

2.16.3. POSSIBLE WIDER CONNECTIONS OF PAPUAN LANGUAGES; PAPUAN AND AUSTRALIAN; GREENBERG'S INDO-PACIFIC HYPOTHESIS

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2.16.3.1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In addition to what has been discussed in 2.16.1. and 2.16.2. in this volume, a few other suggestions concerning possible connections between Papuan languages and outside languages have been made by various linguists. In this connection, the remarks made in 2.16.2.4. about the suggestive similarity between a few widespread lexical items both in Australian and in Papuan languages come to mind, and H. Kerr (personal communication) has observed some basic structural similarities between Australian and some Papuan languages on the pronominal and verbal levels. Also, Laycock (1973) points out the general resemblance between the phonology of the languages of the Ndu Family in the Sepik-Ramu Phylum (2.11.3.1.3.) and the general phonological set-up of Australian languages. He says (Laycock 1973:58):

It is perhaps worth mentioning here also the general resemblance of the Ndu family phonology to that of Australian aboriginal languages. This, taken together with a number of other cultural and genetic features (similar blood groups (MacLennan et al. (1969)); occurrence of spear-thrower and 'bark' paintings; resemblance of slit-gong melodies to didjeridu melodies) could suggest some kind of contact in the past, with the Ndu family much further to the south than at present. Perhaps clues can be sought in the Purari area, where the art-styles resemble those of the Sepik; resemblances between Kambaramba and the Purari were noted previously by Speiser (1937).

2.16.3.2. GREENBERG'S INDO-PACIFIC HYPOTHESIS

2.16.3.2.1. GENERAL REMARKS

The strongest claim for the existence of possible, and apparently genetic, links between Papuan and outside languages has been made by Greenberg (1971) in the framework of his Indo-Pacific Hypothesis. Already well over a decade ago, Greenberg (1958, 1960) had suggested the existence of a large group of interrelated languages including the Papuan languages as well as those of the Andaman Islands, and those of Tasmania.

At that time, the view was still generally held that the Papuan languages themselves were not interrelated, but belonged to a large number of separate groups which were thought to be unrelated to each other (Wurm 1971, 1977; see also 1.3.2. and 2.1.1.5.1. in this volume). In that linguistic climate, Greenberg's suggestions were not received favourably by linguists concerned with the New Guinea area.

More recently, Greenberg (1971) presented a modified and expanded version of his theory, basing it on some structural evidence in addition to the lexical to which his earlier work was restricted to a great extent. Attitudes towards the question of interrelationship or otherwise of Papuan languages had, in the meantime, undergone revolutionary changes (Wurm 1977; see also 1. and 2.1. in this volume) as a result of the very large-scale intensive work in Papuan linguistics since the time at which Greenberg had made his first suggestions. It had been recognised that Papuan languages belonged to a quite small number of separate groups (see 1.3.4.), one of them, the Trans-New Guinea Phylum, of quite disproportionately large size and covering more than four-fifths of the New Guinea mainland and a part of the Timor-Alor-Pantar Islands (see 2.5.1. in this volume). However, genetic relationship between these separate groups is still believed to be absent.

Nevertheless, these fundamental changes in the general attitudes towards the question of interrelationship between Papuan languages have brought about a situation in which views such as those put forward by Greenberg seem more plausible and are potentially more acceptable than this had been the case before, even if only in terms of the potential relationship of outside, i.e. non-New Guinea area, language groups to a particular one of the separate Papuan language groups in that area.

In this, it has to be pointed out that most of the material on which Greenberg has based his work, is poor to very poor, and known to be of a low level of reliability in the light of more recent research in Papuan linguistics. At the same time, some of his approaches based on the information available to him do not give much cause for confidence on the part of the reader, and his results are therefore not above suspicion (Franklin 1973).

An appraisal of Greenberg's proposals regarding the interrelationship between the Papuan languages themselves is outside the scope of this section which is concerned with the question of the external relationships and connections of Papuan languages. However, Greenberg's claim of a genetic relationship between Papuan languages which, on the basis of very much more extensive information and study than was available to him and had been carried out by him, are believed to be genetically

unrelated, weakens the strength of his suggestions concerning the inter-relationship of Papuan languages to some outside languages.

2.16.3.2.2. TASMANIAN LANGUAGES AND PAPUAN LANGUAGES

Of the two outside language groups for which Greenberg claims relationship to Papuan languages, his case for the Tasmanian languages is by far the weaker one.

The Tasmanian languages, extinct since the end of the nineteenth century, constituted a small family of two to five languages and were spoken on the island of Tasmania, to the south of eastern Australia. The view is generally held that apparently no relationship exists between them and any outside languages (Wurm 1972), though increasing attempts are being made to link them with the Australian languages. The material available on these languages is appallingly poor and unreliable, and open to widely varying interpretations which is part of the reason for the uncertainty surrounding the relational position of the Tasmanian languages.

In his work concerned with the comparison of features of the fourteen groups established by him within his large overall Indo-Pacific group, Greenberg has taken recourse to thirteen structural criteria. Of these, only one concerning the form of the second person singular pronoun is present in the Tasmanian languages. The other groups share mostly four to six, in a few instances more, up to eleven, structural criteria - only one Papuan group shares only two. On the lexical level, Tasmanian languages figure only in eighteen of the eighty-four sets of Indo-Pacific etymologies (Greenberg 1971), and in several of these the formal similarities between the Tasmanian and other items do not seem very convincing. It is somewhat striking that any similarities present tend to be more with languages now recognised as belonging to the East Papuan Phylum (see part 2.13. in this volume) and to a lesser extent to members of the West Papuan Phylum (see part 2.10. in this volume) than with other Papuan languages. Both these groups are likely to be archaic and to antedate the advent in the New Guinea area of languages constituting the large Trans-New Guinea and Sepik-Ramu Phyla (see 3.4.1.).

