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*Preserving the unheard, promoting the unspoken:  
 The challenges of documenting, preserving and promoting Kibiri,  
 a critically endangered isolate*



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Handout of the talk

Kibiri distinctions with Porome

Porome	Kibiri	Glose
/kigimi <sup>HHH</sup> /	/ki:mi <sup>HH</sup> /	'Head'
/pagai <sup>HH</sup> /	/pai <sup>H</sup> /	'Forehead, face'
/kagapu <sup>HHL</sup> /	/ka:pui <sup>HH</sup> /	'Leg, foot'
/vigi <sup>HH</sup> /	/vi: <sup>LH</sup> /	'Paddle'
/nei <sup>LH</sup> /	/dei <sup>LH</sup> /	'Rain'

Generation of children (30 – 50) : A few **Kbr** phrases within **HM** speech

(1) (bateri tere) pou-are!  
 WHITE PERSON COME-IPFV  
 'The white man is coming!'

(2) i wai=ba  
 SAGO.ABST NEG=DECL  
 'There is no sago (in the house)'

(3) Moses **ia ura di uburo**  
 MOSES **3SG LIKE COCONUT.ABST WATER.CSTR**  
 'Moses likes coconut water' (Observed)

## Contact with **Kerewo** (Kiwai): lexicon borrowing

(4) **epato** kabiro

**EAR** BIG

'(My) ears are big' (< [hɛpatɔ])

(5) opoi **gido**-da do-me pi-me

TODAY **SONG**-DEF.SG AUX-NON3.HODFUT/FFUT AUX-1SG

'I am going to sing it' (< [gidɔ])

(6) amo **koati**-abo kakaniawo **totonai** pe-me pi-me

1SG **JOB**-DEF.PL MANY **FOR (HM)** GO-NON3.HODFUT/FFUT AUX-1SG

'I am going to go for these small jobs' (< [kɔvaʔati])

pi-me  
AUX-1SG

## Phonology

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Open-mid	ɛ		ɔ
Open		a	

/dɔ<sup>HL</sup>/ '2SG'

/da<sup>HL</sup>/ 'This'

/mu(:)ri<sup>LH</sup>/ 'Knee'

/mɛri<sup>HL</sup>/ 'Path'

/ki:mi<sup>HH</sup>/ 'Head'

/kumi<sup>HH</sup>/ 'Dog'

### Diphthongs

/mɔi<sup>HL</sup>/ 'Man'

/mɛi<sup>HL</sup>/ 'Sugar cane'

/mui<sup>HL</sup>/ 'Lime (chewing)'

/piɔ<sup>LH</sup>/ 'To hear'

/pɔu<sup>H</sup>/ 'To come'

	Bilabial		Labiodental	Alveolar		Velar
Plosive	p	b		t	d	k
Nasal		m			n	
Tap					r	
Fricative				v		

/kɛi<sup>HL</sup>/ 'Seed'

/nɛi<sup>HL</sup>/ 'Louse'

/vɛi<sup>L</sup>/ 'Bone'

/bɛi<sup>LH</sup>/ 'Tongue'

/dɛi<sup>LH</sup>/ 'Rain'

/kui<sup>H</sup>/ '(A) hair'

/mui<sup>H</sup>/ 'Egg'

/kubi<sup>HH</sup>/ 'Tree'

/kuri<sup>HH</sup>/ 'Root'

/paru<sup>HL</sup>/ 'Blood'

/daru<sup>HL</sup>/ 'Word'

