

A multi-purpose project for the preservation of War oral literature¹

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1. Overview of the Mon-Khmer (MK) languages of India (Meghalaya, Assam) and Bangladesh

The MK group of languages spoken in NE India, especially in Meghalaya since the formation of this State in 1972, is currently known as Khasi, Khasian or Khasic after the written Standard Khasi which has become the lingua franca and the standard written language of the MK area of Meghalaya since the British colonisation. Using linguistic criteria, this West-Northern MK group has four different languages: Pnar, War, Khasi, and Lyngngam (PWKL), not mutually intelligible, and many mixed dialects. PWKL has 1 200 000 speakers in Meghalaya according to the 2001 census. Each language is a group of dialects, with subgroups. All the speakers in this group speak Khasi, which has become the vehicle of Christianisation and literacy. Standard Khasi has been very well described from a morpho-phonological and from a lexical point of view but other languages have received very little attention. The overall presentation of this western group of MK languages is based on my unpublished field data.

Standard Khasi, the conservative sub-groups of Pnar and War, and Nongstoin Lyngngam present important differences in their phonology, morphology, grammaticalizations, syntax, discursive

¹ This paper has been jointly presented by Lakhmie Pohtam Sohsley and me at NEILS 4. At her request, I publish it under my only name. I am greatly indebted to her for teaching me Kudeng War, for her hospitality and for the thousands of hours we have spent together to transcribe and to approximate glosses of a large corpus in Kudeng and Nonbareh War. However, I am entirely responsible for the mistakes which certainly remain in the story presented here. I am also most grateful to Woh Thakur Pohtam Tean and to Woh Monti Pohtam Chernia for their invaluable help.

properties and they present variables differences in lexical similarities. These four languages have also developed many mixed languages, which makes difficult a sharp linguistic classification and a precise evaluation of the speakers in each group.

Pnar (sometimes called Synteng) was by far the most important group before the British colonisation. The urban Jowai Pnar has become recently a standard written Pnar, somewhat influenced by Standard Khasi.

Conservative Pnar still appears as a pivot language between conservative War and Standard Khasi. My lexicon of more than 5000 words in the three conservative subgroups of War shows between 22% and 28% lexical similarity with Khasi. There is between 35% and 45 % lexical similarity between conservative War subgroups and Ralliang Pnar (a representative rural Pnar). There is 45 % similarity between Ralliang Pnar and Standard Khasi. There is about 80 % lexical similarity between Nongstoin Lyngngam and Standard Khasi but their respective grammars present important differences and the dialectal inventory of Lyngngam remains to be done. Some of the lexical and grammatical specific features of Lyngngam show interesting similarities with North Munda languages.

Pnar still has about eight conservative dialects mostly spoken in the Jaintia hills and in the North of the Khasi Hills, in the Ri Bhoi district, and in Block II. It is also spoken in the Jaintiapur area in Bangladesh and in small groups in Assam and even in Manipur.

The main dialects of Pnar are: Jowai, Sutnga, Narpuh, Lakadong, Rymbai, Ralliang-Shangpung, Nongbah-Nongjini, Mynso-Thadbamon, Barato. Contrary to some Khasi assumptions, Bhoi is not a language it names a district and it means North in Pnar. A good many Pnar speakers from Manar clans call themselves Mnar in this district. There are also Mikir people, calling themselves Bhoi as they have mixed with Khasi people. Conservative Pnar is spoken by about 300 000 speakers (including communities outside Meghalaya). There are also numerous Pnar-Khasi, Khasi-Pnar, War-Pnar, Pnar-Khasi-War and even Pnar-

Khasi-War-Mikir speaking communities in the Ri Bhoi, those mixed languages are spoken by around 170 000 speakers. There are also many different Pnar-Khasi and Khasi-Pnar mixed languages in most of the West-Central Khasi Hills spoken by around 240 000 speakers. On the West there are Lyngngam-Pnar speaking communities, as Langrin, (e.g. the negation in *rje* of Langrin has typical features of the negation in *re* of Pnar).

War is a group comprising three main dialectal conservative sub-groups: Nongbareh, Amwi, and Satpator spoken in the South of the Jaintia Hills, South East Meghalaya also on the Northern slopes of the Khasi Hills, but also in Assam, Manipur and Bangladesh (near the boarder or in the South-East, West of Tripura) by a population I estimate between 60 000 to 70 000 speakers). Conservative War sub-groups are influenced by Pnar to different degrees in Satpator (Tarangblang, Kwator) and in Pamtdong (Amvi-Pnar).

War also has mixed dialects: different War-Pnar and different War-Khasi. War-Khasi includes especially a large set of former War dialects now very close to Khasi, spoken by approximately 112 000 speakers, in the South slopes of the Khasi Hills, mostly in Pynursla and in Shella areas.

War speakers have settled in Meghalaya in different groups and they are still migrating. Kudeng War, spoken in two small remote villages, belongs to Nongbareh, the main conservative dialect of War, which has six sub-dialects.

MK and Munda are the two branches of Austroasiatic (AA) and PWKL appears to be a pivot group between the two branches; it has conservative typological features of both groups.

2. Transcription and translation of War narratives in the context of AA cosmogony representations and AA rituals.

This work is based on an unpublished documentation totalizing twelve mega octets of recordings with their corresponding IPA transcriptions, and draft translations. This documentation is centred on oral texts comprising tales, religious narratives and epic

narratives. This documentation comprises ten narratives in Amvi, eight narratives in Kudeng, six narratives in Nongbareh, one in Satpator plus numerous religious rituals in their context (live recordings and later explanations given to me by representatives), ethno-botanic and medicinal practices in Amvi War and in Nongbareh War especially in Kudeng, Amkoi and Nongbareh Lyntear, documentation on clan histories, migrations of allied clans and village foundation in Kudeng, Amvi, and Nongbareh Lyntear and music for the pleasure: *pawars* 'sung poetry', *rong khusi* 'pleasure festival'. Genuine ritual music has been destroyed.

Important religious narrations are performed during primary and secondary death rituals, the night before cremation of the dead and the night before *lum sh'iang* 'deposit of the bones' in the clan cairn, see §4.1. Those narratives are delivered ritually in competing teams of clan representatives, inspired by their clan ancestors on a theme given in advance. Those themes concern founding religious stories, epic battles and the story of the founding clan-grandmother-ancestor of the departed one together with the genealogy of streams of her sacred river.

I have been collecting War narratives and War information for scholarly purposes trying also to preserve alive this literature.

