Kamia and Kumeyaay: A Linguistic Perspective

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THE term Kamia and its many orthographic variants, among others Kamya, Comeya, Comaiyah, Co-mái-yàh, Comedás, Comoyàtz, Comoyeé, Co-mo-yei, Quemaya, Quemayá, Camillares, Comoyalis, and Co-moyah (Henshaw and Hodge 1907; Kroeber 1925:723; Gifford 1931:2-3), have caused much confusion in the ethnographic literature. The spelling Kamia was made famous by Kroeber (1925:723ff) and institutionalized by Gifford's (1931) monograph *The Kamia of Imperial Valley* in which he described specifically the native inhabitants of Imperial Valley whom he visited briefly in 1928-1929. Because of the local focus of his monograph, Gifford used the term Kamia to refer uniquely to the group under discussion, although "... it is an open question whether the Eastern Diegueño and the Kamia should be regarded as a single people or as separate peoples" (Gifford 1931:2), and although a designation similar to Kamia is attested by various authors to refer to part or all of the group also known as Diegueño. The problem, stated in its simplest form, is that the two names—Diegueño and Kamia—overlap to some degree for various people, but are apparently not synonymous, least of all for the people they are supposed to identify. At the risk of increasing the existing confusion, but with the excuse that the reason for it might become clearer, I would like to take a linguistic perspective based on comparative observations of Yuman languages and dialects, and even suggest a plausible etymology.

We may first note that two basic variants of the term exist: Kamia [kamyá] or [kamiyá] and Kamiyai [kamiyá·y] or [kumiyá·y]. While at first sight they seem to be no more than variants of each other, a review of the literature suggests that they are not interchangeable. Note for example the puzzling statement of Gifford (1931:18): "The Kamia names for various tribes are as follows: Kamiyai or Kamiyahi, Kamia, and Diegueño." What he means is that the Kamia called both themselves and the Diegueño Kamiyai. One might well ask why then Gifford called them Kamia. The answer seems to be that they are called Kamia by the Yuma and Mojave (Harrington 1908:324; Kroeber 1925:724) and Kamiyai by themselves. I will discuss the linguistic implications of this difference below.

But first, I would like to characterize as precisely as possible the language of Gifford's Kamia, as it emerges from the native terms sprinkled throughout the monograph, which remains the only available source of this speech variety.[1] The following specific observations confirm Gifford's (1931:1) statement that "Linguistically, the Kamia are probably only subdialectally distinguishable from the Diegueño."

Among the Yuman languages, only Diegueño and Cocopa exhibit as common sounds the voiceless laterals [ɬ] and [ɬ^{y}], although they also occur, but rarely, in Yuma. If we therefore assume that Gifford's fairly common symbols *thl, tl, tL,* and *L* stand for

one or the other of these sounds, the likelihood of the language being Mojave or even Yuma–the other neighboring languages–is quite remote. Some examples: *wikwiniL* 'black hill (placename)', *hiLmiarp* 'a lineage', *kwatL* 'a lineage', *tuhatl* 'a song cycle', *horLoi* 'a song cycle'. Furthermore, neither Diegueño nor Cocopa have the sound *v* in word stems. In terms known to have cognates with *v* in Yuma and Mojave, Gifford's recordings show *w*: *wi* 'mountain, rock' (Yuma, Mojave *ʔavi·*), *uwá* 'house' (Yuma, Mojave *ʔavá*). The word for 'people' recorded by Gifford is *tipai*. This is the word used by many of the southern San Diego County and Baja California Diegueño groups, but not by the Northern Diegueño who say *'iipay*.[2] It is also unlike Cocopa where the word is *čapay*. This Cocopa word illustrates a sound change which has affected Cocopa, where *t* has become *č*.[3] The absence of this shift in Gifford's material clearly excludes Cocopa. The speech of the Kamia is therefore clearly a dialect of Diegueño.

