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2021-2022: A fieldwork odyssey. Pros and cons of remote and on-site fieldwork for documenting and describing a severely endangered language of Papua New Guinea: Kibiri.

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*Documenter et décrire les langues et littératures
minoritaires et en danger à l'ère numérique :
épistémologies, pratiques et défis*

INALCO PLIDAM

January 19th - 20th, 2023, Paris



*2021-2022: A FIELDWORK ODYSSEY. PROS
AND CONS OF REMOTE AND ON-SITE
FIELDWORK FOR DOCUMENTING AND
DESCRIBING A SEVERELY ENDANGERED
LANGUAGE OF
PAPUA NEW GUINEA: KIBIRI*

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19:37 Gary Kemaru Bissu...
últ. vez hoy a las 12:56

yes. Think of it. 08:33 ✓✓

10 de noviembre de 2021

Wednesday 10/11/2021

I rewrite Tuesday 9/11/2021 Verbs list 3;
It is the collections

1) I will eat tomorrow In the English langu
age.

In the Kibiri language translation;

- 1) Amo beiraa koomepimee
- 2) Amo beiraa koomepimee
- 3) Amo beiraa koomepimee

2) He will eat tomorrow in the English
language

In the Kibiri language translation

- 1) Doo beiraa koomepiee
- 2) Doo beiraa koomepiee
- 3) Doo beiraa koomepiee

3) He will eat tomorrow in the English
language

In the Kibiri language translation;

- 1) Daa beiraa koomeraa
- 2) Daa beiraa koomeraa
- 3) Daa beiraa koomeraa

4) She will eat tomorrow in the English

Mensaje

CORE QUESTIONS

- What can and cannot be achieved for a language documentation and description project in a remote fieldwork setting?
- What are the limits and opportunities of a remote fieldwork project and for whom?
- What is possible to document and what not on an socially unused language?

SUMMARY

- Introducing Kibiri
 - Geographical situation
 - Sociolinguistic situation
- Remote fieldwork: 2021
 - Background
 - Administrative challenges
 - Practical challenges
 - Implications for the documentation and description
 - Implications for the speaker and the researcher
- On-site fieldwork: 2022
 - Background
 - Kibiri's social death
 - Implications for documentation and description
- Conclusions

