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AN INTRODUCTION TO KIRYA-KONZƏL

A central Chadic language of Eastern Nigeria

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Cambridge & Jos

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1. Introduction

This is a preliminary introduction to the language of the Kirya-Konzəl peoples (Fali of Kirya). Kirya is spoken in 13 settlements northeast of Mubi close to the Cameroun border in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The data given here is drawn from a field trip undertaken between the 4th and 8th of August 2007 and working sessions in Jos between July 2007 and March 2008.

Although commonly called Fali of Kirya, the Kirya language is not closely related to the Fali lects spoken east of Mubi, but rather to the Higi [=Kamwe, Kapsiki] cluster. Konzəl [=Fali of Mujilu] is also an extremely similar Higi-related language.

The first published information on the Kirya is in MEEK (1931:300-308). MEEK gives summary anthropological data and a short wordlist. A lengthier wordlist of Kirya is given in KRAFT (1981:179 ff.). This is a phonetically transcribed wordlist, with a phonemic analysis by Martin MOULD. While this list gives some idea of the lexicon it is otherwise misleading both in terms of tones and phonemic analysis. KRAFT's informant is said to come from 'Jiribu', a settlement not so far identified and which may be an erroneous name.

2. Location, history and sociolinguistic situation

2.1 Nomenclature

Table 1 gives the correct nomenclature for the Fali of Kirya and Mijilu:

Table 1. Terminology of Fali of Kirya and Mijilu

Usual name	One person	People	Language
Kiryà	ndá Kákiryà	Kákiryà	myá Kákiryà
Mijilù	ndá Kónzəl	Kónzəl	myá Kónzəl

2.2 Location and settlements

Kirya villages have traditional name but some also have 'new' names, i.e. those adopted by the administration and often representing Hausaised forms. Table 2 shows the principal Kirya settlements with the original and 'new' names:

Table 2. Kirya villages

Old Name	New name or pronunciation
Kátàlà	Kwatala
Kàpàrì	Kwapali
Kàtskòfù	Manzəl
Kágyòmbòlà	Jambula
Thlápà	Kirya
Gəvəŋ	Gəvaŋ
Kàbàŋ	Kwabaŋ
Kwàyim	Kwayim
Yàkwà	Yakwa
Zùghù	Zughu
Nkəlághù	Chamales (Virtually deserted)
Mízimà	Mizima
Pirghwà	Pirghwa

Numbers are always hazardous, but it seems likely the Kirya number between 5-8,000. There are probably slightly more Konzəl than Kirya, from 10,000.

2.3 Language status

Kirya is still the primary language spoken by the communities in this region although Hausa is becoming more dominant, especially as a result of migration. In pre-colonial times, Higi and Margi were commonly spoken as second languages. With the Fulbe migrations, Fulfulde became a common vehicular language. However, Fulfulde has given way to Hausa as the dominant trade language.

2.4 Fali of Kirya in regional context

The Kirya form part of a larger cultural grouping known as Fali which includes the following groups (Table 3):

Table 3. Fali peoples of Adamawa

Usual name	Indigenous name	Linguistic affiliation
Kirya	Kirya	Higi cluster
Mijilu	Konzəl	Higi cluster
Murvur	Kaməvən	? Higi cluster
Jilvu	Zhilvu	Fali cluster
Muchela	Madzarin	Fali cluster
Vintim	Uroviin	Fali cluster
Bagera	Uraməween	Fali cluster
Bahuli	Urahuli	Fali cluster
Mukta	?	? but possibly the same as Ghye and Amsa
Burha Vamngo	?	?

3. Phonology

The phonology of Kirya is based on elicitation for the dictionary but uncertainties remain. The main source for comparison is the phonology of Higi described by MOHRLANG (1972). However, it seems that Kirya has developed its inventory by comparison with Higi.

3.1 Vowels

Kirya probably has six phonemic vowels:

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Close-Mid	e	ə	o
Open		a	

This is similar to HOFFMAN's (1963) analysis of Margi. However, MOHRLANG (1972) reduces the medial vowels to just three (i.e. high, mid and low) and argues for the effect of labial and palatal prosodies to produce the considerable allophony such an analysis would require. The Fali data may make possible a similar reduction of underlying vowels, but it seems unlikely this would be accepted for a practical orthography. As with Higi, there is apparently no long/short contrast in vowel length and no phonemic nasalisation.