There are, however, features which distinguish it from other Diegueño dialects. First of all, there are sporadic instances of features not found in Diegueño, but present in neighboring Yuman languages. Thus, the sound *d* [ɖ], common in Mojave, Maricopa, and Yuma, is recorded by Gifford in *yidut* 'a foot-high plant the black stems of which were boiled and eaten', obviously the same word recorded by Castetter and Bell 1951:203) as Y. *i dút* " . . . fungus which appears on the mesa in spring . . . eaten by the Yuma."[4] An interesting word is *nyimet* 'mountain lion', attested as such in Yuma and Mojave, but as *nyemetaay* in Diegueño. The borrowing of a Yuma word for a local plant is reasonable, and it is probably noteworthy that the word for 'mountain lion' is recorded in connection with the Creation Myth, since Colorado River influence on Diegueño mythology has been previously noted (DuBois 1906; Lawton 1974:62 and Note 13). A specifically Yuma trait is the pronunciation *ts* for what is normally *č*,[5] and some instances of it are duly recorded by Gifford: *iyats* 'soft or flour corn', *hatsot* 'orange colored fruit that grows on shrubs', *watsuts* 'fish scoop', *etskaiyau* 'chief singer at mourning ceremony'. A Mojave trait is a shift from *š* to *s*, and we find *Espayau* 'eagle's place' and *Wiespa* 'eagle rock' (cf. SD. *špa·*, M. *ʔaspá* 'eagle'), *isa* 'a song cycle', lit. 'bird' (cf. SD. *ʔi·ša·*, and the non-cognate M. *čiyér* 'bird'), *wasopet* 'sweathouse' (cf. SD. *wa·šu·piṭ*, M. *ʔava supet* 'closed house'), *sahuk* '10' (cf. SD. *šaxuk*, but note non-cognate M. *rap havik* or *ʔarap*). A distinguishing feature of Cocopa is a shift from *č* to *s* and Gifford records *maisbaup*, probably [mayspap] '14' (cf. SD. *čpap*, C. *spap* '4'), *yasbak*, probably [(n)yaspak] 'sunrise' (cf. SD. *čpak*, C. *spa* 'emerge, come out'), *isaslich* 'invisible spirit, ghost' (cf. SD. *ʔičiłič* 'devil'). The word for 'one' is reported by Gifford as *shit* which fits Cocopa exactly, the closest Diegueño equivalent being *šin*.

Two completely separate trends emerge from the above. On the one hand, there are words that are probably direct borrowings from neighboring languages, i.e., *yidut* and *nyimet* from Yuma, and *shit* from Cocopa. On the other hand, and these are the more numerous, there are words which can only be interpreted as basic Diegueño words which have undergone some sound shift normally associated with another Yuman language, resulting in some cases in a blend of features which cannot uniquely be ascribed to one of the languages. Thus *iyats* 'soft or flour corn' has the *ts* characteristic of Yuma, but has *y* characteristic of Diegueño where Yuma should have *d* (note Y. *tadic*, SD. *tiyač* 'corn'). While the borrowing of lexical items is unremarkable in a situation of geographic proximity and close kinship ties, the insights into the geographical spread of some Yuman sound changes which these words provide may be of considerable importance in the

detailed accounting of the historical development of the several Yuman languages.

When compared to the various dialects of Diegueño itself, Gifford's Kamia is clearly more like Southern than like Northern Diegueño, the latter dialect being distinct from all others by a shift of *š* to *x* in some environments, and by the presence of a final *-ɬʸ* in some words (of relevance because they have been discussed above are the words for 'eagle' SD. *špa*, ND. *ʔixpa·*, and for 'rock' SD. *ʔəwi·*, ND. *ʔəwilʸ*).

