

Achumawi Database

Summary of September 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

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1. *sta* ‘configure, pose’

Marriage is a contractual arrangement between families. Proper respect required in-laws to use the dual pronouns (*tanáléq̄táyi*), as though talking to a pair of people. The *sta* ‘configure, structure, pose’ morpheme in *mállista* ‘second wife, co-wife, previously married spouse’ may refer to the obligation to sustain a widow after the death of her husband. If a married man dies his brother, her *mállis* ‘brother-in-law’, is obligated to take her in, if she’ll have him. In the March 2023 report I speculated about a connection of *mállista* to *mállis* ‘fire’,¹ perhaps the home hearth fire. (Consider also *mahák*, *wahákwi* ‘father-in-law’, *waluwí* ‘mother-in-law’, *wat^húulawí* ‘opposite-sex sibling-in-law’.)

We have seen the *sta* root in verbs, for example: *tilahístam* ‘put your head down’, *tiicístam píiniñéwáté téhtač*, ‘load acorns on the wagon!’, *taapástam* ‘place (small) object on it’, *taamástam* (same meaning, but the object is larger), *téepástaycóké* ‘tie your hair up in a bun’.

The placename *q̄ac̄ ikuusástačci* ‘grindstone laid on top’ sounds like someone pushed (*ku*) the stone to move (*sa*) it into place (*sta*) on top (*č*). A seat is purposely made for sitting, so we see the agentive *ka* in *tákastačcé*, ‘seat, chair’, *tuukastačci* ‘sitting-upon place’ (with stative *w* realized as *u*), *itt^hú mittu wátém saakastačci* ‘I’m sitting on my heels’.

Grandma Lela said *aačasta* ‘horse’ is an old word (Curtin recorded it), and said that it sounded like ‘standing on poles’. When I then asked how to say ‘he’s standing on posts’, she said *tuupimci yáté yááčastačci*, which however includes *či* ‘upon’ (reduced to *č*). With *či* at the beginning of the stem, we get *iicista* ‘island’. The status of *sta* is unclear in *k^héstam*, *késtam* ‘end, stop’.

The *sta* root occurs with pronominal prefixes, as though a verb stem, and the *a* vowel gives the appearance of an imperative verb

c^hú wista móóčiiimi píiniñéwáté
c^hááwa mistá

How much are you going to load on the wagon?

Where do you mean?

1 *Mállis* itself looks like *ma* ‘heat, fire’ + *li* + *s* ‘indefinite’, suggesting that the core meaning of the *li* root is extension of power, and that the ‘hand, arm’ senses are secondary. In *tilisúúci*, ‘bad luck’, this *li* ‘power’ *suč* ‘dries up’. From the beginning, I associated *li* with *il* ‘hand’, but this natural impulse may be misleading; in any derivation of one from the other the glottalization is unexplained.

<i>húkyé kistá</i>	Do you mean over there?
<i>húkyé wiyí sistá</i>	I mean it's over there.
<i>C^hú wistá tiyí. C^hú wistá túuwí.</i>	How many are there? (animate/inanimate)
<i>pi q^há sistá</i>	I mean this one (nearby)
<i>pálmás kistá?</i>	Do you mean now? (<i>pálmás</i> 'already/when/a little while ago')

There are other occurrences of *st* which may shed light on the etymology and perhaps a derivation of *sta*. The *sta* in e.g. *tákasástak* 'drive (cattle) hither!' appears to be *s* 'indefinite' + *ta* 'in a linear direction' (though conceivably the 'configuration' could be the cattle lining up or bunching up). Other occurrences of *st* are not reductions of *sta*. I have both *tu* and *stu* glossed 'upon' in the lexicon. In *mhnúcustúúyá* 'I'll massage that for you!' we may have *s* 'indefinite' + *tu* 'upon' (with the benefactive *uy*).² People commonly sat on the ground (*tuskímci*), and there is also *tuskístumi* 'sit upon' (both with *ski* 'locate').³ One of the words for 'waterfall' is *ilaacásti*. Further study of the indefinite/inspecific *s* will include these occurrences of *st*.