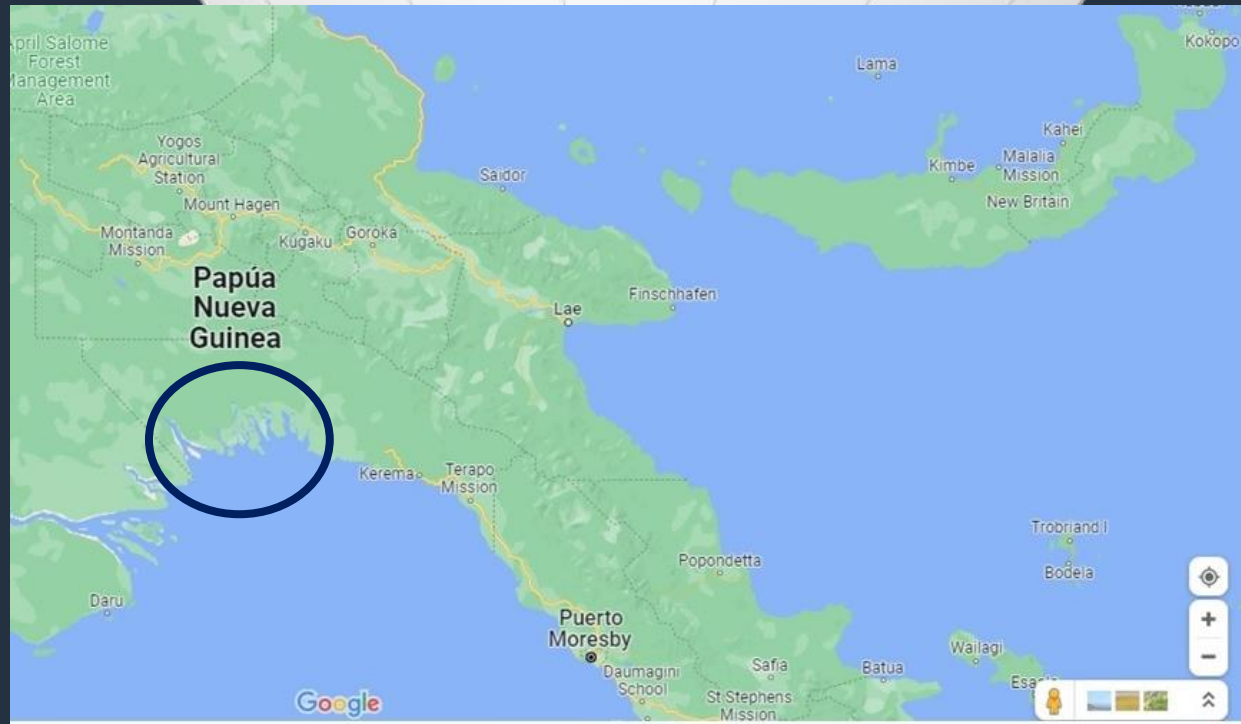
INTRODUCING KIBIRI

- Kibiri [prm] No ISO code yet
- Etymology: *Kitouri* tree (species?)
- Kibiri-Porome: Isolate (Hammarström 2017 : 297)
- 300 people (Kimuri Kaini, p.c.)
- 32 L1 speakers
- Intelligible with Porome [prm] (Franklin 1973:273-274; Petterson 2019:1-2)
- Most documentation on Porome by Petterson (SIL)
- Previous documentation: 6 sentences and pronoun in Franklin (1973)



GEOGR. SITUATION

- Southern Papua New Guinea
- Gulf Province
- Kikori district
- Tributaries of the Kikori river
- No specific single Kibiri village



GEOGR. SITUATION

- Kibiri speakers
 - Porome territories
- Number of speakers in the area

Kikori 5
Kekea 4

Wowo

Aird Hills Ero

Babaguina
Doibo 5

Veiru/ Babeio
10

Koiara



GEOGR. SITUATION

- Other L1 speakers: Port Moresby, Veraibari, Kerema
- Live among non-Kibiri groups: Kerewo, Porome, Rumu, etc.



SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION

- 300 people
- 32 remaining speakers
- 40 – 90 years old
- Hiri Motu [hmo], Tok Pisin [tpi], Kerewo [kxz], some English
- Hiri Motu: all social settings (house, church, tribal meetings, etc) + Kerewo
- Children generation (30 – 55): referential KBR NPs into HM speech, understanding, translation
- Grandchildren generation (< 25): recognition of some words, some understanding – no understanding at all.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION

(1) Moses **ia** **ura** **di** **uburo**

MOSES **3SG** **LIKE** **COCONUT.ABST** **WATER.CSTR**

'Moses likes coconut water' (Observed, Kibiri daughter, 40)

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

1SG **JOB-DEF.PL** MANY **FOR** GO-NON3.HODFUT AUX-1SG

'I am going to go for these jobs' (< [kɔvaʔati] Kerewo) (L1 speaker, 55)

Kibiri, Kerewo, Hiri Motu

SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION

- Low socialization among L1 speakers: HM, KBR sometimes
- As L2: Non-Kibiri partner (Kerewo, Porome)
- Today's house: Kibiri + Kerewo grandparent
- Start of cessation of transmission: 1970's
 - Intermarriage with non-Kibiri groups: Kerewo, etc.
 - Non-Kibiri parent's language took over house interactions
 - Port Moresby national missionaries speaking HM with the kids. Ban to use KBR?
- Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS, Lewis and Simons 2010)

8a Moribund or 8b Nearly Extinct



Eramiri Nauku (65, L1)
Umo Daiwa (33, not a speaker) >
Thread game documentation



< Matthew Orovi (73, L1)
Manema Agoai (70, L2, wife)
Transcription and Translation
session, June 2022










