REFERENCE GRAMMAR OF THE NIRAV LANGUAGE

Мнірав [ˈmnʲi.rəf]



Copyright © 2026 Mladen Branković



Some rights reserved. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0 International License. Additional permissions beyond the scope of this license may be requested from the author.

This file was generated on 1 January 1980.
The full source code is available at github.com/imatpot/conlang.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was typeset using *Typst* , a modern typesetting system first developed by Martin Ernst Haug and Laurenz Mädje. The used typeface is the beautiful *Libertinus Serif* designed by Caleb Maclennan.

Thank you to Roel Christian Yambao for publishing their fantastic *Reference Grammar of the Iridian Language* at lang.roelchristian.com/grammar as well as to Matt Pearson for their exceptional *Okuna Reference Grammar* (and lexicon) at pearson.conlang.org. Their works were a strong inspiration for the layout and structure of this document.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES vii

LIST OF TABLES viii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ix

1. INTRODUCTION 1

1.1. The Language 1
1.1.1. Goals 1
1.1.2. Culture 1
1.1.3. Symbolism 1

2. PHONOLOGY 2

2.1. Vowels 2
2.1.1. Allophony 2
2.1.2. Diphthongs 3

2.2. Consonants 4
2.2.1. Allophony 4

2.3. Phonotactics 5
2.3.1. Syllable Structure 5
2.3.2. Consonant Clusters 5

2.4. Stress 5

3. ORTHOGRAPHY **7**

3.1. Script 7
3.1.1. Ejectives 9
3.1.2. Vowel Hiatus 9
3.1.3. Capitalization 9

4. MORPHOLOGY **10**

4.1. Nouns 10
4.1.1. Noun Classes 10
4.1.2. Definiteness 11
4.1.3. Counting 11
4.1.4. Case Declension 12

4.2. Verbs 12
4.2.1. Verb Classes 12
4.2.2. Tense and Aspect 12
4.2.3. Conjugation 12

4.3. Adjectives 12
4.3.1. Comparison 13

4.4. Pronouns 13

4.5. Derivational Morphology 13

5. SYNTAX **14**

5.1. Simple Clauses 14
5.1.1. Negation 14
5.1.2. Questions 14
5.1.3. Noun phrases 14

5.2. Complex Clauses 14
5.2.1. Conjunctions 15

A. SAMPLES **17**

A.1. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 17

A.2. The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9) 17

A.3. The North Wind and the Sun 18

A.4. Krung Thep Maha Nakhon 19
A.5. The Four Nations 19
A.6. Iroh and the Four Elements 20
A.7. Leaves from the Vine 20

B. LEXICON **22**

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

2.1.a Vowels 2
2.1.b Diphthongs 3
2.2.a Consonants 4
3.1.a Alphabet 8

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Language

This section is incomplete.

1.1.1. Goals

This section is incomplete.

1.1.2. Culture

This section is incomplete.

1.1.3. Symbolism

This section is incomplete.

II

PHONOLOGY

2.1. Vowels

Table 2.1.a shows the 5 primary and 4 allophonic vowels present in the language. Allophonic vowels are highlighted in gray.

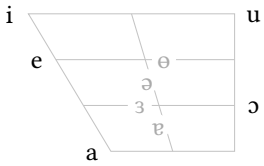


Table 2.1.a Vowels

There is no semantic distinction between long and short vowels, but unstressed vowels are generally shortened before ejective consonants, such as in *camъa* [ˈsă.tʼə] ‘fog’ or *ɪƶeл* [ˈjĭ.kʼəl] ‘denial’.

2.1.1. Allophony

As highlighted in Table 2.1.a, certain primary vowels have allophonic variants which appear in specific environments. Allophony is not indicated in the orthography and may not always be precisely reflected in pronunciation.

Vowel Reduction

Certain primary vowels may be reduced to a lax allophonic vowel if they form the complete nucleus of an unstressed syllable. Specifically,

[a] → [ɐ], [e] → [ɜ], and [u] → [ɵ], although [a, e] → [ə] in word-final syllables. [i] and [ɔ] do not undergo reduction.

Vowel reduction can never occur in stressed syllables, but can occur in unstressed diphthongs. Allophonic vowels are not indicated in the orthography and may not always be precisely reflected in pronunciation.