The preservation of this literature and its dialects is based on the cooperation with traditional religious representatives. A few people from different villages are being trained to record and to transcribe narratives and rituals. I have designed an adapted Romanised alphabet for the conservative War dialects. This alphabet is meant to be used by War people, especially school teachers and children. All the audio-recordings together with their Romanised transcriptions and English translations are meant to be edited, sold on markets, given to schools and distributed to scholars through the Thebeniar Society in the next few years.

This oral literature is produced by one of the very few genuine AA religious community still alive but probably living its very last years. My main collaborators, prominent Amvi and Kudeng elders, have died since this project was started.

This project might also help children to learn English. It has proved impossible to understand English from Khasi for War

children. This documentation is also meant for different scholar purposes:

a) Study of the migrations and AA settlements. I wish to add to the comparison of AA cognate elements an ethno-linguistic dimension. This documentation aims at providing AA common features in different rituals, foundation stories, cultivation practices, land foundation rights along the sacred clan rivers and their crossing streams. It provides AA ways of naming for people, rivers, “animate beings” in the three worlds together with their classifiers, see examples of such reconstructions in §4.1.

Medicinal practices show typical area plants or trees; they also provide interesting clues about cultural representations of the human body, of social and cosmic cooperation, which may be common or different from other MK and Munda communities.

b) Reconstruction of some common features of an AA religion, especially with Bodding, and Hoffmann for Munda, French ethnologists for Mon-Khmer cultures in former French Indo-China territories and Khasi documentation (see references).

c) Typology. PWKL appears to be a pivot group for the study of common MK and Munda typological features.

3. War alphabet for the three main conservative War subgroups of dialects: Amvi, Nongbareh, Satpator.

I propose an adaptation of the Khasi and Pnar roman alphabets for conservative War dialects, spoken especially in Meghalaya and in Bangladesh. We use it to transcribe oral literature in the different conservative dialects, trying not to impose a standard War. I am aware that some kind of standard War might result and impose itself after some time.

Vowels: **a, ã, e** (IPA /e/, /ə/, /ɛ/), **ẽ, o** (IPA /o/, /ɔ/), **õ, i, ĩ, u.** We do not indicate long vowels which have proved confusing with the notation of nasalized vowels.

Consonants: **b, k, d, tj,** (/dj/ in Pnar and in Khasi borrowings like: *djingmut* ‘meaning’, IPA ɕ), **ng** (IPA ŋ) **h,** (IPA ʔ), **l, m, n, p, r, s, sh** (IPA ʃ), **ch** (/tsh/ would be better but /ch/ is already used to

write clan names like *Pohtam Cherniah* as this consonant is close to /ch/ used in the standard Pnar alphabet (/ch/ corresponds to IPA /c/). The IPA notation for this War consonant is /tʃ/ rather than /c/ in Pnar. Cognate words in Khasi use the consonant /sh/), **tj** (a fricative with a low quantity of friction in words which are often cognate with MK, especially Pnar and Khasi, or Munda, involving IPA /j/ or /ɟ/ like *tji* ‘cooked rice’ in War, *dja* in Khasi. In War, the consonant /tj/ opposes to /ch/ (IPA /tʃ/ opposes to /tʃ/ in words cognate with /c/ in Pnar and /ʃ/ in Khasi). /tj/ (IPA /tʃ/) is an isogloss for conservative War dialects in the Jaintia Hills, in the Ri Bhoi, in Assam and in Bangladesh. **l, m, n**, (/nĩ/ in War: *nieu* ‘uncle’, rather than /ñ/ in Khasi borrowings, has been chosen for morphological reasons) **t, v, w, ɪ** (IPA /j/)

4. KA RONDIKA BE U KRISHNO

This epic narrative has been told by Woh Thakur Pohtam Tean in his house to his friends, grandchildren and to me, in Kudeng Thymmai, during two evenings, in December 2005. We were rather close friends and Woh Thakur knew how to use my tape recorder by himself and so this version may be considered as a genuine one. I present it here in four episodes with summaries and extracts. The beginning of the first episode is glossed. The translation is as literal as possible.

4.1 Austroasiatic background of the story

This story takes up various layers of narratives including Hindu and Christian influences and set the names of the heroes accordingly. Though Krishno obviously borrows his name from Krishna the hero of the Maharabata and like him wanders on earth playing his flute, his behaviour in his quest for his chosen clan descent against evil forces owes very little to his Hindu patron and much to War social rules and sense of humour, to Munda and Pnar oral literature and to AA cosmogony representations. The son of the king of evil forces becomes Satan at the end of the story.

Rondika borrows features to the older and much more important Li'do'Kha 'Lady fish', ancestor of the Sutnga Pnar and of all the War mankind. They both appear on earth from a river, they both are the daughter of the Ancestor of waters, that is an ancestor of species of beings who proceeds from rivers (like people and fishes) and species who need rain to grow (like plants). Rondika and Li' Do' kha found new lineages. These two clan ancestors also represent two rather different feminine figures and so are their husbands in the two stories. Here, it is Rondika who links and recognizes Krishno, the son of the Sky, as the ancestor of her lineage rather than being hooked by Lo' Ryndi a simple man within his land, as in the narrative of Li' Do' kha.

Krishno wanders on earth searching for a wife according to the prohibition of clan incest and meeting various incarnations of ancestors. At the beginning of the story, He purifies himself in the water which houses Rondika without knowing his fate. Righteous and evil forces appear to be unconscious, at least on earth.

Li' Do' kha is the daughter of Hermon. Hermon is the wife of Harata Khanwar in another narrative told by Woh Thakur. Harata Khanwar in War corresponds to Harata kun War in Pnar and Harata khon War in Santali narratives (Santali is the main group of kherwar that is of Northern Munda) and then Harata might be a mythical founder of an AA group comprising Kherwar and PWKL people. The main episode of the story of Harata is inserted in the second episode of this story with some modifications, see note 10. The figure of Harata may be traced back from common AA features as will be shown below. Harata khan/kun War is a male ancestor of War, Pnar and Khasi allied clans. He is the husband of Hermon, the mother of Li' Do'kha, the ancestress of Sutnga and War allied clans. Hermon is also the mother of the ancestress of the Jowai Pnar and Khasi allied clans: *ka Sentu Ksiar* 'the flower in gold' in Pnar and *ka Pa' Sentieu* 'the lured flower' in Khasi.

