

MYANMAR-BASED KHAMTI SHAN ORTHOGRAPHY

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Abstract

Khamti Shan, a Tai language spoken in Kachin State, Myanmar, is a northern dialect of Shan spoken in Shan State. Shan and Khamti Shan have adapted the Myanmar (Burmese) writing system for their own use. The Khamti Shan orthography was revised in 2006, fully integrated with current literacy applications and adapting a portion of the Myanmar Unicode set of characters along with an extended set of characters specific to Shan. Khamti Shan in Myanmar differs from the Northeast India variety (Tai Khamti) by distinguishing a palatal nasal and a rhotic. Described are the Khamti Shan phoneme-grapheme correspondences, engendering the segmental, suprasegmental and syllabic features of the orthography, along with a Latin-based transliteration guide for glossing of data. A transliterated and glossed text sample is found in the appendix.

Keywords: orthography, abugida, Tai, Shan, Unicode
ISO 639-3 code: kht

1 Introduction

The Khamti Shan people, who number about 8,000 in Myanmar (Simons et al. 2009), consider their heartland to be the Putao region of northern Myanmar's Kachin State. Another 5,000 to 10,000 speakers of Khamti can be found in Northeast India (Morey 2008:208). In this paper Khamti Shan (KS) refers narrowly to speakers from Myanmar, distinguishing them from the more widely known and studied group from Northeast India that goes by the broader label Tai Khamti (TK). The description presented here is based on data from the Khamti in Myanmar collected in 2005-2008, and so the scope of the description is limited to the KS, which has a distinct Literature Committee from that of the Northeast India sprachbund.

Khamti (Kadai, Kam-Tai, Tai, Southwestern, Northwest) aligns with Ahom, Phake, Aiton, and Khamyang (Wilaiwan 1998; Diller 1992). As part of the Tai branch, it shares the following general characteristics with Tai: syllabic tone with little tone sandhi, postposed modifiers, verb-medial clause structure (although the more pervasive word order is SOV), and a host of monosyllabic morphemes (Enfield 2005; Edmondson & Solnit 1997:7ff). Several characteristics of KS also relate to Tibeto-Burman features rather than Tai. Predominant among these characteristics is the verb-final word order, which also leads to the marking of one or both of the preposed verbal arguments. In the case of KS, the deictic *mai*² 'here' functions as a grammaticalized foregrounded object marker, not found in any other Tai language (Inglis 2014).

This paper describes the Khamti Shan orthography for the primary purpose of a reading and pronunciation reference for non-speakers of KS. The orthography follows a sound system identified by the Shan themselves (Sai Kam Mong 2004:76) and corresponds in nature to other Northern Shan languages, including Ahom, Phake, and Khamyang as described by Morey (2005; 2008). The KS orthography comprises a Brahmi-based script (Court 1996) largely conforming to that of the Myanmar script (Gogoi 1989:66; Wheatley 1996), with Mon being disputed as the basis for the Myanmar—and therefore Shan—script (Milne 1910:27; Aung-Thwin 2005:177-778).

The Khamti Shan Language Development project commenced in 2005 in conjunction with the Khamti Shan Literature Committee (Myanmar). Chief among the goals of this project was to be a revised KS orthography, which could be used with better apprehension results than the previous KS orthography, and which could be adapted with a Unicode character set for modern KS applications.

The KS orthography underwent minor revisions in 2006 in conjunction with the Khamti Shan Literature Committee (Myanmar). The committee was comprised of the chief monk of KS, several other leading monks from the two largest KS populations, Putao and Namti, several KS lay people who have teaching backgrounds, one KS speaker who was concurrently supervising the development of new literacy materials, and another speaker who was compiling a KS dictionary at the same time. Each of these members were selected and approved by the KS communities at large. Three main people were originally deployed by the Literature Committee to spearhead the orthographic revision: two mother-tongue speakers from the Literature Committee—the one compiling a KS dictionary and the one developing new literacy materials—and myself, who was concurrently learning and analyzing the language in order to produce a grammar of KS. The methodology for revision commenced with a list of all the graphemes that were used in the original orthography, it was determined for each grapheme whether any adjustment was needed, the main criteria for adjustment being ease of reading for KS speakers. Each change was presented to the KS Literature Committee for their evaluation and approval. The Literature Committee worked through several drafts of changes providing feedback with each draft, with the committee approving a final draft to then be implemented in subsequent materials developed. The approved revision was submitted to a Unicode developer specialized in non-alphabetic script for the purpose of devising a Khamti keyboard for use by the KS community for a variety of applications.

In what follows, section 2 describes the KS phonemes and some allophones that are represented by the orthography, section 3 highlights the nature of the KS writing system and provides its phoneme-grapheme correspondences, along with example words. Section 4 summarizes some initial literacy efforts that implement the revised orthography in a non-formal setting within KS villages in Myanmar and highlights the computer development process for encoding the KS script, including a Myanmar extended set of Unicode characters. Appendix A features an illustrative (true) Khamti Shan story using the KS script, while appendix B provides the interlinearization of that story with an orthographic line, a Latin-based transliteration line, a gloss line, and a free translation. The Latin transliteration resembles Burmese Romanization rules in that it has no special IPA symbols or diacritics.

