

# Pwo Karen writing systems

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## Abstract

There are several writing systems in Pwo Karen. This paper focuses on Buddhist Pwo Karen and Christian Pwo Karen Scripts and shows how these writing systems correspond to the contemporary and 19th-century Eastern Pwo Karen phonology. The importance of these writing systems for the historical study of Karenic languages is also noted.

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to show the correspondence between the writing systems and phonology of Eastern Pwo Karen. Pwo Karen writing systems include the Buddhist Pwo Karen Script, Christian Pwo Karen Script, Leke Script, and Myainggyingu Script. This paper deals with the Buddhist Pwo Karen Script and the Christian Pwo Karen Script, which are the most widespread among these. For samples of these writing systems, see the texts in Section 7. The relationship between these two writing systems and the sounds is treated in Kato (2001a) and Kato (2001b). However, I take up this issue again here because these articles have the following problems: (a) they are difficult to understand because they explain the writing systems using Roman transliterations; (b) they do not exhaustively cover the notation of rhymes; (c) they are difficult to understand because they do not show the phonological system of Eastern Pwo Karen in the 19th century, which seems to be largely reflected in the two writing systems; and (d) they are written in Japanese and therefore only a limited number of students can read them. Although the paper by anthropologist Stern (1968) deals with these writing systems and how to read them, it contains considerable

inaccuracies. Therefore, it would be meaningful to address the correspondence between these writing systems and the phonological system again here. Understanding these writing systems leads to an understanding of the phonological system of Eastern Pwo Karen of two hundred years ago, and this will be useful for historical studies of Karenic languages.

In the following, Section 2 presents the phonological system of Eastern Pwo Karen. Section 3 presents the phonological system of Eastern Pwo Karen in the 19th century. Section 4 shows the sound correspondences between 19th-century and contemporary Eastern Pwo Karen. Section 5 shows how the Buddhist Pwo Karen Script corresponds to the phonology. Section 6 shows how the Christian Pwo Karen Script corresponds to the phonology. Section 7 presents sample texts. Section 8 is concluding remarks.

## **2. Phonology of the contemporary Eastern Pwo Karen**

Pwo Karen is one of the languages of the Karenic branch of Tibeto-Burman. It has several dialectal groups. Kato (2017, 2019) lists four Pwo Karen dialectal groups that are not intelligible to each other: Western Pwo Karen, Htoklibang Pwo Karen, Eastern Pwo Karen, and Northern Pwo Karen. For the classification of the Pwo Karen dialects and a detailed discussion of their characteristics, see Kato (1995, 2009), Dawkins and Phillips (2009a, b), and Phillips (2017, 2018). As will be mentioned in Sections 5 and 6, both the Buddhist Pwo Karen Script and Christian Pwo Karen Script emerged during the period between the late 18th and mid-19th centuries in the areas where present-day Eastern Pwo Karen is spoken, i.e., Karen State and Mon State. In addition, both writing systems correspond best to the phonological system of the Hpa-an dialect, a dialect of Eastern Pwo Karen. Therefore, they can be considered to have been established based on the phonological system of the Hpa-an dialect of those times. The Hpa-an dialect is a dialect spoken around Hpa-an, the capital of Karen State, and its distribution area includes surrounding towns such as Hlaingbwe and Kawkareik. In the following discussion, the language name Eastern Pwo Karen refers to the Hpa-an dialect.

Neither Buddhist Pwo Karen nor Christian Pwo Karen Scripts can be properly

understood without knowing the phonological system of Eastern Pwo Karen (henceforth abbreviated as “EPK”). Therefore, an overview of the phonological system of the Hpa-an dialect will be presented below (cf. Kato 1995).

The syllable structure of EPK can be represented as C1(C2)V1(V2)(C3)/(T). ‘C’ stands for a consonant, ‘V’ for a vowel, and ‘T’ for a tone. C1 is an initial consonant, C2 is a medial consonant, and C3 is a final consonant. One or two vowels may occur, and are represented with V1 and V2. Bracketed elements may or may not occur. The part of C1(C2)- is called an onset, and that of -V1(V2)(C3) is called a rhyme.

As shown in Table 1, there are four tones; that is, the low-level, mid-level, high-level, and falling tones. In the table, they are shown with /a/ with tone marks. Among these, the mid-level tone is pronounced with a breathy voice. There are also atonic syllables, which are represented by not adding any tone mark. The only rhyme that can appear in atonic syllables is /-ə/. They are pronounced short and weak.

**Table 1: Tones in EPK**

à	[a11]	low-level tone
ā	[a̤33~334]	mid-level tone
á	[a55]	high-level tone
â	[a51]	falling tone
ə		atonic

Simple onsets consisting of only C1 are shown in Table 2. There are a total of 25 simple onsets.

**Table 2: Simple onsets in EPK**

p	θ	t	c	k	ʔ
ph		th	ch	kh	
b		d			
			ɛ	x	h
				y	ɣ
m		n	ɲ	ŋ	
w			j		
		l			
		r			

The phonetic values of simple onsets are as follows: /p-/ [p], /θ-/ [t̥~t̥~θ], /t-/ [t], /c-/ [tɛ], /k-/ [k], /ʔ-/ [ʔ], /ph-/ [pʰ], /th-/ [tʰ], /ch-/ [tɛʰ], /kh-/ [kʰ], /b-/ [b~ʔb], /d-/

[d~ʔd~d], /e-/ [e~s<sup>h</sup>], /x-/ [x], /h-/ [h], /ɣ-/ [ɣ], /ɣ-/ [ɣ~f], /m-/ [m], /n-/ [n], /ɲ-/ [ɲ], /ŋ-/ [ŋ], /w-/ [w], /j-/ [j~j], /l-/ [l], and /r-/ [r~ɹ]. When one reads a written text, /c-/ and /ch-/ are often pronounced as [s] and [s<sup>h</sup>], respectively. In this case, /ch-/ [s<sup>h</sup>] becomes indistinguishable from /e-/ that is pronounced [s<sup>h</sup>].

The phonemes that can appear as C2 are /w-/ [w], /l-/ [l], /r-/ [r~ɹ], and /j-/ [j~j]. Possible combinations of C1 and C2 are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Possible combinations of C1 and C2 in EPK**

		C1																		
		p	θ	t	c	k	ʔ	ph	th	ch	kh	b	d	x	h	m	n	ɲ	j	l
C2	w	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	l	+				+		+		+	+					+				
	r	+				+				+										
	j	+						+			+					+				+

As has been mentioned, the structure of a rhyme can be represented as -V1(V2) (C3). Among the components of a rhyme, the position of C3 can only be occupied by /-N/. The final consonant /-N/ is realized as [N] or nasalization of the preceding vowel. Rhymes can be divided into two types: open rhymes without C3, i.e., /-N/, and nasalized rhymes with /-N/.

There are 13 open rhymes, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Open rhymes in EPK**

Monophthongs			Diphthongs	
i	i	u	ai	aʊ
ĩ		ʊ		
e	ə	o		
ɛ	a	ɔ		

These rhymes are realized as follows: /-i/[ǎi], /-i/[ĩ], /-u/[u~ǎu], /-ĩ/[ɪ], /-ʊ/[ʊ], /-e/[e], /-ə/[ə], /-o/[o], /-ɛ/[ɛ], /-a/[ǎ], /-ɔ/[ɔ], /-ai/[ǎi], /-aʊ/[ǎʊ]. In the younger generation, the distinction between the rhymes /-ĩ/ and /-e/ is becoming unclear for many speakers. Similarly, the distinction between the rhymes /-ʊ/ and /-o/ is also becoming unclear. Among all the rhymes, /-e/, /-o/, /-ai/, and /-aʊ/, generally co-occur only with low- and high-level tones. This is because they originate from rhymes with

a final glottal stop in the 19th century, and the tones that used to co-occur with a final glottal stop in the 19th century, i.e., the low- and high- checked tones, have merged into the contemporary low- and high-level tones, respectively.

Note that I used to transcribe the vowel phoneme /i/ as /i/. I currently use /i̥/ instead of /i/ because the symbol /i/ is difficult to distinguish from /i/ when they are written with a tone mark. Compare, for example, /i̥/ and /i/. Moreover, /i̥/ and /i/ are difficult to distinguish from each other in some IPA fonts in italics.

There are 8 nasalized rhymes, as shown in Table 5. I put /-i̥N/ in parentheses because it appears only in loanwords from Burmese and those from other languages that have entered via Burmese.

**Table 5: Nasalized rhymes in EPK**

Monophthongs	Diphthongs
(i̥N)	
əN ON	e̥iN əwN o̥uN
ḁN	ai̥N

These rhymes are realized as follows: /-i̥N/ [i̥N~ĩ], /-əN/ [əN~ǝ], /-ḁN/ [ãN~ǎ], /-o̥N/ [o̥N~õ], /-e̥iN/ [e̥iN~ei], /-əwN/ [əwN~əw], /-o̥uN/ [o̥uN~ou], /-ai̥N/ [äiN~äi]. In the rhymes /-e̥iN/, /-əwN/, and /-o̥uN/, the final /-N/ is often dropped. In speech with a rapid speed, it tends not to be pronounced. Furthermore, in the younger generation, the distinction between /-əwN/ and /-o̥uN/ is becoming unclear.

