

## Yosemite and Tamalpais

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RECENT WORK on a California Indian language belonging to the linguistic stock called Miwok has familiarized me with the literature on the languages of that family, and particularly with the publications of Lucy Freeland de Angulo, who is the authority on the subject. The following two place names derived from Miwok are presented to draw the attention of onomatologists to work which may have escaped their notice.

The name of Yosemite<sup>1</sup> has been connected with the Sierra Miwok word for '(grizzly-)bear' and with a collective noun meaning 'the killers' or 'a band of killers.' In Mrs. Freeland's "Language of the Sierra Miwok"<sup>2</sup> 'bear' appears as *ĩšĩ·mati* (p. 3) and *yóšé·meti* is defined as 'the Killers' (p. 159). These words, although of course distinct in the native tongue, show a notable degree of similarity in their phonological structure, and a confusion between them, or their being taken as variant forms of a single term is easily understandable on the part of those unfamiliar with the language. That the second, and not the first, is the true etymon is most likely. In the first place, the word for 'bear' lacks the initial *y*-, and the high central vowel (transcribed *ĩ*) of its initial syllable was commonly equated by Spanish speakers with their vowel *e* and by Anglo-Americans either with *ü* or with *u*. And secondly, *yóš-é·meti* fits readily into the morphological pattern of Miwok: the suffixation to the verbal root *yóš-* 'to kill' of the morpheme *-e-* 'one who, that which, does something' yields the agent noun *yóšé-* 'killer,' and this is pluralized by the addition of *-meti*, "a pluralizing suffix, probably more or less collective in meaning, used in all dialects" (op. cit., p. 158). The variant *yohé·meti*?, proper to the southern or Mariposa dialect of Sierra Miwok, in whose range the famous valley lies, indicates that the word first was heard by white men

from the lips of speakers of the more northerly dialects. "This [the form with -š-] is the name which was applied by the neighboring Miwok to the dwellers in Yosemite Valley, who appear to have been (at least in historic times) a band of renegades from various tribes" (op. cit. p. 159).

The accepted etymology<sup>3</sup> of Mt. Tamalpais, the name of one of the most prominent landmarks of the San Francisco bay region, derives the word from the Coast Miwok *tamal*, defined as 'bay,' and *paiyīs* 'mountain.' In this etymology, which goes back to Merriam<sup>4</sup> and Barrett,<sup>5</sup> the second element has beyond doubt been correctly identified and defined. But there is some question about the meaning of the first; for Freeland<sup>6</sup> tells us that in the language of the Lake Miwok, a distinct branch of the western Miwok who dwelt some fifty or sixty miles to the north of their relatives along San Francisco bay and who were separated from them by the quite unrelated Wappo, there occurs the name "*tamdl-pawi* 'Mt. Tamalpais,' literally 'west mountain,' from *tamal* 'west' and *pawi* 'mountain'." The following remarks are presented in support of the contention that there has been a misinterpretation of the toponymic material coming from the Miwok Indians of Marin county, and that the primary meaning of *tamal* there was 'west,' as it certainly was in Lake County.

The confusion can, I think, be made plausible by geography. If the name of a point of land which has a westerly trend and which lies along a bay contains *tamal*, that element could be taken as referring either to the western location or to the nearby bay. To me the first of these alternatives makes better sense; and I think the available evidence supports my contention.

In addition to *Tamalpais* there are five *tamal* names recorded for Marin County. There were the Indians called variously the Tamales, Tomales, Tamalanos, who according to Bancroft<sup>7</sup> lived along the coast from the Golden Gate north to Pt. Reyes; and there is Tomales bay, presumably named (by the Spaniards?) for those Indians. Then we have the most westerly cape in the region, called by us Pt. Reyes and by the Indians *tamal-hūīye*,<sup>8</sup> and along with it the western promontory separating Tomales bay from the ocean (Tomales Pt.<sup>9</sup> = the Indian *tam-mal hoo-yah*; in these last two names *hūīye* or *hoo-yah* is given as the equivalent of 'point'). And