3.2 Consonants

Fali of Kirya consonants are as follows:

	Bila- bial	Labio- dental	Alveo- olar	Alveo- palatal	Palato- al	Velar	Labial- velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d			k ɣ		ʔ
Nasal		m	n					ŋ
Trill			r					
Retroflex			ɽ					
Fricative		f v	s z	ʃ ʒ		x ɣ		h
Affricate			ts dz		tʃ dʒ			
Lateral fricative					ɬ ɮ			ɮ
Approximant					y		w	w y
Lateral Approximant			l					
Implosive	ɓ		ɗ			ɠ		

The /ɠ/ is not a true implosive but an ejective resembling Hausa. One of the more surprising sounds is the retroflex r, /ɽ/, which is not recorded for other languages in the region. It is not a true retroflex but pronounced with the tongue towards the alveolar ridge. Nonetheless, it is clearly a distinct phoneme. /ʔ/, /ɬ/, /ŋ/, /w/ and /y/ are part of a preglottalised series. Preglottalised phonemes are only found in initial position or as the second element in compounds. HOFFMANN (1963) regarded /w/ and /y/ as distinct phonemes in Margi, where they have a similar distribution.

There is no evidence for two Higi phonemes, the 'nasalised nose twang' (ŋ) and the 'flapped voiced fricative' (ɽ) [? a labio-dental flap]. There is no convincing example of long or geminated consonants despite a tendency to transcribe these orthographically. Fali of Kirya has homorganic nasals, realised as m- before labials, labio-dentals and glottals, as n- before all other sounds and as -ŋ- word-medially before velars. Palatal and labial prosodies are common in Kirya as in Higi and Margi.

Orthographic

The following table represents orthographic practice followed in the present document. This is not the result of an agreement by an orthography committee and is subject to change, but follows practice in some other languages of the region. The use of 'ɬ' instead of 'ʦ' is entirely redundant, but is retained until agreement can be reached on another orthographic form.

ʔ	ʼ	ŋ	ng
ɣ	gh	ʃ	sh
ʈ	tl	kw	kh
l̥	ʼl	w	ʼw
ɓ	dl	ɣ	ʼy
m̥	ʼm	ʒ	zh
ɲ	ny		

The IPA symbol 'ɽ' is used for the retroflex r until an agreement can be forged on an appropriate orthographic representation.

3.3 Tones

Fali appears to have two level tones, High and Low and rare downstep. Rising and falling tones occur but are comparatively rare.

High	ˊ
Downstep	ˋ
Low	ˋ
Falling	ˋˊ
Rising	ˊˋ

4. Morphology and grammar sketch

4.1 Nouns

Kirya noun morphology is similar to Margi in that the vast majority of nouns take a standard plural suffix, and a small minority take suppletive plurals (Table 4). Almost all of these are to do with persons with the exception of 'death'.

Table 4. Suppletive noun plurals in Kirya

sg.	pl.	Gloss
dàgì	dòshí	boy
gwinjì	gwinjìjì	bachelor
gyàmàlká	ngyàmày	mother-in-law
màlká	mmày	woman
nàmàlká	námày	girl
ndá	mbàrà	person, people
ntá	mótá	death
ntúmá	nkyóŋkyòm	son-in-law
zàl	zhíft	man
zòròmàn	zhwámáyí	brother

A partial pattern appears with the *h* to *y* alternation in three nouns, but

4.2 Pronouns

Kirya pronouns are marked for number and partly for gender and also show the inclusive/exclusive distinction in the 1st person plural common in African languages. They also incorporate some tense/aspect marking at least far as distinguishing complete and incomplete. Table 5 shows the Kirya subject pronouns for complete aspect:

Table 5. Kirya subject pronouns

Number	Person	m.	f.
Singular	1 st	zà, zè, zò	
	2 nd	yè	
	3 rd	yìnzé	yòzè
Plural	1 st excl.	mmè	
	1 st inc.	yùmé	
	2 nd	yùnè	
	3 rd	yətənè	

The 1st person singular pronoun changes stem-vowel according to the verb it governs, but the rules determining this are not yet clear. It is likely to show height harmony with the stem-vowel or dominant prosody of the verb.

Examples:

zà hál dáfà
I eat food

zè kì kàrí
I beat dog

zò hwyi cāwcāw
I am running quickly

These pronouns are also the unmarked set. Other pronoun sets have prefixed bound clitics. Table 6 shows the Kirya pronoun set incorporating future marking or incomplete aspect:

Table 6. Kirya pronouns (incompletive aspect)

Number	Person	m.	f.
Singular	1 st	wàyí	
	2 nd	wàné	
	3 rd	wànzí	wàzí
Plural	1 st excl.	wàmmí	
	1 st inc.	wòghòmé	
	2 nd	wànvùwí	
	3 rd	wàgháy	

Example:

wàyí kì kǎrí
1FUT beat dog

The pronoun set used in reported speech is closely related, except that the final vowel is replaced by -a:

