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## 'JAIL' IN DINÉ BIZAAD\*

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### Abstract

It is argued that certain words for jail in Diné bizaad (Navajo), e.g. *ʼawáalya* and *wáalya*, come from Spanish. Although it has been long suspected that this word is a loanword, all the suggestions so far presented in the literature remain unconvincing on phonological grounds.

### 1. Introduction

The manner in which the Indigenous people of America view crime, and therefore law, justice and punishment, substantially differs from the way these same concepts are considered by Euro-American societies. Since the prison system is foreign,<sup>1</sup> it should come as no surprise that specialized vocabulary is lacking in the Indigenous languages. When speaking more specifically about the Na-Dene languages, which include Eyak, Lingít (Tlingít) and the Dene (or Athabaskan) subfamily, neologisms

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Echo-Hawk (1996: 4): “Incarceration is an alien concept to traditional Native American societies, which had other forms of social control” or, in Canada, the eloquence of Thayenda-negea (Joseph Brant), the Mohawk Chief of the Grand River, who in 1870 stated that

[...] you will observe that among us we have no prisons; we have no pompous parade of courts; we have no written laws; and yet judges are as highly revered among us as they are among you, and their decisions are as much regard. [...] The palaces and prisons among you form a most dreadful contrast. (Adema 2016: 43)

were introduced to fill the gap. For the sake of illustration, below is a small selection of names for jail or prison in various Na-Dene languages (each language name is followed by its ISO 639-3 code):<sup>2</sup>

- (1) a) Ahtna [aht] (Kari 1990: 85, 267)  
*ut'aaax c'egha 'inhwnel'aende* 'jail', lit. 'place for punishment'  
*ut'aa kunelyaesi* 'jail', lit. 'place in which people are kept inside'
- b) Denaakk'e (Koyukon) [koy] (Jetté and Jones 2000: 707a)  
*kehulyoh denh* 'jail, prison', lit. 'place where someone is punished'.
- c) Dakelh (Carrier) [crx] (Morice 1932.1: 86)  
*nêtrêl-pa-yerh* 'jail, prison', lit. 'house for tying up people'<sup>3</sup>
- d) T̥h̥ch̥o Yatì (Dogrib) [dgr] (Howren and Howren 1983: 24, 36, 40, 55)  
*d̥o danila k̥o* 'jail' {person lock-up house}  
*k̥o rez̥o k̥o* 'jail' {k̥o 'house', √rez̥o 'it is dark'}  
*(e)kwati k̥o* 'jail' {police<sup>4</sup> house}  
*sats̥o ehtl'ì k̥o* 'jail' {metal it.is.knitted house}
- e) Eyak [eya] (Krauss 2012: [274])  
*χ̥əl̥d̥i: q̥d̥* (newer spelling: *XAtl'di: q̥d̥*) 'jail', lit. '(because) it's dark inside'<sup>5</sup>
- f) Lingít (Tlingit) [tli] (Edwards 2009: 104)  
*gayéís' hit* ~ *Giyéís' hit* 'jail' {iron house/building}

In Ahtna (1a), the first expression is built on √'aen 'to punish', whereas the second is a derivative of √'laa 'to handle [singular] rope-like'. As in Ahtna, Denaakk'e (1b) uses the verb √yo 'to punish'. The Dakelh, T̥h̥ch̥o Yatì, Eyak and Lingít terms (1c–f), which focus on various physical features of the prison building or the cell, are essentially descriptive.<sup>6</sup>

The alternative approach to the neologism is to borrow the foreign term.<sup>7</sup> In Diné bizaad (Navajo) [nav], a member of the Southern Dene (or Apachean) branch along with Jicarilla [apj], Chiricahua and Mescalero [apm], or Western Apache [apw], one word for jail is *'awáalya*. When it comes to the origins of this and some other apparently related terms, e.g. *wáalya*, borrowing is the default interpretation. No less conventional, however, is to admit that the details of its etymology remain a mystery (see e.g. de Reuse 1996: 162).

<sup>2</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this paper: ALN—Young, Morgan and Midgette (1992), Eng.—English, lit.—literally, Sp.—Spanish.

<sup>3</sup> This form corresponds to modern (Stuart Lake) Dakelh *nelhghelbayoh* /ne'ɣelbajoh/, which exists in the vocabulary of this dialect along with *'ahudin'ai-un* /ʔahʌdinʔai-ʌn/, from √'ai 'to handle one or two default objects in a controlled manner', as in *'ayan'ai* 'he put it in a hole, jailed him'. In Southern Dakelh dialects we find a different term: Stony Creek *tsak'et* 'cellar, jail, prison', Lheidli *tsak'et* 'cache pit, cellar, jail' (for Stuart Lake, Stony Creek and Lheidli dictionaries, see Poser [2021–], accessed 9 September 2021).

<sup>4</sup> The form *kwati* is an aphetism of *ekwati* 'Royal Canadian Mounted Police' which is a compound made of *ehkwi* 'true' and *yahti* 'he speaks' (Howren and Howren 1983: 5).

<sup>5</sup> Krauss (2012: [274]) speculates that it may simply be *XAtl' di: q̥d̥* 'confined at night'.