Hermon might be derived in War from *kher* + *mən* < *ker* + *mən* 'chosen one(s), beloved one(s)' (*kh*←*k* Haudricour's law), where *ker* might be related to *kara* 'specie, earth up' in Khasi and to the prefix *khər/khər/kər* found in various AA people names as

in *kher-war*, *khər-rim* one of the two conservative Khasi groups and *kher-vi* another name used by Amvi War people to call themselves. *amvi* contains *am* ‘water, river’ and *vi* corresponding to PWKL *wa* another name for river denoting the flow of water. *wa*←*va* and *va*→*vi* like *hi* ‘fish’, *sli* ‘leave’, *khli* ‘tiger in War correspond to *kha*, *sla*, *khla* in Pnar. *war* < *wa* +*-r* and *kherwar* both mean people of the rivers: the prefix *kher-* and the suffix- *r* both form names of places and names of people in War, in Khasi and in Pnar.

In Santali oral literature, Harata is also the name of the mythic great mountain, where a human pair was saved after a rain of fire and where hereafter people got their clan species; in Santali, *hara tal* ‘grow to maturity’, see (Bodding 1929). In Kherwar the Great Mountain Ancestor (Maran Buru) plays a central role as a being who house the source of all rivers. Pnar and War also have this great Mountain Ancestor as Nieu ‘Uncle’ Chellong, see (Daladier 2007) and in Mnong as *mu*, see (Maurice 2002: 298). *chellong* < *shi long* ‘the Being one’ in PWKL refers to the peak which gives its name to Shillong. In PWKL rivers house clan spirits and delimit clan lands.

As the “great mountain”, Harata is a typical AA higher clan land founder ancestor because the great mountain rules the rivers which rule clan land foundation. In War and in Pnar, Nieu Chellong rules lands under another ruling ancestor, a feminine ancestor who sets the religious and social Law, *ka Ma Senchar*. *Ka Ma Senchar* ‘Mother sacred Law’ (*senchar* < *san* + *char*, *san* ‘sacred’ *char* ‘law’) is the highest ruling ancestor in the Pnar and War traditional areas, see *char* in episode two, note 15.

Rivers and their streams are ruled according to the declivity on the ground, from their source inside the Great Mountain. Clan lands are bounded by river crossings according to this ruling principle. The Kherwar and the War have similar rituals for founding new villages. They “plant” stones housing clan founder ancestors in sacred groves. The War set stones housing district protectors as gates of the village according to ancestor hierarchies. New villages are founded along rivers by founder clans who ally. These founders then rule the village for the generations to come

both from a religious and secular point of view. Rivers found and nourish species of clan beings: people on earth and ancestors, from a religious and concrete (crops) point of view. A pregnant woman cannot cross her clan river in the sacred grove as she cannot mix her clan specie reproduction principle with others.

Nieriang is the daughter of Mu' s'iang the mother of all the seeds of species, that is the mother of all the ancestors, including fire, water, rock. Mu' s'iang and Sentchar are probably two attribute names for the same highest ruling entity corresponding to two different layers of oral literature, like Rondika and Li'Do' Kha, perhaps also Krishno and Harata.

Woh Thakur was a prominent Niam Tra elder of the Pohtam (Po?tam), a founding clan in Kudeng Thymmai and in Kudeng Rim. He also was a reputed *kombirat* 'traditional doctor'. *Thakur* is a healing god in the War Pantheon. Nongbareh, the religious centre of this area is described in the story as the navel of the earth. *Pohtam* contains *po* 'belly, inside, core' and *tam* 'to remain, those who remain'. *Po*, *so* 'fruit, fructification' and *do* 'meat, specie, flesh', are kinds of classifiers for clan names and river names (see '*am po*' *iing*', a river, below) in the sense of various fructification types. *So* is also the classifier of edible fruits.

As the Pohtam have separated to found new *kpong* 'households and their lands', they have founded Pohtam Sohsley, Pohtam Tean, Pohtam Chyrniah, Pohtam Hayong, Pohtam Chui, Pohtam Kai; recently Pohtam Bhong separated from Pohtam Hayong. All their founding stones are planted facing East below the lower gate of Kudeng Rim on the steep slopes above *?am Lamar* and *?am ktfar*.

kpong has two concrete representations: a) a basket filled with bones of wild animals, especially teeth and antlers, linking the people and the household ancestors to the forest lands. This basket is ritually deposited under the roof, on top of a post, by the entrance of the house; b) stones related both to clan ancestors and to clan land boundaries. In addition to the founding stones associated to the village and its lands, there are huge resting stones and megaliths in ceremonial places where vertical stones represent *kpong* from different neighbouring clans. One of such group of

stones is located East of Nongbareh by 'am po' iing' river, in the Jaintia Hills, where clans used to meet until recently to pray Nieriang to get or to stop rain falls.

Clan, gods, river names in the three groups of conservative War dialects show that War people have come on Pnar lands in different groups. For example, the name of *Ma Senchar* is taken up in various place names; the river 'am kchar flows from 'Amlarem to 'Am Ngot, ruling all the Nonbareh area, where are Kudeng Thymmai and Kudeng Rim. The name of the Cachar (*kafar*) hills, a former Pnar area ruled by Pnar kings in the 16th and 17th Centuries, as described in the Aom chronicles translated by (Bhuyan 1964), might be reconstructed as *ka* + *tfar* 'the law, the ruling principle', that is the country ruled by the Ancestor of the Pnar and War communities.

Various uses of the names of *Ma sɛntʃar* and *Njeu tʃəlon*, the two highest feminine and masculine Ancestors of the War, trace back their historical covenants with Pnar clans. Rivers flowing from the Shillong peak and from the Eastern hills near Sutnga delimit former Pnar lands: 'Am Ngot flowing Southward between the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills, and the Kupili flowing Northward to the Brahmaputra, between the East Ri Bhoi and Block 2 (now inhabited by the Tiwa) in Assam. According to different explanations given to me in Kudeng and in Nongbareh, the War group of Nongbareh got their actual lands from a covenant with the Sumer clan, a very important Pnar clan, in a village called Iap Ngar in the North Eastern Ri Bhoi. The Kervi, who have settled along the Myntadu river on the East of the War area, allied Jowai clans (especially the Manar). In war villages, former Pnar people now speak War and have become War, while in Pnar villages former War people now speak Pnar or other mixed languages.

The founding of new villages along river crossings with allied clans links rivers, trees of sacred groves and ancestors: clan, district or country ancestors, to village clan founders and to their initial clan river. In the ritual of the planting of the foundation stones of a new village, some water carried from the native river of the founders is sprinkled on the founding clan stones. In the same way, some water of the clan river is sprinkled on the bones

which have become “pregnant” of the clan seeds during the secondary death rituals.

