

# A Collection of Papers on the Tāānpi Language

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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 About Tāānpi**

Tāānpi [t<sup>h</sup>á:n.p<sup>h</sup>ì] is an a priori naturalistic constructed language. This means that it is inspired by, but not based on natural languages.

## **1.2 About this Document**

This document is a collection of papers documenting not only the Tāānpi language, but also its creation in general. Each paper will describe an aspect of the language as it is being created. Once a paper has been finished, it will no longer be edited, except to fix mistakes. If parts of the language are revised, then these changes will be documented in a new paper.

## 2 Beginnings of Tánpz Grammar on the Basis of a Relay

Monday, June 4th 2018

In this document, first steps to developing a grammar of Tánpz will be made during the process of translating a conlangs relay<sup>1</sup>. If you are the next in line in this relay, you will see a bunch of *[redacted]* to hide spoilers such as the translation and gloss.

### 2.1 Text

Tínni nvhùlz hàliyi námikz'ìn áti ź yùún.

Yź áti niyá' nvniyáya yź.

Tź, páai' nvfu'tz yútz.

### 2.2 Translation and Gloss

- (1) a. Tínni nvhùlz hàliyi námikz'ìn áti ź yùún.

tínni nv-hàlz hàli-yi námi-kz'ì-n áti ź yù-ú-n  
sun NARR-trap cage-like OBL-light-POSS 1.ALL 2 ALL-eye-POSS  
“The sun with its light trapped me in your eyes like in a cage.”

- b. Yź áti niyá' nvniyáya yź.

yź áti niy-á' nv-niyá~ya yź  
2.ABL 1.ALL see-WHEN NARR-see~REFL 2.ABL  
“When you saw me, you saw yourself.”

- c. Tź, páai' nvfu'tz yútz.

tź, páai' nv-fu'tz yútz.  
12, march.CONNS NARR-fall 12.ABL  
“Us two, we marched and fell.”

### 2.3 Vocabulary

The vocabulary used in this text is:

- fu'tz “to fall”
- hàli “cage”
- hàlz “to trap”
- kz'ì “light”
- niyá “to see”
- pái “to march”
- tínni “sun”
- ú “eye”

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<sup>1</sup>A game wherein people translate a text into their constructed language and send them onward together with documentation to be deciphered

## 2.4 Syntax

The basic word order in Tánpz is topic-comment. The first constituent in a clause is the topic, followed by the verb, and then everything else. Topics can be omitted, in which case Tánpz appears verb-initial. However, a distinction must be made between main clauses, which act as described, and subordinate clauses, which are verb-final and end in a non-finite verb. Subordinate clauses do not have distinguished topic themselves, and are usually the topic of the main clause. To summarize, the most common sentence structures in Tánpz look like:

- topic — verb — other
- [other — non-finite verb] verb — other

The *other* field is filled with NPs and adverbs. The order here is as follows: adverbials generally immediately follow the verb, followed by NPs — first subject, then objects, and then other stuff.

## 2.5 Phonology

The umlaut phenomenon can be seen in this text, e.g. in (1a), where *nv-hàlz* becomes *nvhùlz*. This phenomenon turns /a/ into /i/ following /ʃ/ and to /u/ following /ɸ/. These sounds are spelled <z v> respectively. Diacritics mark tone.

## 2.6 Morphology

Nouns take a case marking prefix. Topics are always unmarked for case (which is how they are distinguished from fronted foci, which do not feature in this text but might be a thing later on). The case prefixes in this text are:

- *a-* Allative
- *yù-* Ablative
- *námi-* Oblique

These cases will require a bit more explanation. The allative is generally used with recipients, objects and other things acted towards or upon; the ablative is used with origins, actors and other things acted from. The oblique is restricted to non-human nouns and indicates that the noun is additional information such as an instrument, location or a thing given. Human nouns and pronouns are always either allative or ablative.

	plain	ALL	ABL
1	tí	áti	yúti
12	tʒ	átz	yútz
2	ʒ	á'z	yʒ

Table 1: Pronouns

The 12 row here refers to inclusive pronouns, that is “me and you”. Pronouns, like nouns, are not directly inflected for number.