REMOTE FIELDWORK 2021: BACKGROUND

- COVID-19: 21-day quarantine requirement in PNG at 5-star hotels: 3000 €
- Gary Bissuee (72), unemployed, Port Moresby
- Only speaker to have a smartphone
- No power, no access to internet
- Galaxy Note II with damaged battery
- To charge his phone: 5 km by foot to go to a friend's
- No training on Whatsapp tools, Zoom, email, etc.
- Literate in English and Kibiri "by the phonics"


















REMOTE FIELDWORK 2021: ADMIN. CHALLENGES

- Funding
 - CNRS: no remote payments allowed; *contrat de services* for graduate people.
 - Ecole Doctorale (PhD school): 1000 € for on-site fieldwork
 - Permission to use it for remote fieldwork
 - Amount used: about 630 €
 - Rest: on-site fieldwork
 - Ownership of purchased equipment?

REMOTE FIELDWORK 2021: PRACT. CHALLENGES

- Relational
 - Building a (work) relationship remotely 
 - Building trust about salary  
 - Understanding each other's limitations  
- Organizational
 - Building a workflow (time zone differences, differed or live work?) 
- Material
 - Purchase of solar panel, phone and memory card   

REMOTE FIELDWORK 2021: PRACT. CHALLENGES

- Logistical
 - Money sending and reception  
 - Phone charging through solar panel  
 - Whatsapp training by the speaker   
- Data
 - Method of collection  
 - Type of data: elicited  Narratives? naturalistic?   
 - Wordlist (100 items)   Phonetics and phonology
 - Sentence translation (English - Kibiri) : Absolute/Construct from of nouns (259)   Morphosyntax

Okay standby 11:35

List of phrases 17:

- 235) Ann is the woman that I love
- 236) Old tree
- 237) The man's mouth
- 238) I touch his head
- 239) You touch the broken leaf (one leaf)
- 240) He touches the broken leaves (many leaves)
- 241) Tree trunk
- 242) Anus
- 243) My anus
- 244) cheek
- 245) Moises' cheeks
- 246) Elbow
- 247) His elbow
- 248) Clothes
- 249) They touch my clothes
- 250) 2 feathers
- 251) Pandanus
- 252) We touch James' pandanus
- 253) Long road
- 254) Short road

As usual 3 times each phrase +recordings 3 times 11:45 ✓

Ok I have received. Thank 11:48

23 de noviembre de 2021

List of Phrase of 17:

23 de noviembre de 2021

List of Phrase of 17:
From Figure;

235) Ann is the woman that I love # In the English language;

In the Kibiri language translation;

- 1) Eerii Ann daa apumuroo nimoo baa
- 2) Eerii Ann daa apumuroo nimoo baa
- 3) Eerii Ann daa apumuroo nimoo baa.

236) Old tree # In the English language.

In the Kibiri language translation;

- 1) Opiiwai kuboo
- 2) Opiiwai kuboo
- 3) Opiiwai kuboo

237) The man's mouth # In the English language.

In the Kibiri language translation;

- 1) Moii arawaa
- 2) Moii arawaa
- 3) Moii arawaa

238) I touch his head # In the English language.

In the Kibiri language translation;

- 1) Amo Moii Daa kiimaa ooraworamu
- 2) Amoo Moii Daa kiimaa ooraworamu
- 3) Amo Moii Daa kiimaa ooraworamu.

Hello Mr. Bissuee I have a question. Are there any rats at Veiru and Kikori? at houses 00:26 ✓

Haha many. 00:44

0:43 01:28

0:41 01:29

0:37 01:30

0:40 01:32

I am stopping because of the noise 01:43

0:58 03:43

0:48 03:45

0:33 03:46

Se eliminó este mensaje. 03:47

REMOTE FIELDWORK 2021:IMPLICATIONS FOR DOCUMENTATION AND DESCRIPTION

- Impossible to document culturally and socially relevant practices
- Hard to transcribe and translate texts through Whatsapp
- Difficult to discuss and double-check data immediately
- Time-consuming!
- Possible to analyze context-free utterances for phonetics/phonology and morphosyntax

REMOTE FIELDWORK 2021:IMPLICATIONS FOR SPEAKER AND RESEARCHER

- Speaker
 - Found it difficult to work in a calmed and silent setting; lack of concentration
 - Found it was expensive to pay for the data plan
 - Appreciated the researcher's effort and wanted more work
- Researcher:
 - Time and energy-consuming
 - Lack of work-life balance
 - Felt relieved to obtain data during the pandemic.