Village and household foundation rituals may be compared to the secondary death rituals in several Munda and Mon-Khmer (MK) traditions: *lum sh’iang* in War, *Guar* in Sora (South Munda) and their similar rituals in various Kherwar (North Munda), Bahnar and Khmu (Mon-Khmer) cultures. *Gua* is a mythic river of the Santali group.

4.2 First episode: waters, a resource in all activities of mankind and a passage doorway for ancestors

U.te u Krishno u pra u nu phliang.
 M.REM 3MS Krishno 3MS god 3MS up sky
 That Krishno is a god from the sky

‘A’ ti ke mi ke por de nu phliang
 have in 3FS one 3FS time PRF DEIC in sky
 there is a time, (coming) from the sky

she ke.ne ke pertha tju wan ma’ u ke.ne ke pertha
 down F.PROX 3FS earth CONS come see 3MS F.PROX 3FS earth
 down on this earth, he came to see this earth

bero’ ke song sar², bero’ rea dong tju lea ma’ u
 all 3FS earth all four corner CONS go see 3MS
 all the earth, all its four corners, he came to see

kainia’ ke song sar she.ne she ktjua pertha song sar
 how 3FS world down.here 3FS ground world world
 how this world down here is, the ground world

nu phliang wan u Krishno. La’.ite, la’ la’ u,
 up sky come 3MS Krishno. Then INDEF come 3MS
 from the sky Krishno came. When he came

² **song sar** : the world, the universe or the earth as opposed to the celestial world (*phliang*) and the underworld (*pethar*); *ke pertha ke song sar* imitative words.

la' poi u she ke.ne ke pertha, e ngem u
 INDEF reach 3MS down F.PROX 3FS world DCL immerse 3MS
 when he reached here on this earth, he immersed

ti ka 'am³, ngem u ti ke mea sue⁴, e ngem u
 in 3FS water immerse 3MS in 3FS big pool DCL immerse 3MS
 in the river he immersed, in a big pond he immersed

chlup⁵. e ngem u Krishno, e sem⁶ u tite.
 penetrate DCL immerses 3MS Krishno DCL purify 3MS in.there
 penetrating (it). Krishno immersed (himself), he purified in.there

La' dep tite e ngem u ti 'am shi lan diem
 INDEF FIN in.there DCL immerse 3MS in water one long-time very
 After (he had reached), he immersed in the water for a very long time

khlem shlo'. E ngem me ngem u. E mu⁷
 without reappear DCL immerse REP immerse 3MS DCL think
 without reappearing. He kept immersed. People thought

i tjeprou de iip u. De lan diem ngem u,
 3P people PFT die 3MS PFT long.time very immerse 3MS
 he had died. He immersed for a very long time

shi⁸ lema', shi shngai, ngem u shepo' 'am. Shi shngai,
 one night one daytime immerse 3MS inside water one daytime

³ 'am 'water, river, all vital liquids of the body except the blood, also sap and juices'. I try to keep this broad meaning of vital liquid, using 'water', 'waters' and 'river' to translate it.

⁴ sue natural pond of deep waters made by the river as opposed to nan 'tank' made by people.

⁵ chlup to penetrate something. To plunge, to immerse into water or to penetrate something with an implement, to put something to cook inside the fire between ashes and fire wood.

⁶ sem to wash oneself, to clean oneself, to purify oneself.

⁷ mu' to think, to believe in interaction with somebody else, or as a kind of agreement as opposed to perkhat 'to think, to devise' and to lebudia 'to believe, to be confident'. Irrealis moods are not marked in War.

⁸ There are classifiers for some number. In addition there is an opposition mi/shi 'one' according to whether things are discrete or whether they involve some kind of entity or abstraction.

One night, one daytime, he immersed inside the river, one daytime

shi lema' tipo' 'am e shkea u. La'.ite, la' p'oi
one night inside water DCL stay 3MS CONSEQ INDEF reach
one night he remained in the water. Thereafter, when he reached

she.te shepo' 'am shlo' ke derou, ke
down.there down.belly water appear 3FS bachelor 3FS
downthere inside the river, a damsel appeared

miet pelat ke derou, ke miet pelat, shepo' 'am.
extremely 3FS bachelor 3FS extremely down.belly water
a very handsome damsel, a very handsome one inside the river

Ke.te ke derou ke miet diem ke hun ke
F.REM 3FS bachelor 3FS nice very 3FS child 3FS
This damsel who was very beautiful was the daughter of

sh'iem Nieriang, i tviang ke Rondika.
queen Me-who-swim 3MASS name 3FS Rondika
Queen Me-who-swim, her name was She-who-get-lineage

ke.te ke shkea shepo' 'am
F.DIST 3FS sit down-belly water
that one who lived inside the river

Ong ie she.te e bua e de' u she e'ake,
say 3P down.there DCL eat DCL drink 3MS down 3FS ST
people say that down there he ate and drunk at her place

ai bua, ai de' ke, tu 'am, ke.ne ke 'am
give eat give drink 3FS at water 3PROX 3FS water
she gave him to eat and to drink at this river place

nu ke thao ke e miet diem, ke miet diem ke thao.
from 3FS place 3FS DCL nice very 3FS nice very 3FS place
from this place which was beautiful, this beautiful place

Ke.te ke sh'iem, ke sh'iem Rondika, ke hun
3 DIST 3FS queen 3FS queen Rondika 3FS daughter
of the queen, the queen Rondika, the daughter

ke Nieriang ke sh'iem Nieriang ke sh'iem 'am.
 3FS Nieriang 3FS queen Nieriang 3FS queen water
 of Nieriang, the queen Nieriang, the queen of waters

La'.ite, la' tju shlo' u tju wan cha' nu.ne,
 CONSEQ INDEF CONS appear 3MS CONS AUX REML up.PROX
 So, when he had appeared coming all the way here on

i pertha, shlo' u tipo' ke 'am, temphue ke
 3MASS world appear 3MS in-belly 3FS water greet 3FS
 the earth, when he had appeared inside the waters, she greeted (him)

di u kwiiang⁹, shi temphue di u kwiiang,
 SAL A 3MS necklace ONE greet SAL A 3MS necklace
 with a necklace, at once she greeted him with a necklace

so' perchong ai ke shi temphue e'au. E miet diem u ksi.
 fruit carambola give 3FS ONE greet 3MS DCL nice very 3 gold
 of carambola fruits, at once she had greeted him. It was a very beautiful
 one in gold.

