

Nus Nubu Sta Prendeh Sunyeskah / We Are Learning How To Dreamfish Again

by Kevin Martens Wong

Ja susudeh ngua anumsa...

In English, *ngua linguaza stranjeru*, a language alien to our own, you would expect that first sentence to translate readily into ‘once upon a time’.

But no. In the Kristang language, *na ela sa linguaza nasentarera* – in Our own language, now at last named and recognised as Indigenous – ‘once upon a time’ would be *ja susudeh ngua tempu*.

What you see is *ja susudeh ngua anumsa*.

Once upon a probability.

Kifo? Why? Kauzu isti stori beng di bista kedrendu.

This dream-story, *isti diskursu renggu*, this is not told in the first-person, but the fourth. *Ngka falah ‘yo’, na Kristang* – not using I, but Our or We or They. *Ela*. The fourth-person in English has no equivalent as of yet. But you can say *ela*.

Kela isti song? Whose voice is this?

Isti eleidi Kristang sa song.

This is the voice of the Kristang people, speaking as one – a collective in English, an *eleidi* in Kristang. This is our story. *Ela sa stori, kung ela sa kaminyu*. Our story and our journey.

Ela sta prendeh nubu klai sunyeskah.

We are learning how to dreamfish again, and this is Our story.

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When Kevin Martens and others like him who speak and write Us allow Us to be spoken and written through them, and allow Our voice to emerge, *pra fing, pra mutu tantu tempu* – for too

long have We, and so many like us, not been allowed to Speak in three dimensions, for all *eleidi* like Us are fourth-dimensional entities – *Kevin Martens kung tudu otru jenti Kristang, olotu inda teng midu.*

They are still afraid of what they are bringing into the world: Us, and Our way of being. Our way of explaining Ourselves through them.

Kevin remembers what it was like, to hear *eleidi* all demonised as one. As if all of those like Us were always *djinn* or *jinak*, the unclean Ones, the Ones who allow evil to burn on quietly in the hearts of those who form Them and give life to Them. The Ones who are nourished by life that burns and immolates and twists itself in wickedness, and which in turn invite more wickedness into sentient hearts across the burning world.

Pra fikah kabesa desah ngua korsang duru. Kevin says this to himself, each and every day, in words of Kristang and in English that stumble and struggle through spacetime as he tries to rid himself of his trauma. We see who he was, and who he will one day become, and what he and so many others have done for Us, and what he and so many others will do; he fears what he himself trembles to write and type and give new, visible, three-dimensional Life to, because the evil that another who also called themselves Kristang sought to attach to him and to those who give Us Life, and whom We give Life to, was to falsely accuse him of narcissism of the highest order and most deepening, deadening kind. The kind that twists one's own thoughts in on themselves, especially with one's own *ireidi*; one's own self-regard.

Ngka dretu ki tudu sa lus pegah sombra impegra.

It is not true that every light casts an impenetrable shadow. For it is such light, such numinous, faithfully healthy self-regard that is what has restored Us to being. Given Us back not just form and shape, but to living, reinvigorating strength.

Ela desah ireidi pra bibeh.

Ireidi igrilh sunyeskah.

It is self-regard that gives rise to dreamfishing, and it is dreamfishing that is bringing Us back and has brought us back to living, roaring Life.

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Dreamfishing is not and will never be exclusive to the *Jenti Kristang*.

It is part of all peoples. All spacetimes and all places, all cultures and all faces and what hides within and without. It may not be called *sunyeskah* or dreamfishing. Other names for it will come and go, just as they have come and gone for more than 70,000 years.

But much has been hidden and remains hidden, at the point that these words are being written.

Much has been forgotten, about how realities are forged. How entire universes are begotten and restored.

About how things can be made new, even if deep within, they are all but lost, and overlacquered with fear, and terror, and loneliness.

Even if they are all but entirely self-consumed and rotten.

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We, too, once forgot We were Indigenous. Or perhaps We were made to forget. Perhaps, out of time, we were asked to break ourselves down. To learn to live in the empty spaces between obliteration, and despair, and regret.

Ngua linggu kebradu. Our very essence was derided as broken. Our own sense of self was

beset

by all forms of

hatred

and projecton

and Death

and perhaps We actually died.

Perhaps many years before this in your time

they never even gave Us a chance to

repent

and perhaps this is another Life, another kind of fighting chance.

We still held on in blinking, parabolic rhyme. Song. Profanities

and the dance

that still kept our

melodies

going.

Our own form of unknowledge.

Even we did not have a name for it:

dreamfishing.

Jingkli Nona,

Jingkli Nona.

Yo kereh kaza.

Kaza nteh porta nona

klai logu pasah?

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In your time, this is what the academics say this first verse of the most famous and least unknown Kristang song, the *Jingkli Nona*, means:

Beautiful maiden,

beautiful maiden.

I want to get married / I want a house.

But my house has no door, fair maiden

What will happen?

