Kaalamaya Documentation and Language Family 2013

There is little documentation of the Kaalamaya language. Seven historical documents located as of 2013 that appear to be of the Kaalamaya language, show a strong degree of correlation with the language as spoken by Brian Champion in 2011 (table 2). Other than the Native Title application 2010, the names of the informants for the historical documents have not been recorded and thus it is impossible to verify whether they were of Gubran heritage.

The seven documents have been used to create a Kaalamaya wordlist. Each item on the wordlist was tested against the other sources of data and included when there was a high probability that the item was of Kaalamaya origin.

Further research and analysis will be undertaken over the next few years to further corroborate these documents as sources of authentic Kaalamaya language.

The Documents

The seven documents purport to be of Kaalamaya language, of the Gubran people or the alternate names these people were known, or were prepared in the traditional location of the Gubran people. It appears that since 1939 when Tindale constructed a Kaalamaya language list, there has been little done to record the language other than the short Hale list. It is unclear whether the Hale list was constructed onsite with language informants or from historical records.

In the intervening years, it appears the Gubran people amassed at Kalgoorlie and the language was not recorded further. It is very fortuitous that Brian Champion recorded family stories and anecdotes over the last few years in an effort to capture what he could of the language otherwise it would have been a language that passed into extinction. Champion's work at preserving and researching evidence of his people's language is commendable.

Table 1, *Comparison of Kaalamaya Phonemic Inventory from Historical Documents 2013,* compares the phonemic inventory used in each historical document in order to verify they are lists of the same language and to inform the development of a contemporary phonemic inventory.

The second table 2, *Comparison of Kaalamaya Items from Historical Documents 2013,* compares lexical items found in the documents to examine the probability the documents record the same language.

Orthographical Use

Each writer chose a unique orthography to record the language. Until 2011, a standardized Kaalamaya orthography did not exist. To compare the items in table 2 using the writer's original orthographies would provide little comparative information because it is necessary to understand the orthography each writer used in order to read each word. I have transposed the original

words into the contemporary orthography based on an examination of the writer's orthography, to enable comparison.

Some of the comparison may be misleading as the words are proto-Pama-Nyungan such as mara 'hand, mil 'eye' and vegetable food 'mayi'. O'Grady[1] identified such languages as, '…ultimately related to one macro-phylum.'

A relationship with the Wati group of languages can be seen in the items parna 'ground', juju 'dingo and kakara 'east', these items being very common in Wati languages.

Language Family

As of 2013, very little text material exists with which to compare grammatical structures of Kaalamaya language and other languages and all I can compare is the phonemic inventory and lexical items.

Based solely on the lexical items, a strong relationship to the Wati language is evident. There is little relationship to the Noongar languages. Work on the recording and analysis of the Ngadjumaya/Marlpa language, when complete, will enable a detailed comparison which will inform the relationship to the languages to the south of Kaalamaya country.

Whilst Kaalamaya demonstrates a lexical relationship with the Wati languages, there appears to be a stronger relationship with the Nyungic group of languages where there is a 36.5% similarity between it and Ngadjumaya. Until further grammatical data is collected and proves otherwise, I will tentatively place Kaalamaya in the Nyungic family.

However, to determine the placement of Kaalamaya in the South-West Nyungic family tree as of 2013, I have taken a modified Swadesh test and compared Kaalamaya with neighbouring languages and used the following guide as a means of identifying relationships.

Languages less than 15% the same - different ***families***
Languages 16-25% same - different ***groups*** of a family
Languages 26-50% same - different ***subgroups*** of family
Languages 51-70% same - different ***languages*** of same subgroup
Languages 71-100% same - different ***dialects*** of the same language

Based on the modified Swadesh test of 207 lexical items using verified linguistic data as of 2013, there is a 36.5% similarity between Kaalamaya and Ngadjumaya. This result clearly indicates that Ngadjumaya and Kaalamaya are subgroups of the same family of languages, but are different languages. (table 3)

[1] O'Grady et al. 1966:15 *Languages of the World: Indo-Pacific Fascicle Six*, Anthropological Linguistics 8:1-197

These results indicate that Kaalamaya is of the Ngaju-Mirning subgroup of the South-West Nyungic group of languages.

Given the relationship Kaalamaya has with both the Wati and the Nyungic languages, I believe it to be a border or transition language between the two groups. It's physical location and phonemic and lexical data suggests this to be the case.

Conclusion

In comparing the phonemic inventory of each of the seven historical sources with the contemporary oral inventory used by Champion, a high degree of compatibility can be seen which leads me to believe the languages recorded in the historical documents are either very similar to or are the Kaalamaya language.

Further comparison between the lexical items has shown a high degree of compatibility in many items as in table 2.

A number of factors which may account for the differences between lexical items include:

1. A recorded word and meaning (gloss) difference eg: mayi glossing for 'vegetable matter' or 'flour'.
2. The use of borrowed words due to taboos, prohibitions and trends at the time. of recording
3. The recorder's skill and accuracy in hearing and recording the phonemes spoken by the informant.
4. The vagaries of each recorder using a non-standard orthography of their own choosing.

Much more work remains to be done on the recording and analysis of the Kaalamaya language. However, this paper provides evidence of the placement of Kaalamaya within the Ngadju-Mirning subgroup of languages and proves the veracity of the historical documents as being of the Kaalamaya language.

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