

The Piipaash word for ‘coyote’ as a window into Yuman historical development

ISO-639-3: Cocopa: coc (32.38, -114.85); Ipai: dih (32.33, -116.6); Mohave: mov (34.89, -114.6); Piipaash: mrc (33.51, -111.75); Quechan: yum (32.79, -114.6); Yavapai: yuf (35.63, -113.9)

We hypothesize that the Piipaash word *xatlywe* /xatlwe/ ‘coyote’ derives historically from the combination of the independent morphemes *xat* /xat/ ‘dog’ and *lyvii-* /lvi:-/ ‘be like, look like’ (Langdon et al. 1991). That is, *xatlywe* more literally refers to something which ‘looks like a dog’, which is supported by the range of *Canidae* which are identified by this term in archival materials, including coyote, wolf, and fox. Further, this etymology supports the historical change from Proto-Yuman /*w/ to River Yuman /v/ root-initially (Langdon 1975), the proposed direction of which (i.e. rather than /*v/ to /w/ outside of River Yuman) is typologically rare (Shaul and Hill 1998): the /w/ of this form results from *xatlywe* having become lexically “frozen” prior to the shift of /*w/ to /v/ elsewhere in River-Yuman. This analysis thus further demonstrates the value of analyzing synchronically non-decomposable forms for informing our understanding of linguistic history.

Piipaash (also spelled “Pee Posh”, a.k.a. Maricopa) forms part of the River subgroup of the Yuman family, being closely related to Mohave and Quechan (with the latter of which it forms the Maricopa-Quechan subbranch) (Miller 2018). Piipaash follows a recurrent strategy in Yuman of deriving the common name for ‘coyote’ from that for ‘dog’ (Table 1), although the morphemes involved vary across languages (etymologies for all such Yuman words for ‘coyote’ go beyond the current scope of this paper). Moreover, as in other Yuman communities (e.g. Kendall 1980: 132) the common name *xatlywe* differs from that of the mythic figure Coyote (Spier 1933: 353), perhaps reflecting general prohibitions against using an individual’s name (Spier 1933: 197-198).

We claim that the Piipaash word *xatlywe* ‘coyote’ derives from the combination of historic forms of the morphemes *xat* ‘dog’ and *lyvii-* ‘be like, look like’ (Langdon et al. 1991): **xat* and **lywi*, respectively. These morphemes became lexically frozen in *xatlywe* prior to the shift from Proto-Yuman /*w/ to /v/ root-initially in River Yuman (cf. Piipaash *va* ‘house’ (Langdon et al. 1991), Cocopa *wa* ‘house’ (Crawford 1989)) (Kroeber 1943; Langdon 1975), hence the segment remains /w/ here. Thus, *xatlywe* provides further support for the directionality of this change, which has been noted elsewhere to be a rare sound change cross-linguistically (e.g. Shaul and Hill (1998)). The alternation between /e/ and /i:/ seems to reflect common vowel ablaut involving these segments (as well as /o ~ u(:)/) in River Yuman (Langdon 1976; Munro and Gordon 1990). This analysis likely generalizes to the Quechan cognate form *xatalwé* ‘coyote’, though not to Mohave *hukthar* ‘coyote’ (cf. *’ahat* ‘horse, pet, domestic animal’; *hatchoq* ‘dog’) (Munro et al. 1992).

This proposal entails that, at least historically, the Piipaash term *xatlywe* more accurately refers to any animal which resembles a dog in its physical characteristics, rather than strictly referring to ‘coyote’. In fact, this word historically has been used to refer to a range of different *Canidae* which includes coyote, wolf, and fox (Spier 1946: 105), and even individual speakers are attested as having used the word to describe all three (e.g. in Alpher (1970)). Crucially, *xatlywe* is never used for ‘dog’, reflecting that it refers to a dog-like entity, rather than just any *Canidae*.

Table 1: Selected Yuman words for ‘dog’ and ‘coyote’.

	River		Pai-River	Delta-California	
	Piipaash ¹	Quechan ²	Yavapai ³	Cocopa ⁴	Ipai ⁵
‘dog’	<i>xat</i>	<i>’axát</i> (‘horse’)	<i>kθár</i>	<i>xat</i>	<i>’ehatt</i>
‘coyote’	<i>xatlywe</i>	<i>xatalwé</i>	<i>kθàr?hāna</i>	<i>xtpa</i>	<i>hattepa</i>

The data in this table comes from: ¹ Langdon et al. (1991); ² Wares (1968); ³ Shaterian (1983); ⁴ Crawford (1989); ⁵ Couro and Hutcheson (1974). As we aim only to demonstrate similarities across forms within languages, we have not attempted to regularize the orthographies used here.

References

- Alpher, Barry. 1970, May 5. Unpublished fieldnotes. University of California, Berkeley: The Bancroft Library.
- Couro, Ted, and Christina Hutcheson. 1974. *Dictionary of Mesa Grande Diegueño*. Malki Museum Press.
- Crawford, James M. 1989. *Cocopa dictionary*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Kendall, Martha B. 1980. Coyote marries his daughter (Yavpe). In Martha B. Kendall (ed.), *International Journal of American Linguistics Native American Texts Series: Coyote Stories II*, p.129-133. Ann Arbor, MI: Imprint Series, UMI Monographs.
- Kroeber, Alfred L. 1943. Classification of the Yuman languages. *University of California Publications in Linguistics* 1: 21-40.
- Langdon, Margaret. 1975. Boundaries and lenition in Yuman languages. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 41: 218-233.
- Langdon, Margaret. 1976. The Proto-Yuman vowel system. In Margaret Langdon and Shirley Silver (eds.), *Hokan Studies: Papers from the First Conference on Hokan Languages*, p.129-148. The Hague: Mouton.
- Langdon, Margaret, et al. 1991. *Maricopa – English dictionary*. Prepared by Margaret Langdon and others. SRPMIC Department of Education.
- Miller, Amy. 2018. Phonological developments in Delta-California Yuman. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 84: 383-433.
- Munro, Pamela, Nellie Brown, and Judith G. Crawford. 1992. A Mojave dictionary. *UCLA Occasional Papers in Linguistics* 10.
- Munro, Pamela, and Lynn Gordon. 1990. Inflectional ablaut in the River languages. In Scott DeLancey (ed.), *Papers from the 1989 Hokan-Penutian Languages Workshop*, p.69-86. University of Oregon Papers in Linguistics.
- Shaul, David Leedom, and Jane H. Hill. 1998. Tepimans, Yumans, and other Hohokam. *American Antiquity* 63: 375-396.
- Shaterian, Alan. 1983. Yavapai phonology and dictionary. PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
- Spier, Leslie. 1933 (reprinted 1978). *Yuman tribes of the Gila River*. New York, NY: Dover.
- Spier, Leslie. 1946. *Comparative vocabularies and parallel texts in two Yuman languages of Arizona*. Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press.
- Wares, Alan Campbell. 1968. *A comparative study of Yuman consonantism*. The Hague: Mouton.