

AHTANUM CREEK FISHERIES

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I am a cultural anthropologist employed as Professor in the Department of Anthropology, University of Washington, Seattle, where I have been a regular faculty member since 1972. I received a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley in 1973. My specialties include ethnobiology, language and culture, and cultural ecology. I have studied the Sahaptin language, the native language spoken by Indians resident in the Ahtanum Creek area in 1855 (and likely for at least 1000 years prior), focussing particularly on indigenous knowledge of plants, animals, and places important to the traditional economy. I am the author of Nch'i-Wána, "The Big River": Mid-Columbia Indians and Their Land (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1990). My information on the Ahtanum Creek basin is derived from testimony of Sahaptin-speaking elders familiar with that area and from secondary sources ultimately derived from that testimony. I draw also on my knowledge of the ecology of the broader region, which allows comparisons of traditional resource use patterns between the Ahtanum and ecologically and culturally comparable areas for which more detailed information is available.

THE AHTANUM BASIN

Ahtanum Creek drains an area of 173 square miles on the east slope of the Cascade Mountains originating on Darland Mountain at 6600 feet elevation. (Wide Hollow Creek drains an additional 65 square miles immediately to the north, entering the Yakima River immediately upstream of the mouth of Ahtanum Creek. The two basins might be considered a single natural area of 238 square miles.) The elevation at the mouth of Ahtanum Creek is 932 feet above sea level. The North and South Forks of Ahtanum Creek meet 23 miles above the mouth at an elevation of approximately 1900 feet near the present settlement of Tampico. The North Fork drains 75 square miles and is 23 miles long; the South Fork drains 29 square miles in 15 miles.

The 1855 Treaty specifies that the northern boundary of the Yakima Indian Reservation follows "said Attah-nam River to the forks; thence along the southern tributary to the Cascade Mountains;..." (Article II). Prior to 1972 that boundary was drawn up the South Fork west 10.4 miles to Reservation Creek, then southwest to the divide between

Toppenish Creek and the Ahtanum. This boundary was corrected in 1972 to follow the South Fork to its source, thence west along the Ahtanum-Klickitat-Tieton divide to the Cascade crest. This is contra testimony by B. Lane for the United States in this case who states that "the North Fork and South Fork of the Ahtanum are off-reservation" (draft, pg. 2).

Sahaptin place names mark localities of cultural and economic significance to the ancestral Indian peoples of the region in which the named places are found. Many of the names in use by local Indians in 1855 have been lost. However, those which have been written down or which are in use today provide clues to the traditional significance of specific regions to the Yakima Indian peoples. The following represent the available information relevant to the Ahtanum, to the best of my knowledge.

1. Near the mouth of the Ahtanum and along the west bank of the Yakima River for a short distance either side were two settlements, including **ts'íkik** [referring apparently to an odorous spring at the site] which Verne Ray describes as "the largest village of the Yakima... The population here was perhaps 2000" (Ray 1936:146). According to Donald Umtuch this was "a permanent village of 2500 people north of Union Gap near the present site of the State Highway Department Office in the city of Union Gap" (Hunn notes, January 7, 1977). The other settlement was called **xatkapsha** [referring perhaps to a land slide feature at the site]. Ray places "this settlement... on Ahtanum Creek above the mouth a short distance" (1936:146). Don Umtuch affirms that this was a "place on Ahtanum Creek near its mouth" (Hunn notes, January 7, 1977). Nearby are five additional named sites of mythological or ecological significance.

The existence of such a large permanent settlement close to the mouth of Ahtanum Creek suggests the exceptional importance of the local fisheries.

Twelve miles up Ahtanum Creek just south of present-day Wiley City was another settlement located where an Indian trail linking the Toppenish Creek basin with the Naches crossed Ahtanum Ridge at a low point. Several place names have been recorded for this area. The village here -- "a large, rich settlement occupied throughout the year" (Ray 1936:146) -- was called **átanam** [of uncertain interpretation], for which the entire creek and, basin, and adjacent ridge is now known. The centrality of this village within the Ahtanum Creek basin is demonstrated by the fact that the people of the basin were known as **atanam-láma** 'people of **átanam**'. Alternate terms include **aytmán-ash** 'mountain trout place' and **táp'ashwit-ash** 'place having Ponderosa pine', which indicate other resources and ecological features distinctive of this place (McWhorter archives; Relander archives). Dom Umtuch stated that "salmon

used to go up past here, but no longer...." Josephine Smartlowit stated that, "Indians lived all over there; used to hunt over there" (Hunn notes, January 13, 1977; November 26, 1990). St. Joseph's Catholic Mission was established in 1850 six miles above this village. The George B. McClellan railroad survey party stayed at the mission August 17-19, 1853.

