúmi* and *pi*.

This can be described as two levels of syntax. Proximal syntax concerns the organizing of morphemes into a construction like *yánáapiicúmi*. Proximal syntax would traditionally not be distinguished from the derivation of e.g. a noun like *plaaqis* 'sandhill crane' (derived from the roots *pl* 'use tongue, use mouth' + *qis* 'break'). Distal syntax concerns additional words stating the references of pronouns in such a construction (*yánáapiicúmi qá pi qa awí can c'ó* 'he's setting these sticks up in a row') and conjoinings of them (*Yáámá qa missuc ma tehtac, má áncia yánáapiicúmi* 'He ate the meat and acorn and then he set fenceposts', *Ámmácwí 'ka, yánáapiicúmi* 'Having finished eating, he set fenceposts', *Támmi kú tiiciláki wa yánáapiicúmi qa yályú 'ka* 'The man set fenceposts in order to have food'.)

Proximal syntax within those sentential constructions is more strict, with the nominal arguments indicated only by pronouns. Distal syntax affords greater freedom of word order for the extraposed nouns which may optionally disambiguate the pronouns, for other adjuncts, and for conjoining sentences. There is some evidence suggesting that at an earlier time the morphemes in a sentential construct like *yánáapiicúmi* were all free-standing words. This would have been advantageous when the Shastan communities were in regular communication with each other because differences of preferred morpheme/word order would not be so great an impediment to communication in exogamous marriages and other contacts. In languages like English, lexical derivation is unforgiving and etymological. We would not understand **member-re I ioncusdis their* as 'I remember their discussion'. This may account for the 'structural convergence' and borrowing of morphemes, even pronominal affixes, which have been considered remarkable in northern California. Nevertheless, it is likely that these communities affirmed their distinctness in these and other ways (G. Bateson 1935 "[Culture contact and schismogenesis](#)"). After disruption of their biennial 'demographic pulse' for the salmon run on the Sacramento, each of the Shasta-oriented communities had less exposure to structurally similar languages, and more exposure to the differently organized Wintuan languages. I propose that the preferred linearizations in each community began to diverge and to become more fixed. For example, Yana pronouns come at the end of the sentential complex (the 'verb') rather than at the beginning as in the two Pit River languages.

However, two Achumawi morphemes related to the pronouns come at the end of the sentential construction: *um* '3rd person patient' and *icka* '2nd person patient'. These come after the auxiliary-verb root *c* 'do' when it

appears at the end of the verb stem, and after *ku* ‘future, potential’, which in at least some constructions looks like freestanding word (a postposition) but may itself be followed by *c*. These have been treated as suffixes, e.g. in *lhámmiúamá* ‘we eat’. When they occur after *kú* (*lhámmi kúcumá* ‘we will eat’) and after an auxiliary verb such as *waci* (*lhámma s waci* ‘we keep eating, ’*álicítik wacó uma* ‘it’s dangerous’, cp. *álicítiki* ‘frightening, scaring’), they are more easily treated as enclitic postpositions. Their equivocal status between proximal and distal syntax suggests that they are at the margin of a transition from freer to more fixed morpheme order.

2. Metalinguistic uses of pro-form *amq^há*

Amq^há can be glossed as an ordinary referential pronoun.

má micist^húúni maćiiniwi kicitámmaakíyí ckiśi. amq^há palá’ yátwa itt^húúni tatyí kiciśi ckiśi.
And tell your uncle for me, she said, say “**that one** already killed our mother,” she said.

However, although it is glossed the same way, in this sentence the reference is ambiguous:

Amq^há t^hámuwí tmaníyaymí ‘That’s what made you sick’

The reference is not just to the food the boy stole and ate, but to the entire sequence of his nefarious acts, as is shown by the doctor’s words in the continuation of the story:

Tmiñawámmá, tmáátéemilí ánákkaayé, má áncia tmáámá tyiśiśi. Amq^há t^hámmuwi tyiśiśi.

“You stole it, you carried it far off, and you ate it,” she said. “Manifestly, that what it is,” she said.

Most importantly, all this incurred the anger of Burney Mountain (see LR: Bear Doctor cures a thief: 50-51).

The pro-form *amq^há* ‘same as mentioned’ is often translated as an English connective:

amq^há ‘same as mentioned’

Má áncia cktáátaayíwyí tóólollíni qá ticci kú cktílaat^ha. Amq^há ckiśi qá woh q^ham kánciikuuyáké amq^há aamíc umá lkiićiiláka

And then they sifted [it and] all that they would do they leached. **At that point**, the Bear said “You’re rubbing yourself a lot, **so** you might have lice....”

Mám ckwááluuc^húćumi, ckwatamímmá, ckwatah^húúpi. Amq^há ckaalíyaaci, cktinímmáaci, mám cktéhuumi qá kac^húúni tíyúmci.

Then she dragged her out, gutted her, skinned her. They looked at **that happening**, they saw it, and ran back to their house.