<sup>6</sup> For a similar use, see e.g. Southern Ute (Numic, Uto-Aztecan) *karúsi-gáni* 'prison', where *káni* means 'house' (Bright 2000: 267).

<sup>7</sup> Regarding the concept of "loanword by necessity" and why it may not be entirely necessary, see e.g. Haspelmath (2009: 46–48).

The structure of this paper is as follows. The philology of the word *ʼawáalya* is analyzed in section 2. After having evaluated the previous scholarship and determined that all previous etymologies of *ʼawáalya* fail to be entirely convincing in section 3, I argue in section 4 for two new complementary, rather than exclusive, scenarios involving two different Spanish (ISO 639–1:es) expressions (section 4.1 addresses *guardia*, section 4.2 *alguacil*). The paper finishes in section 5 with the conclusions.

## 2. ‘Awáalya in Diné bizaad

The word *ʼawáalya* displays a wide range of variation. The many forms that have been documented across time and space are grouped in the list below:

- (2) a) ⟨ʼawáalyaa⟩ (Young and Morgan 1987: 136–137; similarly Reichard 1951: 17 ⟨wa-lyā-⟩, 311 ⟨awá-lyā⟩, 329 ⟨ʼawá-lyā⟩ or Holy Bible 1985: Genesis 39:20 ⟨awáalyaa⟩, etc.)
- b) ⟨ʼawáalya⟩ (ALN 1008, item [7])
- c) ⟨awaalyah ~ awáalyah⟩ (Austin and Lynch 1983: 31a, with different tone pattern in Hoijer 1945: 18 ⟨ʼá-wá-l-yàh⟩)
- d) ⟨ʼawálya⟩ (Haile 1947, vol. 4: 212–214) or ⟨awályä⟩ (Franciscan Fathers 1910: 440b, cf. ⟨awál’ya⟩ in Franciscan Fathers 1912, vol. 1: 113b s.v. jail;<sup>8</sup> similarly Holy Bible 1917: Genesis 39:20 ⟨awal’ya⟩ or [Mitchell 1910]: 103 ⟨a-wal’ya⟩)
- e) ⟨ʼawálya-⟩ (Haile 1950–1951.2: 173)
- f) ⟨wáalya⟩ along with ⟨ʼawáalya⟩ (*Legal Terms* 97)

These forms deserve additional commentary. Reichard (2a) claims that “*ywalya*-, or *wa-lyā*.” are both valid pronunciations. In Diné bizaad, -w- (< Proto-Dene \*χ<sup>(w)</sup> and \*ʁ<sup>(w)</sup>9) represents the voiced velar approximant, which sometimes has a very distinctive labial offglide ([ʷ]) and it may surface as [y] under certain conditions (especially before the back vowel /o/).<sup>10</sup>

The long vowel on both the second and third syllables (2a) is only systematically found in Young and Morgan’s 1987 dictionary. Long vs. short vowel in the second and third syllables, respectively, as in (2b), can be found in other dictionaries, e.g. Wall and Morgan (1958: 12c) or Young and Morgan (1972: [Part I] 19b).

<sup>8</sup> Harrington’s (1911: 154) interpretations that the Franciscan Fathers’ ⟨ä⟩ stands for the “very short [ä]”, whereas ⟨a⟩ marks the “medium long [a]” (the corresponding long counterpart is noted as ⟨ā⟩), which is, of course, in agreement with what the Franciscan Fathers explained later (*Vocabulary*, vol. 1: 9). It is safe to assume, phonetic details aside, that both vowels are short in the Franciscan Fathers’ works. As for the apostrophe in ⟨awál’ya⟩, it marks an accented syllable (the mark follows the accented syllable, unlike in current IPA use).

<sup>9</sup> There are at least two exceptions: *awéé’* ‘baby’ and *waa’* ‘beeweed, spinach’, which correspond to Western Apache *imé’* and *maagi*, respectively (de Reuse 2017).

<sup>10</sup> The most telling description of this particular feature in Diné bizaad is perhaps that by Hale and Honie (1972: 66). These authors explain that if a noun like *waa’* ‘beeweed, spinach’ were a verb, the onglide would fully surface as [y] after the application of the phonotactic rule known as ‘d-effect’, i.e. /naiidwaa’/ = [neiiywaa’] ‘we are beeweeding around’ (“[i]f so, then this /w/ must be a rounded dorso-velar fricative”).

The short vowel in both the second and third syllables is typical of missionary works (2d),<sup>11</sup> though Haile apparently departs from this systematic treatment in later years, recording a variant, with a long vowel only in the third syllable, which is attested nowhere else (2e).

The tonal pattern in (2c) that can be exclusively found in Sapir and Hoijer's works (e.g. Hoijer 1945, Sapir and Hoijer 1967), where the word is given a high tone on the two vowels of the middle segment (-wáá-), contrasts with that of the remaining sources, where we find a falling tone on the second vowel (-wáa-), which in Sapir and Hoijer's notation corresponds to †-wâ·-. Reichard's grammar is the only source where both tonal patterns can be found simultaneously (2a).