On the flat at and just above the junction of the North and South Forks was the locality known as **támpiku** [origin and interpretation uncertain, but Phillips claims that the "community was named by pioneer settler A. D. Elgin for an Oregon town in which he had previously lived" (1971:142), but no such town is listed by McArthur (1992)]. The noted Yakima leader Kamiakin lived here in the 1840s until the hostilities subsequent to the treaty signing. He kept cattle and irrigated a garden here, the first of many diversions of Ahtanum Creek water for that purpose (Lince 1982:113).

McWhorter recorded the term "Cho'p-pen-chash" [**shápinchash** 'red face paint'] as the "name of the North Fork of the Ahtanum. Derived from the red earth found just east of the soda springs. This earth used as a paint" (1918). This mineral paint was used for decorating men and women's faces and horses. Relander describes how the material was gathered as mud [likely rich in iron oxides] associated with soda springs. Well known examples of such springs are located nine miles up the North Fork. Ray records the term "ts'apas" [**sts'átpas** 'ground fog'] for a location "on the headwaters of the south fork of Atanum Creek" (1936:147).

I have recorded a total of 16 place names within the Ahtanum-Wide Hollow Creek basin, an area of 238 square miles. This represents a "place name density" of .067 per square miles, which may be compared to comparable density of .054 for the Naches River basin (Hunn 1993:33). This indicates that the Ahtanum basin was of comparable cultural and ecological significance to the local Native peoples as was the better known Naches River basin, where there were many important traditional fisheries (cf. Jim Yoke in Jacobs 1934:236).

Relander reports further that William Adams, father of the late tribal councilman, Harvey Adams, was of this group and that "no man knew more about the landmarks and boundaries of the Reservation back country" than he (1962:84). An Ahtanum leader named "We-yal-lup Wa-ya-cika," born 1815, had willow fish traps on the Tieton River that were removed by the local sheriff in a dispute over fishing rights; "... his men dug the Indian canal with their teams under the supervision of Agent L. T. Erwin but were never paid for the work when the government took over the canal" (Relander 1962:84).

While I can add little to Dr. Lane's evidence for traditional fishing on Ahtanum Creek, the ethnogeographic data summarized above demonstrate that the natural resources of the Ahtanum basin, including the north and south forks, provided the major support for a group of Yakima Indians known as the 'people of Ahtanum'.

AHTANUM CREEK PLACE NAMES

From files of Eugene Hunn
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as of 6-29-93

tho'-wit-tet 01-19r-05r

36 = To-wid-it of Relander

McWhorter 1917; "cold wind," ... "name of rock cliff at the north entrance to the Gap, right hand side and on the left bank of the Ahtanum Creek. The Indians say that the wind, beginning at this rock, sweeps down through the Gap every evening." Also called "windmaker" as in a legend; formerly the den of the "Wahk-puch" 'rattlesnake' [/wax-púsh/ 'rattlesnake']. The home of the "horned chiefs.

to-wid-it 01-19r-05r

36 = Tho'-wit-tet of McWhorter

Relander archive, Jim Looney, Oct. 17, 1951, Boyd: Hill on west [at Union Gap] was where To-Wid-it lived... the wind. Means wind goes down. Blows cold. Blows down, hard. Why Indians moved away from there a long while ago. Indians used to live just south [sic. means "north" ?] of Union Gap but wind, cold wind blowing through there all the time hard so they moved south. Relander archive, 59-21+, Boyd: "wind goes down" -- cold wind. Western Gap at Twin Buttes south of Union Gap. Relander 1984:173-175, "The western face of the gap [Union Gap] at Pahutaquit was ..., a name for the strong north wind [polysemously] ..."

tow-wit-it 01-19r-05r

36 = tho'-wit-tet, to-wid-it

McWhorter 1918; "name of the small cliff by Ow rr. on bank of Ahtanum, north of Gap. Means 'Maker of the wind.' Refers to breeze that springs up frequently and sweeps through gap morning and evening. This rock was formerly a rattlesnake 'house' and the home of one of the horned chiefs of the Wahk-puch."

xatkapsha 01-19r-05r-00

371 = xa- 'accidentally' + -tqa- 'suddenly' + -sha

Hunn: Place on Ahtanum Creek near its mouth. (EH/DU: I-7-77) Ray 1936:146. "('ground which is loose'). This settlement was on Atanum Creek above the mouth a short distance."

topas we-tash 01-19r-05r-00

372 = tap'ash-wi-t-ash 'place having Ponderosa pines' ?

