

Useful trees and shrubs of the Kirya people of Adamawa, Nigeria



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1. Introduction

This is a preliminary listing of the useful trees of the Kirya people. The Kirya language is spoken in 12 settlements northeast of Mubi close to the Cameroun border in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The present data is largely from a field visit to Tlapa on the 7th of August 2007. The main informants were;

Although commonly called Fali of Kirya, this language is not closely related to the Fali lects spoken east of Mubi, but rather to the Higi cluster (Mohrlang 1972). There is also the closely related Konzəl [=Fali of Mujilu], also a Higi-related language.

The transcription system is separately described in the Kirya-Konzəl dictionary online, by the same authors. The only previous information about this language is a wordlist given in Kraft (1981:179 ff.).

Scientific names are corrected with reference to Burkill (1985-2004).

2. Data collection

Table 1 shows the Kirya names of trees and their identifications, as far as possible. Further work is in progress to identify more of the trees.

Table 1. Kirya names of trees and identifications

Kirya	English	Hausa	Scientific	Comment
bàgàdí	neem		<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	
bàntàkó		kálgóó	<i>Piliostigma reticulatum</i> & <i>P. thonningii</i>	
bèpà				
blághwà			<i>Ficus sp.</i>	
bùkì	desert date	ádúúwà	<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i>	
cí	mahogany	máďààcìí	<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>	
cíŋcìŋ				
dàďáŋ				
ďàfághùm				= ‘food of mountain’
ďár		gáúďè	<i>Gardenia aqualla; G. erubescens</i>	
dàtáŋí				
ďèmbíshì		jinnin kafiri		
dligicà				shrub
dzàgè				
fəmə?	shea	káďányà	<i>Vitellaria paradoxa</i>	
féwà				
gədləŋkəl				shrub
gədləŋrè				thorny creeper
gólga	copaiba balsam	Máájè	<i>Daniellia oliveri</i>	
gətàghùm				= ‘stick from mountain’
gətàràjìn				= ‘stick of women’s waist-band’
gùgúdlà				shrub
gùlànà tsàlá				= ‘dowry iron of monkey’. The

Kirya	English	Hausa	Scientific	Comment
gùlèvè	raffia palm	kwángwáláá	<i>Raphia sudanica</i>	long fruits look like marriage tokens
gùrìvèn				shrub
hàṛákòntághá				= 'hen's intestine'
hàṛí	locust-bean tree	dóòráwà	<i>Parkia biglobosa</i>	
hám̀bù		dúrùmíí	<i>Ficus polita</i>	
hwàhù̀yàkè	West African ebony	kányà	<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>	
jùjèfè	red-flowered silk-cotton	gúrjiiyáá	<i>Bombax buonopozense;</i> <i>brevicuspe;</i> <i>costatum</i>	B. B.
khítwà				shrub
kò'íghèn				
kúdà tābā				
kúkù	baobab	kúúkà	<i>Adansonia digitata</i>	
kúrnà	Christ's thorn	magariya	<i>Ziziphus spina-christi</i>	< Fulfulde kurnahi shrub
kwántsághày				
lùndzè				
lútáhi	horseradish tree	zogale	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	< Fulfulde
'mámù				shrub
mbáwà	sausage tree	nòònòn gííwáá	<i>Kigelia africana</i>	
mblaṅ	tamarind	tsáámíyáá	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	
ndày				
ndlóóó	custard apple	gwándàn dààjii	<i>Annona senegalensis</i>	
ndlèbónvá	pawpaw	gwándà	<i>Carica papaya</i>	
ndlèṅwá				
nónó				
nzhàvákà				
ṅgwà		dárgàzáá	<i>Grewia mollis</i>	shrub
ṅgwrà dádáṅ				
pálmà				
pèlànú				= 'hyaena's head'
ṛíriḡhè				shrub
sáá				
shàrà	winter thorn	gààwóó	<i>Faidherbia albida</i>	
shíkènè	black plum	dínyáá	<i>Vitex doniana</i>	
tàndzón				shrub
tátliwā				
távàkwà	fig	ḡáúréé	<i>Ficus sp.</i>	
tèmbó	silk-cotton	ríímíí	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i>	
tlífà	fan-palm, deleb	gígínyà	<i>Borassus aethiopum</i>	
tlúrá				

