

Text

Kirsaksiya, hassusar-ez pit sec, ninivip k̄astecac tenizzar sec, nassui-ez nas-suizar ot sec, ta s̄asamsecik kaspeya ker-im-t̄e rami: yifat-ez s̄asamik t̄aspaya u t̄esaya im-Aykasaya pit-t̄e yatas-im-ebar v̄ecihakzar. Ākasnat-t̄e s̄asamsecik Aykasaya, tart̄e-im há atki ti, u metka-im tusta ató t̄or atavará, u consa-im ocza k̄asá k̄astatv̄ip hakra-t̄e kaḡasaya-im-t̄e Kirsaksiya ahatrata-im-ah yatassuizar tustazar. Egi apsat-ah huhi rasketik taratosya otv̄ip, su tart̄enat-t̄e s̄asam̄a amazzá, sekin ossat-ez s̄asamik ākasya pit-t̄e.

How To Use

Use the table of contents to navigate to the section you need. The phonology section explains some sounds (useful for pronouncing the names) and phonological processes. The morphology section explains marking for nouns, verbs, and other word classes. The syntax section explains word order, movement, and fronting. The lexicon is at the end, with a list of every word used in the text (including some definitions that are not used). This is a grammar sketch, so it's intentionally brief in some places. However, if anything isn't explained well, please let me know!

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Phonology

Consonants

There are 13 consonant phonemes, although there are other phones that occur as the result of morphological processes.

	Labial	Alveolar	Sibilant	Velar
Stop	p	t	ts <c>	k
Fricative	f		s	x <h>
Nasal	m	n	nz <z>	
Approximant	w <v>		ɹ <r>	j <y>

Table 1: Consonant inventory

Voicing Nasal and stop clusters allophonically become voiced stops, reflected in the orthography as <b d z g>. These clusters assimilate in place to the stop. Clusters where the nasal is the onset of a syllable, not a coda, do not assimilate.

Affrication Alveolar plosive and fricative clusters allophonically become affricates, reflected in the orthography. Cross-syllable /ts/, /tf/, and /tx/ clusters all neutralize to [tʃ], written as <c>. The /tnz/ cluster likewise affricates, but is realized as [tʃ:], written as <cz>. This cluster is notoriously hard for non-native speakers to pronounce and is often used as a shibboleth.

Assibilation Fricative clusters with the sibilants /s nz/ become assibilated, surfacing as [s: ʒ:]. Orthographically, these clusters are written as <ss zz>.

Vowels

There are 8 vowel phonemes, although only three distinctions are made in unstressed syllables.

	Front	Mid	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e ě <ĕ>	(ə ẽ)	o ȳ <ȳ>
Low		a ă <ā>	

Table 2: Vowel inventory

Vowel Neutralization Mid and low vowels /e a o/ and their nasal counterparts are reduced to [ə ə̃] in unstressed syllables. Schwa is not phonemic, but neutralization is common. The surface form is typically written <a> even when representing underlying /e o/. Dictionaries typically denote the underlying form, or *shadow vowel*, as **e nbm.** or **o nbm.**, an abbreviation of **nabami** ‘shadowy.’ In speech, the underlying vowel becomes evident when stress is shifted due to morphological processes.

Morphology

Nouns

Nouns are morphologically marked for deixis and number.

Deixis Nominal deixis has a variety of uses, including evidentiality, distance, familiarity, and topicality. Verbs and adjectives exhibit agreement for deictic reference. There are three deictic categories, **generic**, **proximal**, or **distal**.

Generic The unmarked or dictionary form of a noun is used when the noun is widely understood or well-known, for immaterial referents that cannot be deictically located, or if evidence of the referent is not known. If direct or reported evidence exists, it's felicitous or questionably grammatical to use unmarked form.

Proximal The proximal form of a noun is used when the speaker is certain, nearby, or familiar with the noun. It can also be used for the conversational topic. This form most commonly denotes direct evidence, meaning the speaker has personal experience with the marked NP. It is marked with the suffix **-ya** or **-va**, which also shifts stress to the ultimate syllable of the root.

Distal The distal form of a noun is used when the speaker is uncertain, far, or unfamiliar with the noun. It can also be used for the conversational focus. This form typically denotes indirect evidence, including inference, meaning the speaker has heard of or can make an educated guess about the existence of the marked NP. Reported deixis is marked by shifting stress to the ultimate syllable of the word.