2.1.2. Diphthongs

The vowels [i] and [u] can function as on- and off-glides with all other primary vowels by becoming non-syllabic [i̯] and [u̯] as per Table 2.1.b. [i] and [u] generally cannot on- or off-glide with themselves with the exception of [i] on-gliding with itself by forming the semivowel [j]. In unstressed syllables, off-glide [u̯] reduces the vowels [a, e] → [ə].

ON-GLIDE [i]	ON-GLIDE [u]	OFF-GLIDE [i]	OFF-GLIDE [u]
i̯a	ˈu̯a, u̯ə	ai̯	ˈau̯, əu̯
i̯e	ˈu̯e, u̯ə	ei̯	ˈeu̯, əu̯
ji	u̯i		iu̯
i̯ɔ	u̯ɔ	ɔi̯	ɔu̯
i̯u		ui̯	

Table 2.1.b Diphthongs

Diphthongs are commonly pronounced across both syllable and word boundaries. Hiatus, instances where subsequent vowels are not pronounced as diphthongs, is indicated in the orthography as per Section 3.1.2. Hiatus may shift syllable boundaries.

2.2. Consonants

Table 2.2.a shows the language's 17 primary, 17 allophonic, and 2 gliding consonants. Allophonic and gliding consonants are highlighted in gray.

	LABIAL	ALVEOLAR	PALATAL	UVULAR
PLOSIVE	p b	tʼ t d	kʼ k g	qʼ q ɢ
NASAL	m ɱ	n		ɴ
TRILL		r r̥		
FRICATIVE	f v	s ʃ z ʒ	ɕ ʑ	x ɣ
AFFRICATE		t͡s t͡ʃ d͡z d͡ʒ	t͡ɕ d͡ʑ	
APPROXIMANT		l	j	

Table 2.2.a Consonants

2.2.1. Allophony

As highlighted in Table 2.2.a, many consonants have allophonic variants which appear in specific environments. Allophony is not indicated in the orthography and may not always be precisely reflected in pronunciation.

Voicing

When a voiceless consonant is surrounded by vowels or diphthongs on both sides, it becomes voiced, e.g. *Ima* [ˈji.də] 'the letter I'. This behaviour can occur across both syllable and word boundaries, but not across sentence boundaries. If the consonant does not have a preceding or following vowel, e.g. at the beginning or end of a sentence, it remains voiceless.

Nasal and approximant consonants are always voiced, while ejective consonants are never voiced.

Devoicing

The consonant [r] → [r̥] when it precedes either [i], [i̥], or [j]. It takes precedence over palatalization but does not block it, e.g. *юрив* [i̥u.ˈr̥ʲif] 'whistle'.

Palatalization

When a consonant is immediately followed by [i̯] or [j], it is palatalized and replaces the on-glide/semivowel, e.g. *Алив* [ɐ.ˈlʲif] ‘the letter A’. The consonants [ʃ] ⟶ [ɕ] and [ʒ] ⟶ [ʑ] when palatalized, as do their respective affricates, i.e. [t͡ʃ] ⟶ [t͡ɕ] and [d͡ʒ] ⟶ [d͡ʑ].

Nasalization

Both [m] ⟶ [ɱ] and [n] ⟶ [ŋ] when they directly precede either [k] or [q], e.g. *амг* [əɱk] ‘midwife’.

2.3. Phonotactics

This section is incomplete.

2.3.1. Syllable Structure

This section is incomplete.

2.3.2. Consonant Clusters

This section is incomplete.

2.4. Stress

The primary stress of a word typically falls onto the antepenultimate (third to last), and the secondary stress onto the penultimate (second to last) syllable, e.g. *мешавʉ* [ˈteˌʒa.və] ‘déjà vu’.

If the word is only two syllables long, the primary stress falls onto the first syllable with no secondary stress, e.g. *шолаун* [ˈʃɔ.ləu̯n] ‘fox’.

Monosyllabic words are always unstressed, e.g. *Ше* [ʃə] ‘the letter Ш’.