Kirya	English	Hausa	Scientific	Comment
tsàr hùm úrèvè vìdlèhè		màgímfáá	<i>Tephrosia densiflora</i> ; <i>T. vogelii</i>	
vihé vivilè				shrub. Alos the name of a fly with a long body.
vizà vwày			<i>Ficus sp.</i> <i>? Prosopis africana</i>	= 'Higi [people]'. The wood is very hard and so is compared to the Higi people who are believed to be very strong
yákwá zhùŋrì	chewstick tree	márkéé	<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i> <i>Ficus sp.</i>	= 'fly black' as small black flies live in it

Table 2 is a list by Kirya name, showing the uses recorded for each tree and shrub.

Table 2. Uses of Kirya trees and shrubs

Kirya name	Uses
bàgàdí	1. Chewstick
bàntákó	1. The wood is used for firewood 2. The bark is used to make rope and bags
bèpà	1. The wood is used for firewood and for beds 2. Women use the leaves as a <i>cache-sexe</i> 3. The mistletoe is used to attract women. If you talk to a woman holding this 'she will follow you'.
blághwà	1. The fruit is eaten 2. The wood is used for firewood, although formerly a fertile woman would not go and collect the wood, leaving it to the aged. 3. Leaves are fed to animals 4. Evil spirits, <i>tləgri</i> , live in this tree and there are the same restrictions as <i>thúrá</i> .
bùkì	1. The wood is used for firewood and for hoe-handles 2. The fruit is edible 3. Leaves are used for fish-poison 4. Bark is boiled and drunk for children with piles
cí	1. The bark is boiled in water as a medicine for stomach pain 2. The seeds are used to prepare two oils; a. <i>ghànà'i</i> is derived from the first pounding of the seeds and rubbed on the skin as well as given to children with a cough b. <i>və̀r̀ndúŋ</i> . The residue of pounding is dried and burnt and a heavier oil extracted. This is rubbed on the back of cows and other domestic animals (and sometimes children) to stop flied worrying them in the rainy season. 3. The tree is used for firewood and poles to make beds 4. The leaves are fed to goats and cattle
cíŋcìŋ	1. The wood is used for firewood, tool-handles and poles 2. Poles from this tree are placed around a shrine and will stay there without rotting for many years 3. The tree is planted in the centre of a cattle pen. However, it must be planted by a poor man with no cows. The theory is that if a cow gets lost, the poor man will cry out and urge people to go and look for the lost animal. The tree is to protect the cattle, to make them more fertile and to give them something to scratch against.