McWhorter n.d., = Wiley City [up Ahtanum Creek].

q'sch-it 01-19r-05r-00

3721. = ? + /ishchát/ 'trail'

Relander archive, CR's hand, Jim Looney, Oct. 17, 1951, Boyd: Ft. Simcoe to Ya[kima] (old wagon road fro[m ?] White Swan & over Ahtanum Ridge... Old Yakima road went from White Swan over hill to Wiley City. It was called

tám-piku 01-19r-05r-00

373 = tám-pik- 'hold it'; = "támtiko" (Ray)

Hunn: pronunciation fide JS,JA:IX-26-90. [on the Atanum River]. Indian name but pronunciation changed; pronounced with a "broad" a, as in "hat" and the u like "o"; JA used to stay there.

támtiko 01-19r-05r-00

373 = tám-piku

Ray 1936:146. "('let's go to village below') Located on Atanum Creek directly south of the present Tampico." Yakima Co., WA.

cho'p-pen-chash 01-19r-05r-00

374 = /sháp-ínch-ash/ 'red mineral face paint'

McWhorter 1918; "'Paint.' Name of the North fork of the Ahtanum. Derived from the red earth found just east of the soda Springs. This earth used as a paint."

McWhorter n.d., = North Fork Ahtanum Creek, 'paint' (from red earth).

sháp-ínch-ash 01-19r-05r-00

374 = Cho'p-pen-chash

McWhorter 1918; "'Paint.' Name of the North fork of the Ahtanum. Derived from the red earth found just east of the soda Springs. This earth used as a paint."

sc'átpas 01-19r-05r-00

375 'cf. páscat 'ground fog' (CRS)

Ray 1936:147. "'ts'apas' ('thin morning fog') On the headwaters of the south fork of Atanum Creek." Yakima Co., WA.

átaním 01-19r-05r

37a = átanam.

Jacobs 1934, Jim Yoke, "There it is named ... (Ahtanum), the river flows along, and at the large beach the [nuuxchíish] (Naches) and [síla] (Selah) join [above Union Gap]" (236).

átanam 01-19r-05r

37a = átanim

Ray 1936:146. "This village was on the north side of Atanum Creek directly south of the present town of Wiley. It was a large, rich settlement occupied throughout the year. Many visitors from distant points were to be found here."

Hunn: Yakima Co., WA. Salmon used to go up past here, but no longer. On Ahtanum Creek at Wiley City, Yakima Co., WA. EH/DU: I-13-77. EH/JA: IX-26-90. EH/JA: IX-26-90, below támpiku; Indians lived all over there; used to hunt "over there" ["a" pronounced as in "hat"]. JS: VI 29-43 á-tana-m, lots of fishing in old days.

Relander 1962, pg. 62: Referred to as "Ithanam River" [= Ahtanum Creek] in a letter from P. C. Sullivan, assistant U.S. Attorney, Tacoma to the Indian agent at Simcoe: "Under date of August 22, 1889, Thomas Priestly, the agent at Ft. Simcoe wrote to the Indian Department at Washington, D.C. relating to the draining of the Ithaman River [Ahtanum Creek] for a considerable distance bordering on the Indian Reservation." "In the letter it is stated that white settlers have withdrawn all the water from the said river to irrigate their lands on the north side thereof leaving the Indian residents destitute of water for their stock and other purposes." "The letter made no reference to salmon, which before days of irrigation ran in large numbers up Ahtanum Creek." Relander 1962: 81: Lists "Ah-tanum-lemá" [atanam-láma] as the people who lived along Ahtanum Creek. Relander 1962, pg. 84: "Yesmouth [= William Adams, father of Harvey Adams] of the Ahtanum -- and no man knew more about the landmarks and boundaries of the Reservation back country -- ..." Ahtanum also the home country of We-yal-lup Wa-ya-cika, recognized Ahtanum leader [born at Selah, 1815; had willow fish traps on the Tieton R. removed by local sheriff]: "... his men dug the Indian canal with their teams under the supervision of Agent L. T. Erwin but were never paid for the work when the government took over the canal."