Syllables whose nucleus contains [i, i̯] or palatization always receive the primary stress regardless of position, e.g. *Алив* [ɐ.ˈlʲif] ‘the letter A’. This also applies to monosyllabic words, e.g. *Юс* [ˈi̯us] ‘the letter У’. If multiple syllables qualify, the last one receives primary stress, from which position

the regular stressing rules continue to be applied. For example, in *Ялвапега* [i̯ɐ.ˈlʲi.vɐ.ˌbe.gə] ‘alphabet’, the second syllable receives primary stress by being the last syllable to contain [i, i̯] or palatalization, and the penultimate syllable receives secondary stress as per the regular stressing patterns.

III

ORTHOGRAPHY

3.1. Script

The language is primarily written using the Cyrillic script. A recognized, standardized Latin script variant of the orthography exists, but is not widely used among speakers.

Table 3.1.a shows the 25 letters in alphabetical order. The order is based on the order of the Latin alphabet. The first occurence of either the base consonant or matching allophone is used to determine the order. ‘Ц’, ‘Ч’, and ‘Ъ’ were appended to the end, as they do not have direct Latin equivalents.

The script features a few non-standard glyphs and letter forms. The otherwise archaic letter ‘Ѣ’ is used to represent [i̯ɔ] rather than e.g. Russian ‘Ё’. The lowercase form of ‘I’ is a Latin-style small capital I, i.e. ‘ɪ’, rather than the standard Cyrillic dotted ‘і’.

The alphabet goes by the name of *Яплвапега* [i̯ɐ.ˈlʲi.vɐ.bɜ.gə], initially derived from Latin *alphabetum* , but adapted over time to contain the first few letters of the Nirav alphabet.

GLYPH	ITALIC	NAME	PHONEMES	LATIN	
А а	*А а*	Алів	[a, ɐ, ə]	A a	Alįv
Я я	*Я я*	Ята	[î̯a, î̯ə]	Ą ą	Ąta
П п	*П п*	Пе	[p, b]	P p	Pe
Г г	*Г г*	Ге	[k, g]	C c	Ce
Т т	*Т т*	Те	[t, d]	T t	Te
Е е	*Е е*	Ета	[e, ɜ, ə]	E E	Eta
Є є	*Є є*	Єта	[î̯e, î̯ə]	Ę ę	Ęta
В в	*В в*	Ве	[f, v]	V v	Ve
Х х	*Х х*	Хе	[x, ɣ]	H h	He
И и	*И и*	Йота	[i]	I i	Iota
І і	*І і*	Іта	[ji]	Į į	Įta
Л л	*Л л*	Ле	[l]	L l	Le
М м	*М м*	Ме	[m, ɱ]	M m	Me
Н н	*Н н*	Не	[n, ŋ]	N n	Ne
О о	*О о*	Ом	[o, ɔ]	O o	Om
Ъ ъ	*Ъ ъ*	Ъта	[î̯ɔ]	Ǫ ǫ	Ǫta
К к	*К к*	Ке	[q, ɢ]	K k	Ke
Р р	*Р р*	Ре	[r, ʁ]	R r	Re
С с	*С с*	Се	[s, z]	S s	Se
Ш ш	*Ш ш*	Ше	[ʃ, ʒ]	Ss ss	Sse
У у	*У у*	Юс	[u]	U u	Ų̇s
Ю ю	*Ю ю*	Ют	[î̯u]	Ų ų	Ų̇t
Ц ц	*Ц ц*	Це	[t͡s, d͡z]	Ts ts	Tse
Ч ч	*Ч ч*	Че	[t͡ʃ, d͡ʒ, t͡ɕ, d͡ʑ]	Tss tss	Tsse
Ь ь	*Ь ь*		[◌ʼ]		

Table 3.1.a Alphabet

3.1.1. Ejectives

Ejective consonants are marked by appending ⟨ъ⟩ and thus compose the digraphs ⟨тъ⟩ [tʼ], ⟨гъ⟩ [kʼ], and ⟨къ⟩ [qʼ]. In the Latin script, the consonant is doubled, i.e. ⟪tt⟫ [tʼ], ⟪cc⟫ [kʼ], and ⟪kk⟫ [qʼ].