2. Back to Work

Better understanding of how roots can be combined reopens decisions made in the first years. It's a truism of learning that we try to fit the rare exceptions into the system that works for the majority of cases.

For example, as late as my June 2020 update, glottal stop didn't seem to be a phoneme by which different words contrast with each other. As in English, it appeared to be the optional onset of a word-initial vowel. It also occurs sometimes after a word-final vowel, but then I found that limited to the end of a bare verb stem glossed as an '-ing' participle. And before the agentive *ka* after any word ending in a vowel. Hmm. Forms like *sasúúla 'áyi* 'I'm happy' and *sl'áámá* 'I might eat' forced reconsideration. De Angulo domesticated this as a 'rising tone': *slá má*, but a rule for re-articulating a high vowel after a low vowel doesn't account for *-o 'oy* or *híi 'í* or the glottal stop which cannot be omitted before the possessive *u* (except in the pronouns, where prior presence of the glottal stop explains the aspirated consonant in e.g. *it^hú*, *kac^hú*, etc.).

To work. At one point, I thought the aspirated *t^h* in the word for 'work' might be because of a consonant cluster: *tithúumi*. With anticipatory nasalization, the falling tone can sound like *ú* followed by *m* with low pitch: *tithúmmi*. As the morphology of verb stems became more clear, I tried to explain the falling tone as *wam* reduced to that nasalized low *u* or *m*. Awkward, and misleading to folks working to recover their language.

The 'third person patient' morpheme *-um* has low pitch (*síúsáátumá* 'one tells me, I am told') and on rare occasion follows a high vowel (*síúsáátínúmá* 'one told me, I was/have been told' = *síúsáátíní* with *-in* 'past' + *-um*). Now that I better accept the fluidity with which verb morphemes can be combined, this provides an obvious analysis of *tith^halúumi* 'work'. The *t^ha* occurs in words for shouting, praying, and perhaps even the 'utterances' of *sííla ma qúúp^ha* pounding acorn. (See the August 2020 update for examples.) The *lu* root is perhaps the pull of work orders given that way. The *um* indicates that a 3rd person is the agent and that the initial pronoun identifies the patient undergoing the action of the verb. Work in obedience to orders was certainly established in the institution of slavery up north and northwest of Pit River, and the spread of slave trade is said to be why Klamath and Modoc people raided Pit River communities to take captives. Service was evidently expected of a war captive. Here are two consecutive sentences in my notes: *Caahúm wilóó twiyí*. 'He used to be a slave.' *Téétamyi twiyí*. 'He's a kidnapped/stolen person.'⁴

The *wam* analysis was encouraged by *titaskáawam* 'finish it!' vs. *itaskáw[a]míi' ka ...* 'having finished, ...' (where the *wa* is reduced to low-pitch *u*) (see the September 2020 update). However, *tith^halúumi* 'work' is far better than my attempted analysis with *wam* to explain the low pitch there.

2 When I re-elicited this text, a speaker changed this to *mníyístúúyá* according to de Angulo's gloss 'I'll fix that'.

3 The fact of location rather than the act of sitting is evident in *kuskístum kúcóo* 'when he sits down on you' (not 'you will sit down'), in the Pumice-Stone Man story.

4 As you know, the word *caahúm* also means 'dog' (and 'horses' after their arrival). I've previously mentioned hearing Milly Elmore's sister protest to her "I'm not your dog!".

3. Impersonal 3rd person, evidentials, and *t-* as argument indicator

When the 3rd person pronouns have an impersonal ‘one does’ sense the verb form can function as a noun, ‘one who does’. Examples: *yawás* ‘hunter’, *yawás* (perhaps *yawás*) ‘singer’, *winihúwi* ‘one who has found power’, *átu wáníúci* ‘Hat Creek people’ (whose doings are *átu* ‘off to the side’), *wilyahtúmi* ‘traditional story teller’, *wisaneqáiwálo* ‘narrator of histories’, of course *winilláátíwi* ‘white person’, and probably all the kinship terms that begin with *w-*.