2.16.3.2.3. ANDAMAN LANGUAGES AND PAPUAN LANGUAGES

The situation regarding the possibility of the existence of some link between the languages of the Andaman Family and some Papuan languages is different, and a greater degree of similarity is apparent than is the case with the Tasmanian languages.

The Andaman languages constitute a family of three, possibly four, languages - one of these differs so much from the other languages in vocabulary that on the basis of lexical evidence alone it could not be included with them into the same family. However, there are considerable structural agreements between the languages. They are spoken on the Andaman Islands located west of the neck portion of the Malay Peninsula, between the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. The languages have been generally regarded as unrelated to any outside language. The Andaman people are negritos, and the only negrito people outside the New Guinea area who have preserved their original language - other negritos such as those of the Malay Peninsula and Luzon in the Philippines have adopted Austro-Asiatic or Austronesian languages.

In his comparison of the Andaman languages with the Papuan languages, Greenberg indicates that four of his thirteen structural criteria are present in the Andaman languages. These comprise the forms of the personal pronouns of the first and second persons singular and of the third person plural. It is correct that the first person singular pronominal forms in the Andaman languages are formally very similar or identical to equivalent forms as encountered very commonly in languages of the West Papuan Phylum which belong to set III (see 2.3.3.4. in this volume) of the personal pronouns in Papuan languages. The Andaman second person singular pronominal forms show agreement with forms restricted largely to the East Papuan Phylum languages. The third person plural pronominal forms in Andaman languages do however not agree with the typical Indo-Pacific forms postulated by Greenberg. At the same time, the Andaman first person plural pronominal forms show formal agreement with the equivalent Papuan forms of set II (see 2.3.3.3. in this volume) which are prevalent in languages of the West Papuan Phylum, and also are quite strongly in evidence in languages of the Torricelli Phylum (see 2.12. in this volume), and in the sub-phylic Trans-Fly Stock of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum (see 2.6.1. in this volume) - this stock contains a strong archaic sub-stratum.

The fourth structural criterion to which Greenberg refers is the verbal suffix *-ka* which denotes past tense. This agrees perfectly with the equivalent suffix in some West Papuan Phylum languages such as those of the Northern Halmahera Family. A suffix indicating past tense and consisting of *-k* + a usually open vowel, often *-a*, is found in a number of other Papuan languages, mostly members of the East Papuan Phylum, and in frequently sub-phylic (i.e. containing an old sub-stratum) stocks of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum.

There are other structural similarities between Andaman languages and some Papuan languages which escaped Greenberg's attention. Andaman

languages are characterized by a complex system of corporal and nominal classifying prefixes to nouns (Temple 1902, Radcliffe-Brown 1964) - this is a feature encountered for instance in some languages of the sub-phylic Trans-Fly Stock of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum, e.g. in Miriam (Ray 1907). Similarly, different suffixes appear with pronouns in Andaman languages to denote tense - this feature is paralleled in some Papuan languages, again for instance in Miriam. However, in these two cases, no formal similarities are involved, and the agreements are purely typological.

A typological agreement with West Papuan Phylum languages, and also some other Papuan languages is the appearance of personal prefixes with verb and noun-functioning words. At the same time, Andaman languages differ typologically from most Papuan languages in several respects.

On the lexical level, Andaman languages appear in thirty of Greenberg's eighty-four Indo-Pacific etymologies, and in quite a few of these some of the agreements, especially with languages of the West Papuan Phylum, and with those of the Timor-Alor-Pantar area which constitute a sub-phylum in the Trans-New Guinea Phylum, to a lesser extent with those of the East Papuan Phylum and some other sub-phylic stocks of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum, are quite striking and may amount to virtual formal identity - the questionable reliability of much of the vocabulary material relied on by Greenberg has however to be kept in mind in this.

2.16.3.3. CONCLUSION

Taking into account what has been said in the above sections, there seems to be little grounds for considering a link between the Tasmanian languages and Papuan languages in general as a serious possibility, though a few lexical similarities between the Tasmanian languages and members of the East Papuan Phylum and West Papuan Phylum are apparent.

However, there seems to be some evidence in support of the possibility that the Andaman languages may have some link, perhaps relational, with languages of one or several of the more archaic Papuan phylic groups, especially the West Papuan Phylum which is geographically closest to them, though the distance between them is still considerable, even though an almost unbroken island chain exists between their respective areas. The situation is made more difficult by the presence of similarities between the Andaman languages and other largely archaic Papuan languages as well such as members of the East Papuan Phylum and some sub-phylic members of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum which contain a strong archaic sub-stratum. These various Papuan language groups are, in the light of our present knowledge, regarded as genetically unrelated to each other.

However, there are indications that an old sub-stratum is widespread in the Papuan language area with traces of it present in several apparently unrelated language groups, and the possibility of a link between the Andaman languages and this sub-stratum element may exist.

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DIVISION 3.

L I N G U I S T I C P R E H I S T O R Y