### 3. Phonology of Eastern Pwo Karen in the 19th century

For a better understanding of Buddhist Pwo Karen Script and Christian Pwo Karen Script, it is necessary to consider the phonological system of EPK during the period from the late 18th century to the mid-19th century, when these writing systems emerged. Henceforth, EPK during this period is called “19c EPK”. The phonological system of 19c EPK can be assumed from two processes: one of the processes is to compare the phonological systems of the Pwo Karen dialects; and the other is to compare the phonological system of contemporary EPK (henceforth abbreviated as “CEPK”) with the system of Christian Pwo Karen Script. The Christian Pwo Karen Script is very systematic and therefore very useful for the restructuring of the 19c

EPK phonological system. The highly systematic nature of the Christian Pwo Karen Script will be understood if one reads Section 6. Below is my view of the 19c EPK phonological system.

The syllable structure of 19c EPK can be represented as C1(C2)V1(V2)(V2)(C3)/(T), which is the same as that of CEPK. However, 19c EPK differs significantly from CEPK in that a glottal stop can appear as C3.

There were six tones: low-level, mid-level, high-level, falling, low-checked, and high-checked, as shown in Table 6. The exact pitches of these are unknown. The major difference with CEPK is that there were tones ending with a glottal stop, i.e., low-checked and high-checked tones. It is very difficult to determine whether the glottal stop in the low-checked and high-checked tones should be interpreted as an intrinsic feature of the tones or as a syllable-final consonant that is unrelated to the tones. Therefore, we will avoid drawing a conclusion in this paper and consider this glottal stop to be both an intrinsic feature of the tones and a syllable-final consonant. It is also very difficult to determine how to relate phonologically the low-checked and low-level tones, and the high-checked and high-level tones, respectively. In terms of notation, /à/ and /àʔ/ are given the same tone mark. However, they may be rhymes with the same toneme, or with different tonemes. The same is true for /á/ and /áʔ/. We would like to refrain from drawing a conclusion on this issue as well.

**Table 6: Tones in 19c EPK**

à	low-level tone
ā	mid-level tone
á	high-level tone
â	falling tone
àʔ	low-checked tone
áʔ	high-checked tone
ə	atonic

Simple onsets consisting of only C1 are shown in Table 7. The inventory of phonemes is the same as CEPK. It is unknown whether there were any differences with CEPK in terms of phonetic realization. The possible combinations of C1 and C2 are also the same as those shown in Table 3.

**Table 7: Onsets in 19c EPK**

p	θ	t	c	k	ʔ
ph		th	ch	kh	
b		d			
			ɛ	x	h
				ɣ	ʁ
m		n	ɲ	ŋ	
w			j		
		l			
		r			

The structure of a rhyme in 19c EPK can be represented as -V1(V2)(C3), the same as CEPK. The major difference from CEPK is that a glottal stop can appear as C3 in 19c EPK.

There are 10 open rhymes, as shown in Table 8. 19c EPK does not have /i/, /ɔ/, /ai/, or /aɔ/, which CEPK has, but it does have /u/, which CEPK does not have.

**Table 8: Open rhymes in 19c EPK**

i	i	u	u
e	ə	o	
ɛ	a	ɔ	

There are 7 open rhymes, as shown in Table 9. CEPK has /-iN/, which appears only in loanwords from Burmese, but we assume that 19c EPK did not have this rhyme.

**Table 9: Nasalized rhymes in 19c EPK**

Monophthongs		Diphthongs		
əN	oN	eiN	əuN	ouN
aN			aiN	

19c EPK had rhymes that ended with a glottal stop. We call these the stopped rhymes. There are 8 stopped rhymes, as shown in Table 10.

**Table 10: Stopped rhymes in 19c EPK**

Monophthongs		Diphthongs		
	i?			
e?	o?			
	a?	ɔ?	ai?	au? au?

#### 4. Correspondences of sounds between 19c EPK and CEPK

This section shows how the sounds of 19c EPK correspond to those of CEPK. Since there is no difference in C1 and C2, and in their combinations, we will only consider the correspondences observed in the tones and rhymes. Forms of 19c EPK are marked with an asterisk.

First, the correspondences of the tones are shown in Table 11. In CEPK, /à/ and /â?/ in 19c EPK have merged to become /â/. Similarly, /á/ and /á?/ in 19c EPK have merged to become /á/ in CEPK.

**Table 11: Tones**

19c EPK	CEPK
*â, *â?	â [a11]
*ā	ā [ā33 ~ 334]
*á, *á?	á [a55]
*â	â [a51]
*ə (atonic)	ə (atonic)

The plain rhymes in 19c EPK correspond to CEPK rhymes, as shown in Table 12. In the 19th century, there was a distinction between /-u/ and /-u/, but these two rhymes have merged into /-u/ in CEPK. The close-mid vowels /-e/ and /-o/ in 19c EPK have both been narrowed in CEPK, becoming /-i/ and /-ɔ/ respectively.

**Table 12: Plain rhymes**

19c EPK	*i	*i	*u	*u	*e	*ə	*o	*ε	*a	*ɔ
CEPK	i	i	u	u	i	ə	ɔ	ε	a	ɔ

There are exceptions to the correspondences shown in Table 12. The 19c EPK rhyme \*/-e/ preceded by the initial \*/w-/ or medial \*/-w-/ has been succeeded as /-e/ in CEPK, not as /i/. For example, /-e/ of the word /ʔəwê/ ‘3SG’ comes from \*/-e/, but



this word is not pronounced /ʔəw̃/. Similarly, /-e/ of the word /xwè/ ‘to buy’ comes from \*/-e/, but this word is not pronounced /xw̃/.

The nasalized rhymes in 19c EPK correspond to the nasalized rhymes in CEPK in a one-to-one relationship, as shown in Table 13.

**Table 13: Nasalized rhymes**

19c EPK	*əN	*oN	*aN	*eĩN	*əuĩN	*ouĩN	*aiĩN
CEPK	əN	oN	aN	eĩN	əuĩN	ouĩN	aiĩN

As shown in Table 14, the stopped rhymes in 19c EPK have all changed to plain rhymes in CEPK. Moreover, the stopped rhymes /-auʔ/ and /-aʊʔ/ in 19c EPK have merged to become /-aʊ/ in CEPK.

**Table 14: Stopped rhymes**

19c EPK	*iʔ	*eʔ	*oʔ	*aʔ	*ɔʔ	*aiʔ	*auʔ	*aʊʔ
CEPK	i	e	o	a	ɔ	ai	aʊ	aʊ

In the following, when a CEPK word example is shown, if the phonemically transcribed form of 19c EPK differs from that of CEPK, the 19c EPK form is presented in parentheses, as in ɔʔ /thà/ (\* /thàʔ/) ‘iron’. However, in the case of ʊ /mà/ ‘to do’, the 19c EPK form \*/mà/ is not presented because its phonemic representation is the same as that of the CEPK form /mà/.

## 5. Buddhist Pwo Karen Script (လိက်ထူလီ)

In the process of receiving Buddhism from the Mon, Pwo Karen people who lived around Hpa-an tried to use the Mon Script to write their language. I assume that such attempts started at the earliest in the late 18th century. This writing method was probably unsystematic at first, but it had acquired a certain degree of systematicity by the mid-19th century, when many palm-leaf inscriptions started to be written in several Buddhist monasteries. I call this the Buddhist Pwo Karen Script (henceforth abbreviated as “BS”) because its origin is related to Buddhism. Stern (1968) calls it the Monastic script. Thus, the BS reflects to some extent the phonological system of EPK during the period between the late 18th century and mid-19th century. After

various revisions, it was in the 1960s that the BS was fixed to the system used today. Around Hpa-an, many palm-leaf inscriptions written with this script have been produced. Many of them are related to Buddhism. According to U Phon Myint (1975), the earliest of the BS palm-leaf inscriptions that he found was made in 1851. According to lore, the origin of this character is said to date back to the Pagan period. It is noteworthy that this writing system was created by the Karen speakers themselves, unlike the other famous letters of Karenic languages, which were often created by Christian missionaries.

In EPK, this writing system is called လိပ်လိပ်လိပ် /láí thû li/ (\*/láí? thû li/), which literally means ‘old palm-leaf inscription’ (/láí/ ‘script’, /thû/ ‘rolled, bundled’, /li/ ‘old’). Because the BS is the most standard writing system in the area where EPK is spoken, it is often referred to simply as လိပ်လိပ် /láí phlòon/ (script - Pwo Karen), which means ‘Pwo Karen Script’. Although I call this writing system the Buddhist Pwo Karen Script to contrast with the Christian Pwo Karen Script, local Karen people are hardly conscious of the connection between this writing system and religion.

In the BS, Pali words may often appear in their original spelling based on the Mon-Burmese system that is used in Buddhist literature. In that case, the reading of words derived from Pali is very complex and difficult to generalize, as it is influenced by both the reading of Pali words in Mon and Burmese. Therefore, in this paper, we will not deal with the principles in reading words of Pali origin.

### 5.1. Initial consonants

Initial consonants, i.e., consonants appearing in the C1 position, are generally written with the basic letters. There are 36 basic letters, which are shown in Table 15. This table is always presented in the primary education of the BS. Brackets are added by the author. Under each basic letter, its pronunciation is shown.

The following are notes on the basic letters.

