An Overview of the Korshallese Language

Preface: A Brief History of Korshall:
The Korshallese language is spoken on the island/microcontinent of Koli Koli, in the tropical savannah highlands on the island's southern capes.

Figure 1. The Korshallese islands on Koli Koli Island.

The Korshallese believe themselves to be the descendants of the *Ānuxee*, a tribe of warriors who fought on the side of the Six Elder Gods during the Cataclysm, the clash between gods and demons that restarted the history of the world. The *Ānuxee* are said to have settled in Korshall after their original homeland sunk beneath the waves because of the massive damage the demons dealt to the planet. While ruins of the Old World are scattered throughout the planet, the odd temple or wall here or there, in Korshall entire cities were preserved and there are many historic sites throughout the highlands.

Stories of the Old World are kept alive through the *hābesne*, known as "Korshallese monks" in the Western world. The *hābesne* are respected elders who form the backbone of Korshallese society, helping to raise and teach children, settling disputes between chieftans, and telling others the *komenemawan*, the "Eternal Story", the ancient and modern history of the Korshallese.

The four major groups the Korshallese have encountered are the Sansenoba, the Hwukar the Pheroxians, and the Agorites. The Sansenoba occupy the coastal plains west of the highlands, with many near the sea living in houseboats or floating villages. They are frequent trade partners of the Korshallese, and have made many alliances in the past. Also native to Koli Koli but not as friendly to the Korshallese are the Hwukar tribe (endonym: *Slujā*). They live at the edge of the rainforest, venturing out to raid Sansenoba villages and Korshallese settlements in the foothills. They are said to have also descended from the *Ānuxee*, but from those who were ostracized at the beginning of settlement.

Living on another island out west are the Pheroxians, or more specifically the Wayo. After uniting their home island in the mid 7th century AE, the Pheroxians began to sail outwards and make war with their neighbors, eventually conquering all of Koli Koli Island when the Korshallese surrendered in 812AE. The Pheroxian colonial era was brutal, many *hābesne* were killed after refusing to convert to the Pheroxian sun religion, and countless stories were lost, countless links to the past severed.

400 years later, the Korshallese were encountered by another large empire: the Agorites. Unlike the Pheroxians, the Agorites valued the knowledge of the Korshallese elders and worked with them to transcribe their stories into written texts. Not all of the Korshallese elders were okay with the idea of transcribing sacred knowledge, but overall it was seen as a positive move. The Agorites maintained a small presence on the island, settling on the Karekore peninsula and founding the city of Rue-Hahn, "Moonmarket". After the First Pheroxian War of the 14th century AE, the Agorites abandoned their presence on the island. Many Korshallese went back with the Agorites, resettling in the Western Bhorlands. The language studied in this paper is Korshallese as it was spoken in the 13th century AE, as the Agorites were recording it.

Phonology:

Table 1. Consonant Phonemes of Korshallese

m, m: <mm>	n, n: <nn>		ŋ, ŋ: < ŋ ŋ>
b, b: <bb>	t, t: <tt>, d, d: <dd>	t͡s <c>[1], d͡ʒ <j>	k, k: <kk>
f	s		x
w	r		

Phonotactics allow for a maximum syllable structure of C_1WVC_2, where C_1 can be any consonant, W is the sole glide phoneme /w/, and C_2 is any consonant except for /t͡s/ or /d͡ʒ/. Geminated nasals can appear in all positions, while geminated stops can only appear word finally. Below are some examples of minimal pairs where gemination is contrastive:

meena [mena], "parrot"	*mmeena* [m:ena], "arrow"
ake [akɛ], "palm wine"	*akke* [ak:ɛ], "mountain top"
wam [wam], "man"	*wamm* [wam:], "tears"
ufad [ufad], "otter"	*ufadd* [ufad:], "spicy"

Not included in the table above is the breathiness phoneme, which will be marked in this document as /H/. Breathiness spreads to make every vowel of a word breathy. In addition, breathy-voiced modifiers can spread to the noun they modify, and vice-versa. Because of this behavior, the transcribers of Korshallese have chosen to write nouns and their modifiers as one long word, with breathiness being marked by an initial <h>.