## Verbal number

### A. Intransitive statives, participant number of S

#### a. Stem alternation

- (7) Myriam da=ba e-a  
MYRIAM 3SG=EMPH LIE.S.SG-3.PRS  
'Myriam is lying (on the floor)'
- (8) Mi buai da=ba teri-a  
DAUGHTER.ABST TWO 3SG=EMPH LIE.S.PL-3.PRS  
'(My daughters) are lying on the floor'
- (9) Mi euwa da=ba ete-a  
DAUGHTER.ABST BIG 3SG=EMPH STAND.S.SG-3.PRS  
'(My) big daughter is standing'
- (10) Miryam Umo aboai=ba uri-a  
MYRIAM UMO 3D=EMPH STAND.S.PL-3.PRS  
'Myriam and Umo are both standing'
- (11) Ukukuro da=ba tete-a  
ROPE.ABST 3SG=EMPH HANG.S.SG-3.PRS  
'The rope is hanging'
- (12) Ukukuro buai da=ba kaiw-a  
ROPE.ABST TWO 3SG=EMPH HANG.S.PL-3.PRS  
'The two ropes are hanging'

#### b. Partial reduplication

- (13) Kubi kere da=ba ubi-neika bai-a  
STICK.ABST PART 3SG=EMPH WATER.ABST-IN FLOAT.S.SG-3.PRS  
'The stick is floating in the water'
- (14) Kubi kere buai ubi-neika ba~bai-are  
STICK.ABST PART TWO WATER.ABST-IN S.PL~FLOAT -IPFV  
'The two sticks are floating in the water'
- (15) Borimi iti~timaro-a koribi-neika  
BIG.FLY S.PL~SIT-3.PRS FISH.ABST-IN  
'The big flies are sitting on the fish'
- (16) Borimi wawa itimaro-a koribi-neika  
BIG.FLY ONE SIT.S.SG-3.PRS FISH.ABST-IN  
'The big fly is sitting on the fish'

## B. Intransitive actives, event number

(17) Myriam da=ba **paruo**-bu  
MYRIAM 3SG=EMPH **JUMP.SG**-3.HODPST  
'Myriam jumped (once)'

(18) Myriam da=ba **pa~paru**-a  
MYRIAM 3SG=EMPH **PL~JUMP**-3.PRS  
'Myriam jumps (many times)'

Scenario A: Myriam and Umo jump once one by one: **pa~paru-a** (event as a whole)

Scenario B: Myriam and Umo jump once at the same time: **pa~paru-a** → **WHY?**

Scenario C: Myriam and Kakoro jump many times one by one: **pa~paru-a**

Scenario D: Myriam and Kakoro jump many times at the same time: **pa~paru-a**

## C. Intransitive actives, participant number of S

(19) kubi okoire-ra-bu  
TREE.ABST FALL-PRF-3  
'The tree has fallen'

(20) kubi-abo okoire-**sto**-ra-bu  
TREE.ABST-DEF.PL FALL-**S.PL**-PRF-3  
'The trees have fallen'

## D. Transitives, participant number of O

(21) moi-da=nei kubi kere **mairi**-are  
MAN-DEF.SG=AGT TREE.ABST PART **CARRY.O.SG**-IPFV  
'The man is carrying **one log**'

(22) moi-da=nei kubi kere **ma~mairi**-are  
MAN-DEF.SG=AGT TREE.ABST PART **O.PL~CARRY**-IPFV  
'The man is carrying **many logs**'

## E. Transitives, event number + participant number of O

(23) Karera etere-mi=nei kubi kere **kevo**-are  
KID SMALL-DIM=AGT TREE.ABST PART **BREAK.SG**-IPFV  
'The small kid is breaking **one stick once**'

(24) Karera etere-mi=nei kubi kere **ke~kevo**-are  
KID SMALL-DIM=AGT TREE.ABST PART **PL~BREAK**-IPFV  
'The small kid is breaking **one stick many times**'

(25) Karera etere-mi=nei kubi kere buakei kevo-sto-are →  
 KID SMALL-DIM=AGT TREE PART TWO BREAK.SG-O.PL-IPFV  
 'The small kid is breaking **two sticks once**'

UNATTESTED. The speaker would say (23), (24) or (26)