- A character that is not usually added to the list of basic letters, but that has the same function as the basic letters is ယှ /e-/ , e.g., ယှဝ် /eà/ ‘be few’.
- The parenthesized basic letters are used only for words borrowed from languages

**Table 15: Basic letters**

က k-	ခ kh-	(ဂ) k~kh-	(ဃ) kh-	င ŋ-
စ c-	ဆ ch-	(ဇ) c-	(ဈ) c-	ည j-
(ဋ) t-	(ဌ) th-	ဍ d-	(ဎ) d-	ဏ n-
တ t-	ထ th-	(ဒ) t~d-	(ဓ) t~th~d-	န n-
ပ p-	ဖ ph-	(ဗ) p~b-	(ဘ) p~ph~b-	မ m-
ယ j-	ရ r-	လ l-	ဝ w-	သ θ-
	ဟ h-	(ဌ) l-	အ ʔ-	
	ဓ b-	တု ɣ-, ɣ-	ယု x-	

such as Pali, Mon, and Burmese. Some of these are given two or more pronunciations, such as “k~kh-”, because they are read differently in different words. Pronunciation can also vary from speaker to speaker. These may, in some cases, be read with the pronunciation of basic letters in Burmese. The basic letters that may be read with Burmese pronunciation and their readings in that case are as follows: ဂ [g], ဃ [g], ဇ [z], ဈ [z], ဒ [d], ဓ [d], ဗ [b], and ဘ [b]. In this case, [g], [d], and [b] are non-implosive.

- Both ဏ and န represent /n-/. Which of these to use is fixed by the word, but the principle of which letter to use is unknown.
- The basic letter န, when marked with a diacritic underneath, may take on a variant character, e.g., န̣ /nū/ ‘breast’.
- တု represents both /ɣ-/ and /ɣ-/. Since the sound /ɣ-/ only appears in particles including တုး /ká/ ‘interrogative particle’, the grammatical context can determine with which pronunciation one should read the letter.

Examples of words written with each basic letter follow, except for the basic letters parenthesized in Table 15: ကး /ká/ ‘be difficult’, ခး /khá/ ‘be bitter’, ငယံင် /ŋèŋò/ ‘to quarrel’, စူး /cú/ (\*cú) ‘hand’, ဆွဲ /chá/ ‘to ache’, ညာညာသ် /jàjàθà/

(\* /nàpāthàiʔ/) ‘all directions’, သူး /dá/ ‘to see’, ဇာဝ် /nā/ ‘ear’, တာ /tà/ ‘toddy palm’, ထာ /thà/ (\* /thàʔ/) ‘iron’, နိုဝ် /nò/ (\* /nòʔ/) ‘mouth’, ဝါ /pà/ (\* /pàʔ/) ‘to regard’, ဖါ /phā/ ‘father’, မာ /mà/ ‘to do’, ယး /já/ ‘fish’, ရံဝ် /rōw/ ‘office’, လာ /là/ ‘moon’, ဝါ /wà/ ‘husband’, သး /thá/ ‘to bear fruits’, တာ်ညှ် /hàidài/ (\* /hàiʔdàiʔ/) ‘toilet’, အး /ʔá/ ‘be many’, ဝး /bá/ ‘be right’, ဟ့း /yá/ ‘evening’, ဟ့း /yá/ ‘interrogative particle’, and ဝိဝ် /xí/ ‘be beautiful’.

## 5.2. Medial consonants and subscripts

The BS has a method of writing that puts a basic letter in a smaller size underneath another basic letter, such as ဝ်, ဝ်, and ဝ်. These smaller basic letters are called subscripts in this paper. Medial consonants, i.e., consonants appearing in the position of C2, are written with subscripts. Subscripts may also be utilized in the notation of atonic syllables. Some subscripts take a different shape from the basic letter. They are the six subscripts shown in Table 16.

**Table 16: Subscripts with a shape different from the basic letter**

Basic letters	င	န	မ	ယ	ရ	လ
Subscripts	င်	န်	မ်	ယ်	ရ်	လ်

The medial consonants /-w-/, /-l-/, /-r-/, and /-j-/ are written using subscripts, as shown in Table 17.

**Table 17: Medial consonants**

ဝ်	လ်	ရ်	ယ်
-w-	-l-	-r-	-j-

Example words with medial consonants follow: ကွာ် /kwà/ ‘ax’, ပွါ် /pwài/ (\* /pwàiʔ/) ‘be tired’, ကွာ် /klà/ (\* /klàʔ/) ‘crow’, ဖာ် /phlā/ ‘arrow’, ခြာ် /khrā/ ‘harrow’, ပြင် /pràn/ ‘be clean’, ဖျာ် /phjá/ ‘market’, and မျိုင် /mjòN/ ‘to drag’.

The following are some notes on medial consonants and subscripts.

- There is a special way to write the medial /-w-/. The pronunciation /-wi/, in which the rhyme /-i/ appears after /-w-/ is written as ဝ်, and /-we/, in which the rhyme /-e/

appears after /-w-/ is written as ဝ်. This will be explained in detail in 5.3.

- The initial consonant /c-/ is sometimes written as ကျ using the basic letter က and the subscript ျ, instead of using the basic letter စ. Words that are written with ကျ are often borrowings of Mon or Burmese words that are written with ကျ in the original languages, e.g., ကျံင် /cài/ (\*cài?) ‘pagoda’ (cf. Mon ကျံင် [cyac]) and ကျံင် /cōN/ ‘school’ (cf. Burmese ကျောင်း /cáun/). In this paper, the transcription of Mon pronunciation follows that of Sakamoto (1994).
- Words with the form CəCV(V)(C) that begin with an atonic syllable may be written utilizing subscripts. Typically, atonic syllables are written as ျ (see 5.3); however, တံ လံ /təlá/ ‘box’, for example, may be written as တံ. That is, in တံ, the basic letter represents the atonic Cə part and the subscript represents the consonant that follows the atonic syllable. Other examples are: တံ /kətə/ ‘to enthuse’, တံ /kəbàN/ ‘ship’, တံ /kəmâ/ ‘lake, pond’, တံ /khənôN/ ‘rice noodle’, တံ (တံဝါနံ) /təwâN/ ‘village’, တံ /pəñā/ ‘buffalow’, တံ /θətài/ (\*θətài?) ‘attention’, တံ /pəɾâN/ ‘news’, and တံ /thəŋâ/ ‘monk’s robe’.

### 5.3. Rhymes and tones

Rhymes and tones are written as shown in Table 18. The horizontal columns indicate the tones in CEPK, while the vertical columns indicate the types of rhymes in CEPK. Symbols such as တံ တံ တံ တံ တံ, and တံ are used to denote syllable-final consonants in the Mon script, but in the BS, it is better to regard them as part of the symbols representing rhymes. Forms attached with an asterisk in parentheses, such as “(\*-i)”, are the corresponding 19c EPK rhymes.

**Table 18: Rhymes and tones**

	Low-level	Mid-level	High-level	Falling
-i	ဝ် -i (*-i)	ဝ် -ī (*-ī)	ဝ် -í (*-í)	ဝ် -î (*-î)
-i	ဝ် -i (*-è)	ဝ် -ī (*-ē)	ဝ်, ဝ် -í (*-é)	ဝ် -î (*-ê)
-e	ဝ်, ဝ် -è (*-é?)		ဝ်, ဝ် -é (*-é?)	ဝ် -ê

-ε	◌̄ -έ (*-έ)	◌̄ -ε̄ (*-ε̄)	◌̄ -έ (*-έ)	◌̄ -έ̄ (*-έ̄)	
-i	◌̄ -ί (*-i, *-i?)	◌̄ -ī (*-ī)	◌̄ -ί (*-i, ?*-i?)	◌̄ -ī (*-i)	
-ə	◌̄ -ə̄ (*-ə)	◌̄ -ē̄ (*-ə)	◌̄ -ə̄ (*-ə)		Atonic ◌̄ -ə̄ (*-ə)
-a	◌̄ -à (*-à, *-à?)	◌̄ -ā (*-ā)	◌̄ -á (*-á, *-á?)	◌̄ -â (*-â)	
-u	◌̄ -ù (*-ù, *-ù)	◌̄ -ū (*-ū, *-ū)	◌̄ -ú (*-ú, *-ú)	◌̄ -û (*-û, *-û)	
-o	◌̄ -ò (*-ò?)	◌̄ -ō (*-ō)	◌̄ -ó (*-ó)	◌̄ -ô (*-ô)	
-o	◌̄ -ò (*-ò?)		◌̄ -ó (*-ó?)		
-o	◌̄ -ò (*-ò, *-ò?)	◌̄ -ō (*-ō)	◌̄ -ó (*-ó, ?*-ó?)	◌̄ -ô (*-ô)	
-ai	◌̄ -ài (*-ài?)		◌̄ -ái (*-ái?)		
-au	◌̄ -àu (*-àu?, *-àu?)		◌̄ -áu (*-áu?, *-áu?)		
-əN	◌̄ -ə̄N (*-ə̄N)	◌̄ -ē̄N (*-ē̄N)	◌̄ -ə̄N (?*-ə̄N)	◌̄ -ē̄N (*-ə̄N)	
-aN	◌̄ -àn (*-àn)	◌̄ -ān (*-ān)	◌̄ -án (*-án)	◌̄ -ân (*-ân)	
-oN	◌̄ -òN (*-òN)	◌̄ -ōN (*-ōN)	◌̄ -ón (*-ón)	◌̄ -ôn (*-ôn)	
-eIN	◌̄ -è̄IN (*-è̄IN)	◌̄ -ē̄IN (*-ē̄IN)	◌̄ -é̄IN (*-é̄IN)	◌̄ -ê̄IN (*-ê̄IN)	
-əuIN	◌̄ -ə̄uIN (*-ə̄uIN)	◌̄ -ē̄uIN (*-ē̄uIN)	◌̄ -ə̄uIN (*-ə̄uIN)	◌̄ -ē̄uIN (*-ə̄uIN)	
-aiN	◌̄ -àiN (*-àiN)	◌̄ -āiN (*-āiN)	◌̄ -áiN (*-áiN)	◌̄ -âiN (*-âiN)	
-ouN	◌̄ -òuN (*-òuN)	◌̄ -ōuN (*-ōuN)	◌̄ -óuN (*-óuN)	◌̄ -ôuN (*-ôuN)	
-iN	◌̄ -ìN	◌̄ -īN	◌̄ -íN	◌̄ -îN	

Among the rhymes that follow the medial consonant /-w-/, the rhymes /-i/ and /-e/ are written as shown in Table 19.