2 Phoneme inventory of Khamti Shan (Myanmar)

There are a number of previous studies on Tai Khamti (TK) spoken in Assam, Northeast India, going back to the 18th century and summarized by Morey (2002; 2005). A complete picture of tone, vowel length and complete vowel height contrast is first provided by Harris (1976; see also Weidert, 1977 primarily for vowels). Morey (2005; 2008) provides a phonological description of the Northeast Tai languages Aiton, Khamti, Khamyang, and Phake that coincide with the findings of Harris and Weidert. KS in Myanmar differs from the variety found in Northeast India in that it includes a palatal nasal and a rhotic. The palatal nasal /ɲ/ is not mentioned by Harris (1976). Morey (2008) does not provide proof of contrast but includes /ɲ/ as a TK phoneme because it is part of its orthography. The contrastive status is seen in the near minimal pairs /niang⁴²/ ‘red’ vs. /ɲiang³⁴/ ‘waist’ and /nai²ɲin⁴/ ‘to hear’ vs. /nin³/ ‘dirt’. The KS rhotic /r/ occurs as approximant [ɻ] word initially, [ɻak⁵⁵] ‘passion’, while the flapped variant [r] only occurs in clusters, following oral stops as in [p^hra⁵³] ‘god’ and [tra⁵³] ‘teachings’.

KS has five tones as described by Harris (1976:114), aligning closely with Phake (Morey 2008:217). The tones are low falling /21/, mid falling /42/ and high falling /53/, mid rising /34/ and high level /55/. The low falling and high level tones exhibit allophonic variation—shorter duration with some glottal restriction and level pitch—for stop-final syllables and some open syllables with short vowels.

KS consonants and vowels are shown in the respective phoneme charts of Tables 1 and 2. The allophonic variants (in parentheses) are represented as graphemes in the revised orthography in order to maintain as much consistency with the old script as possible for widest acceptance and ease of transition. Table 1 identifies 18 consonants that directly correlate with the KS orthography. Except the palatal nasals and the glottal stops, oral and nasal stops can occur as codas. The orthography has an additional symbol for the rhotic in C2 position. The glottal stop is a predictable vowel onset. It is represented because it functions as a consonant base in the orthography.

Table 1: *Khamti Shan (Myanmar) consonant phonemes*

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	<i>p p^h</i>	<i>t t^h</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>k k^h</i>	(ʔ)
Nasals	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ɲ</i>	<i>ŋ</i>	
Fricatives		<i>s</i>			<i>h</i>
Semivowels	<i>w</i>		<i>j</i>		
Lateral		<i>l</i>			
Rhotic		<i>r</i>			

KS vowel phonemes do not differ from previous descriptions (Harris 1976:199-120 for TK; Morey 2008:214 for Phake). They are shown in Table 2. For close vowels /i u u/ length is predictable, with short vowels occurring in closed syllables and long vowels restricted to open syllables. Only for the back unrounded open vowel /a/ is length contrastive, as seen in /an⁴²/ ‘thing’ vs. /a:n⁵⁵/ ‘to read’. KS mid vowels /e ɾ o ε ɔ/ are only found in open syllables and therefore always long. Allophones that are represented in the orthography are marked with parentheses.

Table 2: *Khamti Shan (Myanmar) vowel phonemes*

	Front	Back unrounded	Back rounded
Close	<i>i (iː)</i>	<i>u (uː)</i>	<i>u (uː)</i>
Mid	<i>e</i>	<i>ɾ</i>	<i>o</i>
Open	<i>ε</i>	<i>a/aː</i>	<i>ɔ</i>
Diphthongs	<i>ia</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>ua</i>

There are two sets of vowel sequences represented in the KS orthography, one with final /-u/ (*iu, au, au, iau) and one with final /-i/ (*ai, ai, ui, uai). Harris (1976:121) interprets these vowel sequences as diphthongs and triphthongs for TK. KS orthography is inconsistent in this regard and employs a final semi vowel grapheme representing /w/ for final /-u/ but unique vowel graphemes for sequences formed with /-i/. (see Section 3.2).**

3 Khamti Shan orthography

The Myanmar-based KS abugida (c.f. Daniels 1996) features a base consonant bearing an inherent unwritten vowel which is pronounced [a]. All other vowels are symbolized with diacritics before, after, over, under, or around the base consonant, depending on the particular vowel. Closed syllables include a second consonant following the base consonant that is marked as such with the syllable-final marker <◌̣> positioned over it, as with <၎> /n/ in <ဝ၎̣> /wan⁵³/ ‘day’. The final element in each orthographic syllable is one of five tone diacritics, placed to the right of the entire syllable, as with the high falling tone <: > in the same word <ဝ၎̣: > /wan⁵³/ ‘day’. Like in other Brahmi-based scripts, there are no wordbreaks.