3.1.2. Vowel Hiatus

Table 3.1.a describes diphthongs with an [i̯]-onset to have their own glyphs. If vowel hiatus occurs in these cases, the vowels in hiatus are written separately, compare *Ѣта* [ˈi̯ɔ.də] ‘the letter Ѣ’ and *Иота* [ˈiɔ.də] ‘the letter И’.

In all other diphthongs, ⟨ъ⟩ is used to indicate a vowel hiatus between two adjacent vowels, compare *сау* [sɐi̯] ‘fish’ and *сауъ* [sɐ.ˈi] ‘thought’, as well as *вауна* [ˈfau̯.nə] ‘fauna’ and *ваиъна* [ˈfa.ˌu.nə] ‘basket’. The last example also shows how hiatus can shift the syllable boundary.

When writing Nirav using the Latin script, a diaresis is used to indicate vowel hiatus, i.e. *sai* [sɐi̯] ‘fish’ and *saï* [sɐ.ˈi] ‘thought’, and *vauna* [ˈfau̯.nə] ‘fauna’ and *vaüna* [ˈfa.ˌu.nə] ‘basket’. The diaresis is always required for ‘U’ in hiatus but only required for off-glide ‘I’ in hiatus. As such, on-glide ‘I’ in hiatus does not require a diaresis, e.g. in *Iota* [ˈiɔ.də] ‘the letter И’.

3.1.3. Capitalization

This section is incomplete.

IV

MORPHOLOGY

4.1. Nouns

This section is incomplete.

4.1.1. Noun Classes

Each noun corresponds to one of four semantically distinct noun classes. This classification affects agreement patterns with definiteness, adjectives, pronouns, and verbs, as is described in later sections.

Human Nouns

Class 1 includes all nouns exclusively referring to people in any capacity, as individuals or groups, e.g. *тин* [ˈtin] ‘person’.

Animate Nouns

Class 2 includes all nouns which are historically considered to be alive while not being human. This includes obvious categories such as animals, e.g. *шолаун* [ˈʃɔ.ləu̯n] ‘fox’; plants and vegetation, e.g. *вауна* [ˈfau̯.nə] ‘fauna’; deities, e.g. *Гаиъа* [kɐ.ˈiə] ‘Gaia’; celestial bodies, e.g. *ню* [ˈnʲu] ‘moon’; the weather, e.g. *сатъа* [ˈsă.tʼə] ‘fog’; and certain natural features, e.g. *шу* [ʃə] ‘river’.

Ephemeral Nouns

Class 3 includes all nouns which are historically considered insignificant, intangible or lacking a permanent physical form. This includes abstract concepts, e.g. *ришаум* [ˈɻi.ʒəu̯m] ‘law’; thoughts or feelings, e.g. *тешавʏ* [ˈte.ˌʒa.vɵ] ‘déjà vu’; numbers, e.g. *нул* [nəl] ‘zero’; certain natural phenomena, e.g. *лор* [lɔr] ‘sound’, as well as social constructs, e.g. *нинит* [ni.ˈnit] ‘time’. It notably includes *мнı* [ˈmnʲi] ‘speech’ and *аираʙ* [ˈai.rəf] ‘language’, but not *amu* [ɐ.ˈti] ‘writing’, which is a regular noun.

Regular Nouns

Class 4 include all nouns which do not fit into any of the other classes, e.g. *amu* [ɐ.ˈti] ‘writing’.

Class Reassignment

Although these classes are considered grammatically immutable, it is common for fluent speakers to creatively reassign nouns to different classes for emphatic effect. For example, referring to a pet as a human noun may convey strong affection, while calling a treasured object an ephemeral noun might emphasize fragility. This can also have the opposite effect, such as referring to a person as an ephemeral noun to imply situational insignificance.

Class reassignment is generally frowned upon in formal contexts.

4.1.2. Definiteness

This section is incomplete.

4.1.3. Counting

This section is incomplete.

- Countable nouns have singular, dual, plural
  - Dual grammatically correct, but typically only used for things in pairs, e.g. shoes
- Uncountable nouns

4.1.4. Case Declension

This section is incomplete.

- Nominative/Absolutive
- Ergative
- Accusative
- Genitive
- Dative
- Locative
- Ablative
- Sublative
- Instrumental

4.2. Verbs

This section is incomplete.

