Sikaiana Oral Stories   Sikaiana Traditions

4-29-2021

002 Transcription Notes

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Transcription Notes

Readers should be aware that there is not standardized orthography for Sikaiana. Different writers follow different conventions. I admit that I am not consistent.

Since most of my tapes were recorded in informal speech, there can be variations from more formal speech, upon which the dictionary is based. I will let readers know where transcriptions and translations came from. I have had some degree of fluency in the language in 1980-83, and have retained some of that fluency in 1981. But I do not have fully intuitive knowledge of the language in managing transcriptions, and am not now able to confidently transcribe and translate certain passages, which I think would benefit from being a native speaker.

Some orthographic issues.

Sikaiana has geminate (double) consonants and distinctions in vowel length. These are almost never represented in the writing of Sikaiana people. With the help of John Kilatu, I tried to represent vowel length in the dictionary. I can't assure readers that the entries are always accurate or my transcriptions are always consistent.

There are other issues that affect orthography especially in what words should be treated as prefixes and suffixes and as separate words.

Haka is a very common causative form. I always affix it at the beginning of a word. Many Sikaiana writers do not, treating it as a separate word.

*Laa, naa, ne*i, (there, there nearby, here) are common forms that can denote location or events, speech (that speech there, here). I usually represent them as separate words, but some Sikaiana writers do not. Generally, Sikaiana writers represent them as *la, na,* and I often do the same.

Direction suffixes (*ake, atu, mai* and *iho)* (out/away, to a person, here, down) to some extent correspond with the location markers above. Again, many Sikaiana writers treat them as affixes, adding them to the end of the word. I generally do not, except in a few forms, for example *haimai* (say to someone) for some reason I think should be one word, but *haelle at*u (walk towards), I think of as separate words.

ia is a very frequent particle that marks off a statement, seems to add emphasis

ai, ei are very frequently used particles that follow a very and refer to earlier speech or activities, and sometimes continuing action. Sometimes *ai* is shortened to -i. Again, different speakers represent them in different ways. I usually represent them as different forms in my transcriptions.

Direction terms include: *i* can mean "at" or "because of" (PIJ "from"); *ki* can mean "towards" or an instrumental object ("with").

te is a common definite particle, often prefixed in Sikaiana writing. *a* is a proper name marker.

e ni, ku kahe/kaihe, koi are common tense aspect markers, often prefixed in Sikaiana writing, I make them into separate words.

Ka is a very common conjunction—"and," "but", "so." It is heard in *tala* (faery tales) from the audience as a prompt for the story teller to continue.

Word's auto corrector constantly wants to make i into I, and does other things. I tried to correct them but might have missed some. I also apologize for other mistakes.