

Repetition Big and Small in Eastern Himalayan Oral-Tradition Narratives – From Overlays to Parallelisms

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General Linguistics

C05 (Strand “Narrating Life”)

Summary

- Some Eastern Himalayan societies retain endangered but still vibrant oral traditions and shamanism.
- Shamanic ritual performances are structured into protection chants, recitations of clan lineages and embedded mythological narratives.
- These narratives work as parables: A life here and now is transformed in analogy to a transformation brought about in the narrative.
- This project investigates unfolding narrative structure in Igu shamanism through the lens of three forms and functions of prominent types of repetition structures.



A04 Morenz
B04 Müller

B06 Schwermann
C03 Eggert

words@MoM	alodju atogi	djimima
morphemes	alodju atogi	dji mi ma
gloss	ginger short_tong	sit NEG HON
MoM@ge	I'm sitting here with tongs and holy ginger, you go away before I harm you	

words@MoM	abrapo alöne	djimima
morphemes	abrapo alöne	dji mi ma
gloss	tong small_tong	sit NEG HON
MoM@ge	I'm holding the baby tongs and the ginger, go away before I harm you	

words@PP	peme me ane karō rō nega weliba
morphemes	peme me ane karō rō ne=ga weli=ba
gloss	heavenly_force NOM price price give? 2PL=PL hang_on_hook=ITV
PP@ge	by the heavenly force, you pay a price (i.e., you hang the price on that hook)

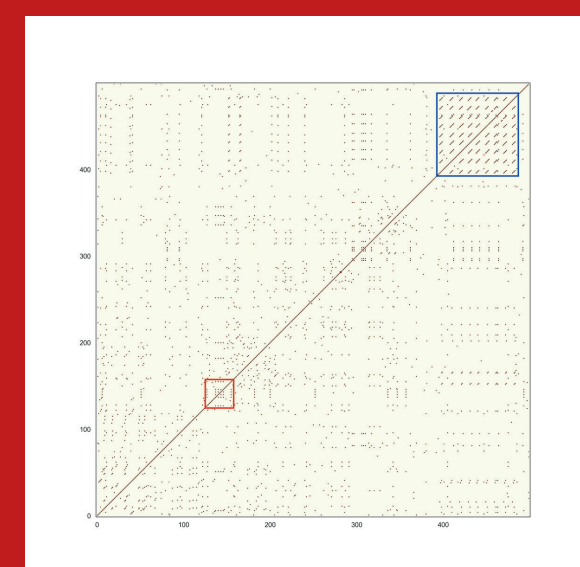
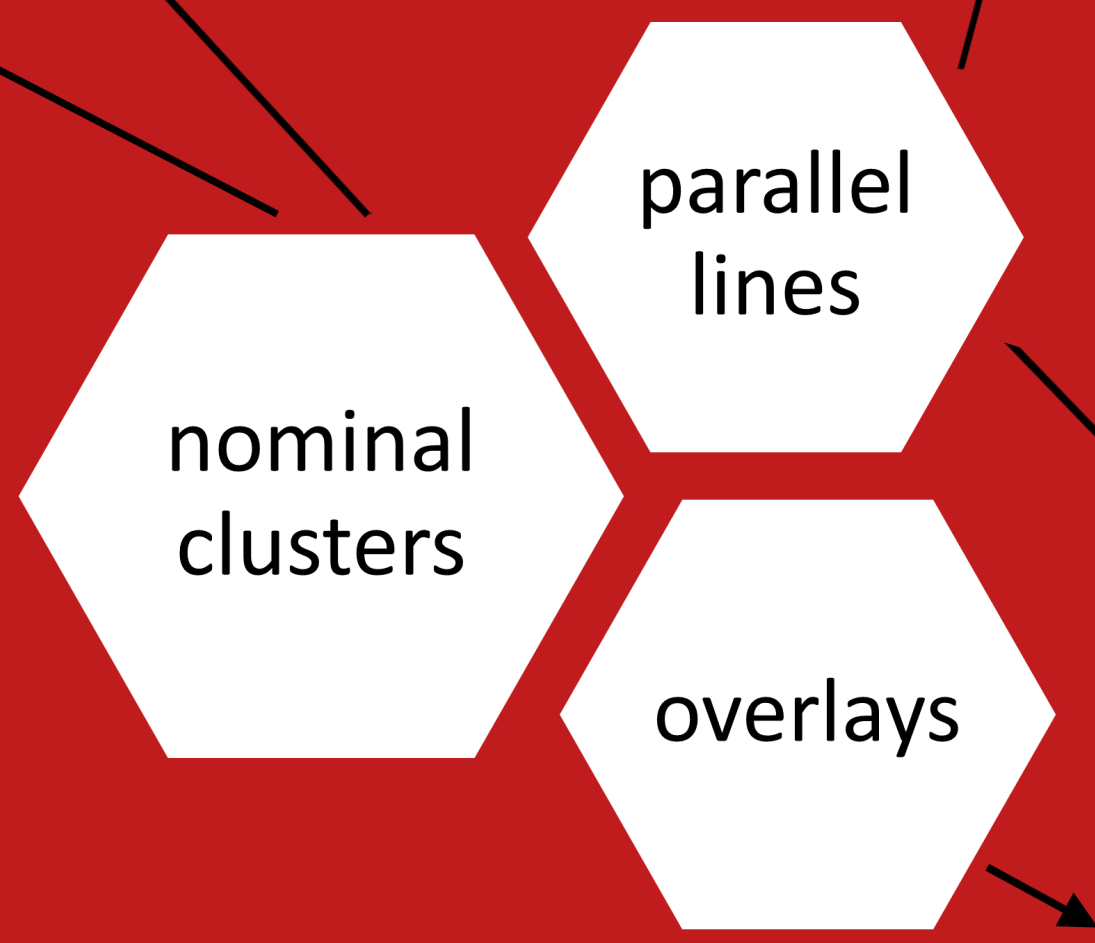
words@PP	aji asurō guru de nega ane
morphemes	aji asurō guru ne ne=ga ane
gloss	cleansing cleansing payment 2PL 2PL place payment
PP@ge	payment has been given for you (hung on hook) in order to appease the spirit



Photo 1: Reh performance by Igu Mola Mili (source: UR)



Photo 2: Ayi performance by Igu Mola Mili (source: UR)



Ellison T. Mark & Uta Reinöhl. 2025. Repetition in Language and Recurrence Mapping. osf.io/preprints/so-carxiv/ma5js_v1.

We investigate repetition structures through recurrence plotting (Ellison & Reinöhl 2025) from local inner-couplet repetitions to larger-scale overlays (episode repetition with variation and gradual enrichment).