If a noun is possessed, the suffix **-(a)n** is added and, optionally, the possessor juxtaposed immediately before the noun. This is seen in (1a): **ʒ yùún** “your eyes”.

Finite verbs are marked for tense with a prefix, in this text only the marker **nv-** for the *narrative* tense is used, which marks a sentence as being part of a recounted story, rather than something happening with relevance to the present or future. Additionally they can take suffixes further specifying the role of the topic, but this does not occur in the text. Reduplication of the last syllable of the verb stem (without tone) is used to mark a verb as reflexive.

There are two converb constructions in this text. The first, **WHEN**, indicates that the action in the main clauses happened at the same time as the converb clause, with a causal connection. It is formed by appending **-a'** to the verb stem, eliding final vowels (but keeping tone intact). This can be seen in (1b). The second, **CONS**, indicates that the main clause happened as a consequence of the converb clause. It is marked by doubling the stressed (first) vowel, and, if the verb ends in a vowel, checking the last syllable with **'**. An example of this is found in (1c).

The suffix **-yi** is used to convert a word into an adverb meaning as much as “like X”.

## 3 Phonology

*Monday, July 17th 2018*

This first paper is intended to provide a thorough description of the Tāānpi phonology, including sounds, word structure and tonology.

### 3.1 Phoneme Inventory

The following table lists all consonant phonemes and their romanization found in Tāānpi:

Phonemes	Lab	Alv			Vel	Glott
N	m	n				
	p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>	ts <sup>h</sup>	tɕ <sup>h</sup>		
P	p	t	ts	tɕ	k	ʔ
F	ɸ		s	ɕ		h
L			l	j	ɰ	

  

Graphemes	Lab	Alv			Vel	Glott
N	m	n				
	p	t	ts	tś		
P	b	d	dz	dź	g	k
F	f		s	ś		h
L			l	y	w	

Table 2: Consonants of Tāānpi

The basic vowels of Tāānpi are /i e a o u/, romanized simply as ⟨i e a o u⟩. Additionally, Tāānpi contrasts vowel length on all five vowels. Additionally several diphthongs exist (and are to be distinguished from vowel sequences): the rising diphthongs /aᵛ aᵛ aᵛ/, spelled ⟨ai ae au⟩, and the falling diphthongs /ie uo/, spelled ⟨ie uo⟩.

### 3.2 Tone

Tāānpi has two tones: high and low. Underlyingly any syllable may be marked high or low, but there is an important rule determining the tone: a low tone between any two high tones within the same word is raised. Thus all high tones within a word form a plateau. Tone is marked with a macron over all high vowels. On diphthongs and long vowels, tone may change between the two segments, creating falls and rises on long syllables.

### 3.3 Syllable Structure

For the purpose of describing syllable structure, the following categories are relevant:

- N — Nasal consonants

- P — Plosives and affricates except for /ʔ/
- F — Fricatives
- L — Liquids /l j ɰ/
- V — Vowels (short, long and diphthongs)

Each syllable contains exactly one element from V, the nucleus. Optionally, it may have simple or complex onsets as well as simple codas. It follows a list of possible onsets with some examples:

Ø	uk	[ʊʔ]	“eye”
	āēod	[áí.ot]	“fire”
N	maek	[maɪʔ]	“father”
	nuokeed	[nuoʔ.e:t]	“ink brush”
P	baumu	[paɰ.mɸ]	“light overcoat”
	tśēēmā	[tɕ <sup>h</sup> é:má]	“boat”
PL	twainop	[t <sup>h</sup> ɰai̯.nop <sup>h</sup> ]	“branch”
	tśluoāk	[tɕ <sup>h</sup> luo.áʔ]	“coconut”
F	sauthu	[sau̯t <sup>h</sup> .hɸ]	“flower”
	seek	[se:ʔ]	“rain”
FL	flufaek	[ɸlɸ.ɸaiʔ]	“storm”
	śwēēp	[ɕɰé:p <sup>h</sup> ]	“snake”

As for codas, the only allowed options are Ø, or any plosive or affricate, including /ʔ/. Examples of all possible coda kinds can be found in the list above as well.