The graphemes of the revised KS orthography for the most part reflect the old KS orthography, which is fully based on the Myanmar script, with a few revisions to the KS graphemes being either innovative or stylistic. One significant change is to include syllabic tone diacritics, which were previously absent from the writing system altogether and making it quite difficult to read in the past. Five of the six KS tone conventions <◌̣, ◌̣, ◌̣, ◌̣, ◌̣> are adapted from Shan, while the rising tone <◌̣> is a unique KS-specific extension. These tone diacritics are not to be confused with alphabetic punctuation, as KS employs only two punctuation markers, <◌̣> for a full stop and <◌̣> for a phrasal pause, similar in function to an English comma. Questions

and degrees of emphasis are signaled by morphemic words rather than punctuation diacritics. A space is employed after every punctuation as well as after certain phrases, mostly an initial topic phrase and a noun phrase expressing a marked object. The punctuation marks, along with the syllable-final marker <◌◌̣> and a syllabic reduplication symbol <◌̣◌̣>, are adapted from the Myanmar script and the KS digit graphemes <၀၁၂၃၄၅၆၇၈၉> are borrowed directly from Shan. As well, revisions are made to several vowel graphemes that are re-worked completely. The Shan grapheme <◌◌̣> /e/ is assigned in KS to /ia/, while the newly devised KS double diacritic vowel <◌◌̣◌̣> /au/ incorporates both the *asat* symbol borrowed from Myanmar <◌◌̣>, along with the Shan single diacritic vowel <◌◌̣> /au/. The purpose for the KS revision for <◌◌̣◌̣> /au/ is to primarily make the KS orthography distinctly Khamti and the stylistic revision of small darkened circles on the tails of characters further sets KS apart from the Shan script, which employs small open circles on these equivalent characters.

The following sections describe Khamti Shan phoneme grapheme correspondences in the revised KS orthography, along with sample words, phonemic transcriptions, Latin-based transliterations, and English glosses. The phonemic transcription incorporates the allophones used in the orthography, while the Latin-based transliteration is strictly phonemic.

3.1 Consonants

The consonant phonemes with their correlating graphemes are presented in Table 3. The oral and nasal stops /p, t, k, n, ŋ/ can occur in syllable-final position with the syllable-final marker <◌◌̣, ◌◌̣, ◌◌̣, ◌◌̣, ◌◌̣, ◌◌̣>. The predictable glottal stop ʔ corresponds to <◌◌̣> and is used for vowel-initial syllables. It functions as a base consonant—a needed place holder for the vowel diacritics in Brahmi-based scripts—as with the subscript <◌◌̣> [u] in the word <◌◌̣> [ʔu⁵⁵] ‘to live’. The rhotic has two orthographic symbols, one in its role as onset and one for its occurrence as C2 in clusters. The latter corresponds to <◌◌̣>, designed to wrap around the base consonant, as with the consonant <◌◌̣> in <◌◌̣> [p^hra⁵³] ‘god’. Consonant clusters are limited to oral stops as base consonants.

Table 3: Graphemic representation and transliteration of consonants

Phoneme	Transliteration	Grapheme	Sample Word	Phonemic	Transliteration	Gloss
p	p	ပ	ပဝ်.	pat ²	pat ¹	week
	p	ပ် final	ကပ်.	kap ²	kaap ¹	to bite
p ^h	ph	ပ	ပာ်.	p ^h a ³⁴	phaa ²	cloth
t	t	တ	တံ;	tai ⁴²	taai ³	to die
	t	တ် final	ပတ်.	pat ⁵⁵	pat ⁵	to cut
t ^h	th	တ	တမ်.	tham ⁵⁵	thaam ⁵	to ask
c	ts	စ	စိတ်.	cit ⁵⁵	tsit ⁵	seven
k	k	က	ကံ.	ka ⁵⁵	kaa ⁵	to go
	k	က် final	ကပ်.	hak ²	haak ¹	to love
k ^h	kh	ခ	ခံ;	k ^h ai ⁴²	khai ³	to tell
(ʔ)	-	ဝ	ဝူ.	(ʔ)u ⁵⁵	u ⁵⁵	to live
m	m	မ	မံ;	man ⁵³	man ⁴	3s
	m	မ် final	မပ်.	nam ²¹	nam ¹	water
n	n	န	နံ;	nai ⁴²	naai ³	alone

Phoneme	Transliteration	Grapheme	Sample Word	Phonemic	Transliteration	Gloss
	n	န final	ကိန်;	<i>kin</i> ⁴²	kin ³	to eat
<i>n</i>	nj	ဗှ	ဗှိင်'	<i>nianj</i> ³⁴	njang ²	waist
<i>ŋ</i>	ng	င	ဲ:	<i>ŋai</i> ⁵³	ngai ⁴²	and
	ng	င် final	ဟင်,	<i>ha:ŋ</i> ²¹	haang ¹	to need
<i>s</i>	s	ဆ	ဆမ်	<i>sam</i> ⁵⁵	saam ⁵	three
<i>h</i>	h	ဟ	ဟိင်:	<i>hianj</i> ⁵³	hiang ⁴	more than
<i>w</i>	w	ဝ	ဝါပ်;	<i>wap</i> ⁴²	waap ³	to grasp
<i>j</i>	y	ယ	ယပ်,	<i>yau</i> ²¹	yau ¹	already
<i>l</i>	l	လ	လိမ်:	<i>liam</i> ⁵³	liam ⁴	to look at
<i>r-</i>	r	ရ	ရက်	<i>ra:k</i> ⁵⁵	raak ⁵	passion
<i>-r-</i>	r	ြ	ြး:	<i>p^hra:</i> ⁵³	phraa ⁴	god