**Table 19: Rhymes preceded by /-w-/**

	Low-level	Mid-level	High-level	Falling
-wi	$\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \\ -w\grave{i} \text{ (*-w}\grave{i}) \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \\ -w\bar{i} \text{ (*-w}\bar{i}) \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \\ -w\acute{i} \text{ (*-w}\acute{i}) \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \\ -w\hat{i} \text{ (*-w}\hat{i}) \end{array}$
-we	$\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \\ -w\grave{e} \text{ (*-w}\grave{e}) \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \\ -w\bar{e} \text{ (*-w}\bar{e}) \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \\ -w\acute{e} \text{ (*-w}\acute{e}) \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \\ -w\hat{e} \text{ (*-w}\hat{e}) \end{array}$

The following are notes on writing rhymes and tones.

- $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  and  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$ , which represent /-ǎ/, are used differently as follows: normally the former is used, but the latter is used when there is no space below the basic letter and it is difficult to use the former. The same is true for  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  and  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$ , which represent /-ǎ/. See, for example,  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  /phlí/ ‘to swing’ and  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  /phlǎ/ ‘be eminent’.
- /-ê/ can be written with either  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  or  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$ . When the latter is used, there is a risk that it will be read as /-ǎ/. However, the latter is frequently used. Similarly, /-ò/ can be written with either  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  or  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$ . When the latter is used, there is a risk that it will be read as /-ò/. However, here again, the latter is frequently used.
- There is no rule to distinguish the uses of  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  and  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  for /-é/. Of the two,  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  is used more often. Similarly, there is no rule to distinguish the uses of  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$ ,  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$ , and  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  for /-ó/.  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  and  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  are used more often.
- /-é/ is represented by  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  or  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$ . However,  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  is used for some particles and interjections, e.g.,  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  /ǎé/ (\*ǎéǎ) ‘negative particle’ (cf. CS ǎǎ) and  $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  /hé/ ‘hey’.
- $\begin{array}{c} \circ \\ \text{L} \end{array}$  at the right end of the third row represents /-ê/. However, this rhyme should not have existed if it had followed the general sound change because /-e/ in CEPK is derived from \*/-eǎ/, and the original stopped syllables only co-occur with low-level or high-level tones in CEPK. Thus, /-ê/ does not follow the general change, and therefore a corresponding 19c EPK rhyme is not shown in the column. There are three words that have the rhyme /-ê/, that is, /ǎwê/ ‘3SG’, /wê/ ‘verb particle for emphasis’, and /bê/ ‘as, like’. These words have the rhyme /-ê/ for the following reasons. As we have seen in Section 4, the 19c EPK rhyme \*/-e/ preceded by the initial \*/w-/ or the medial \*/-w-/ has been succeeded as /-e/ in CEPK, not as /ǎ/. Therefore, /-e/ in /ǎwê/ and /wê/

come from \*/-e/, but is not pronounced /-ɛ̄/. As for /bê/, it is thought to have been \*/bê/, but for some unknown reason, the rhyme seems to have changed from /-ê/ to /-ê̄/.

- $\text{᠜}^\circ$  and  $\text{᠜}^\circ$  represent /-ī/ and /-î/, respectively. However, these rhymes occur only infrequently because they appear only in a few bound forms.
- The rhyme /-i/ represented by  $\text{᠜}^\circ\text{᠜}$  could have been derived from \*/-iʔ/ in addition to \*/-i/. However, since no examples have been found that originate from \*/-iʔ/, \*/-iʔ/ is marked with a question mark, as in “?\* -iʔ”.
- $\text{᠜}^\circ$  represents four rhymes: /-ə/, /-ə̄/, /-ə̄/, and /-ə̄/. However, there are very few words that have the rhymes /ə̄/ or /-ə̄/. Note that no words with the rhyme /-ə̄/ have been found.
- The symbol  $\text{᠜}$  has to be written as  $\text{᠜}$  when it co-occurs with the basic letters ə, ɔ, ɔ̄, ɔ̄, and ɔ̄, and may be written as  $\text{᠜}$  when it co-occurs with the basic letters ɔ, ɔ̄, and ɔ̄. The symbol  $\text{᠜}$  is also sporadically used with other basic letters.
- Both  $\text{᠜}^\circ$  and  $\text{᠜}^\circ$  are read as /-á/. The latter, without any diacritics, is used to write syllables derived from \*/-áʔ/. However, even then, it may be written as  $\text{᠜}^\circ$ .
- The symbols  $\text{᠜}^\circ$  and  $\text{᠜}^\circ$  are placed on the right side of the basic letters when there is not enough space under them, e.g.,  $\text{᠜᠜}^\circ$  /xû/ (\* /xû/) ‘be flat’.
- The rhyme /-ó/ represented by  $\text{᠜}^\circ$  and  $\text{᠜}^\circ$  could also have been derived from \*/-óʔ/ in addition to \*/-ó/. However, since no examples have been found that originate from \*/-óʔ/, \*/-óʔ/ is marked with a question mark, as in “?\* -óʔ”.
- The Mon vowel symbol  $\text{᠜}$  is sometimes used to represent /-ō/ or /-jō/. See, for example,  $\text{᠜᠜}^\circ$  /pùcō/ ‘to worship’,  $\text{᠜}^\circ$  ( $\text{᠜}^\circ$ ) /khlō/ ‘cow’, and  $\text{᠜᠜}^\circ$  /chəkəljō/ ‘gift’.
- $\text{᠜}^\circ$  exists in theory as a spelling for /-án/. However, no words with this rhyme have been found so far. Therefore, a question mark is attached, as in “?-án (\*-án)”.
- The rhyme /-an/ is sometimes written as  $\text{᠜}^\circ$  in some words. For example, see  $\text{᠜᠜}^\circ$  ( $\text{᠜}^\circ$ ) /təwân/ ‘village’. Since this word is a Mon loanword, it is spelled after the Mon spelling (cf. Mon  $\text{᠜᠜}^\circ$  [kwan]). Other words written with this spelling include  $\text{᠜᠜}^\circ$  /phàn/ ‘be bright, luminous’ and  $\text{᠜᠜}^\circ$  /khān/ ‘country’. However, it is unclear why they are written this way.
- As mentioned in Section 2, the rhyme /-ɪN/ appears only in loanwords from Burmese. Thus, the spelling representing the rhyme /-ɪN/ at the bottom of Table 18 is only used



to represent Burmese loanwords or those from other languages that have entered via Burmese.

- Some of the loanwords from Mon cannot be read correctly even if based on the generalizations we have seen above. For example, see ဘာ /phjā/ ‘temple; school’ (cf. Mon ဘာ [phèə]), ကိုလေငံ /kəljàn/ ‘to turn back’ (cf. Mon ကလေင်, ကေင် [kaʔliəŋ]), and တေင် /təmjàn/ ‘be strange’ (cf. Mon တေင် [taʔmian]).

Below are examples of how to write rhymes:

- i လီ /li/ ‘air’, ဘီ /nī/ ‘to smile’, ဖီး /phí/ ‘pus’, ထီ /thí/ ‘water’
- j လေဝ် /lì/(\*/lè/)\* ‘to go’, ဘေဝ် /nī/(\*/nē/)\* ‘to get’, ဖေပျံ /phí/(\*/phé/)\* ‘to give’, ဝေဝ် /pí/ (\*/\*pê/)\* ‘be small’
- e ဝေ /dè/ (\*/\*dèʔ/)\* ‘every’, ခေဝ် /chè/ (\*/\*chèʔ/)\* ‘to stab’, ဝေဝ် /thé/ (\*/\*théʔ/)\* ‘be cut’
- ε ဘယ် /nè/ ‘to believe’, ယဲ /jē/ ‘five’, မဲ /mé/ ‘tooth’, ဖယံ /phê/ ‘necklace’
- i ခိုင် /chì/ ‘race, ethnic group’, ကေင် /klèci/ (\*/\*klèʔciʔ/)\* ‘to endeavor’, စွဲ /c̣wácakī/ ‘quite, considerably’, ဖိုဝ် /phí/ ‘short, low’, မို /mî/ ‘a sentence final particle’
- ə ကို /klə/ ‘always’, ဆို /chə/ ‘thing’, လို /lə/ ‘LOC’, ယို /jə/ (preposed form) ‘I, me’
- a မာ /mà/ ‘to do’, ဆာ /chà/ (\*/\*chàʔ/)\* ‘to sew’, ခါ /khā/ ‘be broken (as a stick)’, ခး /khá/ ‘be bitter’, မာ /má/ (\*/\*máʔ/)\* ‘son-in-law’, မာ /mâ/ ‘wife’
- u (\*-u) ချံ /dù/ ‘pear’, ယူ /jū/ ‘to swallow’, ဝူ /bú/ ‘paddy’, ဖူ /phú/ ‘to jump’
- u (\*-u) ယူ /jù/ (\*/\*jù/)\* ‘to fly’, ယူ /jū/ (\*/\*jū/)\* ‘rat’, ခူး /khú/ (\*/\*khú/)\* ‘to smoke’, ဖူး /phú/ (\*/\*phú/)\* ‘grandfather’
- v ဆာဝ် /chò/ (\*/\*chò/)\* ‘moment’, မာဝ် /mō/ (\*/\*mō/)\* ‘mother’, ခေါတ် /khó/ (\*/\*khó/)\* ‘head’, ဖေါဝ် /phô/ (\*/\*phô/)\* ‘to swell’
- o ကောဝ် (ကိုဝ်) /kò/ (\*/\*kòʔ/)\* ‘to call’, ယောတ် /jó/ (\*/\*jóʔ/)\* ‘be deep’
- ɔ လဝ် /lə/ ‘to tell’, ခုဝ် /dò/ (\*/\*dòʔ/)\* ‘again’, ထဝ် /thə/ ‘can contain’, ဒ် /ʔə/ ‘to be, exist’, ထဝ် /thə/ ‘be long, high’
- ai ဘ် /θài/ (\*/\*θàiʔ/)\* ‘liquor’, လိတ် /lái/ (\*/\*láiʔ/)\* ‘letter, alphabet’
- au (\*-auʔ) ချံ /dà/ (\*/\*dà/)\* ‘to fight’, နတ် /ná/ (\*/\*ná/)\* ‘to enter’
- au (\*-auʔ) ချံ /dà/ (\*/\*dà/)\* ‘room’, လတ် /lá/ (\*/\*lá/)\* ‘be used up’