ah'tanum 01-19r-05r-00

37a = /átanam/; cf. It-menas

McWhorter 1918; "originally pronounced It-menas, meaning 'Plenty trout.' (It-men: trout -- brook trout). George Olney says that three old men told him that the change in the name came about either by the incorrect pronunciation of a child just learning to talk, or from the attempt to speak the name by an Indian learning the Yakima language. Applied to the main stream, including the South Fork. Meaning of Ahtanum unknown to old Indians. Some of the younger think it may mean 'Joining of the waters.'"

Relander archive, 59-21+, Boyd: "creek by the long mountain" (Wilkes IV:466)

aytmán-ash 01-19r-05r-00 a fish place

37b = It-menas; cf. Ah'tanum

McWhorter 1918; "[Ah'tanum] originally pronounced It-menas, meaning 'Plenty trout.' (It-men: trout -- brook trout). George Olney says that three old men told him that the change in the name came about either by the incorrect pronunciation of a child just learning to talk, or from the attempt to speak the name by an Indian learning the Yakima language. Applied to the main stream, including the South

Fork. Meaning of Ahtanum unknown to old Indians. Some of the younger think it may mean 'Joining of the waters.'"

< /aytmán/ 'trout sp. [of mountains, possibly cutthroat ?], + /-ash/ 'place of'

it-menas 01-19r-05r-00 a fish place

37b = /aytmán-ash/ 'trout sp. place'; cf. Ah'tanum

McWhorter 1918; "[Ah'tanum] originally pronounced It-menas, meaning 'Plenty trout.' (It-men: trout -- brook trout). George Olney says that three old men told him that the change in the name came about either by the incorrect pronunciation of a child just learning to talk, or from the attempt to speak the name by an Indian learning the Yakima language. Applied to the main stream, including the South Fork. Meaning of Ahtanum unknown to old Indians. Some of the younger think it may mean 'Joining of the waters.'"

< /aytmán/ 'trout sp. [of mountains, possibly cutthroat ?], + /-ash/ 'place of'

ye-pah 01-19r-05r-00

37c =

McWhorter 1918; "name for Ahtanum creek."

lal-a-wish-em-ko'tas 01-19r-06r a mammal act bi

39 = /lalawish-ma xát-ash/ 'wolves nursing place'

McWhorter 1918, fide Capt. Billie; "Spring at blacksmith shop, Union Gap..." McWhorter n.d., = spring at Union Gap.

lal-wish-mal-hot-tish 01-19r-06r

39 = /lalawish-ma xát-ash/ 'wolves nursing place'; same place as Ow-yah ?; = Lal-wish-mah-hot-tish-pah. which see

lalawish-ma-xátash(-pa) 01-19r-06r a mammal act place

39 = /lalawish-ma xát-ash/ 'wolves nursing place'; = Lal-wish-mah-hot-tish(-pah)

Hunn: /lalawish-ma xát-ash-pa/; < /lalawish/ NWS for 'wolf' + /-ma/ 'plural suffix'; /xa-t/ 'to nurse a baby' [cf. /xii-/ NWS 'to give birth'] + /-ash/ 'place of' + /-pa/, general locative suffix ?

lal-wish-mal-hot-tish-pah 01-19r-06r a mammal act place

39 = /lalawish-ma xát-ash/ 'wolves nursing place'; = Lal-wish-mah-hot-tish; same place as Ow-yah ?

McWhorter 1917; "young wolves are born" or "place of young wolves"; "name of low, brushy land just above the Gap, including the present site of town of Union Gap. This spot was a breeding place of wolves. Also known as "Ow-yah," which has no meaning as far as has been ascertained."

/lalawish-ma xát-ash-pa/; < /lalawish/ NWS for 'wolf' + /-ma/ 'plural suffix'; /xa-t/ 'to nurse a baby' [cf. /xii-/ NWS 'to give birth'] + /-ash/ 'place of' + /-pa/, general locative suffix.