3.2 Vowels

The phoneme-grapheme correspondences for vowels are illustrated in Table 4, along with the allophonic variations that are also represented in the orthography. The inherent vowel /a/ is unwritten, as in the verb <ဟန်> <hn> /han⁵⁵/ ‘to see’ and the long vowel /a:/ has two allographs, <ာ်> for open orthographic syllables, as in <ကာ်> /p^har³⁴/ ‘cloth’ and <ာ> for closed syllables, as in <ကာပ်> /kap²/ ‘to bite’. The allophone [u:], along with the phonemes /r o/ are represented as digraphs, combined with the semi vowel <ဝ်> /w/, as in <ဝ်ဝ်> [u:], <ဝ်ဝ်> /r/, and <ဝ်ဝ်> /o/. The vowel sequences /au au iu iau/ also employ final -w <ဝ်> in their graphemic representation. These represent sequences of sounds, they are not digraphs. In contrast, the vowel sequences ending on /-i/, /ai ai ui uai/ do not utilize the consonantal counterpart /j/ <ယ> but have their own unique vowel diacritics, <ိ> /ai/, <ိာ်> /ai/, <ိဝ်> /ui/, and <ိဝ်ဝ်> /uai/.

Table 4: Graphemic representation and transliteration of vowels

Phoneme	Transliteration	Grapheme	Sample Word	Phonemic	Transliteration	Gloss
<i>a</i>	a	inherent	ဟန်	<i>han</i> ⁵⁵	han ⁵	to see
<i>a:</i>	aa	ာ်	ကာ်	<i>p^har</i> ³⁴	phaa ²	cloth
<i>a:</i>	aa	ာ	ကာပ်	<i>kap</i> ²	kaap ¹	to bite
<i>ai</i>	ai	ဲ	ကဲ	<i>amai</i> ⁴	amai ⁵	where
<i>ai</i>	aai	ိာ်	တဲ;	<i>tai</i> ⁵⁵	taai ⁵	to die
<i>au</i>	au	ဝ်	ယပ်,	<i>yau</i> ²¹	yau ¹	already
<i>au</i>	aau	ာ်ဝ်	ခာ်	<i>k^hau</i> ⁵⁵	khaau ⁵	to be white
<i>au</i>	aeu	ိဝ်	ယိ	<i>jau</i> ⁵⁵	yaeu ⁵	to be big
<i>i</i>	i	ိ	လိင်;	<i>lij</i> ⁴²	ling ³	monkey
[i:]	i	ိ	ကိ	<i>kii</i> ⁵⁵	ki ⁵	how many
<i>iu</i>	iu	ိဝ်	ဟိဝ်	<i>hiu</i> ⁵⁵	hiu ⁵	to wither

Phoneme	Transliteration	Grapheme	Sample Word	Phonemic	Transliteration	Gloss
ia	ia	ိ	ိ်း	<i>k^hian⁵³</i>	khian ⁴	most
[ia:]#	ia	ိ]	ိ]	<i>kiar⁵³</i>	kiaa ⁴	TAGQ
iau	iau	ိဝ်	ိဝ်း	<i>siau³⁴</i>	siau ²	to catch
u	u	ု	ုး	<i>amu⁴</i>	amu ⁵	careless
[u:]	u	ု]	ု်း	<i>kun⁵³</i>	kun ⁴	person
ui	ui	ိူ	ိူး	<i>kui⁵⁵</i>	kui ⁵	banana
ua	ua	ူ	ူး	<i>huan⁵⁵</i>	huan ⁵	ever
[ua:]#	ua	ူ]	ူ]	<i>ua⁵⁵</i>	uaa ⁵	father
uai	uai	ိူဝ်	ိူဝ်း	<i>cuai⁴²</i>	tsuai ³	to help
uu	eu	ိူ	ိူဝ်း	<i>luŋ⁴²</i>	leung ³	one
[uu:]#	eu	ိူဝ်]	ိူဝ်း	<i>muu⁵³</i>	meu ⁴	hand
e	e	ေ	ေး	<i>me⁵³</i>	me ⁴	to fix
ɣ	eo	ိူဝ်	ိူဝ်း	<i>ny²¹</i>	neo ¹	flesh
o	o	ူဝ်	ူဝ်း	<i>to⁴²</i>	to ³	body
ɛ	ea	ေဝ်	ေဝ်း	<i>ne⁵⁵</i>	nea ⁵	RCPR
ɔ	aw	ေ]	ေ]	<i>kɔ²¹</i>	kaw ¹	also

3.3 Tones

The six tone diacritics of the KS orthography are shown in Table 5. The low falling tone /21/ has two graphemic variants, <◌, > and the one used in syllables with oral stop finals, or with a single orthographic consonant syllable, <◌. >, as with the imperative particle <ဝ. > /ta²/. The high level tone /55/ is orthographically default and therefore unwritten, but there is a rare variant high tone grapheme, <◌. >, being used for short open syllables, as in <ိ. > /ŋai⁴/ ‘now’. The transliteration of tone, employing superscript numerals, is a somewhat arbitrary matter, with ¹ assigned to low falling tone [21] ~ [22], ² to rising, ³ to mid falling, ⁴ to high falling, and ⁵ to a high level tone [55] ~ [44].