Of some interest also are a few features that emerge as idiosyncratic of the Kamia dialect, i.e., are unattested in Diegueño dialects as well as in other Yuman languages. Particularly noteworthy are a number of words which have *k* instead of the expected *x*: *kapcha* 'muller' (D. *xapəča·*), *ka'tsuk* 'dog' (SD. *xaṭčukčuk*), *imkamuk* '9' (SD. *nʸimxəmuk*), *niaukap* 'twilight' (D. *nʸa· wəxap*). I also noted one instance each of *š* instead of *č*, *t* instead of *s*, *š* instead of *ɬʸ*, and *s* instead of *ṭ*: *shi* 'fish' (SD. *ʔəči·*), *tarûp* '5' (D. *sa·rap*), *xasha* 'moon' (D. *xaɬʸa·*), *xaspa* 'coyote' (D. *xaṭəpa·*). While some of this might be attributed to faulty transcription, Gifford's recordings of the Diegueño dialects and Yuman languages I am familiar with conform in broad outline to those of other investigators, making these differences worth bringing to the attention of Yumanists.

Let us now return to the problem of the word Kamia. In the phonetic form [kamiyá·y] or [kumiyá·y], hereinafter Kumeyaay, it is reported in various areas of Diegueño territory. My own observations are that, when asked to comment on the meaning of the term, Mesa Grande or Santa Ysabel consultants are likely to say: "It means the people close to the sea," or "They are the people of Campo, and thereabouts." Campo consultants may say: "It means the people from here." Not too much can be deduced from this, except that Mesa Grande and Santa Ysabel people do not think of themselves as Kumeyaay. The terms for 'Indian, people' which are sometimes used to designate the group are *'Iipay* in the north and *Tiipay* or *Metiipay* in the south. What then, is the meaning of Kumeyaay? I will propose that the statements of speakers of the language must be taken quite literally and that they must reflect a shared meaning. It seems likely then that Kumeyaay is not a tribal or national designation, but a descriptive term which can apply to any group exhibiting the appropriate characteristics.

Additional information has come to light in the unpublished notes of J. P. Harrington, who visited Diegueño territory at least once in 1928 (the only date appearing in the notes), and probably earlier as well.[6] The relevant portions of these notes are quoted and commented on below.

During a visit at Mesa Grande, he interviewed Isidro Nejo. We learn that he " . . . is Kamjáj, lives near Mesa Grande school house, near Black Canyon Creek." Nejo identifies the Kumeyaay as "the people that live where the sun sets." This statement agrees well with more recent ones by Mesa Grande consultants, since the ocean is to the west, except that they do not consider themselves Kumeyaay, whereas Nejo does. When recently questioned about Isidro Nejo, Mrs. Lillie Couro of the Mesa Grande band remembered him well as a man who took particularly good care of his apple orchard and vineyard and agrees with the location of his place of residence as given by Harrington. She further states that Isidro Nejo belonged to the San Pascual Band and lived at Mesa Grande because he had married a Mesa Grande woman, Refugia Duro. All this fits quite well with Kroeber's statement (1925:710): "The name Kamia seems to be unknown to the northern Diegueño, except in the form Kamiyai, as a designation for the inhabitants of the district of San Pascual, near the Luiseño frontier. The

Isidro Nejo, his daughter Lorenza (left), and his wife Refugia (right) at his house at Mesa Grande, ca. 1925.

occurrence of this name at San Pascual may possibly be due to the settlement there of a group of southern Diegueño during or after mission times" and also with Harrington's (1908:329, Note 4): "Kamyá refers to the eastern Diegueños. The Kawia [Cahuilla] and western Diegueño are called xakwítc^{ya}."

Of interest also is the use of Kumeyaay as a modifier to another name, a practice still known today, reported repeatedly by Harrington south of the International Boundary. This usage confirms the hypothesis of a descriptive term since modifiers follow the noun in Diegueño syntax. I quote Harrington: "kwał kamjáj trbn, antes lived in costa [tribal name, used to live on coast]. All the Cueros here are kwał kamjáj." Cuero and its English equivalent Hyde are common Diegueño names to this day and both in turn translate to the native word *k^{w}aɬ^{y}* 'skin, hide', the name of a well-known "clan." He also notes: "the Cuero nacion. They live at Huerta and here too." These statements were recorded from Bartolo at his home in San Jose (which I assume to be the same San Jose which is still a Diegueño village a few miles east of Tecate). This fits well with the identification given by Meigs (1939:86): "Kwatl kumiyai or coastal Kwatl, lived near the old San Miguel mission and extended for an undetermined distance north and south. Another group of them lived at and west of Jacume, south of the border."