finally, on the map of Coast Miwok territory and settlements on p. 274 of Kroeber's 'Handbook,'<sup>10</sup> we find the name of an Indian village *Echa-tamal*, situated near the modern town of Nicasio and some seven or eight miles distant from the nearest salt water, the southern end of Tomales bay. All of these places, including Mt. Tamalpais and the territory occupied by the Indians along the ocean front, lay to the west of the relatively heavily populated areas along the western shores of San Francisco bay and northward up Petaluma Creek, areas with which the Spaniards first came in contact and where they accordingly first heard some of these names. A hypothesis that *tamal* meant 'west' seems to me to fit these facts rather better than the given meaning of 'bay.' It also seems to me, I confess, at least questionable that the Indians of the region, with their limited geographic horizon, had a well-defined concept 'bay' that would include such topographically distinct configurations as the large, landlocked body of water we call the bay of San Francisco, the broad open gulf of Drake's bay, and the narrow, fjord-like Tomales bay.

In Lake County, as we have seen, *Tamal-páwi* 'West Mt.' was the name of Mt. Tamalpais. But the mountain cannot have been so named by the speakers of Lake Miwok, for it lies some fifty or sixty miles almost due south of them. Accordingly, since there is evidence of intercourse between these separate groups, the word *tamal-páwi* must be a borrowing from the south; and in this borrowing, although the second component of the compound was transposed from *paiyís* into *páwi*, the first was left unchanged. A name 'West Mt.' for Tamalpais, as used by Miwok speakers, makes sense only from the point of view of dwellers in the general vicinity of San Rafael, in whose language, therefore, *tamal* must have meant 'west.'

In Sierra Miwok,<sup>11</sup> as well as in the western dialects, the term *tamal-* was a directional term rather than a word for a body of water, although it there has the meaning 'north.' (Similarly, the eastern *?olow-* 'west' corresponds to the western *?olo-* 'south'). And among the eastern Miwok it was normal practice to refer to neighboring Indians as 'northerners' (Tamuleko) and 'westerners' (Olokok), a practice which is here assumed for their distant relatives in the west.

We would do better, therefore, in my opinion, to think of Tamalpais as the 'western mountain' rather than the 'bay mountain.'

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion and a bibliography see Erwin G. Gudde, *California Place Names*, 1949, s.v.

<sup>2</sup> *Indiana University Publications in Anthropology and Linguistics*, Memoir 6 of the *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 1951.

<sup>3</sup> Gudde, *op. cit.*, s.v.

<sup>4</sup> C. Hart Merriam, "Distribution and Classification of the Mewan Stock of California," *American Anthropologist* n.s. 8 (1907). 355, n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> S. A. Barrett, "The Ethnogeography of the Pomo and Neighboring Indians," *UCPAAE* 6(1908). 308, n. 389.

<sup>6</sup> L. S. Freeland, "Western Miwok Texts with Linguistic Sketch," *International Journal of American Linguistics* 13(1947). 37.

<sup>7</sup> H. H. Bancroft, *The Native Races* 1 (1883). 363. The information was derived from Alexander Taylor.

<sup>8</sup> Barrett, *loc. cit.*, p. 307.

<sup>9</sup> Merriam, *loc. cit.*, p. 355.

<sup>10</sup> A. L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California*, 1925.

<sup>11</sup> Kroeber, *op. cit.*, p. 444.



*One Eye Creek, Texas.*—J. Frank Dobie states, without citing a source, that the small stream in Cherokee County "is said to be named after a Cherokee chief who lived on it before Christian charity shot out his other eye and appropriated his homestead" (*Straight Texas, Pub. Texas Folk-lore Soc.*, No. 13, 1937, p. 42). Although this sounds like popular etymology, and a derivation from Hainai or Ioni seems more logical, the existence of a Cherokee so called is documented. An inquiry at the General Land Office, Austin, Texas, revealed a record of the James F. Timmons Survey, Republic of Texas (File No. 1-254), dated August 19, 1839, which contains the following statement: "Situated on the waters of Neches River in Cherokee Nation near One Eyes place."

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