

MAKU, SAPE AND URUAK LANGUAGES
CURRENT STATUS AND BASIC LEXICON

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- 0. Introduction
- 1. Maku
- 2. Sape
- 3. Uruak
- 4. Lexical items

0. The genetic relationship and prehistory of human groups in South America has experienced a surge of interest on the part of ecologists (Meggers 1975, 1976) and human geneticists (Neel, et al. 1967, 1971, 1972, 1976, 1977) as well as anthropologists and linguists. In their studies, they rely on linguistic relationships and more importantly on the relative degrees of relationship, between groups.

The main obstacle to a reasonable genetic classification of South American languages is still the lack of comparable and reliable data. The task is made more difficult by the fact that the rate of extinction of certain South American languages is growing faster every day, and for many now-extinct languages the only available data consists of short vocabularies which are inconsistently transcribed.

It is for these reasons that a diagnostic list of phonetically transcribed lexical items for three nearly extinct languages is presented here. Hopefully it will be of value to those interested in historical comparative studies of South American languages.

1. Autodenomination [máko] or [máku].¹ Location, Uraricuera River, Territory of Roraima, Northern Brazil near Venezuela. Number of speakers in 1964, three. The Maku language is still of unknown linguistic affiliation, and is presented as the only member of the Makuan family in ethnographic literature. Greenberg (1960) however, tentatively assigns Maku to the Tucanoan family. Migliazza (1965 and 1966) published a phonology and a syntactic sketch of Maku.

The Maku say that about three centuries ago they lived around the Maluwaka mountains between the upper Padamo and Cunucunuma Rivers in Venezuela. Historical documents from the last century mention the Maku as regular traders travelling from the upper Orinoco to the Rio Branco in Brazil

2. Autodenomination [sapé]. Location, three small settlements on the Paragua River and its tributary the Karun (Coppens 1977), South Venezuela near Brazil. Number of people, about 25; number of speakers, about five.

Data for the Sape language was collected in January 1964 at a Yanam (Yanomama) village in the upper Paragua River (Venezuela) near the mouth of the Pramoshi. The informant was Agostino, a 25 year old bilingual Yanam-Sape, living near the Cosoipa rapids a few miles down river from the mouth of the Pramoshi.

The Sape are of unknown linguistic affiliation. In the ethnographic literature they are also referred to as Kariana or Kaliana. The informant claimed that although their traditional habitat was in the region of the upper Paragua River, some of them have lived from time to time on the Brazil side, namely on the Uraricaa River and further south near the Maraca Island on the Uraricuera River. In 1964 we surveyed the Paragua River from its headwaters down to the small town of La Paragua and counted 27 individuals who claimed to be Sape,³ of these only 10 adults could speak 'some' Sape, the others, mostly young people, could understand but could not (or would not) speak it. Most Sape are intermarried with the Pemon (Carib), Uruak and Yanam (Yanomama).

No linguistic description of Sape has ever been attempted; word lists were collected by explorer Koch-Gruenberg (1917), Armellada and Matallana (1942) and Coppens (1976). The phonetic symbols used in the transcription are the following:

<u>Consonants</u>			<u>Vowels</u>				
stops	p	t	k	high	i	↓	u
affricates		ts	č	mid	e		o
fricatives		s	š	low		a	
nasals	m	n	ñ				
flaps		r					
glides	w		y				

3. Designation [uruák]. Location: Upper Paragua and Uraricaa Rivers (Venezuela-Brazil border). Population to date about 15, speakers five. There are about ten more individuals who are mixed Yanam-Uruak, and speak only Yanam (Yanomama).

Uruak as an autodenomination is somewhat uncertain. When asked about the name of their own group the natives were not in agreement among themselves. Some said Uruak, others said Urutani. Since the beginning of last century the Yanam (Yanomama) invaded their land and intermarried with them. In Yanam their name is [iriak] because Yanam has no rounded [u] sound. The Carib people of the area call them Urutani.⁴ In ethnographic literature they have been referred to as Awake. The origin of this designation goes back to 1787 when Lobo D'Almada (1861) reported Aoaquis Indians just south of the Uraricuera River (Brazil). Schomburgh (1841) found them further north on the Uraricaa River. In 1963 there were seventeen bilingual (Uruak-Yanam) adults in the Upper Uraricaa and Paragua area. Today only five are still living. They claim that their ancestors lived in the same area⁵

long before the Yanam arrived, and their immediate neighbors were the Purukoto (Carib). The data was collected in 1963 from a bilingual woman of about 55 to 60 years. The phonetic symbols used in the transcription are as follows:

Consonants				Vowels		
stops	p	t	k	ʔ	high	i u
fricatives		s	ʃ	h	mid	e ə o
nasals	m	n	ɲ		low	a
flap		r				
semivowels	w		y			

nasalization [̃]

4. The list of 100 lexical items⁶ given below follows the same order as the basic non-cultural vocabulary developed by Swadesh (1960) for lexicostatistical purposes.

Within the next few years there will be no speaker of these languages left. The need for anthropological fieldwork in this area is extremely urgent.

