1 Introduction

• The noun classification system of Máihîki, an endangered Western Tukanoan language of Peruvian Amazonia, is typical of its region (per the descriptions, for instance, in Payne (1986), Seifart (2005), and Gomez-Imbert (2007)) in that it exhibits classifiers that:
  – blur the boundary between derivation and inflection
  – appear in a broad range of morphosyntactic contexts
  – exhibit a semantic split between ‘general’ and ‘specific’ and
  – are involved in reference tracking

• This talk will focus on a particular Máihîki construction: verb root + tensed ‘relativizer’ + classifier, which may be analyzed in three different ways:
  1. as a nominalized verb
  2. as a relativized verb
  3. as the subordinate verb in a clause-chaining construction

• In this talk, my narrow goals will be:
  – to investigate the verb root + tensed ‘relativizer’ + classifier in detail to determine the extent to which there is evidence for each of the three potential analyses;
  – to argue that this construction serves to background information, and that various analyses may be united under the pragmatic umbrella of non-assertion.

• My broader goals will be to speculate about the relationship between classification and non-assertion, and to suggest that the semantic properties of classifiers (bleachedness plus specificity) make them ideal candidates for reference tracking and presupposition.

• Outline
  – In §2, I provide background on the Máihîki system of noun classification.
  – In §3, I illustrate the construction in question and provide evidence for three structural analyses.
  – In §4, I’ll argue that Máihîki classifiers appear in the context of non-asserted information.
  – I will conclude in §5 by speculating about classifiers’ affinity for non-assertion.
2 Background on Classification in Máihīki

- Doris Payne’s (1986) description of noun classification in Yagua brought to light the need for data from Amazonian languages by pointing out the ways in which Yagua challenges Allan’s (1977) typology of classification.

- Since then, a surge in descriptions of Amazonian noun classification systems (e.g. those found in Barnes (1990), Derbyshire & Payne (1990), Aikhenvald (2003), Seifart (2005), Gomez-Imbert (2007), Payne (2007), Seifart (2007), Chacon (2012), Silva (2012), Stenzel (2013), Bruil (2014), Farmer (2015), Wojtylak (2017) among others) has helped to paint a clearer picture of the features common to this linguistic area, in particular, that its classifiers:
  - may be both derivational and inflectional;
  - serve to unitize mass nouns;
  - fall along a spectrum from lexical to grammatical;
  - appear in a broad range of morphosyntactic contexts;
  - are involved in agreement and reference tracking; and
  - exhibit a semantic split between ‘generic’ and ‘specific’.

- In this section, I will provide an overview of the classification system found in Máihīki, with particular reference to the general–specific split, and to the morphosyntactic environments in which classifiers appear.

2.1 The general–specific split

- The Máihīki system of noun classification seems bipartite in a way that other languages of the region (e.g. Yagua (Payne 1986), Miraña (Seifart 2005), Tatuyo (Gomez-Imbert 2007)) have been described: it exhibits a distinction between ‘general’ and ‘specific’ classifiers.

- **Specific** class markers make fine-grained distinctions between physico-cultural properties of entities; **general** class markers make coarser distinctions, typically in animacy, gender, and number.

- The ‘general’ system of noun classification in Máihīki is shown in the tree below:
• The ‘specific’ system of noun classification in Máihíki involves a large class of mostly shape-based suffixes.

• One way to conceive of this bipartite system is as having a morphosyntactic split between general and specific. General class is relevant for subject agreement with the predicate; specific class is relevant for agreement within the noun phrase.

• Seifart’s description of Miraña, however, describes this as a pragmatic split:
  – Specific class markers may be used to ‘highlight a particular property of a referent that is important in a given discourse situation’ (Seifart, 2005: 320)—for instance, to recall, emphasize, or disambiguate a referent.

• As we will explore, what is meant by ‘finite’ is worthy of more investigation.