Consider the following examples: *mmeena* [m:ena] "arrow" being modified by the adjective *hnawof* [n̤a̤w̤ɔ̤f] "on fire" to form the compound *hnawofmmeena* [n̤a̤w̤ɔ̤fm:e̤na̤] "flaming arrow"; and rexi [rexi] "stale-smelling" modifying *htobbe* [tɔ̤b:e̤] "hut" to form the compound *hrexitobbe* [re̤xi̤tɔ̤b:e̤] "stale-smelling hut".

Table 2. Vowel Phonemes of Korshallese

i, i: <ī>		u, u: <ū>
e <ee>, e: <ēē>	ʊ <oo>, ʊ: <ōō>	
ɛ, <e> ɛ:[2] <ē>	ɔ <o>, ɔ: <ō>	
	a, a: <ā>	

The seven qualities of vowel phoneme each come in a long and short version. Below are some examples of minimal pairs where vowel length is contrastive:

ŋar [ŋar], "the smell of crushed plants"	*ŋār* [ŋ:ar], "nest"
hebbe [e̤b:e̤], "value, worth, equivalence"	*hēbbe* [e̤:b:e̤], "blossom"
week [wek], "auk"	*wēēk* [we:k], "slippery, slimy"
ciba [t͡siba], "large root, rhizome"	*cība* [t͡si:ba], "bearcat"
najo [nad͡ʒo], "flamingo"	*najō* [nad͡ʒo:], "sleep"
woobe [wʊbe], "healer"	*wōōbe* [wʊ:be], "exit, absence, lack"
kittu [kit:u], "unmarried, a virgin"	*kittū* [kit:u:], "pangolin"

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[1] Realization of /s/ and t͡s as [ʃ] and t͡ʃ respectively has been observed in some speakers

[2] In the Northern Lowland dialect, /ɛ ɛ: / has merged with /e e:/, as has /ɔ ɔ:/ with /ʊ ʊ:/ and turned the 7 vowel system into 5

Verbs:

Korshallese only has nine "true" verbs, roots which are lexically verb like and are not derived from another part of speech with verbalizing suffixes:

1. *nnee* [nːe], "to do/go" (see also related verbalizing suffix -nē [nɛː])
2. *soobo* [sʊbɔ], "to give/move/make"
3. *ākka* [aːkːa], "to think/say/feel"
4. *hābe* [a̤ːbe̤], "to know/remember"
5. *dace* [da͡t͡se], negation verb
6. *hiri* [i̤ri̤], "to clean/prepare"
7. *htōrako* [tɔ̤ːra̤kɔ], "to worship"
8. *rīfe* [riːfɛ], "to love" (of one's offspring or partner)
9. *womo* [wɔmɔ], "to eat"

Negation of a clause is done through the verb *dace*, with the original clause being moved into a subordinate clause with *wi*. The original verb loses all person and time marking and comes after the object, and this transfers instead to *dace*:

> womo-b   arex-ir-odd
> eat-1S.PRES wombat-GEN-meat
> "I am eating wombat."

> dace-b   wi arex-ir-odd   womo
> NEG-1S.PRES that wombat-GEN-meat eat
> "I am not eating wombat."

Korshallese ~~was required to feature~~ features a process known as insubordination, where subordinate clauses stand alone as their own clauses [3]. In Korshallese this is most commonly found with clauses featuring the subordinator *wi*, and are often used as a form of answering questions with additional evidence:

> A: hiri-kwē-ru-nemm?
>   prepare-IRR-2S.FUT-Q
> "Are you going to prepare dinner?"

> B: wi   mmara-nē-kwē-b   week-er-kunek-ir!
>   SUBR hand-do-IRR-1S.PRES   auk-GEN-egg-ID
> "(Can't you see) that I am gathering some auk eggs?" / "(Yes), I'm gathering auk eggs!"

Insubordinate clauses with the conditional *rux* can convey an optative meaning:

> rux   wini-wākka-kwē-k!
> COND lying.down-feel-IRR-1S.PAST
> "If I was lazy!" / "If only I could be lazy!"

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[3] Evans, Nicholas. "Insubordination and its uses"

Nouns:

Nouns are not marked for number, nor do they carry any marking for alignment; word order shows the role of a noun in a sentence (the normal order is SVO, but this can change in certain constructions).

> Anuxēē htōrako-kk   kerna
> Anuxēē worship-ANIM god
> "The Anuxēē worship the gods."