Another group mentioned to Harrington by Bartolo is the "kwanō kamjáj." About them, in one place we find the comment: "otra palabra [another language(?)]" and in another " . . . live at La Grulla, de Ensenade pocá [close to Ensenada]. Pero yo pienso yo no hay kwanus [But I think there are now no kwanus]. they talk like informant." I have no idea who these people might be. In addition, Harrington notes:

> "Yerno seems to think that kwał and kwał kamjáj are two distinct aps. [appellations]. B [Bartolo] says there are only 2 names, kwał kamjáj here and kwał matqá [matxá] on desert. [the latter] talk un poquito like inf's. They have long hair, halfway down arm, as Yumas do. They understand Yuma too but their language is like infs. They live at Calexico and extend as far hitherward as qakum [Jacumba or Jacume]. They live at Poso Coyote, at juqá [yuxá, i.e., Yuha Springs], and as far as qkúm [= qakum]."

The people here described clearly belong to Gifford's Kamia group. Although he did not record the name himself, he mentions Henshaw and Hodge's (1907) inclusion of Quathlmetha [kwał^{y} matxá] as one of the Kamia rancherias or bands. The word *matxá* means 'wind' in Southern Diegueño. Confusion reigns again, for now we have the *kwał^{y} matxá* as part of the Kamia of Imperial Valley (who, let us recall, call themselves *kamiyai*), but the *kwał^{y} kamiyai* around Tecate and west of there.

Phonologically, the form Kumeyaay appears to be basic, with Kameyaay a reduced alternant of it. This suggests that the word is morphologically complex (as any three-syllable word typically is in Yuman languages), consisting of the very common Yuman nominalizing prefix *ku-* (or *kw-*) which can derive a noun from any verb stem, and of a verb stem *meyaay* which does not seem to have survived as such in present-day Diegueño. No satisfactory etymology suggested itself to me for many years, until in 1972 Mrs. Christina Hutcheson taught me the verb *meyay* 'to be steep' and its derivative *'emat kumeyay* 'cliff' lit. 'the place that is steep' (Couro and Hutcheson 1973:33, 37). *Meyaay*, in turn, could be related to *meyay* by the common process of vowel lengthening associated with plurality. *Kumeyaay* then could mean 'the steep ones' and by extension 'those from the cliffs', a not inappropriate designation for people living along the coast of southern and Baja California, in agreement with consultants' repeated mention of 'people by the sea', and appropriate enough for the western branch of the *kwał^{y}*.

It must be noted, however, that no speaker of Diegueño I consulted ever volunteered this etymology and that Mrs. Hutcheson, when asked whether Kumeyaay and *meyay* or *'emat kumeyay* could be related words, stated she had never noticed the similarity. This suggests that my proposal is plausible only given a certain amount of time depth, and allowing therefore also for a certain amount of semantic change for both the stem and its derivative so that the connection is no longer immediately obvious. If we further hypothesize that from 'steep' the meaning of the derived word shifted more to the notion of closeness to the sea, there is even a plausible reason for calling the people of Imperial Valley by this name, since after all, they lived by the recently formed Salton Sea and perhaps at an earlier time by one of the previous inland seas which apparently sporadically formed in the area (cf. Wilke and Lawton 1975:9-21).