ON-SITE FIELDWORK 2022:BACKGROUND

- Beginning of project: September 2020
- Submission of Visa application: October 2020
- Visa approved: August 2021
- Quarantine lifted: September 2021
- Fieldwork: January – November 2022 (10 months)
- No prior on-site fieldwork experience
- 1st travel to PNG
- Established relationship with remote speaker = access to community 

ON-SITE FIELDWORK 2022: KIBIRI'S SOCIAL DEATH

- Moral support from language activists: Remote speaker and a local teacher (Kibiri)
- Inconsistent materialized support from speakers
- Lack of language use
 - No naturalistic data, no register variation, few social practices
 - Staged conversations
 - A lot of original texts (procedural, descriptive, etc.)
 - Controlled elicitation.
 - Forgetfulness of lexicon; delay in response
- Abandonment of cultural practices (legends, drum-making, traditional songs)



00:02:17

 00:24:45

BB11.1-21052022

🗑️
⏪
🔄
⏸️
⏩
🔇
📄
🔊
🔗
🔄
⋮



00:07:20 00:17:52

LW8.1-08032022

Conversation

Video player controls including play/pause, stop, and volume icons.

Additional video player controls including full screen, mute, and share icons.

ON-SITE FIELDWORK 2022:IMPLICATIONS FOR DOCUMENTATION AND DESCRIPTION

- Possible to describe Kibiri as a linguistic system
- Possible to have different text genres
- Impossible to document the whole social picture due to language loss
- Less varied corpus: single register, adult speech, no naturalistic data, etc.
- Lower exposure to the language by the researcher