The final glottal *-h* in (2c) marks the inorganic [h] that follows open syllables in the final position of words and utterances (see, e.g. Hoijer 1945: 27–28). The short vowel+*h* vs. long vowel+Ø alternation in the derivative *awáalyahí* ~ *awáalyaai* 'prisoner, convict, jailbird' is documented apparently only in Austin and Lynch's dictionary.

As for the *a*-/Ø-alternation that can be observed in Reichard (2a) and (2f), it is not limited to this word (3). I will deal with this issue in the discussion below (see sections 4.1–4.2).

- (3) a) *ʔakwiih* ~ *kwiih* 'vomit'  
 b) *ʔtsiináztʔíí* ~ *tsiináztʔíí* 'headband'  
 c) *ʔyeel* ~ *yeel* 'fee, payment'

None of the distinct features exhibited by the forms in (2) can be attributed to lect variation. Likewise, none of these forms can be considered correct or standard from a purely prescriptive viewpoint.<sup>12</sup> Diné speakers consider that variation is the natural condition of their language, and this has been repeatedly reported in the literature.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, idiosyncratic use and personal preference (code-mixing phenomena like "Navlish" [Webster 2010] included) are common traits and they extend to spelling and even to etymology.<sup>14</sup> It is within the context of accepted variation and the positive reception of speech play (another well-known feature of the speakers of the Na-Dene languages) that the adoption of foreign words and,

<sup>11</sup> It seems that the variant *ʔawálya* would be typical too of Trader Navajo (at least in some idiolects, see Werner 1963: 48).

<sup>12</sup> See Peery (2012) for a detailed account of the conscious attempt at creating a normative version of Diné bizaad by Robert Young and the introduction of the political agenda which might naturally follow once language standardization has been officially endorsed. Also, see Spolsky and Irvine (1982) for the Diné perspective on literacy and its rejection.

<sup>13</sup> Surprisingly, this subject received little attention in the past, with the research of Reichard (1945) or Saville-Troike (1974, Saville 1977) being remarkable exceptions.

<sup>14</sup> Local etymologies along with linguists' etymologies abound, e.g. *bilagáana* 'American' can be seen as a native word meaning 'the ones we kill' rather than the local rendition of Spanish *americano* (Peterson and Webster 2013: 109). Creativeness is most obvious in placenames (see e.g. Samuels 2001 on Western Apache). Some Diné colleagues I have consulted admitted half-jokingly that *ʔawálya* reminds them of English *wall*, an association perhaps triggered by the presence of this word in collocations such as *behind prison walls* and the like.

more importantly, the emergence of lexical coinages should be properly understood. No study on etymology can ignore these facts, and I will return to speech play in the discussion below.

With the caveats expressed in the previous paragraph, I will focus hereinafter on the form *ʔawáalya* because (a) it reflects the most representative combination of the features in (2), and (b) it is the chosen form (no doubt influenced by Young and Morgan, cf. Young and Morgan 1987: |v-a|) in numerous Diné bizaad-publications, as shown, e.g. in the newspaper *Adahooniígíí* (e.g. on p. 5c of vol. 4(3) from January 1, 1949, or on p. 14 of vol. 10(10–11) from August–September, 1954), in the well known anthology of historical texts compiled by Morgan and Williams (1954, e.g. on p. 121) and in the bilingual collection by Benally (2011), as well as in children’s literature (e.g. de los Santos 1995: 140 [*awáalya*], 141), etc. Also, this is the form whose etymology has been discussed in the specialist literature (for details, see section 3 below). However, it will become apparent in section 4 that other formations need to be included to create a fuller picture.

### 3. Previous scholarship

The suspicion that *ʔawáalya* is a loanword is explicitly stated for the first time by Sapir and Hoijer: “[The origin of t]he following [words], which look like borrowings, cannot be identified: [...] ʔawáályà ‘jail’” (1967: 81).<sup>15</sup> In spite of its brevity, the authoritative nature of this statement by Sapir and Hoijer is supported by the fact that the etymology of *bisóodi* ‘pig, bacon’, an expression included in the same “unknown origins” group along with *ʔawáalya*, is presented for the first time (ibid.): Mexican Spanish *pizote*, from Nahuatl *pitzotl*. This, originally a personal communication by William Bright, it is today considered conventional wisdom.

The rationale behind the identification of the word as a loanword rests on the impossibility to recognize in it a native lexeme. If derived from a verb, neither the hypothetical theme (classifier + stem) \*\*-l-ya, nor the (medial) segment (-)wáa- make sense in terms of what we know of (verb) morphology in Diné bizaad.

It is also significant that no apparent cognates seem to exist in the other Southern Dene languages or beyond.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> It seems that the status of loanword was not always certain. This hesitation can be seen in Hoijer (1945: 18), where we find “[ʔá-wá-l-yàh], ‘jail’ (a borrowing?)”. Reichard (1951: 78–79) does not include the word for jail in her list of borrowed nouns, and the Franciscan Brothers do not make mention of Spanish influence.