What about the form Kamia [kamyá] which is obviously the way the Mojave and Yuma referred to their western neighbors? It cannot *a priori* be excluded that this word has a separate etymology since it has a distinct phonological shape. This is unlikely for several reasons. First of all, the phonetic similarity coupled with semantic similarity cannot be due to chance alone. Secondly, a stem *myá* or *miyá* would have to underlie the word. Such a stem is actually attested in Havasupai, Walapai, Yavapai, and Paipai with the meaning 'sky, up, high'. Not only is the meaning not very appropriate, but this source for the word would necessitate the hypothesis that the name originated in a more distant part of Yuman territory (where it is to my knowledge unattested), was borrowed by the Colorado River groups (Mojave, Yuma), and by some

unheard-of coincidence sounds almost exactly like the Diegueño designation. It should be noted also that the stem meaning 'sky, etc.' is *may* or *ma·y* in the western languages. Another problem is that prestress *y* is very rare in Mojave and Yuma since in that position, etymological *y* has systematically shifted to *ð* in these languages. If it therefore reflected an earlier *myá*, the expected shape in Mojave and Yuma would be **mðá*, which is unattested.[7] If, on the other hand, we assume the origin of the word to be Diegueño, we have a plausible etymology, a reasonable explanation for the presence of prestress *y*, and even a possible explanation for the absence of final *y* in Kamia: there is a general phonological rule in Cocopa, which is even sporadically attested in Yuma, whereby a final *y* is deleted after a long stressed vowel. The word could thus have spread through Cocopa to Yuma and Mojave.

A final note should bring all this to the present time and report on a current usage of the term Kumeyaay. The need for tribal identity so strongly felt today calls for unambiguous non-Anglo designations. It is therefore not surprising that the name Kumeyaay is spreading as the designation for the Indians of southern San Diego County and their language, a symbol of local unity as well as distinction from the northern county 'Iipay and the south-of-the-border Tiipay. Noteworthy is the establishment of the Kumeyaay Tribal Affairs Office in El Cajon, concerned with matters affecting the southern San Diego County groups, and the offering of a Kumeyaay language course at San Diego State University.

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NOTES

1. While some descendants of the Kamia of Imperial Valley still speak the language, they have merged with other speech communities and are not likely to have preserved all peculiarities of the dialect heard by Gifford.

2. Northern Diegueño words used in the general discussion are in the practical orthography of Couro and Hutcheson (1973). In citation for comparative purposes with other languages, they are in phonemic notation, and so are words in other dialects or other Yuman languages when not in phonetic brackets []. Accordingly, *č* = ch, as in church, *c* = ts, as in cats, *š* = sh, as in shoe, *j* (in Harrington's usage) = y, and *ə* = a, as in sofa (unstressed). Words quoted from Gifford are, of course, in his orthography. Abbreviations used are: ND., Northern Diegueño; SD., Southern Diegueño; D., Diegueño; C., Cocopa; M., Mojave; Y., Yuma.

3. For information on systematic sound changes in Yuman languages, see Wares (1968) and Langdon (1970).

4. Other possible instances of this sound are *Madkwahumai* 'name of mythological twins' and *madkawar* 'brown fox', although these are less assured with no known cognates available to me. They are just as likely to represent instances of lenis *t*, and, in fact, the two words might even contain the same morpheme *mat* 'reflexive-reciprocal'.

5. Pamela Munro reports that Mojave speakers single out this feature when imitating Yuma speech. All Mojave forms in this paper have been checked with her.

6. In Kroeber and Harrington (1914), we note: "...Mr. J. P. Harrington, who has had a brief opportunity to hear Diegueño...." Harrington (1908) includes Diegueño numerals collected by him. The Mesa Grande notes may well have been collected during the earlier visit. Harrington's unpublished notes on Diegueño are kept in the archives of the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages at the University of California, Berkeley, and permission to use them was kindly granted by Mary Haas. Judith Crawford meticulously copied the Diegueño material for me.

7. This statement requires qualification. A form with *đ* is indeed unattested in Mojave and Yuma, but Kroeber (1943:38, 39) reports *Kameđa'* in Maricopa and offers the following comment: "Evidently an analogy formation on the basis of River *đ* = *y* in other Yuman."

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