- əN 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /phəN/ ‘inside’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /θəN/ ‘three’ (a variant of 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /θəN/ used when it is conjoined with a NC), 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /θəN/ ‘three’ (independent form)
- aN 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /phàN/ ‘spear’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /lāN/ ‘place’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /ʔáN/ ‘to eat’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /chāN/ ‘hen’
- oN 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /thòN/ ‘bridge’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /chōN/ ‘to pick up (a person)’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /phón/ ‘to catch’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 (𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫) /thôn/ ‘gold’
- eiN 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /dèiN/ ‘to play (an instrument)’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /thēiN/ ‘be related’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /ʔéiN/ ‘house’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /mêiN/ ‘be ripe’
- əuN 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /jəuN/ ‘to roar’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /thəuN/ ‘ant’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /ʔəuN/ ‘be cloudy’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /ʔənthəuN/ ‘to pick up’
- aiN 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /jàiN/ ‘be far’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /khāiN/ ‘to tie around’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /ʔáiN/ ‘to bite’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /láiN/ ‘rocky mountain’
- ouN 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /nòuN/ (\* /nòuN/) ‘horn’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /phòuN/ (\* /phòuN/) ‘to get a hole’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /bóuN/ (\* /bóuN/) ‘festival’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /phôuN/ (\* /phôuN/) ‘to hold in the arms’
- iN 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /ʔədich[sʰ]iN/ ‘Thomas Edison’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /bîN/ ‘drum’
- wi 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /kwî/ ‘deep swamp’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 (𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫) /lwî/ ‘to choose’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /thwî/ ‘dog’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /khwî/ ‘to comb’
- we 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /kwè/ ‘bee’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /xwè/ ‘how many’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /thwé/ ‘right side’, 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 /nwè/ ‘seven’

## 6. Christian Pwo Karen Script (လံးဆံ့ပံ့)

This writing system was created by American Baptist missionaries including Wade, Mason, and Brayton in the 1840s. I call this the Christian Pwo Karen Script (henceforth abbreviated as “CS”) because this script was created by Christian missionaries. Stern (1968) calls this writing system the Mission script. In EPK, the Bible is called လံးဆံ့ပံ့ /láí chēinxí/ (book - clean), meaning ‘the holy book’. Since /láí/ also means ‘letter’, the word /láí chēinxí/ is also used as a name for this letter.

The CS is based on the Christian Sgaw Karen Script, which Wade made by modifying the Burmese script in the 1830s. In the early days of the CS, novelties can be observed in that Roman letters were used for some basic letters and basic letters and vowel symbols were juxtaposed, which is not found in the Christian Sgaw Karen Script. In Mason (1846), Pwo Karen words and sentences are written in this method (see Figure 1). However, these aspects had been modified at the beginning of the



## 6.1. Initial consonants

Initial consonants, i.e., consonants appearing in the C1 position, are generally written with the basic letters. There are 27 basic letters, which are shown in Table 20. This table is always presented in the primary education of the CS. Brackets are added by the author. Under each basic letter, its pronunciation is shown.

**Table 20: Basic letters**

က	ခ	ဂ	ဃ	င
k-	kh-	y-	x-	ŋ-
စ	ဆ	(ဇ)	ည	ဈ
c-	ch-	c-	j-	e-
တ	ထ	ဒ	န	ပ
t-	th-	d-	n-	p-
ဖ	ဗ	မ	ယ	ရ
ph-	b-	m-	j-	r-
လ	ဝ	၀	၁	အ
l-	w-	θ-	h-	ʔ-
	ဧ	၂		
	κ-	p- ~ h-		

The following are notes on the basic letters.

- ဇ is never used except to write a loanword from Burmese or English. It may be pronounced [z], following the reading of the same Burmese script.
- ၂ is used to write the prefix /pə- ~ hə-/ denoting a human being. /pə-/ and /hə-/ are free variants. In terms of pronunciation, it should be sufficient to write this prefix as ဝ or ၁. The reasons for making a separate character could be the following: (a) ၂ can be read as either /pə-/ or /hə-/ according to a reader's preference; (b) /pə/ has a usage of the first-person plural pronoun (written as ဝ), and one can distinguish it from the prefix if they are written in different ways; and (c) the Sgaw Karen form for a human being is /pyā/ cognate with EPK /pə-/, which is written in the Christian Sgaw Karen Script as ၂, and if /pə-/ is written as ၂, the etymological commonality of these forms can be shown. It is unclear which of (a) through (c) is the real reason.
- /ɣ-/ and /κ-/ are indistinguishable in the BS, but they are written with distinct letters in the CS.

Examples of words written with each basic letter follow, except for the basic letter parenthesized in Table 20: ကၵ /ká/ ‘be difficult’, ခၵ /khá/ ‘be bitter’, ဝၵ /yá/ ‘evening’, ပံၵ /xí/ ‘be beautiful’, ငဲးငီး /ηဲးηဲ/ ‘to quarrel’, စူၵ /cú/ (\*cú/) ‘hand’, ဆၵ /chá/ ‘to ache’, ညးညါးသံး /jǎŋǎθǎi/ (\*jǎŋǎθǎi?) ‘all directions’, ရဲး /è/ ‘be few’, တး /tà/ ‘toddy palm’, ဝး /thà/ (\*thǎ?) ‘iron’, ဒၵ /dá/ ‘to see’, နါ /nǎ/ ‘ear’, ဝး /pà/ (\*pǎ?) ‘to regard’, ပါ /phǎ/ ‘father’, တၵ /bǎ/ ‘be right’, မး /mà/ ‘to do’, ဝၵ /já/ ‘fish’, ရိုး /rōu/ ‘office’, လး /là/ ‘moon’, ဝး /wà/ ‘husband’, ဝၵ /θá/ ‘to bear fruits’, ဝံးဝံး /hǎidǎi/ (\*hǎi?dǎi?) ‘toilet’, ဒၵ /?ǎ/ ‘be many’, မး /sǎ/ ‘interrogative particle’, and ပုမု /pəmú ~ həmú/ ‘woman’ (cf. ပုမုး /pəmú/ and ပုမုး /həmú/ in the BS).

## 6.2. Medial consonants

In the CS, the medial consonants /-w-/, /-l-/, /-r-/, and /-j-/ are written as shown in Table 21, using subscripts.

**Table 21: Medial consonants**

ဝ	ၵ	ၵ	ၵ
-w-	-l-	-r-	-j-

The following are notes on the subscripts.

- CS ၵ /-l-/ and ၵ /-j-/ are identical in shape to BS ၵ /-j-/ and ၵ /-l-/, but the relationship between the letters and sounds is inverse.
- The initial consonant /c-/ is sometimes written as ကူ instead of using the basic letter ဝ. Words that are written with ကူ are often borrowings of Mon or Burmese words that are written with ကူ in the original languages, e.g., ကူံး /cài/ (\*cài?) ‘pagoda’ (cf. Mon ကူပ် [cyac]) and ကူံး /cōn/ ‘school’ (cf. Burmese ကျောင်း /cáun/).

Example words with medial consonants follow: ကူး /kwà/ ‘ax’, ပုး /pwài/ (\*pwài?) ‘be tired’, ကူး /klà/ (\*klà?) ‘crow’, ပါ /phǎ/ ‘arrow’, ခါ /khrǎ/ ‘harrow’, ပုး /prǎn/ ‘be clean’, ပါ /phǎ/ ‘market’, and မုး /mjòn/ ‘to drag’.

### 6.3. Rhymes and tones

Rhymes and tones are written as shown in Table 22. Table 18 in 5.3 uses a phonology-based arrangement, but Table 22 uses a grapheme-based arrangement. The horizontal columns are arranged according to the tone symbols, and the vertical columns are arranged according to the vowel symbols (plus the nasalization symbol). As in Table 18, forms attached with an asterisk in parentheses, such as “(\*-i)”, are the corresponding 19c EPK rhymes.