(26) Karera etere-mi=nei kubi kere buakei ke~kevo-sto-are  
 KID SMALL-DIM=AGT TREE.ABST PART TWO PL~BREAK-O.PL-IPFV  
 'The small kid is breaking **two sticks many times**'

#### F. Transitives, event number

(27) karera etere-mi=nei kubi-da kere karakara=nei potere-a  
 KID SMALL-DIM=AGT TREE.ABST-DEF.SG PART KNIFE.ABST=INST CUT.SG-3.PRS  
 'The small kid cuts **one stick once** with the knife'

(28) karera etere-mi=nei kubi-da kere karakara=nei wavi do-a  
 KID SMALL-DIM=AGT TREE.ABST-DEF.SG PART KNIFE.ABST=INST CUT.PL AUX-3.PRS  
 'The small kid cuts **one stick many times** with the knife'

	Participant			Event
	S	O	Recipient	
Intr. Statives	St.Alt / Part. Red.			
Intr. Actives	Suffix -sto			Part. Red.
Transitives		Suffix -sto / Part. Red.		Part. Red. / St.Alt
Ditransitives		?	← Part.Red. →	?

#### BONUS: ABSOLUTE / CONSTRUCT FORM OF NOUNS IN KIBIRI

The reader is invited to look at Creissels, D. (2017). *Construct Forms of Nouns in Typological Perspective*. Paper read at the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, Zurich, September 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, for examples of African and other languages in the world that meet the definition proposed by the author.

Key ideas:

- Construct form (CSTR): A particular marking of the head noun of a NP when modified.
- Absolute (ABST) form: The contexts in which the CSTR form is not used (e.f citation form, etc.).
- For CSTR: No cross-referencing features of the modifier on the noun.
- The possibility that CSTR marking interacts with the expression of some features of the head noun itself (number, gender).
- "In languages in which nominal lexemes have a special non-autonomous form used **exclusively in derivation or (morphological) compounding**, that form is **NOT** a construct form according to the definition posited above, since this definition refers to the ability for the construct form to act as the head of a syntactic construction."

- Instance of head marking.

Cross-linguistic variation according to:

- The types of dependents that require the use of a construct form of their head;
- The possibility that construct marking interferes with the expression of some features of the head noun (number, gender);
- The morphological nature of construct form marking.

The case of Kibiri:

#### A. The types of dependents that require the use of a construct form of their head:

##### 1) Possessors: rigid constituent order and obligatory CSTR marking

- (29) **di**-da                                      **akei**    **di-ro**=ba  
 COCONUT.ABST-DEF.SG                      2D            COCONUT-CSTR=DECL  
 'The coconut is your coconut' (Pronominal possessor)

- (30) **Nower**                                      **ere**                                      maraida                                      waiko-eme  
 NOWER    WOMAN.CSTR                              WITH.1SG                                      TALK-1D.HPST?  
 'Nower's wife and I were talking' (ABST *eri*) (NP possessor)

- (31) **Do imai**-da                                      ivari ipau=ro?  
 2SG FAMILY.ABST-DEF.SG BIG HOW=Q  
 'How big is your family?' (CSTR *imare*) (Lack of CSTR in the expected context, attested once)

##### 2) Adjectives: flexible constituent order and optional CSTR marking

- (32) **Ivari mapi-ro**  
 BIG HOUSE-CSTR  
 'Big house' (ABST *mapi*) (BUT *ivari mapi*, *mapi ivari*, and *mapi-ro ivari* are attested)

##### 3) Numerals: flexible constituent order and optional CSTR marking

- (33) Da **wakuteri**                                      **wakuteri kima**                                      eire-a  
 3SG THREE    THREE HEAD.CSTR SEE-3.PRS  
 'He sees six heads' (ABST *kimi*)

- (34) **Wakuteri kotobiri**    **buai kumi**                                      ikarawo-a  
 THREE FROG.ABST TWO DOG.ABST CHASE-3PRS  
 'three frogs chase two dogs' (CSTR *kotobiro/kumo*)