## 4 Verbal System, Pt. 1

*Thursday, July 19th 2018*

My intention is for Tāānpi to have a rather complex verbal system. In this first paper on it the foundations of it will be laid out.

### 4.1 Verb Stems

Each verb at its core possesses a stem, which carries most of the lexical meaning of the verb. Three kinds of verb stems must be distinguished:

1. Short stems: These verb stems are sesquisyllabic, consisting of a full syllable and the onset of the following syllable. There is a decent amount of these, generally very common and prototypical verbs like “run” or “hit”, but it is not an open class.
2. Vowel stems: These verb stems are typically bisyllabic or longer (though monosyllabic exceptions exist), and they always end in a vowel. Most remaining prototypical verbs fall in this class, though there are affixes that form verbs of this class. These verbs are characterized by significant vowel changes during inflection. Three subclasses are common: -a verbs, -e verbs and -ai verbs.
3. Consonant stems: These verb stems are also usually bisyllabic or longer and always end in a consonant. The majority of these verbs are prototypical nouns, which are converted to verbs by means of zero-derivation, taking on a meaning of “to do X” or “to use X”. Consonant stems show simpler inflection than vowel stems, but there are also a decently sized subclass of irregular verbs with internal vowel changes. An important subclass are -h verbs. These behave much like consonant stems with a hypothetical ending of -h. However, h (historic /k<sup>h</sup>/) has disappeared from codas, which gives rise to a fair amount of irregularity in these verbs.

### 4.2 Bases

Stems cannot directly take on suffixes or auxiliary verb constructions. Rather, they must first be inflected into a base, of which there are seven. Three bases are used on final verbs, the three on medial verbs, and one on both.

1. Perfective: Used for final verbs, typically for completed or simple actions, often past.
2. Imperfective: Used for final verbs, typically for ongoing or repeated actions, also often future.
3. Irrealis: Used for medial and final verbs, often in the formation of conditional statements.
4. Terminative: Used for medial verbs, typically indicating sequential actions with this ending before the next starts.
5. Inceptive: Used for medial verbs, opposite of above.
6. Concurrent: Used for medial verbs, indicating that this action happens at the same time as the following one.



7. Provocative: Used for final verbs, forms questions and commands which provoke a response.

The mentioned distinction of medial versus final verbs is central to Tāānpi verbs: final verbs finish a clause, medial verbs connect into another clause. This can give rise to complex (even excessive) verb chaining. Bases may be used as standalone inflected verbs without further auxiliaries, and each base has particular uses which will be elaborated upon in future papers.

	Short	Vowel			Consonant
		a	i	ai	
Perfective	-a	[a]	[a]	[aa]	-a
Imperfective	-i	[ai]	[i]	[ii]	-i
Irrealis	[*]-u	[a]-tu	[i]-tu	[ai]-tu	-tu
Terminative	-(l)a	[a]-la	[i]-la	[ai]-la	-la
Inceptive	[n]-ae	[a]-nae	[i]-nae	[a]-nae	-nae
Concurrent	[*]-a	[a]-k	[a]-k	[a]-k	-a
Provocative	-(w)e	[u]-e	[i]-we	[au]-e	-we

Table 3: Inflections for the bases for the different stems. Square brackets indicate changes to the final sounds of the stem. [\*] indicates fortition. Parentheses indicate a sound which is only included if phonotactically allowed.

For short stems, some fortitions occur, marked by [\*] in the table above: With consonant clusters, the liquid is dropped. Fricatives turn into corresponding plosive or affricate. Unaspirated plosives or affricates are aspirated (g turns into h). Nasals, aspirated consonants and /h/ remain unaffected.