E temphue di e'ake ha' e'au.
 DCL greet SAL A 3FS ST SAL B 3MS ST
 She was the one who greeted him (as her chosen one).

La'.ite wan u nu ke.ne ke pertha.
 CONSEQ come 3MS up F.PROX 3FS earth
 Thereafter he came up on this earth.

La' wan nu pertha u kwiiang kdet u lekedei.
 INDEF come up earth 3MS necklace worm 3MS shake
 When he came up on this earth, his necklace was wriggling and shaking.

La'.ite e'ake be shlo' ke lea be' ke,
 CONSEQ 3FS ST COM appear 3FS go chase 3FS

⁹ *kwiiang* 'necklace' given here as an ever-lasting love link. A traditional necklace is made of *perchong* fruits in gold and of peaces of coral beds. This love link contrasts with Pethan 'link', also named Saitan, the son of Ban the great Oppressor, who also tries to seduce and link Rondika.

Thereafter she also she appeared, she went chasing (him)

kat nu e lea u, be' me be' ke,
 as UP DCL go 3MS chase REP chase 3FS
 wherever he was going, chasing and chasing (him)

be' me be' ke, phet me phet u;
 chase REP chase 3FS, run.away REP run.away 3MS
 chasing him again and again, he was running away again and again;

'a.tju phu' kwa' u.te ha' tju di lok,
 NEG PST yet desire 3MS.REM A INFER CONS get spouse
 that one had not yet desired to have the fate to get a spouse,

'a tju phu' kwa' u tju di tjeprou.
 NEG PST yet desire 3MS CONS get person
 he had not yet desired to get married

Translation:

Krishno is a god, a celestial being. Once upon a time, he came from the sky down here on this earth. He had come to see this earth with all its countries, to see it all over in the four directions; Krishno had come from the sky, down here on the ground, to see how this world is.

When he came, when he reached this earth, he plunged into a river. He plunged into the dip waters; he plunged there and remained immersed. Krishno plunged and stayed in there, purifying himself. After plunging in this river, he stayed there for a very long time, without reappearing. He remained immersed. People would think he had died. He stayed immersed for a very long time, one night and one day, he remained immersed inside the waters.

When he arrived in the waters, a damsel went to him, in the heart of the waters, a wonderful, really wonderful damsel.

This beautiful damsel was the daughter of the queen Me-who-swim, the name of this damsel who lives in the waters was Who-gets-lineage.

People say that there she gave him board and lodging, she hosted him with food and drinks, she, there in this water place, in

this marvellous place. This queen, this queen Who-gets-lineage, was the daughter of Queen Me-Who-swim, the queen of waters.

Then, when he had appeared here on this earth, when he had appeared here in the waters, she greeted him at once with a ceremonial traditional necklace. It was a gorgeous one, in gold. She was the one who had greeted him as her chosen one.

Then he came up on this earth. When he came up his necklace was wriggling and hopping.

She too went up then, running after him wherever he might go, running and running, rushing further and further away.

He had not yet desired to have the fate to get married. He had not yet desired to be with someone.

4.3 Second episode¹⁰, first temptation on earth of Krishno

summary: Krishno wanders on this earth, playing his flute, believing Rondika cannot hear it. Rondika, restlessly running after him, follows the sound of his flute, her clothes completely worn out. Her mother, Me-who-swim looks at her with pity from the outer world but does not interfere. At some point, Krishno reaches a pond in a deep forest, where three fairy sisters have incarnated into three beautiful young ladies. They undress and enjoy bathing luring him without noticing his presence, believing they are alone. Krishno enjoys watching them, hidden behind a tree. The water of purification may also be the water of earthly joys. Krishno takes and hides the dresses of the youngest and most beautiful one. Without her dresses she cannot fly back where she belongs. When

¹⁰ This episode takes up but transforms the theme of Harata Khon War in Pnar narratives where the hero, a simple man, binds the youngest sister of the three daughters of the king of the sky as an earthy progenitor of his lineage by the force of a magic given by his godmother. Here, Krishno himself banishes her from the celestial society, as she took a chance of seducing her clan mates on earth. AA have rituals to bind the Ancestors of people or of various crops, especially the paddy, to clans, see (Jouin 1949), (Kemlin 1998) and (Dournes 1977). When they incarnate as progenitors of earthy species those feminine ancestors are temporally bound, they bear earthy fruits and then fly back, as in the narratives of Li Do'kha, of Pa' sentieu or in the Sre foundation story of (Dournes 1977).

they notice the disappearance of the dresses, not knowing who he is, they try all their powers against him to get back the dresses, without any result. Thereafter, he let them know who he is. Though they express respect and fraternal love to him and though he feels pity and sympathy for the young girl who had no ill intention, he teaches them a very hard lesson about the respect of incest taboo, refusing to give back the dresses. Being a possible matrilineal cousin of these sisters (they are the daughters of Koina 'purifying pound', see note 14). Rondika is a patrilineal cousin of Krishno, a very welcome fiancé according to tradition).

(...) La' ite, la' p'oi shete, la' dep u tju besia kete ke miet bere kete ke hembo, lum u i dea kete ke humbo, tai ria' u iie, phet u shepo' kermea tu rot 'am, ria' u tite, khop shkea u ti trai ke tvea. La' ite la' mu' ke tju shlo' he sap dea, sap tjeme, e'ake 'a' te i tjeme ke, de lum u i dea i tjeme ke bero', tai ria' u, plak. La' ite, e'ake, 'a tju di tjeme kete tju sap, tju phong. I ba ke de dep sap tite ki er bai, ke Suni be ke Irmai, er bai de dep sap, kene 'a tju di ke, lum u sbak e tai ria' u iie. La' ite te, ong ki puri "hei! ne me i Pra, ne me i tjeprou, to' sa' s'or peshlo' i dea i tjeme, peshlo' i tjeme ke"

e'au, tjiao, khlem ja'kea', tjiao khlem kea', khlem ke dur . Ha' shi rhen, ong ki:

"hei, ne me i Pra, ne me i tjeprou, to' sa' s'or peshlo' i dea i tjeme" ong ki pe lai bai, "de sap pertha i jo' man pusea' m".

E'au, 'a tju wen tang shi tjieng khlem tju bap.

La' ite kat lai rhen e shier ie man ie te, 'a tju ai ute i dea i tjeme ke tai ria' bit u i tjong kete ke derou, kete ke dang hembo. La' ite, tai ria' sbak khlem ai u. La' ite ai ke shi ia'sap pertha ong ke:

"tju man pusea' m ne me hena m".