Number Plurality is indicated through the suffix **-zar**, which also shifts stress to the ultimate syllable of the root. Plural marking precedes deictic marking, so the suffix **-zar** is treated as part of the root. When number is specified with a numeral, the noun is not marked for plurality.

Verbs

Finite verbs are morphologically marked for polypersonal and deictic agreement. Non-finite verbs appear in either participle form or as an adjunct with a preposition.

Polypersonal Agreement Transitive verbs exhibit polypersonal agreement, but intransitive verbs don't mark for person agreement at all. Below are some of the polypersonal agreement markers that may be used in the text.

		Patient		
		1	2	3
Agent	1	-	-taf	-sec
	2	-pat	-	-sec
	3	-tat	-saf	-sec

Table 3: Person agreement

Deictic agreement Verbs agreeing with distal form take the suffix **-q**, while verbs agreeing with the proximal form take the suffix **-ik**. Both suffixes shift stress.

Participle The participle is formed with the suffix **-vip**. The primary use of the participle is converbial, expressing actions that occur simultaneously. Typically, verbs of motion remain finite while verbs of manner become converbial. Many auxiliary verbs use the converbial form to demote the semantic verb. The participle is also used to form verbal adjectives.

Auxiliary Verbs

Auxiliary verbs are used to convey aspect, modality, and voice. These verbs have a variety of lexical meanings. Auxiliary verbs can also be viewed as forming periphrastic expressions, since the auxiliary still has other, semantic meanings. In auxiliary constructions, the auxiliary bears all finite marking, and the semantic verbs are demoted to adjuncts.

Perfective The perfective auxiliary **ot** 'be' is used for actions that occurred at a single point in time. Its semantic verb is demoted to adjunct with the preposition **te**. The usage of this form generally conveys the event time was in the past, but it can be used for current or future events as well.

Mediopassive The passive auxiliary **pit** 'hold' is used to change the valency of the verb by demoting the agent and promoting the object. Its semantic verb is demoted to adjunct with the preposition **ez**.

Irrealis The irrealis auxiliary **sesam** 'say' is used to express actions that are not yet or may not be realized or happening. It can express desire, doubt, or conditionality. Its semantic verb is demoted to adjunct with the preposition **te**. The usage of this form generally conveys the event time is in the future, but it can be used for current or past events as well.

Negation The negative auxiliary **reskat** is used to express negation. Its semantic verb is put in participle form.

Focus-shifting **Ot** can also be used to allow a verb phrase to become the focus. Syntactically, a finite verb must always be second position, which prevents them from being fronted for focus. The auxiliary **ot** can be used as a dummy finite verb, allowing the semantic verb to shift position. The semantic verb is put in participle form.

There are more auxiliary verbs than those listed here, and not all auxiliaries listed here are used in the text.

Other Morphemes

There are three other types of morphemes found in the text.

Clitics Clitics are distinguished from suffixes by the stress pattern of the head they bind to. Suffixes shift stress to the preceding syllable, maintaining the penultimate stress of the head. Clitics, on the other hand, do not cause stress shifts. Most prepositions and the possessive marker **im** are clitics, typically binding to the head noun. The possessive marker **im** is different; it can

occasionally bind to the possessor noun, not the possessed noun, if the NP being possessed is conjoined with **u** or **tqr**.

Interjections Interjections are particles that convey discourse-relevant information. Interjections are distinguished from other lexical classes by their lack of movement; they are required to be the first word in an utterance.

Adjectives Most adjectives are derived from nouns and are therefore morphologically similar. However, true adjectives differ from nouns because they cannot be one of the arguments of a finite verb, whereas nouns can be. Although adjectives are not bound to their head NP, they cannot exist independently.

Syntax

Phrases

Phrasal elements are typically head first, so nouns precede their modifiers. However, clitics are usually in postposition (furthermore, since clitics are bound, they must be pied-piped when movement occurs). Conjunctions and coordinators typically appear before the noun they are conjoining; most constructions use a single conjunction, but verbal conjunction requires that both elements be marked.

Clauses

The base-generated word order is SVO, but this order rarely surfaces. The finite verb must always be in second position, and adjuncts typically come after core arguments, so a common word order in declarative sentences is SAuxOV. More often, however, the order of elements in the clause is governed by deictic reference and focus.

Focus The most proximal, most newsworthy information is placed before the finite verb. More focal arguments and adjuncts are prioritized, but when two are equally newsworthy, the more proximal or evident is fronted. In practice, this means that the first argument or adjunct in an utterance is its focus.