	<u>Maku</u>	<u>Uruak</u>	<u>Sape</u>
1. I	te:ne	maykate/ma-/tʃa-	mi
thou	e:ne	kaykate/ka-	kapi
we	te:kene	materya	miyono
this	ki	kiʔa	tisa
that	kwa	ayta	tisami
who	toči	maʔayoka	pante
what	čini	maya	pemente
not	laʔa	ʃʔay	atsam / ika
all	peʔtaka	kitate	kawen
10. many	e:suʔu	kaʔtyaw	kawen
one	nokuđamu	kyoana / kyano	koka
two	baʔta	komana	karya
big	bote	kwaya	konən
long	kaxi	šawi	karya
small	kudi	sikipi	to
woman	ne:labə	kari	kapay
man	la:səba	maʔkya	kwa
person	dzoʔkude	kina	kamon
fish	meʔkəsa	kotom	pə
20. bird	i:duba	yopsa	čam
dog	dzoʔwi	toari	to
louse	i:ne	koʔka	čo
tree	o:ba	šapi	tapa
seed	kū:te	kuka	ku
leaf	de:mu	aña	muyra
root	le:mekeči	aša	tu
bark	či:mu	kōhā	kui / kuy
skin	č:mu	kōhā	kuy
flesh	muči	mitsa	mian

	<u>Maku</u>	<u>Uruak</u>	<u>Sape</u>
30. blood	le:me	kaña	tsom
bone	a:mu	mo	wina
grease	e:künü	wiñaya	kun
egg	kü?te	kokama	kupi
horn	e:katso	širipya	wina
tail	ne:to	mašya	upi
feather	ku:te	oša	ičam upa
hair	ku:te	oša	pa
head	ke:te	kwate	moynaku
ear	čika?te	watika	awi
40. eye	sukute	kohap	amku
nose	pi	wa / kwa	ayku
mouth	wi:či	ma?a	itu
tooth	wu:mu	ka	pika
tongue	du:te	takōhā	matu
claw	sukuči	šopti	ičam aypa
foot	basuku	šate	ikora
knee	basəkate	korokopsa	miney
hand	suku	maša/mama	piča apa
belly	sikiči	tsya	tukuy
50. neck	lipite	šoropaña	pokoy
breasts	čüčü	kotsa	wi
heart	səbuku	kirakote	pokowi
liver	i:sa	ika	mapi
drink	mi	oyta/ayta	pe
eat	ki	pa / kapa	ko / ku
bite	bü	psa/ pasa	pu
see	ku	kina	mow
hear	ne	ko	man
know	nimi	kina	mow
60. sleep	we	anə	paku/ku
die	kinə	atay	siya
kill	šipinu	rio (beat)	kaya
swim	lawa	ša	pə
fly	nü	šan	karu
walk	te	ma	paru
come	na	mana	ma
lie down	đa	kio/ taa	pire
sit	siki	naka	maye
stand	kəy	kara	pa
70. give	se	matso	emeyma
say	šini / šibu	mataka/tsama	mo
sun	ke?le	uši	ñam
moon	ya	a?tap	tapo
star	đaoku	okihat	ñayino
water	na?me	akohā	nam

	<u>Maku</u>	<u>Uruak</u>	<u>Sape</u>
rain	naʔme	akohã	nam posoe
stone	li:ne	muka	takuypa
sand	lünükü	iñãkosa	inoku
earth	boʔte	iñã	inokučín
80. cloud	sapənawi	karapaso	usəyna
smoke	čipe	šana	yui
fire	nühẽ	ani	šoko
ash	me:te	šoni	tukutu
burn	we / niʔ	asipa	šoko
path	i:kilu	aʔma	mu
mountain	wi:ke	piʔa	takwa
red	leme	araʔwi	ayña
green	nüčü	atehe	šanurua
yellow	kaləmadə	pišio	pusia
90. white	kaləmate	araway	sae
black	kabi / weʔči	sipan/soson	tsaiña
night	i:kisu	tose	useyna
hot	we	kuri	iria
cold	antsu / mihu	roma / kima	unkoya
full	suku	topi	ukwa
new	asi	koma	yenkoña
good	kuduma / e:di	taseri	amayñakoa
round	kuməsa	siari	načín
dry	ka:te	šona	patokwa
100. name	entse	rawi	marua

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NOTES

1. Not to be confused with the Mácú, or Makú (Puinave) of the Negro and Japurá Rivers, nor with the Maco-Piaroa (Saliva) of Venezuela.

2. Allophone [dz] has a low frequency of occurrence in Maku; our data show only three examples.

3. We did not survey the Karun River, a tributary of the Paragua, where the Pemon (Carib) and some Sape live. Today, however, there are no more than 25 Sape, including those that have intermarried with the Pemon of the Karun.

4. The names Uruak and Urutani are interpretable in the Yanomama language. /uru/ or /urua/ could be a name of a person, being the stem; /-k/ and /-tani/ suffixes. /-k/ means plural, and /-tani/ a variant of /-tari/ descendant of. Urutani is also the name of a nearby mountain.

5. There is some support in their claim in the fact that the names of the rivers of the region are of Uruak origin: e.g., Uraricaá liver of Jandia fish; Kuaimí lizard sp.; Ericó fly sp.

6. More language data can be obtained upon request from the author.