2.2 Classifier environments

• Classifiers in Máihíki can appear suffixed to:
  – **adjectival roots**, such as háí- ‘big’ in (1a)
  – certain **noun roots**, such as the mass noun ókó ‘water’ in (1b)
  – **numeral roots**, such as têpê- ‘two’ in (1c)
  – **demonstrative roots**, such as the discourse demonstrative íti in (1d)
  – **verb roots**, such as átšú ‘be hot’ in (1e)
  – ‘**relativized**’ **verbs**, such as táísè ‘that which fell’ in (1f)

(1) a. háíràkà míñhimèhàhìtèà
  háí -raka mèní -hèè -hìtèà
  big -CL:liquid rise -2STATE.PLACT -3SG.PRES.DECL also
  ‘The water level rose too’ (lit.: ‘the big water rose too’)

b. ókòràkà ñjètèmèhògìí
  ókó -raka ñjètè ème -hò -gi
  water -CL:liquid break lie.down -PERF -3SG.PAST.DECL
  ‘The water broke open and lay on the ground’ (i.e., it began to rain) (iy6 246.1)

c. têpètàrà tfjábì
  têpè -tara tfjá -bi
  two -CL:cylindrical buy -1PL.PAST.DECL
  ‘We bought two bottles’ (ovi 103.1)

d. hìnòtä íâìràkà ñkòdžìtìà
  hìnòtä ítì -raka ñkú -dʒì -ta
  just.now DISCOURSE.DEM -CL:liquid drink -3PL.PRES.DECL -INFO
  ‘They’re drinking the soup’ (cf1 172.1)
e. átjúràkà kwàkòè hàɲùdòhògò
   átjú -raka kwàkò -re hàɲù dú -hò -go
   be.hot -CL:liquid heat pour pour.liquid -SEQ -PERF -3SG.FEM.PAST.DECL
   ‘She heated the water and poured it out [into the worm’s hole]’

f. ítị́ni ț’́sèdàdà háídžìàrà nèèhò
   ítì -njì táí -se -dadi hàí -dʒìara nèè -hò
   discourse.dem -CL:plant fall -REL.PAST -CL:place big -CL:lake make -2STATE
   ‘The place where the tree fell became the sea’ (mbd 341.1)

• In what follows, I will be focusing on the type of construction in (1f)—verb root + ‘relativizer’ + classifier.

3 The construction in question

• There is a paradigm of suffixes that have been glossed in previous descriptions of Máihìki (Farmer 2015) as tensed ‘relativizers’.

• This paradigm, shown below, includes three tenses with lenis and fortis allomorphs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fortis</th>
<th>Lenis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>-∅</td>
<td>-∅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>-tʃi</td>
<td>-se</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>-ha</td>
<td>-hai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Máihìki ‘relativizers’

• Present, past, and future examples are shown below:

(2) máíkò lìkàkò, ‘mì ágàrà ómàkù, dʒì gàhìqàrà?’
   máí -ko lìkà -ko mà ãó -gara óí -ma
   go.up -SS.SIM.FEM speak -3F.SUBJ.OVLP you food -CL:clump want -NEG
   -ki dʒì gàhì -gara
   -3SG.MASC.Q my hold -CL:clump
   ‘She went up and said, “You don’t want this ball of food that I’m holding?”’
(3) hásu ū hásótfibì sààkù diöhó
hásu ū hásó -tjì -bi sàà -ki diöhó
shotgun he shoot -REL.PST -CL:thing take -3SG.MASC.OVLP put.in.water
-hó
-PERF

‘He took the shotgun that he had shot and put it in the water’ (aag 114.1)

(4) nóre ìbì dʒòu bàlhábì kwààníkogí
nò -re ì -bi dʒòu bà -há -bi kwàà
wife -ACC PROX.DEM -CL:vessel canoe be -FUT.REL -CL:vessel pick.up
níkó -gi
stand.up.TR -3SG.MASC.PAST.DECL

‘He picked up his wife and stood her up on what would become the canoe’ (cf1 180)

• Below, I will discuss potential analyses of these constructions as nominalizations, relativized verbs, and the subordinated verbs of temporal adverbial clauses.

3.1 Nominalization or Relative Clause?

• The construction could feasibly be analyzed as a nominalization or a relative clause.

• For many languages of the Americas, this distinction has been argued to be blurry or irrelevant (Shibatani 2009; Comrie & Thompson 1985).

• Indeed, in Máháki, the construction in question may bear nominal morphology, such as the plural suffix -ma:

(5) úhá bìfhì dàisè sūweregàrämà tìgàrámnà úkùńjì ítìhùnà
úhá bì -hì dài -se sū -se -gara
song get.up -PL.SS.OVLP dance -REL.PST strain -REL.PST -CL:clump
-ma tìjì -gara -ma úkú -dʒì ítìhùnà
-INAN.PL thick -CL:clump -INAN.PL drink -3PL.PRES.DECL they

‘Those who got up and danced drank the masa de pihuayo verde’ (lit.: ‘the thick clumps that had been strained’) (pvd 51.1)

• This construction can be also predicativized in the same way nouns are—via the copula suffixes -hà (plural/inanimate), -agi (masculine animate), or -ago (feminine animate).