**Table 22: Rhymes and tones**

	○ɔ	no tone mark	○J	○ɾ	○S	○L	
○	○ɔ -ì (*-i)	○ -ī (*-ī)	○J -í (*-í)	○ɾ -î (*-î)	○S -ài (*-ài?)	○L -ái (*-ái?)	
○̇	○̇ɔ -ḷ̇ (*-è)	○̇ -ḷ̇ (*-ē)	○̇J -ḷ̇̇ (*-é)	○̇ɾ -ḷ̇̇ (*-ê)	○̇S -è̇ (*-è?)	○̇L -é̇ (*-é?)	
̀	̀ɔ -è (*-è)	̀ -ē (*-ē)	̀J -é (*-é)	̀ɾ -ê (*-ê)			
○̊	○̊ɔ -ì (*-i)	○̊ -ī	○̊J -í (*-i)	○̊ɾ -î	○̊S -ì (*-i?)	○̊L -í (*-i?)	
○ɔ̣	○ɔ̣ -ọ̀ (*-ọ̀)	○ɔ̣ -ọ̄ (*-ọ̄), -ọ́ (*-ọ́)					no mark ○ -ə (*-ə)
○̄	○̄ɔ -à̄ (*-à̄)	○̄ -ā̄ (*-ā̄)	○̄J -á̄ (*-á̄)	○̄ɾ -â̄ (*-â̄)	○̄S -à̄ (*-à̄?)	○̄L -á̄ (*-á̄?)	
○̆	○̆ɔ -ù̆ (*-ù̆)	○̆ -ū̆ (*-ū̆)	○̆J -ú̆ (*-ú̆)	○̆ɾ -û̆ (*-û̆)	○̆S -à̆ (*-à̆?)	○̆L -á̆ (*-á̆?)	
○̈	○̈ɔ -ù̈ (*-ù̈)	○̈ -ṻ (*-ṻ)	○̈J -ú̈ (*-ú̈)	○̈ɾ -û̈ (*-û̈)	○̈S -à̈ (*-à̈?)	○̈L -á̈ (*-á̈?)	
○̇̇	○̇̇ɔ -ò̇̇ (*-ò̇̇)	○̇̇ -ō̇̇ (*-ō̇̇)	○̇̇J -ó̇̇ (*-ó̇̇)	○̇̇ɾ -ô̇̇ (*-ô̇̇)	○̇̇S -ò̇̇ (*-ò̇̇?)	○̇̇L -ó̇̇ (*-ó̇̇?)	
○̇̇̇	○̇̇̇ɔ -ò̇̇̇ (*-ò̇̇̇)	○̇̇̇ -ō̇̇̇ (*-ō̇̇̇)	○̇̇̇J -ó̇̇̇ (*-ó̇̇̇)	○̇̇̇ɾ -ô̇̇̇ (*-ô̇̇̇)	○̇̇̇S -ò̇̇̇ (*-ò̇̇̇?)	○̇̇̇L -ó̇̇̇ (*-ó̇̇̇?)	
○̆̆̆	○̆̆̆ɔ -ò̆̆̆ (*-ò̆̆̆)	○̆̆̆ -ō̆̆̆ (*-ō̆̆̆)	○̆̆̆J -ó̆̆̆ (*-ó̆̆̆)	○̆̆̆ɾ -ô̆̆̆ (*-ô̆̆̆)			
○̆̆̆̇	○̆̆̆̇ɔ -à̆̆̆̇ (*-à̆̆̆̇)	○̆̆̆̇ -ā̆̆̆̇ (*-ā̆̆̆̇)	○̆̆̆̇J -á̆̆̆̇ (*-á̆̆̆̇)	○̆̆̆̇ɾ -â̆̆̆̇ (*-â̆̆̆̇)			
○̆̆̆̇̇	○̆̆̆̇̇ɔ -ò̆̆̆̇̇ (*-ò̆̆̆̇̇)	○̆̆̆̇̇ -ō̆̆̆̇̇ (*-ō̆̆̆̇̇)	○̆̆̆̇̇J -ó̆̆̆̇̇ (*-ó̆̆̆̇̇)	○̆̆̆̇̇ɾ -ô̆̆̆̇̇ (*-ô̆̆̆̇̇)			

◌◌̄	◌◌̄ -èIN (*-èIN)	◌◌̄ -ēIN (*-ēIN)	◌◌̄ <sub>J</sub> -éIN (*-éIN)	◌◌̄ <sub>ḡ</sub> -ĕIN (*-ĕIN)		
◌◌̄ <sub>l</sub>	◌◌̄ <sub>l</sub> -ə̀UN (*-ə̀UN)	◌◌̄ <sub>l</sub> -ə̄UN (*-ə̄UN)	◌◌̄ <sub>l</sub> <sub>J</sub> -ə̀UN (*-ə̀UN)	◌◌̄ <sub>l</sub> <sub>ḡ</sub> -ə̄UN (*-ə̄UN)		
◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ</sub>	◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ</sub> -àIN (*-àIN)	◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ</sub> -āIN (*-āIN)	◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ</sub> <sub>J</sub> -áIN (*-áIN)	◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ</sub> <sub>ḡ</sub> -âIN (*-âIN)		
◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub>	◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub> -òUN (*-òUN)	◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub> -ōUN (*-ōUN)	◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub> <sub>J</sub> -óUN (*-óUN)	◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub> <sub>ḡ</sub> -ôUN (*-ôUN)		
◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub>	(◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub> ) -ḭN	(◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub> ) -ĪN	(◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub> ) -ḭN	(◌◌̄ <sub>ḥ̄</sub> ) -ĪN		

The following are notes on writing rhymes and tones.

- ◌ḭ exists in theory as a spelling for \*/-iḡ/. However, no words or morphemes that used to have \*/-iḡ/ have been found so far. Therefore, a question mark is attached, as in “(?\*-iḡ)”.
- ◌ḡ can represent two rhymes -ḥ̄ and -ḥ̄. Note that no words with the rhyme /-ḥ̄/ have been found.
- The CS has a way of representing an atonic syllable Cə. A basic letter with no marking, i.e., ◌, represents it. Examples are: တတၢ် /kə̀bàɴ/ ‘ship’, တတၢ် /tə̀lâ/ ‘box’, ဝရၢ် /pə̀rə̀ɴ/ ‘news’, and ဒေဝါ /pə̀mā/ ‘debt’.
- The symbol for /-a/ is ◌ḥ̄. This symbol is written only when tones are unmarked.
- ◌ḥ̄ exists in theory as a spelling for 19c EPK \*/-ə̄ḡ/. However, no words or morphemes that used to have \*/-ə̄ḡ/ have been so far found. Therefore, a question mark is attached, as in “(?\*-ə̄ḡ)”.
- The symbol representing nasalization of rhymes is ◌ḥ̄. When a tone mark is attached to a basic letter, it is written as ◌ḥ̄ underneath the tone mark.
- ◌ḡ<sub>J</sub> exists in theory as a spelling for /-ə̀N/. However, no words with this rhyme have been so far found. Therefore, a question mark is attached, as in “?-ə̀N (?\*-ə̀N)”.
- The spelling representing the rhyme /-ḭN/ at the bottom of Table 22 is only used to represent Burmese loanwords or those from other languages that have entered via Burmese.

Below are examples of how to write rhymes. The words listed as examples are the same as those listed at the end of 5.3. The order of the words is changed according to Table 22.

- ◌ ㄨㄟ /li/ ‘air’, ㄆㄧˊ /nī/ ‘to smile’, ㄆㄨˊ /phí/ ‘pus’, ㄨㄛˊ /thí/ ‘water’, ㄓㄨˊ /θài/ (\*θài?) ‘liquor’, ㄌㄨˊ /láí/ (\*láí?) ‘letter, alphabet’
- ◌ ㄌㄨˊ /lí/ (\*lè/) ‘to go’, ㄆㄛˊ /nī/ (\*nē/) ‘to get’, ㄉㄨˊ /phí/ (\*phé/) ‘to give’, ㄉㄨㄛˊ /pí/ (\*pê/) ‘be small’, ㄉㄨˊ /dè/ (\*dè?) ‘every’, ㄉㄨˊ /chè/ (\*chê?) ‘to stab’, ㄉㄨˊ /thé/ (\*thé?) ‘be cut’
- ◌ ㄆㄧˊ /nè/ ‘to believe’, ㄨㄛˊ /jē/ ‘five’, ㄨㄛˊ /mé/ ‘tooth’, ㄨㄛˊ /phê/ ‘necklace’
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /chì/ ‘race, ethnic group’, ㄐㄨㄛˊ /cwácákī/ ‘quite, considerably’, ㄐㄨˊ /phí/ ‘short, low’, ㄐㄨˊ /mí/ ‘a sentence final particle’, ㄐㄨˊ /klèci/ (\*klè?ci?) ‘to endeavor’
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /klè/ ‘always’, ㄐㄨˊ /chō/ ‘thing’, ㄐㄨˊ /lò/ ‘LOC’, ㄐㄨˊ /jə/ (preposed form) ‘I, me’
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /mà/ ‘to do’, ㄐㄨˊ /khā/ ‘be broken (as a stick)’, ㄐㄨˊ /khá/ ‘be bitter’, ㄐㄨˊ /mā/ ‘wife’, ㄐㄨˊ /chà/ (\*chà?) ‘to sew’, ㄐㄨˊ /má/ (\*má?) ‘son-in-law’
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /dù/ ‘pear’, ㄐㄨˊ /jū/ ‘to swallow’, ㄐㄨˊ /bú/ ‘paddy’, ㄐㄨˊ /phú/ ‘to jump’, ㄐㄨˊ /dà/ (\*dàu?) ‘to fight’, ㄐㄨˊ /náu/ (\*náu?) ‘to enter’
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /jù/ (\*jù/) ‘to fly’, ㄐㄨˊ /jū/ (\*jū/) ‘rat’, ㄐㄨˊ /khú/ (\*khú/) ‘to smoke’, ㄐㄨˊ /phú/ (\*phú/) ‘grandfather’, ㄐㄨˊ /dà/ (\*dàu?) ‘room’, ㄐㄨˊ /láu/ (\*láu?) ‘be used up’
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /chò/ (\*chò/) ‘moment’, ㄐㄨˊ /mō/ (\*mō/) ‘mother’, ㄐㄨˊ /khó/ (\*khó/) ‘head’, ㄐㄨˊ /phò/ (\*phò/) ‘to swell’, ㄐㄨˊ /kò/ (\*kò?) ‘to call’, ㄐㄨˊ /jò/ (\*jò?) ‘be deep’
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /lò/ ‘to tell’, ㄐㄨˊ /thō/ ‘can contain’, ㄐㄨˊ /tò/ ‘to be, exist’, ㄐㄨˊ /thò/ ‘be long, high’, ㄐㄨˊ /dò/ (\*dò?) ‘again’
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /phò/ ‘inside’, ㄐㄨˊ /thō/ ‘three’ (a variant of ㄐㄨˊ /thò/ used when it is conjoined with a NC), ㄐㄨˊ /thò/ ‘three’ (independent form)
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /phàn/ ‘spear’, ㄐㄨˊ /lān/ ‘place’, ㄐㄨˊ /tán/ ‘to eat’, ㄐㄨˊ /chân/ ‘hen’
- ◌ ㄐㄨˊ /thò/ ‘bridge’, ㄐㄨˊ /chō/ ‘to pick up (a person)’, ㄐㄨˊ /phón/ ‘to catch’, ㄐㄨˊ /thò/ ‘gold’



