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THREE POSSIBLE DIFFUSED WORDS IN AMERINDIAN LANGUAGES

Barbara E. Hollenbach

As I was reading Joseph Casagrande's article, "Comanche Baby Language" (IJAL 14:11-14, 1948), I was struck by the similarity of three words to Copala Trique forms in my field notes. Comanche ?'iti' or ?'ititití' it's hot, used as a command to children to stay away from hot things, and the corresponding adult forms with r in place of t, are very similar to Copala Trique utItItI or uʃijijih or t<t<t< it's hot, used as an exclamation by the person feeling the heat. Comanche mamá' ? horse, used by children when they want to be carried on someone's back, is very similar to Copala Trique mamã⁴ or mamãh⁵ to be carried on the back, used by both children and adults to each other for carrying a child. Comanche cici' ? breast, bottle, milk, I want to be suckled, and the corresponding adult form pícip milk, breast, are very similar to Copala Trique ci³ breast and uci³ to nurse (intransitive).

The resemblances seemed worthy of note because of the considerable distance, both geographic and linguistic, between the two languages. Comanche is a Uto-Aztecan language spoken in Oklahoma; Trique is a Macro-Otomanguean language spoken in Oaxaca, Mexico. The words can hardly be cognate, yet they seem to be more than mere chance resemblances. I began to wonder if they did not represent forms widely diffused throughout Middle America and the U.S. Southwest. I therefore began to question my colleagues in the Summer Institute of Linguistics. My brief investigation revealed a number of possibly related forms. The name of the SIL member who provided each form is enclosed in parentheses after each.

The forms for to carry a child on one's back are: 'manč'i,

used in Apapantilla Totonac (Totonacan) and local dialects of Spanish as a one-word utterance to children (Ruth Bishop); 'meme, used in Tojolabal (Mayan) as a one-word utterance to children. (Margaret Wendell), ma³ma⁴, used in San Juan Lealao Chinantec (Macro-Otomanguean) as a modifier of the verb to carry (James Rupp). A likely source for these words is the Classical Aztec root mama or mame to carry on the back. Other possible, but in my opinion far less likely, sources are: Spanish mamar to nurse (intransitive); Spanish mamá mother; or Quechua (Quechumaran) 'mama mother (Peter Landerman).

The forms for it's hot are: tUtU, used in Rocoroibo Tarahumara (Uto-Aztecan) as a warning to children that food is hot (Donald Burgess); iditɛ, used in Northern Paiute (Uto-Aztecan) both as an exclamation and as a warning (John and Joy Anderson) AČŮČŮ, used in San Felipe Otlaltepec Popoloca (Macro-Otomanguean) as an exclamation (Ann Williams), ačIčI, used in San Esteban Atlatlahuca Mixtec (Macro-Otomanguean) as an exclamation (Ruth Mary Alexander); ača'čau or ača'lau, used in Quechua as an exclamation (Peter Landerman). Candoshi (Jivaroan) has an onomatopoeic word for burning skin; čiričəčəčəčə (Lorrie Anderson). Perhaps these warnings and exclamations developed from onomatopoeic forms for sizzle.

The forms for breast are: chiche or chichi, used in Mexican Spanish, originally a loan from the Classical Aztec word chichihualli breast or chichi to nurse (intransitive); cikilit, used in Totonac (Ruth Bishop); ču?, used in Tojolabal (Frances Jackson); cʰam, used in Cakchiquel (Mayan) (Mary Mast); ču used in Tzeltal (Mayan) (Homer Gifford); čʰu?, used in Ixil (Mayan) (Ray Elliott); č^hu?, used in Tabasco Chontal (Mayan) (James Walker); šiji, used in Isthmus Zapotec (Macro-Otomanguean) (Virginia Embrey); ce'ck, used in Tlahuitoltepec Mixe (Zoquean) (Donald Lyon). All of the above contain either an alveolar or alveopalatal affricate. The five Mayan forms are probably true cognates.