Fronting Hierarchy The most likely NPs to be fronted are proximal or experiential NPs, followed by distal or reported NPs. Pragmatically speaking, generic or unmarked NPs are rarely newsworthy, and thus are rarely in first position. Adjuncts (typically semantic verbs) are also likely to be fronted, which serves as a form of emphasis.

Verb Movement If an auxiliary verb is present in the utterance, then it bears all inflection and is placed in V2 position. The semantic verb phrase is treated as a kind of adjunct and thus can be fronted based on its newsworthiness (it cannot be fronted based on proximity since adjunct VPs are not diectically marked).

Lexicon

ah • *prep.* • at, on top of, on (some time)

ahatrata • *noun* • something that's very hot; anger, rage; (sci.) summer solstice

apsat • *noun* • place, point; (meta.) timely, on time;

atki • *noun* • part, piece; plank or brick (of a fence or wall); (math) denominator

conso • *noun* • counting word for adult people

ebar • *prep.* • underneath

egi • *intj.* • just, only (a few of...); conveying disappointment or failure

emas • *noun* • land, property; (sci.) intellectual property

eta (*o nbm.*) • *noun* • grain (referring to the class of crop); **atavara** beer, alcoholic beverage

ez • *prep.* • in, inside; among, surrounded by

ha • *adj.* • one; specific

hakra • *noun* • battle, skirmish; (pl.) conflict, campaign; (pl. idiom.) semester (of school)

huhi • *adj.* • fast, quick; smart; accurate

im • *prep.* • of; marking a possessed noun

kaspe • *noun* • legal document, contract; declaration, decree (esp. royal); (slang) stuffy person, someone who is boring

kąsa • *noun* • soldier; **kagąsa** army, battalion;

kęstat (*e nbm.*) • *verb* • to lead (smne.); **kęstat tę (sat)** to train for smth.

ker • *noun* • thickness, fat; large thing; (idiom.) conveying movement through or between

Kirsaksi • *name* • male given name

metka (*o nbm.*) • *noun* • bowl, basket, vessel, rounded semi-circle hollow container; counting word for agricultural crops (and by extension animals to be consumed)

nassui • *noun* • someone adorned by jewelry; king, ruler

nini • *verb* • to giggle, to act childish (not pejorative); to be wholesome, pure; to be divine, holy (esp. when in a leadership role)

ocza (*e nbm.*) • *adj.* • two

qkas • *noun* • payment; price; **ąkasnat** to be made to pay, to be charged; to tribute, to tithe, to donate (for political purposes)

ossat • *verb* • to increase; to grow (personally, intellectually); to encourage; to cheer for

ot • *verb* • to be; (aux.) perfective aspect, demoting with **te**; (aux.) dummy verb, demoting as participle

pit • *verb* • to have; to hold; (aux.) mediopassive voice, demoting with **ez**; **pit tē** to take from smne.

husar (*o nbm.*) • *verb* • to shout (at someone); to praise, to compliment; **husar sat** to shout out loud; **hassusar** to exalt, to shower with praise

reskat (*e nbm.*) • *verb* • (aux.) negation, demoting as participle

sec • *pron.* • he, she, it, they; (arch.) relative pronoun

sekin • *conj.* • and

şesam • *verb* • to speak; to say smth.; to want, desire; (aux.) irrealis mood (usually more certain-tative than subjunctive); **şesam tē (sat)** to speak up, to stand up for smth.

su • *conj.* • and

ta • *intj.* • yes! indeed!; conveying reaffirmation; reemphasizing adjuncts or arguments

taspa • *noun* • sea; (idiom.) part of a fixed expression meaning kingdom

taretas (*o nbm.*) • *noun* • marketplace, bazaar; (idiom.) commodity, good

tē • *prep.* • movement toward or away from; for; from; to; around

tēsa • *noun* • hair line, brow, forehead; shore; (idiom.) close to, near; (idiom.) part of a fixed expression meaning kingdom

tenis • *noun* • citizen, person of a nation; store patron, customer

tertā (*e nbm.*) • *noun* • gold; the color yellow; (adj.) valuable; (adj. slang) cool; **tartēnat** to be shaken down, to be ransacked, to be looted

ti • *adj.* • eight

tqr • *conj.* • or (inclusive)

tusta (*e nbm.*) • *adj.* • many, each

u • *conj.* • and

vācihak • *noun* • tactic, strategy (esp. in war); schedule, daily calendar

yifat • *verb* • punish

yatas • *noun* • sun; (idiom.) cause, reason, motivation; **yatassui** (pl.) year