<sup>16</sup> The word jail is documented only in two other Southern Dene languages: Western Apache *haáná'idilí* (and the dialectal variant *haáná'inilí*), the synonymous expression *haáná'ilka'i* ‘jail’, and the derivative *haná'igeshní* ‘jailer’ (Bray 1998: 122a, 127b, cf. Mescalero *ʔnesitjín* ‘prisoner’, see Breuninger 1982: 89, or Jicarilla *ásitjì* ‘prisoner’ and *asitín* ‘policeman’, see Mersol 1976: 17) and perhaps Jicarilla ⟨igō'a ~ igō'ai⟩. The Jicarilla forms come from Goddard’s texts and they appear in the following collocations: ⟨igō'ai yinL tē ci⟩ {jail from he put him}, ⟨igō'ai yinL ten⟩ {the in jail} and ⟨igō'a gōL tē na⟩ {they locked him up} (1911: 120 line 8, 153, lines 8, 14, digested English trans. on pp. 240, 254). In spite of the fact that the initial *a-* in Diné bizaad seems to correspond

ALN lists at least three possible sources for *ʔawáalya* (4):

- (4) a) *juzgado* [xus.ʔa.do ~ xus.ʔaw] ‘court of justice’<sup>17</sup>  
 b) *calabozo* [ka.la.ʔbo.so] ‘jail’  
 c) *gayola* [ga.ʔo.la] ‘cage’

The three suggested words come from Spanish and all of them are followed by a question mark so that it is made perfectly clear that the authors of ALN fail to find any of them convincing. It is only natural that efforts to identify the donor language focus on Spanish, given the Southern Dene-Spanish language contact history, which goes back at least to the late sixteenth century (though during certain periods the principal punishment was slavery rather than confinement in jail). Though it is true that the number of Spanish loanwords in the Southern Dene languages is not exceedingly high,<sup>18</sup> it allows some generalizations in regards to loan phonology to be made.

There is ample documentary evidence that these words could have been known by the Southern Dene nations (see e.g. *calabozo* in Griffen 1998: 170 [Griffen’s work covers the period 1762–1857]). In terms of frequency, (4) reflects the actual distribution in certain corpora from the more often documented (*juzgado*) to the less often (*gayola*).<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, all of these words violate the rules of the Southern Dene-Spanish loan phonology. In the discussion below the assumption is made that speakers of the target language use the resources available to them in their native language (see e.g. Boersma and Hamann 2009).

The original meaning of *juzgado* is ‘court of justice, courthouse’, but there are many examples of the word being used with the general meaning of ‘jail’. See, for instance, the description of a typical town during the Spanish colonization of the Southwest: “At the center of the plaza was located the pueblo jail (*juzgado*), and facing the place where the public buildings, the council house, the church, the

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to Jicarilla *ʔi-* in many words (this is a morphological issue, the mechanical replacement of what sometimes is incorrectly seen as the 3poss. *ʔi-* by the indefinite *ʔa-*, rather than a genuine sound correspondence) and that the alternation *-w-* vs. *-g-* is not uncommon (the data collected by Goddard must be critically approached, especially when it comes to transcription, as he was unfortunately rather inconsistent, see, e.g. Spence 2017), it is safe to assume that Jicarilla (*ĩgõʔai* ~ *ĩgõʔai*) and *ʔawáalya* (~ *wáalya*) are not cognates.

<sup>17</sup> Speakers of Southern Dene languages heard the non-standard features of (New Spain/Mexican) Spanish, rather than those of Traditional Spanish. Such features include the free variation of [x ~ h], as in “[x]uzgado” ~ “[h]uzgado”; the *seseo*, that is, a merging of [s] and [θ], as in “ju[s]gado”; the reduction of /-aðo/ > /-ao/ ~ /-aw/ in final position, as well as some phonetic traits that belong to the pan-Spanish linguistic sphere, e.g. the complementary distribution of (voiced) stop vs. fricative, like in “[g]ayola” vs. “la [ʔ]ayola”, etc.

<sup>18</sup> Even lower is the number of Southern Dene words that have found their way into (the local varieties of) Spanish. In the specialist literature occasional attributions can be spotted from time to time, e.g. Espinosa (1911: 14) claims that *maruca* ‘wife, woman’ comes from Navajo. This claim, of course, cannot be corroborated (see e.g. Cobos 1983: 107b).

<sup>19</sup> The results of a search in the electronic corpora based on Peter Boyd-Bowman’s *Léxico hispanoamericano* (accessed 11 August 2021, see Boyd-Bowman 2015), filtered for instances documented before 1900, are as follows: *juzgado* = 93 hits, *calabozo* = 34 hits, *gayola* = 2 hits, cf. *cárcel* = 412 hits, *prisión/presión* = 253 hits.