Table 7. Kirya pronouns in reported speech

Number	Person	m.	f.
Singular	1 st	wàyá	
	2 nd	wàná	
	3 rd	wànzá	wàzá
Plural	1 st excl.	wàmmá	
	1 st inc.	wòghómá	
	2 nd	wànvùwá	
	3 rd	wàghàtámá	

Only the 3rd person plural shows an irregular form, as in this example:

mapa John na wàyá tsu tǎ lúmǎ
said J. that I went to market

Table 8 shows the Kirya object pronouns:

Table 8. Kirya object pronouns

Number	Person	m.	f.
Singular	1 st p.	ʒí	
	2 nd p.	ʒà	
	3 rd p.	ʒínzǐ	ʒǎzǎ
Plural	1 st p. excl.	mmǎ	
	1 st p. inc.	ʒumá	
	2 nd p.	ʒum	
	3 rd p.	ʒum	

Indefinites:

Someone nǎntǎndǎ
Some people mbǎrǎ gǎlǎm

4.3 Verbs

Kirya verbs seem to undergo little morphological alteration in use; the tense/aspect system is almost entirely controlled by the pronouns. The verb phrase is typically SAOV with auxiliaries as bound morphemes.

ʒǎ hwyi cǎwcǎw
I am running quickly

Imperatives are formed by suffixing -u to the verb stem (Table 9):

Table 9. Kirya imperative formation

Kirya	Gloss
hǎlǎ dǎfǎ	Eat food!
sǎú yamǎ	Drink water!
kǐú kǎrí	Beat the dog!
kǐú ha	Thresh grain!

First person plural imperatives are formed as follows:

mǎy hǎl dǎfǎ
let us two eat food

mwà hǎl dǎfǎ
let all of us eat food

These pronominal forms do not seem to be directly related to any other pronoun set.

4.4 Adjectives

The adjective in Kirya always follows the noun it qualifies and shows agreement only in number. Qualified plural nouns drive first syllable reduplication of the adjective, a common strategy in Chadic, although less usual in adjectives. Examples are given in Table 10:

Table 10. Expression of number in Kirya adjectives

sg.	Gloss	pl.	Gloss
ndǎ gwǎsǎ	short person	mbrǎ gǐgǐsǎ	short people
ndǎ tǎpǎ	tall person	mbrǎ tǎtǎpǎ	tall people
ndǎ bǎfǎ	fat person	mbrǎ bǎbǎfǎ	fat people
ndǎ tǎhǎ	thin person	mbrǎ tǎtǎhǎ	thin people

Numerals are invariant but follow adjectives and drive the reduplication of the stem:

kə́rá nkə́rí gùtàn
dog black one

kə́rá nkə́nkə́rí bəkə́
dogs black two

4.5 Adverbs

Kirya adverbs follow the verb they qualify.

wàná hwyi cāwcāw
I-HAB run quickly

4.6 Numerals

The main numerals are as follows (Table 11):

Table 11. Kirya numerals

gùtàn	one	gùm nəcə́f	fifteen
bəkə́	two	gùm nùnkwáng	sixteen
makən	three	gùm nə́mbə́rfə́ng	seventeen
fwàdà ¹	four	gùm nə́tə́ghəs	eighteen
fwàr ²	four	gùm nùtlì	nineteen
ncifə́	five	sələ́w ntsəkə́	twenty
kwáng	six	makə́w tsəkə́	thirty
mbìrfə́ng	seven	fòn tsəkə́	forty
tə́ghəs	eight	cifə́ ntsəkə́	fifty
wɾì	nine	kwángə́ tsəkə́	sixty
gùm	ten	mbə́rfə́ngə́ ntsəkə́	seventy
gùm nə́tə́ng	eleven	tə́ghəsə́w tsəkə́	eighty
gùm nə́màkən	twelve	wɾìw tsəkə́	ninety
gùm nùfwàr	fourteen	gùn tsəkə́	one hundred

Numerals follow the noun they qualify and also follow any adjective qualifying the noun.

5. The classification of Kirya-Konzəl

Since it is usually said that Kirya-Konzəl is related to Kamwe [=Higi], Table 12 compares words to establish the degree of similarity. The Higi forms are transcribed from MOHRLANG (1972)

Table 12. Comparison between Kirya and Kamwe

Gloss	Kirya	Kamwe
goat	kùə	kwe
to throw	nghà	la
sheep	tə́mbəkə́	gamé
dog	kə́rì	kílé
to break	bəl	bílé
river	ghwà	díle
moon	tə́rì	tíré
fish	kə́rìpə́	kílipé

While it is evident the two languages are related, they are clearly not close enough as to be regarded as dialects of one another.

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