4.2.1. Verb Classes

This section is incomplete.

4.2.2. Tense and Aspect

This section is incomplete.

4.2.3. Conjugation

This section is incomplete.

4.3. Adjectives

This section is incomplete.

- Not really a thing, nouns are verbified, i.e. it is green = it “greens”

4.3.1. Comparison

This section is incomplete.

4.4. Pronouns

This section is incomplete.

- 1st singular, dual, plural inclusive, plural exclusive
- 2nd singular, plural
- 3rd singular, plural
- no formality registers, formality by using (proper) nouns

4.5. Derivational Morphology

This section is incomplete.

V

SYNTAX

5.1. Simple Clauses

This section is incomplete.

5.1.1. Negation

This section is incomplete.

5.1.2. Questions

This section is incomplete.

5.1.3. Noun phrases

This section is incomplete.

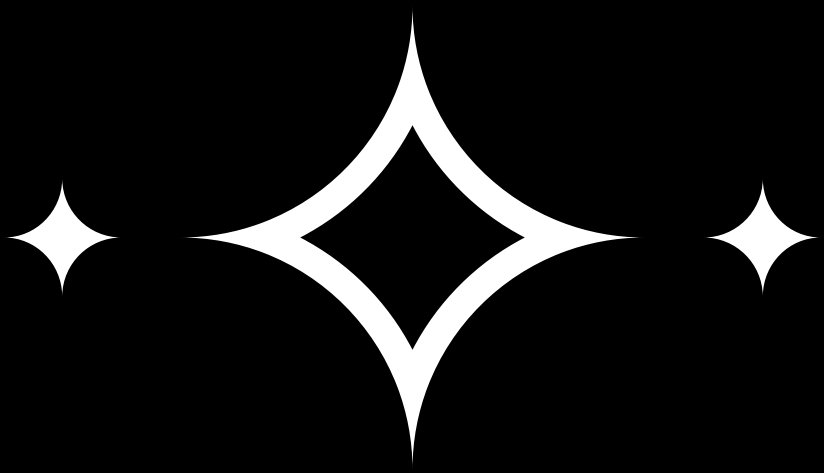
5.2. Complex Clauses

This section is incomplete.

5.2.1. Conjunctions

This section is incomplete.

APPENDICES



A

SAMPLES

A.1. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(from the United Nations General Assembly, 1948)

This section is incomplete.

> *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

Лорем ипсум.

A.2. The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9)

(from the Bible)

This section is incomplete.

> *Now all the Earth continued to be of one language and of one vocabulary. As they travelled eastward, they discovered a valley plain in the land of Shinar, and they began dwelling there.*
>
> *Then they said to one another: "Come! Let us make bricks and bake them with fire." So they used bricks instead of stone, and bitumen as mortar. They*

now said: "Come! Let us build a city for ourselves and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a celebrated name for ourselves, so that we will not be scattered over the entire face of the Earth."

Then the Lord went down to see the city and the tower that the sons of men had built. the Lord then said: "Look! They are one people with one language, and this is what they have started to do. Now there is nothing that they may have in mind to do that will be impossible for them. Come! Let us go down there and confuse their language in order that they may not understand one another's language."

So the Lord scattered them from there over the entire face of the Earth, and they gradually left off building the city. That is why it was named Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the Earth, and the Lord scattered them from there over the entire face of the Earth.

Лорем ипсум.

A.3. The North Wind and the Sun

(from Aesop's Fables, Perry 46)

This section is incomplete.

The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger, when a traveler came along wrapped in a warm cloak. They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveler take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other.

Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew the more closely did the traveler fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt Then the Sun shined out warmly, and immediately the traveler took off his cloak. And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.

Лорем ипсум.

A.4. Krung Thep Maha Nakhon

The complete ceremonial name of Bangkok, the capital of Thailand. According to Guinness World Records, it is the longest place name worldwide.

> กรุงเทพมหานคร อมรรัตนโกสินทร์ มหินทรายุธยา มหาดิลกภพ นพรัตนราชธานี บูรีรมย์ อุดมราชนิเวศน์ มหาสถาน อมรพิมาน อวตารสถิต สักกะทัตติยวิษณุกรรมประสิทธิ์

> *The city of angels, great city of immortals, magnificent city of the Nine Gems, seat of the King, city of royal palaces, home of gods incarnate, erected by Vishvakarman at Indra's behest.*

Лорем ипсум.