- (35) **Perui**                                      **buai**    iname ete-bo-ro  
 YEAR.ABST TWO AND STAY-3-FPAST  
 'Two years, and he stayed' (CSTR *peruro*)

- (36) Amakei **kabo** buai  
 1D **CANOE.CSTR** TWO  
 'Our two canoes' (**ABST kabui**)

**4) Interrogative pronouns: free constituent order, only IP + N.CSTR and N.ABST +IP, CSTR marking dependent on constituents' order**

- (37) Ibo **i-ro** ko-me pi-e opoi taura?  
 WHAT **FOOD.CSTR** EAT-NON3.HODFUT AUX-2SG TODAY AFTERNOON  
 'What (food) are you eating this afternoon?' (**ABST i**)

(38) Int.Pronoun – Noun.ABST (Unattested)

(39) **Noun.CSTR** – Int. Pronoun (Unattested)

- (40) **koi**-da **ibo**=ro?  
**THING.ABST**-DEF.SG **WHAT**=Q  
 'What is the thing' (**CSTR koi-ro**, OR **ibo koi-ro**=ro?)

**5) Quantifiers: free constituent order, optional CSTR marking**

- (41) **keu wai kuro**-bu  
 MANY NEG **VILLAGE.CSTR**-PL  
 'A few villages' (**ABST kuri**)

- (42) Auapa **kotobiri wakuteri kumi** ikarawo-a  
 ALL **FROG.ABST** THREE **DOG.ABST** CHASE-3.PRS  
 'All the frogs chase three dogs' (**CSTR kotobiro**)

- (43) **koi~koi-ro** aua dominei ve~vere-re  
**THING~THING-CSTR** ALL 2SG.AGT O.PL~CREATE-1/2SG.FPST  
 'All things you created' (**ABST koi**)

- (44) Kumi wawa **kotobiri auapa** ika~karaw-are  
 DOG.ABST ONE **FROG.ABST** ALL O.PL~CHASE-IPFV  
 'One dog is chasing all the frogs' (**CSTR kotobiro**)

**6) Relatives: rigid constituent order, obligatory (?) CSTR marking**

- (45) [**uru-ro-u**] **dara** kere teteri parea=ba  
 SPEAK-PRF?-2SG.PRS **WORD.CSTR** PART? LONG VERY=DECL  
 'The word that you have said is very long' (**ABST daru**)

- (46) [**a-baba-bu apa-ire-bo-ro**] **ara**-da aparo parea ara=ba  
 1SG-PARENT-PL GIVE-?-3-FPST **NAME.CSTR**-DEF.SG BEAUTIFUL VERY NAME.CSTR=DECL  
 'The name that my parents gave me is a beautiful name' (**ABST ei**)

## 7) Compounding: rigid constituent order, obligatory CSTR marking

- (47) **Di uburo**  
**COCONUT.ABST WATER.CSTR**  
 ‘Coconut water’ (**CSTR *di-ro* / ABST *ubi***) N+N
- (48) **Bari kere kabo**  
**SKY.ABST PART CANOE.CSTR**  
 ‘Airplane’ (**CSTR *beiro* / ABST *kabui***) N+N
- (49) **Oi mapi-ro**  
**SICK HOUSE-CSTR**  
 ‘Hospital’ (**ABST *mapi*, \*oi mapi/\*mapi oi/\*mapi-ro oi**) ADJ+N

Type of modifier	Constituent order	CSTR marking	Hypotheses
Possessor	Strict POSSR-N.CSTR	Obligatory	POSSR = S slot
Adjectives	Free all combinations	Optional	
Numerals	Free all combinations	Optional	
Int. Pronouns	Free only: Int. - N.CSTR OR N.ABST – Int.	Dependent on constituent order	
Quantifiers	Free all combinations	Optional	
Relatives	Strict REL-N.CSTR	Obligatory (?)	Heavy constituent + SOV
Compounds	Strict N + N.CSTR	Obligatory	N1 = POSSR