Table 5: Graphemic representation and transliteration of tones

Toneme	Grapheme	Sample Word	Phonemic	Transliteration	Gloss
/21/ ¹	◌,	ေ]	<i>kɔ²¹</i>	kaw ¹	also
[21] ¹	◌.	ေ.	<i>ta²</i>	ta ¹	IMP
/34/ ²	◌,	ေ]	<i>p^ha³⁴</i>	phaa ²	cloth
/42/ ³	◌. >	ေဝ်း	<i>to⁴²</i>	to ³	animal
/53/ ⁴	◌. >	ေဝ်း	<i>kun⁵³</i>	kun ⁴	person

Toneme	Grapheme	Sample Word	Phonemic	Transliteration	Gloss
/55/ ⁵		၁၂၆	<i>k^ha:u⁵⁵</i>	khaau ⁵	white
/44/ ⁵	·	၆·	<i>ŋai⁴</i>	ngai ⁵	now

4 Khamti Shan orthography and literacy development

The old orthography, extant mostly in handwritten ancient scrolls of law, religion, and culture, is inconsistently written, without tone marking, and is accepting of a wide variation of spelling for many words, making the script hard to read and write, and causing a learning motivation issue for native speakers who are uninitiated users to the orthography. The committee, therefore, deemed a literacy initiative incorporating a new primer using a revised orthography, along with graded reading material for use in a non-formal, grass-roots set of literacy classes to be of upmost importance in sustaining the use of the KS language and culture. Within this context of a new language development initiative, the revised orthography is implemented into the new primer, all of the newly developed graded reading materials, and into the literacy teacher training materials. Of primary significance, the revised orthography is featured in the locally produced Khamti-Burmese dictionary containing 11,500 words (Kusalanda and Namnaeu 2013) and provides a central reference for the consistent spelling of words. The revised orthography is being well-received by young and old, both monks and laypeople and is continuing to be used in communication media and in the reworking of some religious texts (personal communication and observation).

The recent literacy efforts include workshops for making the new primer and the training of indigenous literacy teachers in highly interactive learning methods, as opposed to rote repetition with little other interchange with the teacher and among students. As well, hundreds of students from over 15 villages in several major locales have already participated in and graduated from literacy classes, mostly being conducted in conjunction with local temples, and with recently trained KS monks and laypeople doing the teaching. The initial feedback is quite positive to date, using new material and teaching methods, uniting communities for the good of the people, celebrating language and culture in several large scale festivals, which include traditional costume and dance, special speeches by monks and laypeople, and a general sense of camaraderie.

The intention of the Unicode development for the new KS script is to address a growing need to use KS in the computing and the smart phone age. The KS script utilises the Standard Unicode Myanmar block (Standard Unicode 2016:614-618) for all of the KS vowels and for most of the consonants, the remaining consonants adapting the Unicode Myanmar Extended-A (Shan) set. There is also a Unicode Myanmar Khamti Shan Extended set that includes just two characters, the rising tone <ʻ> and the high tone on short open syllables <ˆ>. The high tone symbol was redeveloped for a structural positional change from Shan occurring on the syllable (Standard Unicode 2016:618). As well, the KS reduplication symbol <^> derives from the Unicode Myanmar block used in Burmese as a letter modifier. In KS this symbol is adapted to be a syllabic-level reduplication marker for open syllables (Standard Unicode 2016:619). The Unicode Myanmar block, along with the extended sets can all be downloaded at <http://unicode.org/charts>. Finally, a pre-publication version of both a Khamti Shan Unicode keyboard and stylistic font set, producing the pleasing stylistic output observed throughout this paper—and especially the Khamti Shan story in Appendix A—should be ready for open distribution upon a final review.

The Khamti Shan Literature Committee (Myanmar) functions separately from other Tai Khamti literature committees that may be functioning in Northeast India (cf. Morey 2005:196). As there seems to be little variation in the Khamti language between these two countries, future prospects include a coming together of communities to continue to work out a single orthography, script, and font, further uniting the greater Tai Khamti peoples. As well, the KS people desire to be recognised more inclusively within the greater Shan population that occupies most of Shan State, Myanmar. In this regard, it is also hoped that community-led literacy efforts for KS can work together with Shan communities, honouring their joint history and promoting their kinship within Myanmar.

ခိန်: ဟိုင်: ယင်း: ရမ် ။
khian⁴ hiang⁴ yang⁴ nam⁵
 most be.strong exist IPFV.II

‘The eel suggests that among fish it is the most delicious, has the most strength.’