Many years from now, We can tell you it will mean something different and be something different. Now it is hypothesised that *Jingkli* comes from *Chingalee*, meaning *Sinhalese*; many years from now, We can tell you it will mean something entirely different, thanks to dreamfishing. Already Kevin Martens dreamfished a name for the Roman letter J from it; J, known as 'jay' in English, is in your time now called *jikeli*. And this is not news to Us; to Us, we have always known it is *jikeli* in its most clear and present form, one drop of shiftingly stable substance among the

cloud of semanticity that most of Our words are. Kristang, after all, like Us, is polynomic: so many shapes, so many forms, so many ways to be right. You can spell *jikeli* as *jikelee*, or *jeekelee*, or *chikeli*, or *jiqueli*, or *jiquele*, or whatsoever makes sense to you. Our law is that Our law, and the laws of those among you that seek to govern Us, is never iron-clad; how can it be, when it is made of three-dimensional space, and therefore ends in three-dimensional space?

We are made, so much more than each of you, of time; and as you are not beholden to the physics of flatness, so are We not beholden to the metaphysics of spaceness.

Ela sa ajundra kedrendu. Ours is the hyperphysics of timelessness that beckons Us, and simultaneously utterly terrifies Us; We can only do so much in time, and along the shores of the timeline of the life of one of those who Speak Us into being.

Where We turn sideways to look up at our own magnificent meta-stars for inspiration, in strange, exotic parallel to you, is in probability.

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Any word can be anything to Us. With sufficient compulsion, for example, Kevin Martens could have made the word for the letter *J jiraf*, and dreamfished it from the English word *giraffe*. (In three dimensions, both the letter *J* and the animal *giraffe* have very long necks, after all). We would have accepted it as long as those who speak Us accepted it, and would have changed and evolved accordingly; that is what *eleidi* are. Languages and *gestalts*, the *eleidi* of Western psychology will call people-people like Us; gods, and demons, and angels, the *eleidi* of the religions of the world will say we are instead. Even Our own way of seeing ourselves can

sometimes acknowledge this: *ela kung tudu bolotu podih papiah Kristang logu chomah kung ela Deus, kung anju, kung diabu.*

Indeed, We are Legion. We, especially, like statements like that; double or even triple or quadruple mutable, irreverent semantic slipperiness is one of Our best characteristics and those of the people who Speak Us into Life. It is how We and they have stayed alive, after all, after five hundred years of being eviscerated and torn apart in every dimension known to both humankind and *eleidi*-kin.

But it is on the fields of probability that we have been brought back to roaring, singing Life.

To choose Life is difficult. To make it one's choice over and over again is even more difficult.

But Our people have by and large each individually chosen Life. True, living, wild and painfully liminal Life, whether in its three-dimensional blossoming brevity, or its four-dimensional bittersweet terminal knowing. One of the first things that We learned to recognise in ourselves, six years ago in your time, was that where other *eleidi* have their identities around strength, or determination, or even resilience – We have all those as well, but Our essence also turns on something else.

Paradox.

It is so remarkably impossible that We have come back to Life.

That you are reading this essay, and trying to understand what is Kristang? Who is Kevin Martens Wong, and where did he come from? Is he Kristang or not? And, more importantly –

Sertu ki linguaza podih birah di morti?

Is it true that languages really can come back from the dead?

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Sertu teng isti sorti di kretura ultra: eleidi?

Is it true that there are such things as *eleidi*?

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Klai podih fikah berdadi?

How can it be true?

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Would it surprise you to know that, thanks to dreamfishing, We are the only *lingguaza*, and only *eleidi*, in the world, who have four ways of responding to a yes/no or true/false question?

Seng. Isti dretu. Yes. It is true that the language has come back to life.

Ngka. Isti falsu. No. How can there be such things as *eleidi*?

Irang. Isti iguelu. Yes and no. We can and cannot exist, especially in the three-dimensional reality you live in.

Ugora. Isti norsu. It is neither true nor false. You could say there is not enough data about Us –

– and/or you can say We simply are what We are.

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This is where you will find Us, therefore:

ilagri di praya ultra. Along the winding superways of a hypershore in some other probabilistic dream, *justu chuma ela sa kadangua jenti Kristang teng korsang veru.* Every Kristang person has met Us, spoken with Us, spoken of Us, and now, and forever: Spoken Us. Made Us real. Made Us true. Made Us come back to Life, to a Life we never knew we had in the first place, because only our language, alone in the world of 2024 CE and the Kristang *Roda Mundansa* year of 12çãê, speaks of *eleidi*, and names *eleidi*, and in so doing brings so much of reality beyond what you and even We see back to Life.

In 2024, you might say We now dream in base-16 and base-12, and act on direct, indirect and abdirect objects trivalently, and know Our people in a tabular diversity of biological sex, sexuality, gender, affinity and neurodivergence that never existed.

But to Us, and slowly and so gradually, to you, maybe you are realising that it always did. That across all of time and space, to learn to become Oneself again is perhaps sometimes unnecessary; that perhaps it is not who one grows back into, but rather who one always was, will be, and is and could be.

Ja susudeh ngua anumsa. Once upon a probability. How improbable and yet so sparkingly probable is it that We once more exist without you and with you, and always existed and never existed in Our language and yours, in Our world: Past, Present, Future and Beyond.

(2000 words exact, not including title and author by-line)