store rooms, etc., while the remaining frontage was occupied by dwelling-houses” (Blackmar 1890: 56), cf. “At the center of the plaza was located the pueblo courthouse (*juzgado*), sometimes with a jail attached” (Blackmar 1891: 165), etc. However, *juzgado* cannot be the origin of *’awáalya* because there are no parallels for Sp. /xu ~ hu/ as /wa/.<sup>20</sup> The usual strategy to adopt sequences of the type /C/ uC/ is to make use of the closest consonant in Southern Dene with the vowel /o/, e.g. Jicarilla *as’dóoha* ‘stove’, *gojáala* ‘spoon’, *hóoniyoo* ~ *Hóniyo* ‘June’, *lóosi* ‘sweet’, *sógala* ~ *isógala* ‘sugar’ ← Sp. *estufa*, *cuchara*, *junio*, *dulce*, *azúcar* (with loss of initial *a*- under English influence). When unstressed, Spanish first syllable /u/ or /o/ tend to be rendered /a/, e.g. Jicarilla *dadóol*, *gayóodi*, *gadóon*, *gabóon* ← Sp. *doctor* [do(k).’tor], *coyote* [ko.’jo.te], *botón*, *cupón*, respectively (cf. in Diné bizaad *damóq* ~ *dimóq* ~ *damíjigo*, from Sp. *domingo*). Likewise, it seems impossible to provide a convincing scenario that would account for the remaining segment /-syađo ~ -sɣaw/.

The explanation to reject (4a) equally applies to (4b) and (4c) as well. In other words, although they may be semantically well motivated, these etymologies are unacceptable in terms of Diné bizaad-Spanish loan phonology.

#### 4. New proposals

There seem to be no attempts to explain *’awáalya* as either a non-Spanish loanword or a genuine Dene-related word. Instead of venturing a hypothesis within the domain of those admittedly unexplored areas, I will follow the general trend to investigate Spanish in a search for the original source of *’awáalya*. This is, I believe, not only a cautious decision, but, above all, a reasonable one: the institution of imprisonment is a cultural phenomenon which is directly and irremediably attached to the New Spain government. It played a major role in the Diné-Spanish and Indigenous-Spanish period of history. The literature on the *presidios* ‘garrisoned town, frontier fortresses’ in New Spain, which over the course of years will become the basis for towns and cities, is immense. In what follows, I will discuss two terms which appear, relatively frequently, in the historical documentation of the time and could shed some light on the origin of *’awáalya*.

For the sake of argumentation, in the discussion below it will be assumed that the primary form is *wáalya*, and that *’awáalya* should be dealt with as a secondary formation. This decision is based on the fact that no known cases with loss of initial etymological vowels (apheresis) seem to exist. The reverse situation, that is,

<sup>20</sup> This very reason would suffice to reject comparisons with more recent and tempting slang terms such as (*la*) *julia* ‘police van or car’, which is used both in Mexico and the Southwest of the United States (see e.g. Santamaría 1942.2: 161b = 1974: 648b s.v. *Julia* (La):

Nombre popular y jergal que se da al carro cerrado en que se conduce a los presos o reos carcelarios y, por extensión, al camión o coche de la policía. Lo mismo en el sur de Estados Unidos de Norte América).

The origin of the term is unclear.

the apparition of non-etymological vowels in initial position (prothesis), is amply documented, even with borrowings, e.g. Jicarilla *alíisa* ‘sled’ ← Sp. *liza*, apparently from *deslizar(se)* ‘to slide’ (Pono 1976: 9), or in Hispanic toponyms which may have initially passed through the filter in Diné bizaad: *La Alesna* (New Mexico), from *La Lezna* ‘the Awl’ (Jett 2019: 153). The absence of initial *ʼa-* in *bilagáana* ‘white man, American’ ← Spanish *americano* [a.me.ri.'ka.no] (cf. Western Apache *bidigáana* ~ *godigáana*, see de Reuse 1996: 163, or Denaakké *beleegaane* ‘American person, people’, which is traditionally seen as a Russian loanword, i.e., *amerikán-*, see e.g. Jetté and Jones 2000: 825b) takes us back to English. The word [amerikan] > [merikan] is very often provided in handbooks as a classic example of apheresis. The same explanation holds true for other instances of apheresis, e.g. Jicarilla *sóogala* ‘sugar’ ← Sp. *azúcar*, but Eng. *sugar* /ʃʊgə(ɹ)/. Therefore, these cases show the consequences of English influence, not the results of an internal process in Diné bizaad (or Dene in general).

#### 4.1. *guardia* and *wáalya*

The first word I will focus on is *guardia* which means both ‘guard or sentry duty’ and ‘guard (person)’. The latter meaning is the result of semantic confusion, documented from the 15/16th centuries, with the original *guarda* ‘guard’ (see e.g. Corominas and Pascual 1984.3: 246–247).

In the New Spain world, the expression *cuervo de guardia* refers to a guardhouse (and bunkhouse) for men on duty. It was located at the front of the presidio, sometimes being almost indistinguishable from the actual entrance to the complex, leading to the *patios* (see, e.g., *Reglamento* 1772: 114, de Lucuze 1772: 74–75, for illustrative examples of the location and nature of the *cuervo de guardia* within the presidio, see various plans in Moorhead 1975: 120, 122, 124, 128, 136, 152, and more specifically in Williams 1991: 90–91). It should come as no surprise that damage to the *cuervo de guardia* was the source of great distress to the inhabitants of the presidio (see in Polzer and Sheridan 1997: 215, the demands of a captain to have it rebuilt after it has been lost due to a storm in 1751, etc.).