(6) ū máińáru bátʃikíagì
ū máińáru bá -tjì -ki -agi
he upriver live -REL.PST -CL:MASC -COP.ANIM.MASC

‘He lived upriver’ (cmb 4.1)
• It may serve as the possessor or possessum in a possessive construction:

(7) húníhókò bàtfókò wèè tèà tánihógí
    húní -hó -ko bà -tő -ko wèè tèà tánì -hó
die.NI -2STATE -CL:FEM be.AUX.NI -REL -CL:FEM house also fall.NI -2STATE
    -gí
3SG.PST.DECL

‘The house of the woman who had died fell too’

• It is often translated into Spanish as a nominalization.

(8) dží áó kókókó nà gánàbà
dží áó kókó -ko nà gánà -bi
I food cook -CL:FEM then earn -1SG.PST.DECL

‘I made money as a cook’ (svc 204.1)
‘Yo como cocinera he ganado’

• But these same constructions in Máihíki are undeniably clause-like in that they can describe complex, tensed events and can bear negation and aspectual marking as finite verbs would.

• The most common translation into Spanish is with a relative clause.

(9) dží dōihiñà džiø neëmashañhñà kátò sáníhñêärê bàtdzi ìtiñhñà
dží dōi -huna džiø nèë -ma -se -huna kátò sáni
my siblings -CL:group garden make -NEG -REL.PST -CL:group there go.NI
    -hea -re bà -dži ìtiñhñà
    -2STATE.PL -SEQ live -3PL.PRES.DECL they

‘My siblings, who didn’t want to make swiddens, went to live elsewhere’ (bag 534.1)

(10) óó sòåhàràñfàsè hànà bëóhí
óó sòå hàrà -jìa -se hànà bëó -hí
plantain be.ripe sit -IMPF -REL.PST now not.exist -3SG.PRES.DECL

‘The plantain (tree) that was sitting here ripe is now gone’ (dos 79.1)

3.2 The construction in question as a clause-chaining device

• Previous descriptions of Máihíki have not explored the role of this construction in clause-chaining.

• Farmer (2015) and Michael (2011) claim that complex events in Máihíki are expressed via clause-chaining devices that encode switch reference and degree of temporal overlap:
- same-subject temporal overlap suffixes
- same-subject sequential suffixes
- different-subject temporal overlap suffixes
- different-subject sequential suffixes

- I will be concerned here with the same-subject suffixes, as clause-linking function of the construction in question bears most similarity to these.

- The same-subject temporal overlap suffixes, shown in the table below, indicate that the times of the events of the matrix and dependent clauses are at least partially overlapping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masc</th>
<th>-ki</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fem</td>
<td>-ko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pl</td>
<td>-hį</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Same-subject temporal overlap suffixes

(11) a. dáıkè, máká dáıkè ágáহ
     dáí- ki máká dáí -ktextbari ágá -hį
     come -MASC.SS.SIM woods come -MASC.SS.SIM shout -3SG.MASC.PRES.DECL

     ‘Coming out of the woods, he called out’ (ttj 101.1)
     ‘Viniendo del monte él llamaba’

b. ábıkè tıkahi, ‘ko, ko, ko’
     ábé -ki tikā -hį ko ko ko
     bathe -MASC.SS.SIM hit.PLACT -3SG.MASC.PRES.DECL ONOM ONOM ONOM

     ‘Bathing, he was hitting (the water) making it go, “ko, ko, ko”’ (clp 227.1)
     ‘Bañando estaba golpeando con el sonido “ko, ko, ko”’

(12) a. yábésàbikò sákó
     yábé sàbì -ko sáí -ko
     hide.INTR crawl -FEM.SS.SIM go -3SG.FEM.PRES.DECL

     ‘She went crawling, hiding’ (muj 32.1)
     ‘Escondiéndose y gateando se fue’

b. īsékò áómákò
     īsé -ko áó -má -ko
     be.stingy -FEM.SS.SIM feed -NEG -3SG.FEM.PRES.DECL

     ‘Being stingy with food, she didn’t feed [them]’ (hab 40.1)
     ‘Mezquinaba comida y no les daba de comer’
(13) a. kùhì sáídžì
    kù -hi sáí -džì
clear.path.with.machete -PL.SS.SIM go -3PL.PRES.DECL
'They went clearing the path with machetes' (cm2 78.1)
'Se fueron macheteando'

b. ónó tôáhì õúdžì ūtíhùnà
    ónó tôá -hì õú -džì ūtíhùnà
beverage grind -PL.SS.SIM drink -3.PL.PRES.DECL they
'Grinding the masato, they would drink' (pyj 9.1)
'Moliendo el masato, ellos tomaban'

- The same-subject sequential suffix, -re, indicates that the events occur in sequence.