Because of the limited amount of "true" verbs in Korshallese, a lot of noun roots do double duty and can serve as verbs by adding verbalizing suffixes such as *-nē* or *-wākka.* Much of this compounding is no longer productive, and fixed compounds encode a defined meaning. For example the verb for "to shine", *hutabbinē*, is formed from *hut* "day, morning, light", *abbi* "sky, weather, status", and the verbalizing suffix *-nē.*

> tōrok hut-abbi-nē-kk-ere   rux heja-nē-kwe
> sun   day-sky-do-ANIM-FUT if   tomorrow-do-IRR
> "The sun will shine tomorrow."

Korshallese does not mark definiteness, but it does mark indefiniteness. The suffix *–(i)r* marks indefiniteness. It is also used to mark nouns which are being modified by a quantity, including numbers as well as words like *xe* "a little bit", *dawa*, "a lot", and *dawawa* "both, all, every". One exception is the numeral *adda* "two", for which nouns marked by it receive the dual suffix *-wi.* Below are some examples:

> urake womo-kk-ā   banak
> fire   eat-ANIM-PST rice
> "They (the temple guardian) ate the rice."

> urake womo-kk-ā   banak-ir
> fire   eat-ANIM-PST rice-ID
> "They (the temple guardian) ate some rice."

> urake womo-kk-ā een   banak-ir
> fire   eat-ANIM-PST three rice-ID
> "They (the temple guardian) ate three (servings of) rice."

> urake womo-kk-ā   adda banak-wi
> fire   eat-ANIM-PST two   rice-DU
> "They (the temple guardian) ate two (servings of) rice."

Adjectives and nouns are considered the same part of speech. To form predicative adjectives and copulaic constructions, use *-nē*.

> hābero Dir! urake bindete-nē.
> know-IMP Dir fire   temple.guardian-do
> "This is Dir! They are a temple guardian" (lit. "Know Dir! They templeguard.")

Pronouns:
Korshallese has an open class of pronouns, frequently deriving pronouns from existing nouns to give them pronominal reference. In post-colonial dialects of Korshallese, speakers will even take pronouns from the languages of large empires they interact with to sound more polite.

Examples of Korshallese first person pronouns:
- *bodda*: means "private" or "personal", is the common first person pronoun used with strangers of roughly equal rank
- *caŋŋa*: means "heart", is used with friends or family
- *siru* : also the word for "sight, vision", considered polite and used with those who have a higher social standing than you or those you look up to
- *wi-sirunē*: translates more to "(I understand) that I see", hedges any possible errors you have in perception/understanding, or differences you have with the elders you are speaking to

Second person pronouns:
- *hwee*: was originally a vocative particle, but has become the most common 2nd person pronoun, used among people of equal rank
- *bāna*: means "face", considered polite and used with people you don't know that well
- *nero:* means "odor, stink" and is lovingly/jokingly used to refer to friends
- *hbattak:* means "top of the head, crown" and is used for small children (as you are taller than them and see the tops of their heads), can also be used to insult those of a lower standing than you
- *hkorowee*: comes from *koro* "wisdom, expertise" and the vocative particle *hwee*, lit. "your wisdom"; often used to refer to elders or the clergy (many other pronouns are derived from this vocative particle)
- *htabbattwee*: another vocative-derived particle, from *tabbatt* "power; strong wind", means "your power, your glory", used to refer to chiefs and other leadership, but is somewhat archaic
- *kina*: the Pheroxian 2nd person pronoun, used to address Pheroxians (Wayo or non-Wayo)
- *som*: the Agoric 2nd person absolutive pronoun, used to address Agorites

Third person:
- *jākkū*: also means "tracks, trail", as the person being referred to is no longer there in the conversation. It is the most common 3rd person pronoun, used to refer to people of any rank
- *rawo*: also means "staff", and is used to refer politely to the *hābesne* monks.
- *urake*: also means "fire", and is used for the Pheroxian temple guardians (*bindete*). Many Korshallese ended up converting to or at least absorbing some customs from the Pheroxian religion,
- *kakke*: also means "tail"; is used to refer to animals, usually pets but occasionally some more intelligent wild animals as well
- *hrubo*: also means "fart"; is used to refer to large herd animals, especially the Diprotodon-like giant wombats which graze in the Korshallese highlands
- *tamaka*: the Pheroxian 3rd person pronoun, used to refer politely to Pheroxians (Wayo or non-Wayo)
- *jien*: from the Agoric 3rd person absolutive pronoun *cien*, used to refer politely to Agorites