In this context, it could be argued that *cuervo de guardia* could be categorized within technical terminology and, therefore, it would be doubtful that the Apaches would be familiar with it. However, the fact that some guardhouses acted as provisional jails would be enough to associate *cuervos de guardia* with a more conventional jail, very much as a presidio today is understood not as a garrison, but as a jail or a sort of jail for dangerous convicts. Also, it is within reason to assume that the reduced form *guardia* was used instead of the full technical term.<sup>21</sup>

There were already reports of guardhouses with cells in the early 1700s, see e.g. Rubio Mañé 1959: 64 *apud* Boyd-Bowman 2015 [document from 1718: “(al hombre)

<sup>21</sup> Of somewhat less relevance may be the fact that missionaries used terms like *guardián* ‘legal protector of the Indians’ (and usually the highest moral authority at a given location), and derivatives such as *guardiania* ‘(sort of) monastery’, etc.



le quitaron de las manos dicho espadín y llevaron preso al cuerpo de guardia” or Williams 1991: 123 [courtroom testimony from 1813]. It is beyond any doubt that Diné speakers knew and were locked in guardhouses, of which there are multiple reports.<sup>22</sup>

Ironically enough, the word for jail was never included in earlier vocabularies, despite the fact some of those vocabularies were recorded in guardhouses (see e.g. the “Jicorillas Apache” [= Jicarilla] vocabulary that was “[o]btained by Lieutenant [James H.] Simpson [1813-1883], from an Apache Indian, a prisoner in the guardhouse at Santa Fe”, see Simpson 1852: 130 fn. [8], note that there is a typo “Ticorillas” for “Jicorillas” in Simpson 1850: 141, 143 = McNitt 1964: 248 fn. [8], 249). It is not really a problem that some of these passages were uttered (and recorded) in English, as the corresponding word “guardhouse” maintains an etymological link to the original Spanish expression of (*cuerpo de*) *guardia*. The dropping of *cuerpo de* most likely occurred in Spanish (the creation of short forms as alternative to long technical terms is commonplace).

Since it is generally assumed that the borrowing period began sometime in the early 1600’s, with a break during the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680 and then a rekindling in the early and middle 1800’s (see e.g. Spicer 1962: 450, cf. Hester 1963: 91–92, 1971: 53–54), it is possible that both Spanish and English could have exerted some influence on the final outcome.

In terms of loan phonology, Sp. *guardia* perfectly matches *wáalya* (see Table 1). As it has been previously explained, Sp. /ɣw/ can be rendered in Diné bizaad, among others, by *w* [(w)<sup>w</sup>]. The Sp. sequence *-rdia* [-rðja], though seemingly tricky, it is unproblematic: Sp. /r/ corresponds regularly with /l/ in Diné bizaad (hence ⟨malyâ-na⟩ and ⟨xolyá-n⟩, from Sp. *Mariano* and *Juliano*, respectively, in Reichard 1951: 78–79), and voiced stops following liquids are lost, as in *siláo* ← Sp. *soldado* [sol.ðaw].

<sup>22</sup> For the sake of illustration, see e.g. Kelly (1970: 45–46):

On August 26 Blakeney was notified by the Officer of the Day that four Navajos had appeared outside the fort. Three of them were permitted to enter and were immediately placed in the guard house.

or McNitt (1972: 362):

Contrary to the treaty clause relating to captives, twenty-one Navajos who were captured during the nearly four months of Miles’s campaigning were held in the guardhouse when Bonneville started back for the river.

or Thompson (1976: 65):

[w]hen a Navajo killed a horse belonging to another Indian, the Indian leaders held a consultation. They concluded that if the culprit was turned over to the soldiers, he would be put in the guardhouse for a time and then returned to the camps, as bad as ever.

or on p. 92:

In June at least 1,000 Navajos were still absent from the Bosque. [...] Twenty-four Indians lay ill in the hospital, and several were locked in the guardhouse.

When found in an unstressed syllable after a consonant, the diphthong remains unchanged because the resulting sequence *lya* [l.ja] is admissible in phonotactic terms, cf. in Diné bizaad and Jicarilla *sandíiya* ‘watermelon’, Western Apache *sadíya* (de Reuse 1996: 165; for the loss of preconsonantal nasal, cf. *mansáána* ~ *masáána*, etc.) ← Sp. *sandía* [san.'dja], with a stressed gliding vowel, or Jicarilla *méiyas* ‘stocking(s)’ ← Sp. *medias* [me.djas], with resyllabification due to the disallowed sequence \*[eja].<sup>23</sup> As for stressed diphthongs interpreted as long vowels with high tone/pitch, this is a well-documented adaptation across the Apache-speaking world, e.g. Jicarilla *Gáadolo* ‘(Fourth of) July’ ← Sp. *cuatro* (*de julio*), *déenda* ~ *déda* ‘store’ ← Sp. *tienda*, *kéesda* ‘feast’ ← Sp. *fiesta*, etc.

Table 1: Phonetic one-to-one comparison of Sp. *guardia* vs. *wáalya* in Diné bizaad

ʔw	a	r	ð	j	a
uʔ <sup>w</sup>	aʎ	l	Ø	j	a

If this is so, what is the origin of *ʔa-* in the (dominant) variant *ʔawáalya*? There are several explanations that could potentially explain the origin of the *a*-variant. I will discuss the various possibilities in the next section.