The *t-* prefix appears to be a pronoun of this sort, with the number unspecified.

a. The most frequent occurrences are what I have called a participle. When it occurs on the argument of a higher-order verb, *qa* may precede it as though it were a noun: *sátaspiimi qa támmi* ‘I quit eating’.

b. It occurs on a verb in a subordinate clause. I provided examples in the September 2022 update, such as *tóóqiiikántíwi aawátca macwá suwí* ‘it only hurts when I walk around’. The assertion in the subordinate clause is presupposed, hence, evident or accepted fact.

tyíiciini hamís pílayuucóóluucan tyanawámmiini qa wiyáacáálu ú támmi kúci.

There was one young man, he stole an old woman’s food.

ma áncá tuttéemi illim, ánákaayé tuttéemi, ...

‘He went outside (from where people lived), far off he went, ...

ma áncá we támmi qa qh’é qá kac’hú tináwámmi, wiyáacáálu ú támmi kúci ináwwámmi .

and then he ate that, his which he stole, stealing the old woman’s food.

c. It occurs in combination with other pronominal prefixes with a sense of being evident, manifest, a present fact, e.g. *twiyí* vs. *wiyí*, *tyánuwí* vs. *yánuwí*. It is also used when hearsay is accepted as fact: *ís tyiyí* ‘I hear he’s an Indian’, vs. *ís miyí* ‘he might be an Indian’, *ís tmiyí* ‘I hear he might be an Indian, evidently he might be an Indian’. Is a familiar saying hearsay or evident? *Hakcan ká twiyí wíimáqci twaasá* ‘travel in pairs, they say’ (‘two indeed they characteristically are who travel, {*t-*} one characteristically says’).

d. We see this together with the subordinate when it expresses inference: *tyáamá* ‘he must have eaten it’, where the *t* is for the subordinate clause under an understood ‘I infer’ or ‘I think that’; *stítínímmáacumá* ‘they must have seen me’, where one *t* is for the subordinate clause (as in the previous example) and the other (probably the one adjacent to the patient *s*) is the agent ‘they’. The speaker is asserting that it is evident, it can be inferred from what is known.

De Angulo calls some occurrences of this *t-* ‘quotative’, “when the speaker himself has not witnessed the action but reports it on hearsay.” The glosses in my notes include both ‘hearsay’ and ‘evident’. This has been confusing. I think that the speaker is asserting it as accepted fact, no matter whether the source is hearsay or direct experience.

There are many other combinations, and there is much still to be learned as I continue the work of peeling off the pronominal affixes and analyzing them. My current sense is that we do not have several *t-* prefixes but only one, an argument-indicator under a higher operator word (subordinating, coordinating, conjoining), often elided as being understood, each of which imparts a different meaning and is translated by a different construction in English.

In other American languages the speaker must use specialized morphemes to indicate how trustworthy their assertion is by indicating different kinds of evidence for it. Of course, this can be done by adding explicit phrases even in English, as is seen in the glosses of the following examples from Makah (in Washington, the southernmost of the Wakashan languages; the others are on Vancouver Island): *wiki-caxa-w* ‘It’s bad weather (directly experienced)’; *wiki-caxa-k-pid* ‘It looks like bad weather (inference from physical evidence)’; *wiki-caxa-k-qad’i* ‘It sounds like bad weather’; *wiki-caxa-k-wa.d* ‘I’m told there’s bad weather’ (see more [here](#)). The *t-* prefix is not part of such a system.

Oops! Keyboard instructions

On the [download page](#), select [Keyboards](#), and there in the section for each language you will see a link to the Welcome page that gives instructions how to use the keyboard. I neglected to include this when I posted the materials for installing the new keyboard.

Index of updates

I have created a spreadsheet indexing vocabulary, terms, and other key words by which to find topics of interest in the monthly updates since I started posting them in March 2020. It is a work in progress, not yet including every report, and it is not yet sorted alphabetically. It is primarily an aid to research and writing for me, as the current grant is about writing up results, but you can download the current status at any time from my dropbox folder [here](#).

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/5u8kxj0fzlwtpuu7epmn2/Update-index.ods?rlkey=tlbshsdm60jgztj02w0fvn8nh&dl=0>