- ဝံး: ဒံ့ /dèin/ ‘to play (an instrument)’, ထံး /thēin/ ‘be related’, ဂံ့ /γéin/ ‘house’, မံ့ /mēin/ ‘be ripe’
- ုး: ယု့ /jəuN/ ‘to roar’, ထုး /thəuN/ ‘ant’, အု့ /ʔəuN/ ‘be cloudy’, အု့ထု့ /ʔánthəuN/ ‘to pick up’
- ဲး: ယဲ့ /jəin/ ‘be far’, ခဲး /khāin/ ‘to tie around’, အဲ့ /ʔəin/ ‘to bite’, လဲ့ /lāin/ ‘rocky mountain’
- ိး: ဝိ့ /nòuN/ (\* /nòuN/) ‘horn’, ဖိး /phòuN/ (\* /phòuN/) ‘to get a hole’, ဘိ့ /bòuN/ (\* /bòuN/) ‘festival’, ဖိ့ /phòuN/ (\* /phòuN/) ‘to hold in the arms’
- ုး: အဲဲဒဲဒဲထု့ /ʔèdich[s<sup>h</sup>]iN/ ‘Thomas Edison’, ဘု့ /b̥iN/ ‘drum’

Words with /-wi/ and /-we/ that we have seen in Table 19 of 5.3 are listed below for comparison with the BS.

- ကွဲး /kwi/ ‘deep swamp’, လွဲ (ရွဲ) /lwī/ ‘to choose’, ထွဲ /thwí/ ‘dog’, ခွဲ /khwī/ ‘to comb’
- ကွဲး /kwè/ ‘bee’, ဗွဲ /xwē/ ‘how many’, ထွဲ /thwé/ ‘right side’, နွဲ /nwè/ ‘seven’

## 7. Sample texts

This section shows two EPK texts. From a textbook for the BS edited by the Pwo Karen Literature and Culture Development Committee (2010), the first paragraphs of two lessons are quoted. The text shown in 7.1 is a folktale (pp. 21–23 in the textbook), and the text shown in 7.2 is an essay (pp. 30–32 in the textbook). Sections 7.1.1 and 7.2.1 show the original texts written in BS. Sections 7.1.2 and 7.2.2 show their rewritten version in CS. Sections 7.1.3 and 7.2.3 show the phonemic transcriptions of the texts and sentence-to-sentence English translations.

### 7.1. Kyaw Kloo Hton

#### 7.1.1. Buddhist Pwo Karen Script

စဝ်ကောဟ်ခံင်

လုံအိုဝ်းဗူးအိုဝ် တုံဝါနံအိုလုံဖုံး အိုဝ်းဗူး လုံခေါဟ်လံင်ခင်းထာ် လုံစုဂ်လုံယာင်ဏှ်လုံ။  
 လုံတုံဝါနံမိုင်ဏှ် တုံဝါနံဖေါဟ်အိုလုံဟာ် အိုမိုင်မွဲဝေ စဝ်ကောဟ်ခံင်ဏှ်လုံ။

စဝ်ကောဟ်ခံင်ဏ်အိုသုင်းဟေဝ် အိုသာအွာ သာမဲသာဖျါင်ဆိုင်အိုအေး ချူဝေစွးမာ်လှ်။  
 တိုဝါနံဖေါဟ်သီးလှ်ဖးဏ် ဖေးအင်းဗျီးယျုဂ်ကိုဝ်ဏိုင်းဍေလှ်။  
 စဝ်ကောဟ်ခံင်ဏ်သီး အိုဝေဍေအိုမောဝ်မူးမယ့်ဏ်ဖေအင်းဗျီးယျုဂ်ဏ်ဆေဝ်လှ်။  
 တိုဝါနံဖေါဟ်လှ်ဖး လှ်ဟာဍေလှ်ဟာ ဖေစိုဝ်မာဆိုင်လောတ်သာဗျီးဖိုင်ယျုဂ်ဖိုင်  
 ထံင်းစိုဝ်စူး ခင်းဆိုင်ဏိုင်း ကိုဝ်ဟာဍေလှ်။

**7.1.2. Christian Pwo Karen Script**

စီးကျိာ်ထီၤ

လၢအဝံဒၢအိၣ် တတၢ်အိၣ်လဖျိၣ် အိၣ်ဝၢဒၢ လၢခိၣ်လီၤခ့ၣ်ထံၣ် လၢဘူၣ်လယဲၣ်နီၤလီၤ။  
 လၢတတၢ်ဖးနီၤ တတၢ်ဖိၣ်အိၣ်လဂၢ အမံးမ့ၣ်ဝဲၣ် စီးကျိာ်ထီၤနီၤလီၤ။  
 စီးကျိာ်ထီၤနီၤအသ့ၣ်ဂ့ၣ် အၢၣ်အွၢ ဘၣ်မဲၣ်ဖျိၣ်ဆၢအိၣ်အ့ၣ် ဒုၣ်ဝၢစွၢမါလီၤ။  
 တတၢ်ဖိၣ်သံၣ်လဖးနီၤ ဖုၣ်အၢၣ်ပံၣ်ပုၣ်ကိၣ်နီၣ်ဒုၣ်လီၤ။  
 စီးကျိာ်ထီၤနီၤသံၣ် အိၣ်ဝၢဒၢအိၣ်မုၢ်မဲၣ်နီၤဖုၣ်အၢၣ်ပံၣ်ပုၣ်နီၣ်ဆ့ၣ်လီၤ။  
 တတၢ်ဖိၣ်လဖး လဂၢဒဲလဂၢ ဖုၣ်ဘီၣ်မၢဆၢဒုၣ်လီၤဘၣ်ပံၣ်ပုၣ်နီၣ်ဒုၣ်လီၤ။  
 ထီၤဘီၣ်ဘျုး ခုၣ်ဆၢဒုၣ်န့ၣ် ကိၣ်ဟ့ၣ်ဒုၣ်လီၤ။

**7.1.3. Transcription and translation**

cəklóthôn

‘Kyaw Kloo Hton’

(1) lə ʔəwī dáʔò¹ təwân ʔó lə phlóʊn, ʔó wêdá  
 LOC past ago village be one NC[round] be EMP  
 lə khólòn khánthài ləbàʊləjain nó ló.²  
 LOC mountain foot not.so.far that AST

‘Once upon a time, there was a village. The village was located not far from the foot of the mountain.’

(2) lə təwân phèn nó təwânphú ʔó lə yà,  
 LOC village inside TOP villager be one NC[human]  
 ʔə mèin mwē wê cəklóthôn nó ló.  
 3SG name COP EMP Kyaw.Kloo.Hton that AST

‘There was a villager living in the village. His name was Kyaw Kloo Hton.’

- (3) còklóthôn      nó      ʔə      θóuN    ɣì      ʔə      θà      ʔwà,  
 Kyaw.Kloo.Hton TOP 3SG liver good 3SG heart white  
 θámé      θàphlâin    ch̄ə      ʔó      ʔé,      dùu      wê      cwámā ló.  
 be.scared be.afraid thing be NEG brave EMP very AST

‘Kyaw Kloo Hton was kind-hearted. He was fearless and very brave.’

- (4) təwânp̄hú    θíləphá    nó      phé      ʔán      xíxàu  
 villager PL TOP cut eat swidden  
 kò      néin      dè      ló  
 every year every AST

‘The villagers would farm swiddens every year.’

- (5) còklóthôn      nó      θí      ʔó      wê      dè<sup>3</sup>      ʔə      mō  
 Kyaw.Kloo.Hton TOP also be EMP with 3SG mother  
 múmê      nó,      phé      ʔán      xíxàu      nó      chī      ló.  
 widow and cut eat swidden that too AST

‘Kyaw Kloo Hton also lived with his widowed mother and farmed swiddens.’

- (6) təwânp̄hú    ləphá    lə      ɣà      dè      lə      ɣà  
 villager PL one NC[human] and one NC[human]  
 phé    bò    mà    ch̄əN    lóthà    xí    ph̄əN    xàu    ph̄əN,  
 cut APPL do together RECP jungle inside swidden inside  
 thón    bò    búu,    kh̄əuN    ch̄əN    nán    kò    ɣà    dè    ló.  
 sow APPL paddy dig together weed every NC[human] every AST

‘The villagers all helped each other with the work of farming swiddens, planting upland rice, and cutting weeds.’

