

1. Description

“Kurrama is closely related to Yindjibarndi as it shares a very substantial amount of vocabulary as well as grammatical and phonological features.” (6)

This group joined with the Punukunti. (8)

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Kurrama (alt. names: Gurama, Karama, Korama, Kurama) (1)

Different alt. names: Jawunmara (Indjibandi term, applied also in a slightly different form to Mardudunera), Gurama, Kerama, Karama, Korama, Jana:ri (2)

“Their name is said to mean ‘lowlanders’ in contradistinction to ‘uplanders,’ the Kurama.” (2)

Pama-Nyungan language family (4)

Australian → Nyungan Pama → South West → Coastal Ngayarda → Kurrama (5)

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com):

vku (1)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

Western Australia, northwest, southeast of Pannawonica (1)

“Plateau tops of Hamersley Range, north to cliff wall looking down on valley of Fortescue River; east to Mound McCrae at western boundary of Hamersley Station; south to headwaters of Duck Creek and upper Hardey River at Rocklea.” (2)

117°0'E. x 22°20'S (2)

“Minthi Springs that is a boundary for the Punjima and Kurrama tribes. Pelican, or wirlimarra in my language, is a creek near Camp Anderson. That is the boundary of the Yindjibarndi and Kurrama and another of their law grounds.” (3)

1.4 Brief history:

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

British took over Western Australia (starting with Swan River) in 1829. They took most of the best land. British went North near Kurrama land within 30 years. (7)

“...violence and tragedies of British colonization...” (9)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

“Hamersley Ranges, Western Australia, viewed from edge of northern scarp. The *Triodia* grassed open country in foreground changes suddenly southward into mulga (*Acacia aneura*) shrubland. A semiarid warm climate with dry winter. The *Grevillea* in the foreground is flowering in July after a late cyclonic storm. Territory of the Indjibandi tribe. The Kurama live on upper plateau visible in distance.” (2)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density:

Area: 3,700 sp. M. (9600 sp. Km.) (2)

The language’s population is either 50 or 10. In 1981, Wurm and Hattori believed the population was 50. A project established in 2009 also says the population is 50. However, UNESCO says the population has diminished to 10 speakers. (4)

“In 2002 there were estimated to be less than 10 Kurrama speakers left. Now, that number will be less but is unknown. There are many more Kurrama people who have a partial or passive understanding of the language. Other people identify as being of Kurrama heritage and do not speak the language or speak other languages after marrying into other language groups.” (6)

The most recent National Indigenous Language Survey Report of 2005 estimated 10 speakers. (8)

2. Economy

Received poor treatment by the British during the mining boom of the 1960s. (9)

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production:

2.6 Land tenure:

2.7 Ceramics:

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

To follow Aboriginal law, when Bananga men marry Burungu women, all their children are Balyirri, when Burungu men marry Bananga women, all their children are Garimarra, when Garimarra men marry Balyirri women, all their children are Burungu, and when Balyirri men marry Garimarra women, their children are Bananga. Different parts of the country or natural world belongs to each group, making the land "related to us in the same was as an uncle, cousin, or parent." (7)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

"I followed the grandfather, Yinawangka. I don't know how that comes about. I was the oldest and the grandparents teach me all the culture things and I have to follow my grandparents. My grandmother was Kurrama. I should have followed the grandmother, but too late now." (10)

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin):

To follow Aboriginal law, when Bananga men marry Burungu women, all their children are Balyirri, when Burungu men marry Bananga women, all their children are Garimarra, when Garimarra men marry Balyirri women, all their children are Burungu, and when Balyirri men marry Garimarra women, their children are Bananga. Different parts of the country or natural world belongs to each group, making the land “related to us in the same was as an uncle, cousin, or parent.” (7)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations:

To follow Aboriginal law, when Bananga men marry Burungu women, all their children are Balyirri, when Burungu men marry Bananga women, all their children are Garimarra, when Garimarra men marry Balyirri women, all their children are Burungu, and when Balyirri men marry Garimarra women, their children are Bananga. Different parts of the country or natural world belongs to each group, making the land “related to us in the same was as an uncle, cousin, or parent.” (7)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

Warfare/homicide

“In later years under pressure from the Kurama, they moved eastward to Yandicoogina and the Ophthalmia Range forcing the Niabali eastward.” Suggests that they were either violently pushing the Tjuroro tribe eastward or that they were growing and that cause them to move into Tjuroro territory. (2)

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

“Minthi Springs that is a boundary for the Punjima and Kurrama tribes. Pelican, or wirlimarra in my language, is a creek near Camp Anderson. That is the boundary of the Yindjibarndi and Kurrama and another of their law grounds. Having law grounds on tribal boundaries enables peoples of both tribes to meet together without crossing other people’s lands. For this reason there were always some law grounds on their boundaries. At Marrina Spring, near Camp Anderson, there was another law ground. Yindjibarndi and Kurrama met there for the law...” (3)

4.18 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

Every community is a huge extended family “with a clear code of respect and discipline.” (7)

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

5.4 Post marital residence:

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

“Going through the Law” decides who is man and who is child. “When they go through Law they’re classed as man.” (7)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization:

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

5.12 Trade:

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

“The community draws strength from their spiritual homelands through their living traditional culture which connects the people, their land, language, and culture.” (9)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Law ceremonies every summer, young men are initiated: go on trips through neighboring villages to learn the law, men and women of different tribes play different roles throughout the initiation process. “They’re not classed as man unless they go through Law. Aboriginal elders class them as kids.” There is a secret part of the ceremony, after this, the sons are now men. (7)

6.4 Other rituals:

Asking permission (?) to explore the Aboriginal homelands: spitting out water and speaking in Yindjibarndi. (7)

6.5 Myths (Creation):

Before creation, the sky was very long. The Creation spirits (Marga) pulled the sky and the world out of the sea. They still live in this world. They shaped this country, the animals, and the aboriginal people (from the Marga themselves). This was when the world was soft. (7)

Establishment of law: Marga (up the river) vs. Nararoo (?) (down the river), violent war until Marga ambushed Nararoo = first law ceremony. Then the world became hard. (7)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

Women do not go through the law; however, they do play a big part in the ceremonies. (7)

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Most, if not all, of the Kurrama speaking people were relocated to Roebourne after British invasion. Here, like American Indians, many have developed a drinking problem. (9)

Numbered references

1. http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=vku

2. Tindale, Norman. *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974. Print.
3. Rumley, Hilary and Kim Barber. "We Used to Get our Water Free..." Identification and Protection of Aboriginal Cultural Values of Pilbara Region. *A Study and Report prepared for the Water and Rivers Commission of Western Australia*. April 2004. Online.
4. <http://multitree.org/codes/vku>
5. <http://www.wolframalpha.com/entities/languages/kurrama/xm/at/8f/>
6. http://www.wangkamaya.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=173&Itemid=335
7. Rijavec F. *Exile and the Kingdom*. Snakewood Films. 1993. (only able to watch the first 30 minutes online, would provide much more information if watched all the way through.)
8. <http://www.sorosoro.org/en/kurrama>
9. http://www.wangkamaya.org.au/index.php?page=shop.product_details&flypage=flypage-ask.tpl&product_id=95&category_id=13&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=98&vmcchk=1&Itemid=98
10. Young, Lola. *Lola Young: Medicine Woman and Teacher*. Western Australia: Fremantle Press, 2007. Print