#### 4.2. *alguacil* and *ʔawáalya*

In order to avoid misunderstandings, it must be stated from the outset that the second word to be discussed, that is, *alguacil*, is most likely not the direct source of *ʔawáalya* for reasons to be explained below. It is only one of a series of potential triggers that may account for the now dominant variant *ʔawáalya*, provided we accept that *wáalya* was indeed the original form.

The word *alguacil* [al.ɣwa.'sil] ‘sheriff’, which is ultimately of Arabic origin (see e.g. Corominas and Pascual 1984.1: 162), has been already borrowed in Mescalero *ʔawasíil* ‘policeman’ (Breuninger 1982: 123). The resemblance of the initial segment *ʔawa-* in Diné bizaad *ʔawáalya* and Mescalero *ʔawasíil* is undeniable. The semantic link does not require further elaboration as they belong within the same semantic area. While it is true that the word *alguacil* has not been documented in Navajo, the fact that this word was used in the region is beyond any doubt. The same holds true for some of its derivatives, e.g. *alguacilía* or *alguacilería* ‘sheriffalty or sheriffdom, office of the sheriff’. The suffix *-ía* is productively used to derive spheres of action, trade, etc., as in *filología* ‘philology’, whereas *-ería* refers to local nouns, as in *libro* > *libr-ería* ‘bookshop’, *carne* > *carn-ic-ería*

<sup>23</sup> An alternative analysis would reduce the sequence /djV/ simply to /jV/ due to palatalization and/or simplification. This seems to be what occurs in initial position, e.g. Jicarilla *yos*, Chiricahua *yoos-* ‘God’, Western Apache *Yéusn* (de Reuse 1996: 168) ← Sp. *Dios* or, perhaps more clearly, Denaakke and Ahtna *yaabel* ‘devil’ ← Russian *d’jávól*. Note that the very same adaptations of Sp. /djV/ as /jV/ and Sp. /rdjV/ as /rjV/ or /jV/ have been identified in the Spanish loanwords of some languages of Central California (ShIPLEY 1962: 14, 17–21 items AGUARDIENTE, DIABLO).

‘butcher’s shop’. The former appears in two well-known terms from the past, that is, *apachería* and *ranchería*. We can safely assume that the Apache Nations were familiar with both terms.<sup>24</sup>

I suggest that the origin of the variant *’awáalya*, with a non-etymological *’a-*, might have been the result of mixing up two different words: *alguacil* or perhaps *alguacilía* (→ *\*\*’awa-*) and *guardia* (→ *wáa-*) and that the motivation was twofold: semantic and phonetic (the initial segments sound very similar). This blending is not uncommon in the particular history of loan adaptation among the Southern Dene languages, and it is in agreement with the appreciation for language creativity and speech play exhibited by Diné speakers (see e.g. Peterson and Webster 2013). For example, *bilasáana* ‘apple’ cannot be seen as having simply being borrowed from Sp. *manzana* ‘apple’ or *manzano* ‘apple tree’. Were that to have been the case, we would expect †*balasáana* (cf. the vocalism in Jicarilla and Mescalero *mansáana*, Western Apache *mansáana* ~ *masáana*). Aware of this irregular outcome, the Franciscan Fathers (1910: 198) describe the word as “a corruption from the Spanish [...]”. Instead, I suggest that *bilasáana* is most likely a blended form of Eng. *apple* [’æp.l] and Sp. *manzana* (the English component shows apheresis and an epenthetic vowel, with [pl] yielding *bila-* as in Mescalero *biláahda* ‘silver’<sup>25</sup> ← Sp. *plata*).<sup>26</sup> It is the attractiveness of this kind of (reasonable) solution that led de Reuse (1996: 166) to suggest that Western Apache *gosdóón* ‘ribbon’ might derive from Sp. *listón* under the influence of *cordón* ‘cord, braid’, or that *kabisáana* ‘American’ may have resulted after blending Sp. *capitán* ‘captain’ and *comisario* ‘commissary, deputy’ (de Reuse 1996: 167).<sup>27</sup>

There is an alternative explanation that does not require *alguacil*, and therefore it is presumably more suitable in economic terms. According to this scenario, we must consider *wáalya* ← Sp. *guardia* vs. *’awáalya* < *\*alguardia* ← Sp. *la guardia*. In this case, we must assume that the same cluster reduction that took place in Mescalero, that is, Sp. *-IG-* > *-w-*, occurred in Navajo in the hypothetical form *\*alguardia*. This hypothesis is, unfortunately, not supported by documentary evidence. It rests on

<sup>24</sup> The suffix *-ería* could be in theory rendered as *\*\*-e/ilya*. However, it is highly unlikely that *’awáalya* comes from *alguacilía* or *alguacilería*, as there is no reasonable way to account for the loss or simplification of the *ci(le)*-segment.

<sup>25</sup> Breuninger (1982: 144) claims that the Mescalero form may be ultimately of Chiricahua provenance, but it is not of great importance whether it came from Chiricahua or directly from Spanish, as the rendition of the initial cluster in Spanish is what concerns us here.