ပု;ဆဗျော, ရန်, ပုန်း: ကန်’ရုံး: ရမ်, ခာန်; ရမ်, လှို က်. မဲ’
paa³sanje¹ nanai¹ pun⁴ kan²naeu⁴ nam¹ an³ nam¹ leuk¹ mai²
 eel means over.there inside water NOM water be.deep LOC

ကန်’ရုံး: ဟူ : ကန်’ရုံး: ထမ်’ မဲ’ ရာ်; ရမ် ရှူ
kan²naeu⁴ hu⁴ kan²naeu⁴ tham² mai² naai³ nam⁵ u⁵
inside hole inside cave LOC just EMPH live

ဆာင်; ရံ, ။
tsaang³ nai¹
be.able EMPH.S

‘The eel suggests that over there inside the water, the deep water, (eel) are able to live just inside a hole in a cave.’

ပု; ခာမ့်: ယု, ပု; ပဆဝ်’ ရာ်; ပု; ကိန်; ရှို ဝ်, ပု; ကန်; ရမ် ။
paa³ amaue⁴ yaa¹ paa³ patsau² naai³ paa³ kin³ neo¹ paa³ kan³ nam⁵
 fish that TOP fish itself just fish eat flesh fish PRES IPFV.II

‘That fish is a fish that just itself eats fish flesh.’

ရံ,ဆေ,မဝ်ကု: တူ ဝ်; ကဆင် မဲ’ ရကျေ, ခာန်; မန်း: ပေ, မဲ’ ကိ: ယု,
nai¹se¹mau⁵kaa⁴ to³ ksang mai² nakaw¹ an³ man⁴ pe¹ mai² ki⁴ yaa¹
 moreover animal what F.OBJ ever NOM 3S defeat F.OBJ if TOP

ကပ်.ကိန်; ရှူ ။
kaap¹kin³ u⁵
 devour IPFV.I

‘Moreover, whatever animal that it defeats, (it) devours.’

ဲ:ရံ, တံ:ကူ ဝ်, ကပ်; ရု’ ဝန်း: လှို ဝ်; ပု;ဆဗျော, ခာမ့်: မဲ’ ကု
ngai⁴nai¹ tai⁴ko¹ kau³ khaa² wan⁴ leung³ paa³sanje¹ amaue⁴ mai² kaa⁵
 so friend 1S POL day one eel that F.OBJ go

က နိဝ်’ ရှူ ။
k siau² u⁵
 STYL catch IPFV.I

‘So my friend, one day, went to catch that eel.’

ကု က နိဝ်’ ကိ: ယု, မို ဝ်: မန်း: မဲ’ ကု’ ရွတ်. ဝဲ:နီ
kaa⁵ k siau² ki⁴ yaa¹ meu⁴ man⁴ mai² phaa² tsuat¹ ngai⁴st⁵
 go STYL catch when TOP hand 3S LOC cloth wrap and.then

ကန်’ရုံး: ဟူ : ပု;ဆဗျော, မဲ’ ရံ; ရှူ ။
kan²naeu⁴ hu⁴ paa³sanje¹ mai² saeu⁵ u⁵
 inside hole eel LOC put.in IPFV.I

‘When he went to catch (it) (he) wrapped a cloth on his hand and then put (it) inside the eel hole.’

ၵ်း ကိ: ယျ, ပျးမပျေ, ဓာတ်; ခွတ် တူဝ်; လှိုင်; ကာပ်. မျး ရှူ ။
saue⁵ ki⁴ yaa¹ paa³sanje¹ an³ uan⁵ to³ leung³ kaap¹ maa⁴ u⁵
 put.in when TOP eel NOM be.little CLF.animal INDF bite VENT IPFV.I

‘On putting (it) in, a little eel came to bite (it).’

ဝဲ:ကိ: မတ်: ပျးမပျေ, ဓာတ်; ခွတ် ဓာမ့်: မဲ’ မွဲ: ရွတ် မိ တိတ်.
ngai⁴ki⁴ man⁴ paa³sanje¹ an³ uan⁵ amaeu⁴ mai² suai⁴ khuat⁵ si⁵ tit¹
 and.so 3S eel NOM be.little that F.OBJ pull out CONJ drag

ရွတ် မိ ခဲ’ ကျ ယဝ်, ။
khuat⁵ si⁵ nai² kaa⁵ yau¹
 out CONJ get go PFV

‘And so he pulled out and dragged out that little eel and had gotten to go (on his way).’

ဝဲ:မိ မတ်: ဓာတ်; မွဲဝ်: ကျ က တင်’ ကိတ်; ယဝ်, ဓာတ်တာတ်
ngai⁴si⁵ man⁴ au³ meo⁴ kaa⁵ k tang² kin³ yau¹ aan⁵taan⁵
 and.then 3S take go.home ANDT STYL cook eat PFV very

ကိတ်;စိ; ရှူ ။
kin³ni³ u⁵
 be.delicious IPFV.I

‘And then he took (it) back home, had cooked (it) to eat, (it) being very delicious.’