### Lexicalization of two nouns in the CSTR form as verbs

- (50) **do pumuro**  
**2SG HEART.CSTR**  
 ‘Your heart’ (**ABST *pumi***)
- (51) **a-pumuro dabui-da**  
**1SG-HEART.CSTR PLACE.ABST-DEF.SG**  
 ‘I like the place’ (Observed)
- (52) **abo umo=ba do iminia**  
**3PL KNOW=DECL 2SG MIND.CSTR**  
 ‘They know what you mean’ (lit. ‘They know your mind’, **ABST *imini***, < Kerewo)
- (53) **a-iminia=nei orio baba=nei vere-bo-ro ei-da**  
**1SG-MIND.CSTR=AGT OLD FATHER=AGT CREATE-3-FPST LAND.ABST-DEF.SG**  
 ‘I think God created the world’



## CSTR inflectional classes

I Stem – ro	II Caru > Cara	III Haplology /_ri/ >/_rɔ/	IV /_i/ > /_ɔ/	V /_i/ > /_ε/
mapi-ro ‘house’	daru > dara ‘word’	Ipiri > ipiro ‘eye’	paumi > paumo ‘feather’	eri > ere ‘woman’
i-ro ‘food, sago’	paru > para ‘blood’	auri > auro ‘bamboo’	urubi > urubo ‘nose’	mori > more ‘flesh’
di-ro ‘coconut’		*ipiri-ro/ *auri-ro		

VI /_i/ > /_a/	VII /_Cεi/ > /_Cara/	VIII /_u(C)i/ > /_urɔ/	IX Stem modif. - ro	X /_i/ > /_ia/
arawi > arawa ‘mouth’	vei > vara ‘bone’	kui > kuro ‘hair’	evei > evearo ‘light’	Boribi > boribia ‘cuscus’
kimi > kima ‘head’	Kei > kara ‘seed’	pumi > pumuro ‘heart’	ai > aro ‘son’	Imini > iminia ‘mind’
	! kamei > kama ‘body’	! Kabui > kabo ‘canoe’		

XI /_V <sub>1</sub> i/ > /V <sub>1</sub> ia/	XII /_V <sub>1</sub> i/ > /-arε/	XIII Irregular	XIV No marking
dei > deia ‘rain’	imai > imare ‘clan’	kari > moro ‘people’	baba > baba ‘father’
kai > kaia ‘thunder’	wui > ware ‘story’	ia > mea ‘mother’	sea > sea ‘chair’
		obu > uro ‘brother’	kua > kua ‘uncle’

### B. The possibility that construct marking interferes with the expression of some features of the headnoun (number, gender)

Kibiri’s CSTR form interacts with definiteness and number of the head noun. See (41) and (46) above.

### C. The morphological nature of construct form marking.

- Suffixation of *-ro* (Class I)
- Stem modification: partial (segmental) or total (Class II-VIII; X-XIII)
- Stem modification + *-ro* (Class IX)
- No marking (Class XIV)

**Conclusion :** According to Creissels’ (2017) definition, Kibiri does exhibit an ABST/CSTR form of nouns similar to the examples found in languages like those from Sub-Saharan Africa and others. The distinctive feature of Kibiri is the fact that in the contexts of adnominal possession, compounding and relative clauses, the marking is obligatory and the constituent order is rigid, whereas in the other contexts like adjectival modification, numerals, quantifiers, etc. the CSTR marking is not obligatory and the constituent order is free. Kibiri also exhibits interaction between CSTR marking and definiteness and number of the head noun, though the attestations are not so numerous in the current state of the corpus. Finally Kibiri exhibits a rather large number of inflectional classes for CSTR marking. It is interesting to note such a complex marking system coming from a rather unused language.