A.5. The Four Nations

(from Avatar: The Last Airbender)

This section is incomplete.

> *Water. Earth. Fire. Air.*
>
> *My grandmother used to tell me stories about the old days, a time of peace when the Avatar kept balance between the Water Tribes, Earth Kingdom, Fire Nation, and Air Nomads. But that all changed when the Fire Nation attacked.*
>
> *Only the Avatar mastered all four elements. Only he could stop the ruthless firebenders. But when the world needed him most, he vanished.*
>
> *A hundred years have passed and the Fire Nation is nearing victory in the War. Two years ago, my father and the men of my tribe journeyed to the Earth Kingdom to help fight against the Fire Nation, leaving me and my brother to look after our tribe.*
>
> *Some people believe that the Avatar was never reborn into the Air Nomads, and that the cycle is broken. But I haven't lost hope. I still believe that somehow, the Avatar will return to save the world.*

Лорем ипсум.

A.6. Iroh and the Four Elements

(from Avatar: The Last Airbender)

This section is incomplete.

> *Fire is the element of power. The people of the Fire Nation have desire and will, and the energy and drive to achieve what they want.*
>
> *Earth is the element of substance. The people of the Earth Kingdom are diverse and strong. They are persistent and enduring.*
>
> *Air is the element of freedom. The Air Nomads detached themselves from worldly concerns, and they found peace and freedom. And they apparently had great senses of humor.*
>
> *Water is the element of change. The people of the Water Tribes are capable of adapting to many things. They have a sense of community and love that holds them together through anything.*

Лорем ипсум.

A.7. Leaves from the Vine

(from Avatar: The Last Airbender)

This section is incomplete.

> *Leaves from the vine*
> *Falling so slow*
> *Like fragile tiny shells*
> *Drifting in the foam*
> *Little soldier boy*
> *Come marching home*
> *Brave soldier boy*
> *Comes marching home*
>
> *Happy birthday, my son.*
> *If only I could have helped you.*

Лорем ипсум.

B

LEXICON

ати *(n.r.)* writing, text, lyrics
амг *(n.h.)* midwife
Алів *(n.r.)* the letter A
аирав *(n.e.)* language
Ята *(n.r.)* the letter Я
Яліпапега *(n.r.)* alphabet, writing system
Пе *(n.r.)* the letter П
Ге *(n.r.)* the letter Г
тин *(n.h.)* person, human, man, woman
тешаву *(n.e.)* déjà vu
Те *(n.r.)* the letter Т
Ета *(n.r.)* the letter Е
Єта *(n.r.)* the letter Є
Ве *(n.r.)* the letter В
вауна *(n.a.)* fauna, vegatation, plant life
ваиъна *(n.a.)* basket, woven container
Хе *(n.r.)* the letter Х
Иота *(n.r.)* the letter И
Іта *(n.r.)* the letter І
ігъел *(n.e.)* denial, negation
лор *(n.e.)* sound, noise
Ле *(n.r.)* the letter Л
мні *(n.e.)* speech, voice, dialect
Ме *(n.r.)* the letter М
нул *(n.e.)* zero, insignificance
ню *(n.a.)* moon
нинит *(n.e.)* time, duration
Не *(n.r.)* the letter Н
Ом *(n.r.)* the letter О
Ѣта *(n.r.)* the letter Ѣ
Ке *(n.r.)* the letter К
ришаум *(n.e.)* law, rule, regulation, principle
Ре *(n.r.)* the letter Р
саиъ *(n.e.)* thought, idea
саи *(n.a.)* fish, seafood, marine life
Се *(n.r.)* the letter С
сатъа *(n.a.)* fog, mist
шу *(n.a.)* river, stream, creek, flowing water
шолаун *(n.a.)* fox
Ше *(n.r.)* the letter Ш
Ют *(n.r.)* the letter Ю
Юс *(n.r.)* the letter У

юрів *(n.r.)* whistle
Це *(n.r.)* the letter Ц
Че *(n.r.)* the letter Ч