ဝဲ:နဲ, မတ်: လှိုင် မဲ’ ကျ, ဓာတ်; ခဲ; ဝဲ:နဲ, မတ်: မွဲဝ်; ဘူကံ.
ngai⁴nai¹ man⁴ phaeu⁵ mai² kaw¹ am³ khai³ ngai⁴nai¹ man⁴ meo³huk¹
 so 3S anyone LOC also NEG tell so 3S tomorrow

ကျ, ပာတ်; လှိုင်; ကျ ခိတ် ရှူ ။
kaw¹ paan³ leung³ kaa⁵ ik⁵ u⁵
 then time one go again IPFV.I

‘So he didn't tell anyone and the next day, then, (he) went again another time.’

မွဲဝ်; ဘူကံ. ကျ, ကျ ခိတ် ကိ: ပျးမပျေ, ဓာတ်; ခွတ် တူဝ်;
meo³huk¹ kaw¹ kaa⁵ ik⁵ ki⁴ paa³sanje¹ an³ uan⁵ to³
 tomorrow then go again when eel NOM be.little CLF.animal

လှိုင်; ကာပ်. မိ ဝတ်: မွဲဝ်; ဓာမ့်: ကျ, မတ်: ခဲ’ မျး ယဝ်, ။
leung³ kaap¹ si⁵ wan⁴ meo³ amaeu⁴ kaw¹ man⁴ nai² maa⁴ yau¹
 INDF bite CONJ day time that also 3S get VENT PFV

‘When he went again the next day a little eel bit and on that day also he had gotten (one).’

နင် ခဲ, နကာတ်; မိ မတ်: မိ ဘူ’ ဝတ်: မိပ် ဝတ်: ခဲ, နဝ် ကျ
nang⁵ nai¹ nakan³ si⁵ man⁴ si⁵ haa² wan⁴ sip⁵ wan⁴ nai¹khau⁵ kaa⁵
 just.as DEF just.like CONJ 3S four five day ten day PL go

ရွတ် ကိ: ယု, ပု;လပွေ, ဓာန်; ရွတ် နံ,ရပ် မူ တ် ကျ ယဝ်, ။
khuat⁵ ki⁴ yaa¹ paa³sanje¹ an³ uan⁵ nai¹khau⁵ mut⁵ kaa⁵ yau¹
 out when TOP eel NOM be.little PL all_gone ANDT PFV
 ‘Being just like this for four, five days, ten days, when he went out, little eels (had come) until all gone.’

လကျန်, ဝန်: လှိုင်; ယု, ပု;လပွေ, ဓာန်; ရိန်: ယ့် ဓာမ့်: ရွက်
laphaa⁵nai¹ wan⁴ leung³ yaa¹ paa³sanje¹ an³ khian⁴ yaeu⁵ amaeu⁴ uak⁵
 now day one TOP eel NOM most big that out

မု: ခိ မိုဝ်: မန်: မံ' ကာပ်. ရွတ် ယဝ်, ။
maa⁴ si⁵ meu⁴ man⁴ mai² kaap¹ khuat⁵ yau¹
 come CONJ hand 3S F.OBJ bite out PFV
 ‘Now one day, that biggest eel came out and had completely bit his hand.’

ဝဲ:နံ, မိုဝ်: မန်: ကျေ, နွဲ: ဝဲ:ခိ ပါး;ဂှါဝဲမံ' မန်: ဂြိင်: မူ တ်
ngai⁴nai¹ meu⁴ man⁴ kaw¹ suai⁴ ngai⁴si⁵ paai³haang⁵mai² man⁴ hiang⁴ mut⁵
 so hand 3S then pull and.then finally 3S strength use.up

ကျ ယဝ်, မန်: နွဲ: ဓာမ်; လေ, ယဝ်, ။
kaa⁵ yau¹ man⁴ suai⁴ am³ pe¹ yau¹
 ANDT PFV 3S pull NEG overcome PFV
 ‘So, pulling his hand, then, he then finally had used up (his) strength, having pulled (but) having not overcome (it).’

ရှူ ကန်'ရ်: နမ်, ဝဲ:ကိ: ယု, မန်: နွဲ: မဝ် လေ, ကိ: ပို ရ်;
u⁵ kan²naeu⁴ nam¹ ngai⁴ki⁴ yaa¹ man⁴ suai⁴ mau⁵ pe¹ ki⁴ peun³
 be inside water and.so TOP 3S pull NEG overcome when other

ကူ ရ်: ဓာန်; ကန်'ရိုဝ် နံ,ရပ် မံ' ကျေ, မန်: ခိဝ် ဓာမ်;
kun⁴ an³ kan²neo⁵ nai¹khau⁵ mai² kaw¹ man⁴ iu⁵ am³
 person NOM above PL LOC then 3S cry.out NEG

နံ' ယဝ်, ။
nai² yau¹
 able.to PFV

‘And so, as for being in the water, when he pulled but was not able to overcome he had not been able to cry out to other people that were above.’