La' ite, ai ki shi ai sap pertha kat 'a' be' ma' ie te. 'a' pusea' ie te, 'a' pusea' puram ie te. Te e'au, teleoi e shkea u. 'a tju nep tjeu u te. La' ong ki, "hei" ha' shi rhen to' shier "io' man pusea' m", de di mere i tja' burom ti e wan i ti song sar ti pertha. Ha' shi rhen ai sap pertha ie, e'au te:

"hn hn, tja ka'tju' u he 'a' te i heni".

E'au, mea bere i bor u. La' ite tju lea wan ki cha'non, tju lea wan phliiang, tju lea wan pe lai bai ie, ha' e'ake tju phong ie cha'non. La' ite te, e'ake, e mere ke khlem tjeme tju lea, e sa' dieu ke, ite i pere bo, pere ia' 'a' be i tjeme ie, te e'ake khlem tjeme, 'a tju sa' shien ke te tju lea cha'non, e mere ke.

(...) Ong u: " ihi ki puri, nie te u Krishno". La' ite te, la' ma' ke, shi ma', ong ke "kong", ham u Krishno, "kong Krishno", ja'do' ie ha' e'au pe lai bai ie, ham u e mea bere i bor u, ia'do', ia' diem ha' e'au.

(...) "di ihi ki henthai tjat e lea' khlem akor sem, khlem akor ihi tine ti i 'am. E mu' hi du' ihi she ke pertha? du' ihi e be' ke char¹¹ ti kene ke pertha? du' ihi be' to' kene ke 'am? e sem ki bero' ki lai phue shwier, ki lai phue shwat¹², bero' ki mrat ki mreng e sem ie, bero' ki 'a' hensue¹³ e sem ie tine, ne nie be kaitju' 'a tju be' ma' nge.

(...) After reaching the place (where they were bathing, and after) choosing the one who was the most beautiful among those girls, he takes her clothes, hides them, runs away inside the forest up to the bank of the river and hides himself, sitting quietly on the roots of a trunk.

Thereafter, as the youngest sister thought to get out and get well dressed, she realized that she had no more clothes. He had taken and hidden everything. So she had no more clothes to dress in and to cover herself. Her sisters had already dressed, they were two: Irma and Suni¹⁴ and the two of them were already well

¹¹ **char** 'law', 'to rule'.

¹² **lai phue shwier, lai phue shwat** (imitative) the thirty kinds of species living on earth, see note 20.

¹³ **hensue** 'earthy living principle, breath', see note 14.

¹⁴ **sunī** 'atmosphere' or more precisely the space between the earth and the sky proper where the higher beings like the sun and the stars are. This space communicates with the underworld and the earth thanks to the sacred groves, their trees (roots and upper branches), clan stones, rivers. It is separated from the sky proper where stay the higher ancestors, who can travel freely across the three worlds. When a person dies, his body is burnt and according to different War traditions reflecting other AA traditions, three pieces of his bones are deposited in a little hut or buried among the roots of a tree in the sacred grove,

dressed, as for her, she had got nothing anymore; he had taken and hidden everything. So, those fairies say: “He you! Whoever you are, god or human being, please let the clothes reappear, let her clothes reappear”

He, he remains silent, answering nothing, without emitting the least sound, without showing anything of his presence. They say once again: “He! Whoever you are, God or human being, please let the clothes reappear”

The three of them say: “Beware! If you belong to earthly beings you might become ashes”

He, he did not dare to give the least answer.

Three times they threatened him, it was impossible for them to get any result. He did not give back to this damsel the clothes he had just hidden though she was still a child. He had hidden them all but he wouldn't dare to give them back.

Once again, they had threatened him as if he was a human being, they couldn't see him. There were no ashes, not the tiniest bit of ashes. He, he stayed still, having private thoughts. Their magic was not sharp enough. When they had uttered for the third time: “Heï, you might become ashes if you do not give the clothes back, whoever you are, whether a human being or a god” and that nothing could be seen, they felt ashamed, they had dishonoured themselves in front of the whole universe. Once again they had behaved as if he was a simple human being.

or in a cairn, or on top of a wooden mast, or left inside the ashes of the cremation ground. The cremation ritual allows him to get freed from earth bondage; he looses his *hensue* ‘earthy vital principle’ and becomes a *shuret* ‘household ancestor’. Three days after death has occurred, *selut mendi* is performed to know whether the death was natural or not. If not, a purification ritual has to be performed where the water of a *koi* ‘purification pond dug by people’ is used instead of the water of the clan river. *Shuret* stay in the underworld, where still flows their clan river, and in the *sunî* space, they come back in their house when food is given to them. The dead one has to purify up to the time he gets ready and his household people get rich enough to perform the *lum sh’iàng* ceremony. Another *selut mendi* is performed to know whether the clan ancestor accepts him. Then, his bones are collected and deposited in the matrilineal clan tomb. The *lum sh’iàng* ritual allows him to get freed from his household and to fuse with the clan ancestor. The clan ancestor then grows up in the ancestor hierarchy.

(...) He, he said: “no, no way with such manners, no reason why”
He, his power was much stronger. So, the three of them would have to come back (as they were) there away in the sky, good fate might let them cover her up there. She felt ashamed to go naked with her two sisters well dressed, she had sad thoughts; she was not ready to go into the sky like that.

He said: “you fairies, I am Krishno”

Seeing that, surprised he was Krishno, she replied at once:

“Brother-in-law, brother-in-law Krishno”

And the three of them kissed him, they were surprised by his power; they kissed and greeted him.

(...) “It is you, of the female gender, who behaved without correct manners, without the right behaviour in the river. Do you think you are the only ones on earth? Do you believe you are the only ones to rule this world, the only ones to know this river, don’t you know that all the species that have an earthly body may come here to bathe, I also was there though you couldn’t see me.”

4.4 Third episode: the fight of righteous and evil forces after a second temptation of Krishno by the daughter of evil forces

Summary: Krishno continues to wander on earth and, not knowing who she is, happens to enter the earthly house of the beautiful daughter of the king-ancestor of evil forces who offers food to him. This lady does not know who he is either. She is very attractive. She most gently forces him to accept betel nut as she prepares food, meaning to oblige him to stay with her. As he wants to get out and pay for her food and hospitality, she refuses money and asks him to marry her as a reward. He refuses, telling her that his fate is to be chosen as a husband after twelve (see note 17) years and that he might come back when it’s time. He continues his wandering, playing his flute. Rondika, who was at a loss, hears again his flute and comes closer. Meanwhile, the daughter of the king of evil forces calls her father in the sky and asks him to bewitch Krishno. She tells him she has fallen deeply in love with Krishno who himself wears a necklace as a sign of

engagement to somebody else. She is afraid her father might kill her lover but she cannot resist her will to get him back.