Kirya name	Uses
dàdǎŋ	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fruits are cooked into porridge 2. Branches are used to make stirring-sticks, <i>síkú</i> 3. Leaves are fed to animals 4. The wood is used to make mortars
dǎfǎghùm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The wood is used for firewood
dǎr	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The wood is used for firewood 2. Children eat the fruit and it stains their lips black
dàtǎrǐ	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The wood is used for firewood 2. Women use the leaves as a <i>cache-sexe</i>.
dǎrmbíshì	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fruit is eaten 2. The fresh leaves, <i>bèràkwá</i>, are used for soup 3. The wood is used for firewood
dligicà	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When there is an outbreak of animal disease, the leaves are laid across the road to prevent sickness from entering the village
dzègè	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The seeds are bought by the Kanuri and used to make perfume 2. When planting tiger-nuts you lay down a line of leaves in the soil before sowing to act as a green manure
fǎmǎ?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The fruit is edible and the nut is used to make oil, <i>dànkǎé</i>. The oil is cooked in soup and rubbed on swollen legs. 2. Timber is used for mortars, stools drums and firewood.
fǎwà	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The wood is used for firewood 2. Leaves are fed to animals
gǎdlǎŋkǎl	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The fresh leaves are used in soup 3. The wood is used for firewood and fencing 3. If you have a groundnut farm and it is not doing well, you plant this shrub in the middle of the farm so the ‘the eyes of the people will not spoil the farm’. It is believed that when people see the extent of your crop it reduces the yield, so this blocks their view.
gǎdlǎrè	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Used to make fishing traps 2. Because it covers a large area, people used to hide within it during wars
gǎlgà	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The trunk is used to make a traditional bed, <i>gǎdlǎ</i> 2. Leaves are fed to livestock 3. Poles are used to make shade 4. A sweet residue collects on the leaves. Children collect it in the bush and eat it or it is mixed into porridge to sweeten it
gǎtàghùm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Used to make fighting sticks, <i>gǎtà</i>
gǎtǎràjìn	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The forked stick of catapults is made from this tree. 2. Poles made from its branches are laid on thatch to stop it blowing off
gùgùdlà	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The wood is used for firewood and poles 2. When planting tiger-nuts you lay down a line of leaves in the soil before sowing to act as a green manure
gùlǎnǎ tsàlá	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The wood is used for firewood and poles
gùlǎvè	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poles are used to modern style beds, <i>angawa</i>, and fighting sticks
gùrivèn	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leaves are fed to animals 2. The branches are used to make roofing poles 3. When the ‘<i>may</i> pumpkins are ready, women gather them in one place and a man will come and split them. They then cover them with leaves of <i>gùrivèn</i> to speed up the rotting process.
hǎtǎkòntághá	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thorny branches used as fences 2. The wood is used for firewood
hǎrǐ	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The wood is used for firewood and tool-handles 2. The parts are as follows; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mature fruit <i>nghwùnǎ</i>. Also the name of the yellow flour inside the pod, which is

Kirya name	Uses
	mixed with water, formed into cakes and eaten by all.
	seed <i>ghəlǎfə</i>
	semi-mature fruits <i>gərgərndá</i> . These are cooked for children
	dried, empty pods <i>bídlím</i>
	3. The pounded bark is applied to burns
	4. Ash from the firewood is used as potash in soup
	5. Liquid made from the dried, empty pods is used as a sealant.
hám̀bù	1. The fruit is eaten
	2. The wood is used for firewood
	3. Leaves are fed to animals
	4. Formerly, only an older person would plant it in front of their house. A young person would die, as you cannot plant it and safely eat the fruit.
hwàhù̀yàkè	1. The fruit is edible
	2. The wood is used for firewood and to make hoe handles
	3. The fruit can be squeezed out and made into a gum, 'wa hwàhù̀yàkè, used to fix arrowheads to the shaft. This gum is also used to seal the sheaths of knives and to make mock-arrows, m̀bráŋ, used by children when learning how to shoot.
jùjə̀fə	1. The flower is made into soup
	2. Branches are used to make stirring-sticks, <i>síkú</i>
	3. When boys are initiated and go up on the mountain, they cut a branch of this tree and put it on their house to indicate their status
khítwà	1. Women use the leaves as a <i>cache-sexe</i> . It has a pleasant smell and so women choose it for use during funerals.
	2. If a snake bites you then if you drink a decoction of the boiled bark you will vomit out the poison. Boiled bark is also a general remedy against sickness.
kò'íghèn	1. The wood is used for firewood
	2. Leaves are fed to animals
	3. Roots are used as medicine to heal wounds
kúdà tãbã	1. The wood is used for firewood
	2. Leaves are fed to animals
	3. The day that a woman transfers to her husband's house, she will wear these leaves. The bride will move for just three days to her husband's house but not have sex during this period.
kúkù	1. Leaves are used for soup, <i>kùrí</i>
	2. The fruits are used to make porridge
	3. Children eat the seeds, <i>kòntádli</i> , and everyone eats them cooked
	4. Rope is made from the bark
	5. Spirits, especially those of twins, live on the baobab. Twins from a baobab grow fat and more quickly and are less wicked than those from a tamarind.
	6. If your wife deserts you for another man, take a piece of her clothing or a leaf she has worn and insert it into the trunk of a baobab, which will gradually grow over it. She will never bear a child while it is inside the tree.
kúrnà	1. Thorny branches used as fences
	2. The wood is used for firewood
	3. The fruit is edible
kwántásághày	1. The wood is used for fences
	2. The sap is put on fresh wounds to stop them bleeding and used as eye-drops
lùndzè	1. The fruit is edible but fibrous and sticks between the teeth. The proverbial expression <i>wàní hànzè lùndzè</i> 'you will suffer' refers to fibres stuck in the teeth.
	2. The boiled leaves are drunk and washed in by children with measles
	3. Leaves are fed to animals
	4. Roots are used in sweetening beer. The beer is not intoxicating when fresh but becomes so