Hakcan winín maníkan wiýi cktúw, yályúucan wal múút^haaqálcán wal amq^há maníkan wiýi cktúw.

They bore two children each, it was, **those** children they bore boy and girl it was.

Amq^há can combine with postpositions in a noun phrase.

amq^hááwa (amq^há wa) ‘by the same as mentioned’

Syúlusk^haykumá mic ticáámé kam, amq^hááwa wawá sálictiiki qá q^hahéé

He stared at me without blinking, **that’s why** I was greatly afraid of that one.

Amq^há tyiśiśi “t^hé lhíy síisáátumá, amq^hááwa tsiyí” tyiśiśi.

That one said “He told me ‘let’s do it!’, **that’s why** I did it” he said.

Wéé sintámmak kúci qá pi qa tóosi wal qá woh wal amq^hááwa tiyúmco ’oy paláqmim.

Well, I’ll tell this **how** Deer and Bear used to dwell long ago

This one from Radin is a bit divergent in word order.

Sálilléqtumá sáámá amq^hááwa He likes me **because** I’m eating.

amq^hááwáté (amq^há wáté) ‘collocated with the same as mentioned’

Qa álisti qa íp^huuni iisáákéwáté, amq^hááwáté cktáák^hé.
At the rock calling itself *íp^huuni* (*íp^huuri*'), they climbed up **on that**.

amq^háka ‘same agent as mentioned’, ‘acting accordingly’

Hakcan winin manikcan wiýi cktúw.... amq^háka is cktáákááci, cktatíiwalmíwei ...
They had two children each, it was.... Thus they lived, they were neighbors ...

As winassúúli amq^háka winacuuúúci
Water dries up but then pumps up again [name of a spring out in the lava] (Harrington mf2r30-31: 243)

Amq^há walípúumíni. Amq^háka wísanaayíini.
That one he sent out. **That one** looked for them.

amq^hááka (amq^há ka) ‘same agent as mentioned’ (emphatic)³

Cýééwa, c^héyé smóoci kúci ckwapsíwei qa kwán, amq^hááka ckyáásá titáhsítí wa ckyáwáasa.
“In what way, which way might I do?” thought Coyote, **so** he sang hard, he sang hard to find out.

Amq^hááka ckyáásá tintámmaakíyaké wa háy tucóo; slinálíqaaci ckwapsíw.
For that reason he sang hard in order to tell himself “Think! Would that I meet someone!” he thought.

To any of these, *m* ‘thither; down to’ may be added, with a semantic shift to ‘hence, thence; diverging from that mentioned; contrary to expectation’.

amq^hákam ‘thence agentively from the same as mentioned’

Háy sínúuwí, amq^hákam héw suwí qa pálmás. ‘I remembered, but now (recently) I’ve forgotten.’
Pálmás héw st^háyuwí, amq^háka háy sínúuwí. ‘I forgot (recently), but (now) I remember.

Cé tuccó cktiší. Amq^hákam ckwaaqíicumi qá plaaqís.
“Don’t do it!” They said. **But** Crane stepped across.

Q^hééwáté is tiikáaco ’oyí twíyí qá itt^hú issilóo. Amq^hákam piq^hááwáté is slháákaaci we.
Our ancestors used to live in that place, well, **but** we live in this place.

Ís wic icééci ’yúwí amq^hákam íaq^hápá mahhóq wic icééci ’yúwí.
He looked like a person, **but** again he looked like an animal.

amq^háákam (amq^há kam) ‘thence agentively from the same as mentioned’ (emphatic)

Hilissuyáticka amq^háákam cé skuwí tinímmaáci
I’m pointing at you, but you don’t see me.

Hamís cisíticani ’tinnántiwi má áncá tinissúúci tééwaytími, ma téq^hiíwáyí. amq^háákam qa waayí tíyí tálictiiki.
One girl (they) chased around and caught in that way, and hurt badly; **but** her father was afraid.

... tépteeli kac^hú tílúúci. amq^háákam ámit^héwcan ticuusaáci má tépti.
... took her back to his house, **but** the woman escaped and went back home.

Mam tíic^híici qa súúqat aaqo. Amq^háákam qa is wáka cé tyuucíini tituutíisi.
And they went over Sugarloaf Mountain, **but** the men didn’t shoot (them).

amq^hááwátém (amq^há wáté m) ‘thence from the location of the same as mentioned’

T^húsýi sa tkici itt^húúni tííqaati ckiší. t^húsýi támmi kúci sa kíccááwáci, amq^hááwátém allu smhuuci.
Our earth, you do good,” he said. ‘Please stand up good things to eat, **because** we get hungry’⁴

3 Only these two instances, both recorded by de Angulo from Jack Folsom.

4 This is the only instance of *amq^hááwátém* in the database. The pronominal *m* (vs. *l*) is ‘potential’, whence a ‘future’ gloss is possible: “because we’ll be hungry”. *Allu shuwí* ‘We’re hungry.’ *Allu smhuwí* ‘Are we hungry? I guess we’re hungry. We might be hungry.’