<sup>26</sup> The lack of extensive documentation makes it difficult to confirm the chronological order of this hypothesis. The influence of English only began to be significant at a much later period than that of Spanish, and it became dominant during the 1940s–1950s, especially with school attendance after 1955 (see e.g. Field 2006: 38). Curiously enough, among the English loanwords that young Navajo children seem to use we can find the word *jail* (Holm, Holm and Spolsky 1982: 178).

<sup>27</sup> In Pharies’s taxonomy of blends (1987), *’awáalya* would belong in the group of interference blends. The formations in these group are mainly characterized as being the result of unconscious associative interference with no semantic change (since the words involved usually are (quasi)synonymous) and nonsequential articulation. The word *bilasáana* in Diné bizaad, on the other hand, belongs to the category of formational blends, where conscious intervention plays a crucial role.

speculation regarding the frequency and context of the noun phrase *la guardia*, which could have triggered the metathesis *la(-) > al(-)*. There are examples in Diné bizaad pointing to the total loss of the definite article: *manáagi* ← Sp. *almanaque* is the result of false segmentation. The initial *al-* is perceived as being related to the definite article *el* which, in general as a category, poses problems for the speakers of Southern Dene languages in the early stages of borrowing, as can be seen, for example, in Jicarilla *lalámbiri* ‘wire’ ← Sp. *el alambre*, Mescalero *’ilguugis* ‘apricot’ (perhaps via \**ricoque* or the like) ← Sp. *albaricoque*, in Diné bizaad *’alóós* ‘rice’ ← Sp. *arroz* vs. Jicarilla *alalóós* ← Sp. *el arroz*, or *’aldóós* ‘two spot, deuce (in cards)’ ← Sp. *el dos* (in card games), etc.

I have disregarded the other explanations which I find unlikely.<sup>28</sup> For example, the *’a-* in *’awáalya* cannot be (a) the regular reflexive (or indefinite) prefix, as in *’a-woo* ‘one’s own tooth’, (b) a vowel different from /a/, as in *’esbáada* ~ *’asbáala* ‘spades (in cards)’ ← Sp. *espada*, (c) an intrusive “prothetic” vowel, as in Denaakkè *oolo-botneek* ~ *elebotnek* ‘worker, employee, hired man or woman, servant, laborer’ ← Russian *rabótnik* (Jetté and Jones 2000: 824b), or (d) the result of contamination, perhaps based on the initial *’a-* of *’ahályání* ‘jailer, prison guard’ (originally simply ‘watcher’, that is, {’á-há-l-yá-n-i}, with thematic *’á-ho-*, from √*yąąd* ‘be aware, wise’, see ALN 689–691 = Morgan and Williams 1987: 295b).<sup>29</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper it has been argued that the words *’awáalya* and *wáalya* ‘jail’ in Diné bizaad are lexemes of Spanish origin. On account of their semantics and phonology, it is suggested that both forms are related to Sp. *guardia* ‘guard’ in the collocation *cuerpo de guardia* ‘guardhouse’. This term referred to a section in the presidios which was frequently used as a jail during the Southern Dene-Spanish contact period. But Sp. *guardia* accounts only for *wáalya*. It is further argued that the origin of the variant *’awáalya*, which seems the most common form nowadays among the Diné, may be, always in agreement with what is known of Southern Dene-Spanish loan phonology, either an alternative rendering of Sp. *la guardia*, or, less likely,

<sup>28</sup> Needless to say, wild speculations, or unscientific explanations will not be taken into account. These include that *’awáalya* may be a sort of compound whose components are so eroded to elude proper identification (a sort of *kwati* in the Tłı̨chǝ Yatı̨ example in (1d) or the (intra-generational) word shortenings documented in Dene Słı̨né by Henry 1980, etc.), or that we are dealing with a Spanish slang term so far undocumented (the “educated vs. mundane” argument), or that Diné speakers borrowed the word from an unknown language.

<sup>29</sup> It is important to keep in mind that the origin of initial *’a-* is unknown in a number of lexemes in Diné bizaad, e.g. *’altsinii* ‘mariposa lily’, *’anılı* ‘rag’, *’aseezf* ‘gossip, news’, *’ashja* ‘opportunity’, etc. (in ALN all of them are labelled “derivation unknown”). Neundorf (1982: 274) claims that some of these words, e.g. *’ásaa* ‘pot’, *’ashja* ‘opportunity’, *’ashkii* ‘boy’, *’at’ééd* ‘girl’, have the underlying structure *’a-* (+ increment) + stem. In Neundorf’s view, this is one of the few “[...] relatively simple, and highly recurrent, patterns” in noun derivation. While this may be an apt description of the situation at hand, it does little to explain the ultimate origin of these words.

the result of influence from some other Spanish words loosely related to jail, e.g. *alguacil* 'sheriff' or *alguacilía*. As a general observation, it is clear that more attention must be paid to the linguistic variation within Diné bizaad, Spanish and English, for very rarely does turning to prescriptivism provide the correct answer to problematical situations.

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