Kirya name	Uses
	later. Beer with <i>lündzə</i> in is called <i>tài</i> and is served when a chief is installed, for marriages and for twins ceremonies.
lútáhi	1. Leaves are used for soup 2. The wood is used for firewood 3. Root is pounded and ingested like snuff as a remedy for headaches 4. The root can be boiled and the liquid drunk as a remedy for typhoid
'mámù	1. The wood is used for firewood 2. Leaves are fed to animals 3. The fruit is ground up, mixed with groundnuts and eaten as a snack similar to <i>ngwà</i> .
mbáwà	1. A branch from this tree is used to plant sweet potatoes 2. An infusion of the bark is used to cure stomach pain.
mblaŋ	1. The fruit is used to sweeten porridge 2. The fresh leaves are used in soup 3. The wood is used for firewood and to make hoes, axe handles and pestles 4. The seeds are boiled in water and the liquid used to make eye-drops to cure eye-problems, e.g. those resulting from measles. The juice is also applied to arrow wounds. 5. The leaves are boiled in water and pressed all over the body, to cure s.o. with swellings, for example when they have fallen out of a tree. Also used in the case of shoulder dislocation, <i>gùrsó</i> .
ndày	6. Twin spirits, <i>kùshinə</i> , are believed to live in this tree. Twins are believed to be spirits not humans. If one twin dies, its spirit returns to the tamarind 1. The leaves are used as a medicine for ringworm. Boiled leaves must be eaten three times. 2. The wood is used for firewood
ndláḅá	1. The fruit is eaten 2. The wood is used for firewood, although this is a recent practice. Formerly, it was believed that if your wife cooked you food with firewood from the custard-apple tree, you would not be strong. 3. Leaves are fed to animals 4. The mistletoe, <i>kúrḁḁúm</i> , from this tree is used to protect fruit trees from theft. Anyone stealing fruit from a protected tree will get a wound looking like its fruit. 5. If you are going on a journey and believe that people are planning s.t. evil for you, place the leaves of the custard-apple by the side of the road and cover them with earth from a small anthill, to neutralise the effect of the attack.
ndləḅóvá	1. The bark is used to make potash 2. The leaves are used for medicine 3. The roots are used to cure ulcers 4. Fruit is eaten
ndləŋwá	1. The wood is used for beds, chairs, doors, tobacco mortars. 2. The leaves are fed to goats.
nónó	1. The wood is used for firewood 2. The leaves are used as a bandage for wounds as they are gummy and stick together 3. When a woman gives birth to a child people press her body with an infusion of leaves to staunch the bleeding 4. When making local beer, the ground cooked grain is spread on <i>nónó</i> leaves to cool it
nzhàvákà	1. The wood is used for firewood 2. The fruit is edible 3. When you touch the tree it exudes bad-smelling air
ngwà	1. The wood is used for firewood 2. Leaves are fed to animals 3. A boiled mixture of the bark and mud is used to plaster walls and beehives
ngwrà ḁáḁáŋ	1. The wood is used for firewood and to make fences, mortars and drums 2. Leaves and fruit are fed to animals
pálmà	1. The wood is used for hoe-handles and fighting sticks