**Note 1:** /dáʔò/ ‘ago’ is a particle indicating that the preceding noun denotes a past time. The second syllable of this particle comes from 19c EPK \*/ʔò/, which is expected to be /ʔò/ in CEPK, but no such change occurred. In the CS, it is written as 𑜄𑜂𑜆𑜄 as it was pronounced in 19c EPK. The same is true for the demonstrative 𑜄𑜂𑜆𑜄 /ʔò/ ‘over there’.

**Note 2:** The sentence-final particle /ló/, which denotes assertion, is also pronounced /l̄ó/. In the BS, it is written as 𑜄𑜂𑜆𑜄 /l̄ó/, and in the CS, it is written as 𑜄𑜂𑜆𑜄 /l̄ó/. In this paper, it is transcribed as /l̄ó/, according to the spelling of the BS.

**Note 3:** The particle /dè/ meaning ‘with’ or ‘and’ is thought to have been pronounced \*/dē/ in 19c EPK. Therefore, in the CS, it is written 𑜄𑜂𑜆𑜄 as it is pronounced in the 19th century.

**7.2. Karen instrument ‘khwe’ (blowing horn)**

**7.2.1. Buddhist Pwo Karen Script**

ဖုံဆိုင်ဖေါတ်ဆိုင်အူးခို  
ခိုယိုင် ဖုံဆိုင်ဖေါတ်ဆိုင်ဖေါတ်ဆိုင်အူးဖိုင်လုံဖးဏ် မွဲဆိုင်ဖေါတ်ဆိုင်အူး လုံဆိုင်ဖးအူးယောဝ်  
သုံဝါဉ္စေန်ဝ် ဆိုင်အူးလုံမိုင်လုံ။  
ခိုယိုင် ဖုံဆိုင်ဖေါတ်ဆိုင်ဖေါတ်ဆိုင်အူးဖိုင်လုံဖး ကောတ်ဏ်ဟုံင် မွဲဝဲဒူး ထုံယပ်ပြာထာ  
ဆိုင်သုံယာအးထုက် လုံမိုင်ဆေဝ်လုံ။  
အေဒူးလင်ခိုဟုံင်ဏ် မွဲဖုံဆိုင်ဖေါတ်သီး အိုင်ခိုင်ဏာင်း ဆိုင်သုံယာကိုဝ်ဟာဉ္စေန်လုံ။

**7.2.2. Christian Pwo Karen Script**

ဖျိုင်ဆိုင်ဖိဆေအူးခွဲ  
ခွဲယီး ဖျိုင်ဆိုင်ဖိဆေဖိဆေအူးဖးဒုလဖးနီ၊ မွဲဆေဖိဆေအူး လဆေဘာအူးဂျါ  
ဝဝ်ဒဲနိန် ဆေအူးလမံဒုလီ။  
ခွဲယီး ဖျိုင်ဆိုင်ဖိဆေဖိဆေအူးဖးဒုလဖး ကျိန်နီဂီဒု မွဲဝဲဒူး ထယီပြါထာ  
ဆေဒူးယာအာထုလ လမံဒုဆုလီ။  
အူးဒူးလဒူးခွဲကွဲနီ၊ မွဲဖျိုင်ဆိုင်ဖိဆေ အဆိုင်နဲဒူး ဆေဒူးယာကိန်ဟုဒူးဒူးလီ။

**7.2.3. Transcription and translation**

phlòɴ chiphó chəʔú khwè  
Karen race wind.instrument khwe  
‘Karen instrument *khwe* (blowing horn)’

(1) khwè jò' phlòɴ chiphó chəphóchəʔú² phən ləphá nó  
khwe TOP Karen race instrument inside PL TOP  
mwē chəphóchəʔú lə chə bá ʔúwə̀ θəwàì  
COP instrument REL IMPS must blow breathe.in  
dè nò chəʔú lə mèn lə.  
with mouth wind.instrument one kind AST

‘The *khwe* is a type of Karen wind instrument played by blowing and inhaling with the mouth.’

- (2) khwè jò phlòUN chiphó chəphóchəʔú phàn ləphá  
 khwe TOP Karen race instrument inside PL  
 klú nó yòN mwē wédá thəjōprāthā  
 bronze.drum TOP after COP EMP famous  
 chə θijā ʔá tháU lə mēiN chī ló.  
 IMPS know many the.most one kind too AST

‘The *khwe* is the second most famous instrument of the Karen people, after the bronze drum.’

- (3) ʔè³ dá làn khwè yàn nó,  
 if see down khwe shape TOP  
 mwē phlòUN chiphó θí ʔə chínáin  
 COP Karen race PL 3PL symbol  
 chə θijā kò yà dè ló.  
 IMPS know every NC[human] every AST

‘When we see the *khwe*, we all remember that this is the symbol of the Karen people.’

**Note 1:** The particle /jò/ meaning ‘this’ or indicating a topic is thought to have been pronounced \*/jò/ in 19c EPK. Therefore, in the CS, it is written ʔʔ as it is pronounced in the 19th century

**Note 2:** The noun /chə/, meaning ‘thing’, also has the usages of nominalizing prefix and impersonal subject. In these grammaticalized usages, it is pronounced as /chə/. Thus, in the CS, it should be written as ə if the spelling follows the pronunciation; however, it is actually written with the spelling əə, which represents the pronunciation of the original noun.

**Note 3:** The subordinate clause marker /ʔè/, which means ‘if’, is written in the CS with the spelling əʔ representing /ʔi/. The reason for this is unknown. This form might have been pronounced \*/ʔé/ in the 19th century.

## 8. Concluding remarks

In this paper, we have seen how the BS and CS correspond to the phonological systems of CEPK and 19c EPK. 19c EPK is very important for comparative studies of Karenic languages, in that it preserves nasalized rhymes and stopped rhymes. The 19c EPK final nasals are always explicitly reflected in both BS and CS. However, the

presence of 19c EPK final glottal stops is always reflected in the CS, but only partially in the BS. Furthermore, the CS is very systematic in that the symbols and sounds correspond in a nearly one-to-one relationship. In this regard, in comparative studies of Karenic languages, the CS should be referenced. If a student can read this writing system, s/he can use Purser and Saya Tun Aung's (1922) Pwo Karen dictionary written in CS, and it would increase the accuracy of her/his research. I hope this paper will prove useful in comparative studies of Karenic languages. I also believe that this paper will be beneficial to students who wish to study the Pwo Karen language itself.

This paper dealt with two writing systems, i.e., the BS and CS, because these two are the most commonly used among speakers of Pwo Karen. However, there are at least two more writing systems in Pwo Karen. That is, the Leke Script and Myainggyingu Script. These are both writing systems for EPK. Let me introduce them at the end of this paper. However, I would like to confess that I still cannot read them and do not understand their systems.

In Karen State, there is a religion called Leke that worships Maitreya (Leke is a religion, not a language name as such sometimes quoted). Followers of this religion use the characters shown in Figure 2.

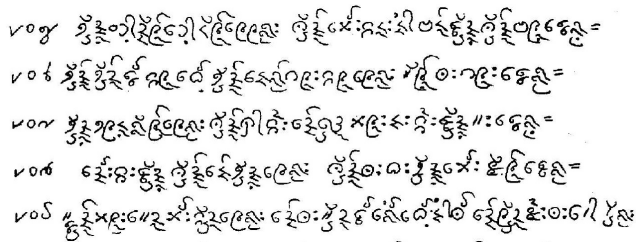


Figure 2: Leke Script

Legend has it that in ancient times the Karen people had a writing system called /lái(\*lái?) chān wé(\*wé?)/ (script - fowl - scratch), which means the 'script of scratching of fowls'. The Leke Script was probably created in the mid-19th century, based on that legend. I call this the Leke Script, but Leke followers themselves call it /lái chān wé/. An overview of this writing system is discussed by Stern (1968). It looks

complex, but basically uses a system common to Indic scripts.

The Myainggyingu Script is a writing system that appeared on or after the 1990s. This script was created through the efforts of the Buddhist monk U Thuzana (ဦးသုဇန, 1947–2018), also known as the Myainggyingu Sayadaw (မြိုင်ကြီးငူဆရာတော်), and its shapes are as shown in Figure 3. Presumably, this character was also created based on the legend of /lái chān wé/.

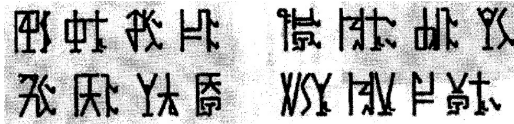


Figure 3: Myainggyingu Script

U Thuzana is a Sgaw Karen monk, and the sample in Figure 3 is presumed to represent Sgaw Karen words or sentences. Recently, I heard that this system was developed so that it can also write EPK as well as Sgaw Karen. This script also appears to basically use the system common to Indic scripts. In Sgaw Karen, this script is called /li? kwèkè/ (probably meaning ‘wavy script’).

### Abbreviations

APPL = applicative marker denoting assistance; AST = particle indicating assertion; BS = Buddhist Pwo Karen Script; CEPK = contemporary Eastern Pwo Karen; COP = copular verb; CS = Christian Pwo Karen Script; EMP = emphasis; EPK = Eastern Pwo Karen; IMPS = impersonal subject; LOC = particle indicating location, goal, and source; NC[human] = numeral classifier for a human; NC[round] = numeral classifier for a round thing; NEG = negativity; PL = plural; RECP = reciprocal; REL = relative marker; SG = singular; TOP = topic; 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person.

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