(14) a. ...násórè éèrè héétõòõõõhìbì
    násó -re éò -re héó tôô -hó -bi
woolly.monkey -ACC tie.up -SS_SEQ throw make.fall -2STATE -1SG.PAST.DECL
'...I tied up the woolly monkey and threw it down' (130.1)
'...he amarrado el choro y le he botado abajo'

b. sáàrè kwàkõmà!
    sáà -re kwàkò -ma!
take -SS_SEQ cook -IMP
'Take it and cook it!' (iy6 437.1)
'¡Llévalo y cocínalo!'

- The verb root + 'relativizer' + classifier is also often translated either as an adverbial temporal clause or as a coordinate clause:

(15) kàâ kámà dʒòòhì nàtæsèhùnà mámì bèòdʒì
    kàâ kámà dʒòò -hi nàtà -se -huna mámì bèò
then thus do -SS.PL.OVLP wake.up -REL.PST -CL:group name give.name
-dʒì
-3PL.PRES.DECL
'Thus we woke up and baptized'

(16) úkúšèhùnà úhãràdʒì ítíhùnà
    úkú -se -huna úhã rà -dʒì ítíhùnà
drink -REL.PST -CL:group song sing -3PL.PRES.DECL they
'Drinking, they sang songs' (pyj 13.1)
I argue that ‘temporal overlap’ suffixes are part of a larger paradigm of clause-chaining devices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masc</th>
<th>Fem</th>
<th>Pl</th>
<th>Indicate that the backgrounded event overlaps with the topic time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ø + -ki</td>
<td>Ø + -ko</td>
<td>Ø + -h₁</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tʃi + -ki</td>
<td>tʃi + -ko</td>
<td>-se + -huna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ha + -gi</td>
<td>-ha + -go</td>
<td>-hai + -huna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Clause-chaining suffixes

- These are the ‘general class’ suffixes, but specific class can be used as well.
- We then have three potential analyses of sentences like the one in (18):

\( \text{(18) \quad náta\,sèhùnà\,sáhù} \)

\( \text{náta\, -se\, -huna\, sá\, -hi} \)

\( \text{wake.up\, -REL.PST\, -CL:group\, go.PST.NI\, -3PL.PST.DECL} \)

‘The wakers-up left’
‘They who woke up left’
‘They woke up and left’

4 Non-asserted information

- The construction in question has three viable syntactic analyses, but coherent pragmatics: in all cases, it does not make an assertion.
- In other words, it does not consist of ‘what the hearer is expected to know […] as a result of hearing the sentence’ (Lambrecht 1994), but of what the speaker expects the listener to take for granted.
Ecuadorian Siona, a closely related Western Tukanoan language, has been described as encoding a distinction between assertive and non-assertive clause types by Bruil (2014), who notes a close relationship between classifiers and non-assertive agreement markers in the language.

In earlier talks on Máhiki classifiers, I argued that the split between ‘general’ and ‘specific’ classification was a grammatical one rather than a pragmatic one (as it had been described for Miraña by Seifart (2005)).

Seifart (2005) shows that Miraña specific class markers can be finite:

\[
(19) \text{kátur:ßhi e:hi kú:muhí}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kátur:ß} & \quad \text{hi} & \quad \text{e:} & \quad \text{hi} & \quad \text{kú:muhí} & \quad \text{hi} \\
\text{fall} & \quad \text{-SCM.2D.round} & \quad \text{DIST} & \quad \text{-SCM.2D.round} & \quad \text{turtle} & \quad \text{-SCM.2D.round}
\end{align*}
\]

‘It (disc-shaped) fell, that (disc-shaped) turtle’ (Seifart 2005: 80)

\[
(20) \text{tsá-hw:ó-túu \quad tsá-ui-wu \quad me \quad pikó:?
}\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{one-SCM.palmleaf-ABL} & \quad \text{one-SCM.string-DIM} & \quad 1/2 \text{s put-PRD}
\end{align*}
\]

‘From one palm leaf, one puts one string’

In Máhiiki, the domain of ‘general’ class is subject agreement in declarative sentences; the domain of ‘specific’ class is agreement within the noun phrase.