Kirya name	Uses
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sap from the roots is placed on fresh wounds 'like iodine' Leaves are fed to animals Women use the leaves as a <i>cache-sexe</i>.
pəlānvú	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Thorny branches used as fences The wood is used for firewood
ṭírighà	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The wood is used for firewood and to make fences A gum is found on the trunk which is used as a depilatory for armpits and public hair When the shrub is small it has an underground tuber eaten by children.
sáǎá	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The leaves are used for soup The wood is used for firewood
shàrà	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The wood is used for firewood Leaves and fruit are fed to animals
shíkàǎà	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wood is used for beds, drums and firewood Fruit is eaten or mixed into porridge The primary juice extracted from the berries is known as <i>kwándàrà</i>. The second juice is <i>mǎdlàmpíṛì</i>. During the <i>hidzgà ciki</i> ceremony (prior to the fiancé leaving home) the <i>kwándàrà</i> is served to the in-laws and the <i>mǎdlàmpíṛì</i> is given to other guests. During a special ceremony for youths, the <i>Tsà dlǎgvù</i>, they go up onto the mountain wearing new clothes and drink <i>kwándàrà</i>. The young people dance in pairs until the best dancer is chosen and he is then carried down on people's shoulders.
tàǎdzǎn	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The fruit is eaten The wood is used for firewood The roots are used to make a medicine for wounds and sores, <i>jumbulan</i>. The bark is pounded and applied to them.
tátliwǎ	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The wood is used for firewood and poles Leaves are pressed on the body of a sick person The leaves are used to protect the farm from porcupines. The leaves are put in a pot and hung in a farm and this will drive away the porcupines
távàkwà	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The fruit is edible and the leaves are cooked in soup. A fluid can tapped from the root. It is drained into a pot overnight and given as a medicine for a persistent cough. Wood is used for firewood Leaves are fed to animals.
tǎmbǎ	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The cotton, <i>jínàtǎ</i>, is used to stuff pillows and for striking a light with flintstones
tlífà	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Planted as a boundary marker The fruit is edible The sprouts are grown as <i>muruci</i> (a recent practice learnt from the Kilba) The leaves are used to make mats, hats, baskets and brooms
tlúrá	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The leaves are cooked in soup but may also be fed to animals. Rope is made from the bark, and the wood is used for firewood. Evil spirits, <i>tlǎgṛi</i>, live in this tree. Women must go in pairs to pick the leaves which must only be collected in the morning or evening. If there is an epidemic such as CSM in a neighbouring village, then the villagers will gather and slaughter a ram. They make a rope from the skin of the ram and tie it from a <i>tlúrá</i> to another point so that everyone must pass under it. This is a symbolic passage from death to life and protects them from becoming infected.
tsàr hùm	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The wood is used for firewood The boiled leaves are pressed on swellings Women use the leaves as a <i>cache-sexe</i>
úrǎvǎ	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The wood is used for firewood and for fences The fruit is edible



Kirya name	Uses
vìdlàhó	3. Branches used for threshing grain 1. The leaves are mixed with seeds of dligicà and put in water to poison fish. 2. A widow will never wear these leaves
vihó	1. The wood is used for beds, chairs, doors, tobacco mortars. 2. The leaves are fed to goats.
vivilà	1. The wood is used for firewood and to make fences 2. The mistletoe is used for protection when fighting. If you bathe in water boiled with mistletoe blows will be neutralised.
vizà	1. The fruit is eaten 2. The wood is used for firewood 3. the leaves are used as a medicine for goats. When a goat gives birth and the afterbirth refuses to come out, the leaves are fed to the mother to complete the birth
vwày	1. The wood is used for firewood, poles and high-value tool handles 2. Blacksmiths make charcoal from this tree
yákwá	1. The wood is used for firewood and to make poles 2. Latex from the trunk is applied to an aching tooth.
zhùŋɔ́	1. The rope is used to make bags 2. The wood is used for firewood 3. Leaves are fed to animals

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