Ong u sh'iem Ban: "To hun he, tju shika nge e'au pe nïe, tju bia' he kchou tine i sni he. Tine hekin ti sni he tju la' thia' kchou u. Tju shika nge e'au, tju 'ai e'au di ban¹⁵, di tjadu e'au de cha'non."

E ai u shi dat di u ham shmen, di ke prut, shi sit u de nunon, e sit u u Krishno. Tdem shmen ie puï, la' wier ute u tdem.

U Krishno tjat kaite u he.

"Eeee (ong Krishno) ham kaine? Ha' ne me kaine, to' lea' he lut i mu' m."

Ong u Sh'iem Ban: "de lut ie, katle to lea' di e'am wan "

"chennam (ong u Krishno) to de kut ke shier ã rhen, ã sotti, te tju shika nge hekin e'am katle.

Te chen di e'am i pran m he sã' kainia' be he ma' kainia', nïe me e'am mea bor bere, ap i pran m tju sit nge"

Sit u Krishno shene i pertha nu phliiang. Ma' u de shene nu phliiang tju poï u ham, reng u ke prut, tang shi pechri u ham shmen. La' ite, la poï kene ke prut nute pukhiiao' u sh'iem Ban shi liiangnang kai e thang di u shmen bero' iip lut ke pran u.

"du' katle tju shika nge"

Pukhiiao kai e thang hi.

Ong u Krishno "du' katle, tju shika nge e'am, he sã' m kainia'?"
Khle' i kra' kat mu' tju bia' m"

King Ban said: "Alright daughter, I will teach him a lesson in turn, you will take care of his illness in your house. Right here in your house, he is going to stay ill. I will teach him a lesson, I will play Ban's magic on him, a magic from above."

¹⁵ *ban* 'to oppress, to treat cruelly, to press upon the body, hence Ban 'the Oppressor'. His son *Pethan* 'especially' is also addressed as the big Saitan, see the fourth episode. The evil forces that drive Pethan are blind evil links which stick especially on some people. Bad fate opposes to good fate as a link. In various narratives while good fate, or upper Ancestors, elect righteous people, bad fate links people blindly, unconscious of its evil strength.

He gives one single blow with an arrow of fire, with his arc; he shoots from above, he shoots on Krishno. The fire smoke follows and vanishes. Krishno remains the same.

“Eeee! Says Krishno, what’s going on? As for you, do you believe it’s over?”

“That’s all that was meant for you, now it is your turn”

“Trully”, said Krishno, and he stops speaking after saying it twice.

“I am going to teach you something about power, wait, it is within your own body, that you are going to experience what kind is mine compared to yours, get ready, I am going to shoot”.

He also, Krishno, in turn, with an arrow of fire, he shot at King Ban. Krishno shoots from here down on earth up to the sky. He had seen that the arrow had to reach the sky; he had bent his arc widely and had triggered the enflamed arrow at once. Thereafter, when the arrow had reached the sky, it had separated king Ban into two halves. Up there, half of his body was burnt (while the other half had remained alive.)

“This is my only way to teach”

Half of his body was like an overcooked roasted fish.

Krishno said: “this is my only way to teach you, do you feel how? Sprinkle water and mix the medicinal plants the way you had planned to cure me.”

4.5 Last episode: Rondika and Krishno meet.

Summary: Twelve years have passed. Rondika is still linked to Krishno by the unconscious link which is her good fate. They both come close to the earthly place where their marriage has to take place. This place, near Nongbareh, is the navel of this earth linked with the entrails of the sky, according to the tradition in this area. Rondika, her clothes completely worn out, reaches the place where all the living creatures and authorities on earth have come, dressed up, but she does not find her chosen lover. She searches in vain for him. Just at the time she experiences great doubts and despair, Pethan, also named Soitan, the son of Ban, tries to seduce Rondika pretending Krishno will never reach the place. He is defeated by the higher good fate and power of Krishno who happened to hear the news that he was here, rushed to that place and now intrudes as

a kind of reply to Pethan's request for the betel nut offering of Rondika. In front of the crowd, he defeats Pethan who runs away destroying himself with both his own unconscious strength and his conscious sense of shame. At last, Krishno realises his desire to marry Rondika. She sees him still far away but coming. Their matching desire is fulfilled with fame. Evil forces still run away.

Ha' shi rhen reng ke, lea un ke, nget ke ti tkhap u paitba' khlik, khlok, khlik, khlok, khlik, khlok, lea ma' selli ke ma' ke te e'au. "haï haï", ong ke, "de shep i lea i wan nge katne, e de that lut i dea, i tjeme, i dea, i rit, "haï haï", ong ke, "de di mere nge, ti' wan nge ti kene ke pertha, to' sang nge katne. Haï haï, ha' nie ke hekin", nie ke, tju du' eï ha' ke tju p'em man tjeprou. Tju lea wan be to' rhen te wan, tju lea tu phrang be to' rhen te wan. Haï, haï, tju du' eï ha' ke man tjeprou". E sã' dïau ke dha' nie ke he. Haï haï, ke pertha sang. Ha' shi rhen don, ã rhen, de dep ke tju un, ha' shi rhen khan ke be u kwueï, reng ke ong ke: "i nam i sat¹⁶ ne me dang tju 'a' i dang tju man sh'iem, man kmaï, man tjeprou ti song sar pertha, ki dang tju pentngen ha' i song sar i pertha tju tjiem, i sh'iem niunga, i sh'iem pnue, ha' tju tjiem i kenthap tipo' tju wan i thende; laï rhen, laï sotti, tju un nge, e tju wan i suk, i thende." Kat ute u Pethan "nam ku' ile i kwueï, i petha be ha' nie. tinia' tju to' he u Krishno?"

'a' lat to' ie te wan, ong ie. Mar tite la' to' u Krishno, phet sang ute u Pethan, that lut i dea i tjeme u, pat u la' phet u e di mere u, ti e lea u, ong u "nam ti nie". E ãa' shwiia u, e di mere u, tja' burom u, e phet u, re, re, re ka' e mea hea' i khlea hnshea u, tang tju kue u cha' shmea, cha' tvea, cha' sôm, cha' sãm poï u, cha' 'am be pe u, cha' i kendong. E sã' u, de di mere u tu mat i paitba'.