But in contexts where the speaker says something assumed to be known by the interlocutor, specific classifiers may be used, and the non-assertive construction may stand alone.

\[
(21) \text{tóméhi\kà}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tómé} & \quad \text{-tíka} \\
\text{fall} & \quad \text{-CL:stick}
\end{align*}
\]

‘It (stick-shaped) is falling’

**Context**: the speaker and I are both watching a pen fall

This calls for teasing apart the notions of finiteness and assertion, as e.g. Klein (2006) attempts to do.

5 **Discussion: classifiers and non-asserted information**

Classifiers work well in contexts of presupposition and reference tracking because they are semantically bleached, encoding a single, narrow dimension of meaning.

Reference is possible when the speaker correctly assumes the interlocutor is on the same page:
the fact that the speaker assumes common ground can be signaled by the semantic underspecificity of a classifier;
the nature of the common ground that the speaker assumes can be hinted at by the semantic narrowness of a classifier.

• Máíhîki and other languages of the Amazon basin provide rich potential for an investigation into the interrelatedness of subordination, non-finiteness, non-assertion, and presupposition, and the role of classifiers in each.

6 Acknowledgements

The observations about Máíhîki contained in this talk stem from fieldwork conducted from June through August of 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 as part of the Máíhîki Documentation Project. I wish extend my gratitude to the Máíhûnà for sharing with me their home, their language, and their insights. I acknowledge the support of NSF BCS-1065621 and the Robert L. Oswalt Graduate Student Support Endowment for Endangered Language Documentation. The author’s fieldwork was conducted mainly in the community of Nueva Vida on the Yanayacu River with speakers of the western dialect of Máíhîki. Many of the texts cited in this presentation were collected by Amalia Skilton (UC Berkeley) in the communities of Sucusari and El Estrecho.
### Appendix A  Glossing abbreviations used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Glossing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2STATE</td>
<td>second state</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANIM</td>
<td>animate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUX</td>
<td>auxiliary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECL</td>
<td>declarative</td>
</tr>
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<td>DEM</td>
<td>demonstrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISCOURSE</td>
<td>discourse</td>
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<td>FUT</td>
<td>future</td>
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<td>IMP</td>
<td>imperative</td>
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<tr>
<td>INAN</td>
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</tr>
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<td>information structure particle</td>
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<td>INTR</td>
<td>intransitive verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASC</td>
<td>masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>ni-class verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONOM</td>
<td>onomatopoeia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVLP</td>
<td>temporal overlap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>present</td>
</tr>
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<td>PROX</td>
<td>proximal</td>
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<td>PST</td>
<td>past tense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
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<tr>
<td>REL</td>
<td>‘relativizer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>same subject</td>
</tr>
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<td>TO</td>
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<td>transitive verb</td>
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Appendix B  Texts used

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODE</th>
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<th>TITLE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aag</td>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>āíkō āgāyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bag</td>
<td>OLG</td>
<td>Biografías de Roberto Lopez (Kíno) y Amelia Gordillo de Jesus (Neeho)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cf1</td>
<td>ARS</td>
<td>Cómo formó la tierra, parte 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>clp</td>
<td>EMR</td>
<td>Máñeno y la primera collpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cm2</td>
<td>TRR</td>
<td>Cómo mataba la gente antes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cmb</td>
<td>LPR</td>
<td>Cómo murió Babi</td>
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<td>dos</td>
<td>EMR</td>
<td>El hombre que mezquínó sus dos mujeres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hab</td>
<td>LTN</td>
<td>El hijo abandonado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iy6</td>
<td>RRO</td>
<td>Hijo del tigre del cielo, parte II</td>
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<td>mbd</td>
<td>LGF</td>
<td>Máñeno crea los animales</td>
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<td>muj</td>
<td>LGF</td>
<td>La mujer que agarró el alma de su marido</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ovi</td>
<td>OLG</td>
<td>Viaje de Otilia a Iquitos I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pvd</td>
<td>JMM</td>
<td>Fiesta de Pijuayo Verde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pyj</td>
<td>SRF</td>
<td>Cómo se prepararaba ayahuasca y toé antes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>svc</td>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Viaje de Soraida al congreso de 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ttj</td>
<td>TRR</td>
<td>Toadareyai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


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