2023
Remote fieldwork continues

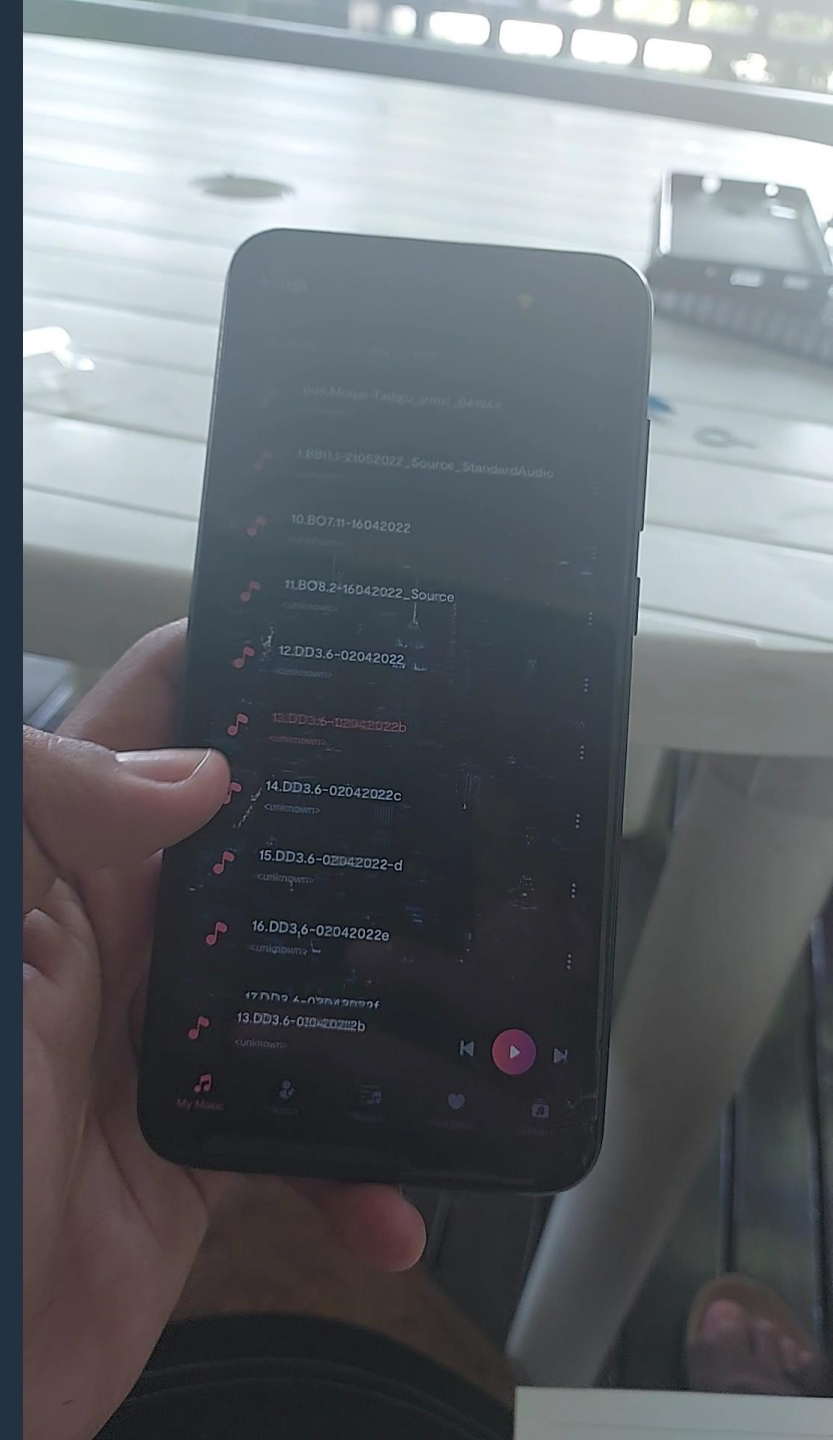


Compressed recordings in
phone card

Listening through a
loudspeaker

Transcription and translation
manually by speaker

Picture through Whatsapp
to researcher for annotation



AUTO-DOCUMENTATION BY THE KIBIRI?

- Material issues
 - Lack of funding
 - Security concerns: burglaries and robberies
 - Power supply
 - Equipment training
 - Equipment repair
 - Internet connexion
 - File transferts
 - Transcription / translation
- Speaker's willingness?

Remote fieldwork questionnaire

Since the Covid-19 pandemic started in 2019, it has been difficult or impossible for linguists to go to the field. The goal of this questionnaire is to see how this has impacted linguistic research, and if remote fieldwork is a potential substitute for in-situ work.

Field site and working environment

In which country(ies) do you do (most of) your current fieldwork? *

How long does it take to reach the field site?

From your home location *

- less than 12 hours.
- between 12 and 24 hours.
- between 24 hours and a week.

Jakob Lesage (HU, Berlin)
Neige Rochant (LLACAN CNRS)
Moisés Velasquez (LACITO CNRS)
Tessa Vermeir (DDL CNRS)

CONCLUSIONS

- Remote fieldwork
 - Funding institutions should be more flexible with administrative and accounting matters
 - Success depends on the speaker and the researcher's personal, professional, financial and material situation
 - The researcher should assess the whole situation and carry out what is doable
 - Financial advantage: e.g one trip instead of two
 - More agency on the part of the community
 - Not suitable for severely endangered languages with social death (Kibiri)
 - Should take place after on-site fieldwork
 - Alternation of on-site and remote fieldwork?

CONCLUSIONS

- On-site fieldwork
 - Should focus on document what is possible in a severely endangered language and in its current state
 - Work with as many speakers as possible for variation
 - We must accept that some aspects of the language and culture are gone
 - Respect the community's unconscious decision to let the language go
 - Perhaps language awareness comes through language work

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