ဝဲ:ကိ: မန်: ဂှလိုဝ် ကျေ, နွဲ: မဝ် လေ, ဂြိင်: ကျေ, မူ တ်
ngai⁴ki⁴ man⁴ haleu⁵ kaw¹ suai⁴ mau⁵ pe¹ hiang⁴ kaw¹ mut⁵
 and.so 3S how.much ever pull NEG overcome strength also use.up

ကျ ကိ: ကရှူ: မန်: ကန်'ရ်: နမ်, မံ' တါး; ကျ ယဝ်, ။
kaa⁵ ki⁴ ktsu⁴ man⁴ kan²naeu⁴ nam¹ mai² taai³ kaa⁵ yau¹
 ANDT when immediately 3S inside water LOC die ANDT PFV

‘And so, however much he pulled (he) was unable to overcome (and) when (his) strength also was used up, he had immediately died in the water.’

‘So he often went (over) there.’

တံးကူဝ်, မန်း: ခဝ် ကော့, ခာၤ နကီ: ။
tai⁴ko¹ man⁴ khau⁵ kaw¹ aa⁵ naki⁴
 friend 3S PL then ah QT

‘His friends, then, (said) "Ah!"’

စေယုၤ ခာမ့်: စေယုၤ ခာမံး နံး ခွက်. ခာမံး နံး နမီၤ ထာမ် ထံးမီၤ
ne⁵yaa⁵ amaeu⁴ ne⁵yaa⁵ amai⁵ nai⁵ tsuak¹ amai⁵ nai⁵ nasi⁵ thaam⁵ ngai⁴si⁵
 place that place where Q place where Q QT ask and.then

စေယုၤ ခာမ့်: မံး ကျ က လိမ်: တေ, ခွတ် ကီးယုၤ ။
ne⁵yaa⁵ amaeu⁴ mai² kaa⁵ k liam⁴ te¹te¹ khuat⁵ ki⁴yaa¹
 place that LOC go STYL search really completely EMPH

‘(They) asked "That place, where is the place?" and then went to that place to really completely search.’

ကူ’ကူဝ် မန်း: ယုၤ ပုန်း: ကန်’ရ်: နမ်, မံး တာ်; ကန်’ယုၤ
phu²pho⁵ man⁴ yaa¹ pun⁴ kan²naeu⁴ nam¹ mai² taai³ kan³su⁵
 husband 3S TOP over.there inside water LOC die PROG

နံး, မံး ဟုန် ရှူ ။
nai¹ mai² han⁵ u⁵
 EMPH.S F.OBJ see IPFV.I

‘As for her husband, (they) saw (him) over there being dead under the water.’

ထံးနံး, ပုးပေၤ, မံး ကူ ရ်: ပေ, ကီး ကူ ရ်: နံး ကီးရ်; ပုးပေၤ,
ngai⁴nai¹ paa³sanje¹ mai² kun⁴ pe¹ ki⁴ kun⁴ nai² kin³ paa³sanje¹
 so.then eel F.OBJ person defeat if person get eat eel

မီ ပုးပေၤ, မိုင် ကူ ရ်: မံး ဟိုင်: ကီး ယုၤ ကူ ရ်: မံး
si⁵ paa³sanje¹ seung⁵ kun⁴ mai² hiang⁴ ki⁴ yaa¹ kun⁴ mai²
 but eel EMPH person LOC be.strong if TOP person F.OBJ

ပုးပေၤ, ကီးရ်; ရှူ ။
paa³sanje¹ kin³ u⁵
 eel eat IPFV.I

‘So then if a person defeats an eel (he) gets to eel eat, but if an eel, on the other hand, is stronger than a person, the eel eats the person.’

ခာန်’နံး, ကီးယုၤ, ပုင် ခာန်; တံးကူဝ်, ကဝ်; နံး မိုင်’ ပုးပေၤ, မီ မန်း:
an³nai¹ ki⁴yaa¹ pung⁵ an³ tai⁴ko¹ kau³ nai² siau² paa³sanje¹ si⁵ man⁴
 this EMPH story NOM friend 1S get catch eel but 3S

တာ်; ကျ နံး, နမ် ။
taai³ kaa⁵ nai¹ nam⁵
 die ANDT EMPH.S IPFV.II

‘This then is a story that my friend got to catch eel but he died.’

နံ, နံး; နမ် ။
nai¹ naai³ nam⁵
this just IPFV.II
'This is it.'

Appendix C: Abbreviations

1S	=	first singular
2S	=	second singular
3S	=	third singular
ANDT	=	andative
CLF	=	classifier
COMPL	=	complement clause marker
CONJ	=	conjunction
DEF	=	definite
EMPH	=	emphasis
EMPH.S	=	emphatic sentence
F.OBJ	=	foregrounded object
IMP	=	imperative
IPFV.I	=	first imperfective grammaticalized from 'live'
IPFV.II	=	second imperfective grammaticalized from 'be.plenty'
INDF	=	indefinite determiner
IRR	=	irrealis
LOC	=	locative
NEG	=	negation, negative
NOM	=	deverbal nominal marker
PFV	=	perfective
PL	=	plural
POL	=	polite register
PRES	=	present
PROG	=	progressive
Q	=	interrogative (question) particle
QT	=	quotation
RCPR	=	reciprocity
RPRT	=	reported speech
STYL	=	stylistic
TAGQ	=	tag question
TOP	=	topic in information structure
VENT	=	venitive

These abbreviations are adapted from the Leipzig Glossing Rules, List of Standard Abbreviations.
<http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php>