Kat me e'au mu' u (Krishno): "nie tju di ha' e'ake, nie hekin tju di ; e'ake, tju mon ke ha' nie".

¹⁶ **i nam i sat** 'give (us)', traditional requesting way to start a prayer in a ritual *them nam, them pun* 'lit. the making of the handing over, the making of the source'(immitatives).

La' ite, mar ban chet, ong ke, ai ke shi un, ham to' pit ke ditun, kaile pit ke, "oooo! u tun, u tun, u tun ute u derou" (Krishno), tu tun e 'a' u.

La' ite, de tite, tia' ke, tia' ke tu e'au. La' ite ai ke shi tur prak kram kram lea ke kat cha' 'a' be ma' kete tute tju shkea u shepo' kermea, tite lea ke top ai ke u kwue, lum u niat. La' ite ja'do' ki be e'ake be e'au, kdok semput ke e'au, e'au be semput u e'ake. La' ite ia'ong kete ke pertha bero' ke chebas, ham u Krishno, u hun u sh'iem. Shene i riem sh'iem, i riem mea, i riem hea'. La' ite "chebas" ong ki. De b'iang diem ke riem nge hekin tju di ke". La' ite te ia'seri i paitba i paitsan u, lai phue mrat lai phue¹⁷ mreng bero' tite.

Ute u Pethan e man u u sh'iem Soitan, u mea Soitan ba'. U Pethan e phet u, to' iip, to' p'em ute, katte hekin de lut kete ke perom.

Once again, she (Rondika) stands up and enters the crowd of people, khlik, khlok, khlik, khlok, khlik, khlok, she comes to look around; she looks without seeing. "Alas", she says, "what a pity to go back and forth like that, destroying completely all my clothes into pieces", she says, "alas! Alas! All my wanderings on this earth brought only shame on me, as I came on this earth I didn't expect it would be so hard for me, alas, human life seems to be so meaningless". "Alas!" She cries, she cannot help but crying: "it is hopeless to expect any understanding of what drives human life".

It seems that there is no pathway for her to go on forward. "Alas, how difficult it is to understand human life". She is so sad she can do nothing but crying. "Alas, how difficult it is on this earth." Once again, twice again, she stands up and wanders inside the crowd, holding close the betel nut offering ready to offer, she stands up again "Queen Sun, King moon, I pray you, allow a

¹⁷ **lai phue mrat lai phue mreng** 'the thirty species of "animate" living creatures'. 30 = 6 x 5, two core numbers (see also 12) of various AA including Pnar, War and Khasi numeration systems, see (Zide 1978), (Luce 1985). An AA notion of "animate" being is made explicit in an AA vestigial complex three way system of classifiers which can be reconstructed in War and which still can be observed in frozen reduced affixes in cognate lexical elements in Southern and Kherwar Munda and in various MK languages, see (Daladier 2005 and 2007).

powerful human being, a human king, to come here on this earth who might bring comfort on this earth, who might bring inner peace; I am going to wander again for the third time, in search of peace and relief.”

As (she is having those doubts) here is Pethan who says “give me betel nut¹⁸, where else will you find out where is Krishno?” People say “too late, no way”. As he has heard the news, Krishno arrives on the spot, Pethan runs away, destroying his clothes, falling down as he runs away ashamed, still uttering “hand it over to me”. It is not for him, shame on him, no fame for him, re, re, re with his knees¹⁹ which have become so big, still he climbs far away over the rocks, over the trunks, reaches uncultivated lands, crawl over rivers, stays on steep places, he has been dishonoured in front of the crowd.

Hence, he (Krishno) thinks to himself “I should get her love, I am obviously the one who should get her love, I should be her chosen one”.

Just when she is saying to herself “I shall look around again”, she gives a start, surprised, watching out, she sees: “Ooo! There, far away, the young man”. There in the distance he is. She hurries to meet him, rushing as fast as she can kram, kram, kram there where her insight leads her directly to him inside the forest and she hands over the betel nut offering which he grasps at once.

Thereafter they kiss each other; she and he clasp and embrace each other. The whole world shouts “Hurrah”, Krishno the son of the king is surprised to see all these dressed up important people, princes and kings. “Hurrah” they say. He thinks to himself “I look good enough to please her”. Representatives of the whole world applaud them.

¹⁸ Offering bettel nut is a way to greet, to offer hospitality and here a sign of election, as in the episode where the daughter of Ban requests Krishno to accept betel nut before she prepares food for him.

¹⁹ In some War villages, as among the Lamet, see (Izikowitz 1951) and the Kherwar, see (Bodding 1929), three kinds of bones are collected after death in cremation or burial ceremonies for the secondary bone burial ceremony, especially knee or leg and collar bones.

Pethan has become King Satan, the big Satan. Pethan has run away, be he dead or alive. Here is the end of this story.

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| 1,2,3 | person or mass term or sentential pronouns |
| ABIL | physical ability |
| ASS EA | assertion marker involving egophoric or alterphoric reference |
| CL | classifier |
| COM | comitative |
| CONS | a) imminent (consecutive aspect) event or action or intent or consecutive T/A or irrealis in correlation to a higher assertive marker in a complement clause b) purposive (consecutive goal) marker in an adjunct clause |
| CONSEQ | deictic introducing a new episode or sub-episode in a narration or goal marker |
| COP | copula |
| DCL | default assertion marker of declarative assertions |
| EMP | modality of empathy |
| EVENT | modality of eventuality |
| F | feminine |
| FIN | to be over for an action or an event |
| INDEF | indefinite or irrealis actualisation; non immediate temporal connection; future as a temporal deictic |
| A INFE | agentive inferential modality |
| M | masculine |
| MAGR | modality of agreement with the interlocutor |
| MASS | mass noun |
| NEC | necessity |
| NEG PST | negation taking value up to the moment of assertion |
| P | plural |
| PERF | perfect |
| PREC | precative |
| PROG | progressive as an aspectual marker; past as a temporal deictic |
| PROH | prohibitive |

| | |
|-------|---|
| PROX | proximal deictic |
| REM | distal deictic |
| REP | repetition of a process |
| S | singular |
| SAL A | salient marking for agentive instrument or source arguments or adjuncts |
| SAL B | salient marking for benefactive or subject of discourse arguments or adjuncts |
| ST | emphatic pronouns or pronouns encoding object arguments or oblique arguments and adjuncts |
| TOP | permutation of a salient element at the beginning of the assertion |

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