
Varta Avina

The *Kavinan* language

uruwi

Retami-varta hee
A complete grammar

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2

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1 | Phonology

1.1 | Consonants and vowels

The Kavinan language uses the following phonemes:

Table 1.1: The consonants of Kavinan.

| | Bilabial | Alveolar | Palatal | Velar | Glottal |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------|---------|-------|---------|
| Nasal | m | nh / η / n | | | |
| Plosive | p | t | | k | |
| Fricative | v / β / | s | | | h |
| Approximant | | | j | | |
| Trill | | r | | | |

Table 1.2: The vowels of Kavinan.

| | Front | Central | Back |
|------|-------|---------|------|
| High | i | | u |
| Mid | e | | o |
| Low | | a | |

1.2 | Phonotactics

A syllable comprises of:

- an optional consonant,
- a vowel,
- and one of /r s n/,

as long as the first two items are not **/ti/*.

1.3 | Allophony

/h/ becomes [x] after a consonant.

/n/ becomes [ŋ] before /h k/.

2 | Syntax

In this chapter, we look at the structure of the whole sentence.

2.1 | Basic word order

Kavinan uses SVO order. Since it does not have any cases, this word order is strict. None of the items may be omitted, other than O from intransitive verbs.

2.2 | Modifiers

Modifiers follow what they modify.

2.3 | Interjections and vocatives

They appear at the beginning of the sentence.

2.4 | Questions

Binary questions are asked by raising the intonation at the beginning of a sentence.

Wh-questions use the pronoun <kaan> *what, who* &c., with no change in word order. As with binary questions, the intonation is raised at the beginning of a sentence.

3 | Nouns

Nouns are inflected only for number. There are three main noun classes.

3.1 | 1st declension

First-declension nouns end with <-a>.

Table 3.1: Declension of <varta> *language*

| | | |
|----------|----|-------|
| Singular | -a | varta |
| Plural | -o | varto |

Nouns ending in <-aa> are treated specially:

Table 3.2: Declension of <sapaa> *frog*

| | | |
|----------|-----|-------|
| Singular | -aa | sapaa |
| Plural | -oa | sapoa |

3.2 | 2nd declension

Second-declension nouns end with <-u>.

Table 3.3: Declension of <rinu> *door*

| | | |
|----------|----|------|
| Singular | -u | rinu |
| Plural | -e | rine |

3.3 | 3rd declension

Third-declension nouns can end with any consonant or vowel. Those that end with <-u> form a special case.

Table 3.4: Declension of <kasta> *coin*

| | | |
|----------|-----|--------|
| Singular | -a | kasta |
| Plural | -ai | kastai |

Table 3.5: Declension of <toate> *internal organ*

| | | |
|----------|-----|--------|
| Singular | -e | toate |
| Plural | -ei | toatei |

3.4 | Nasal mutation

The nasal mutation on nouns changes its role:

- it converts a noun to an associated adjective (e. g. *wood* → *wooden*)
- as an object of preposition, it changes the meaning of the preposition in question
- it converts a pronoun or a proper noun into a genitive

The initial consonant is changed to the following:

3.5 | Pronouns

Personal pronouns are not divided into first, second and third persons as in most languages. Instead, they fall into four categories which exhibit different behaviour depending on whether they occur as the subject or not:

3.5.1 | Bind pronouns

When a bind pronoun is placed at the beginning of a sentence (after any interjections or vocatives), the subject is understood to be possessed by the bind pronoun. The bind pronoun also assumes the subject reference from other pronouns in the same sentence.

In the following example, notice that <sema> refers to <tarkaa>, not <sapaa>.

Tarkaa sapaa minan an sema.
 PR.FAR.BIND frog jump-SG.PAST toward PR.NEAR
 Your frog jumped toward you.

3.6 | Adjectives

Adjectives decline in a similar manner to nouns, although almost all adjectives are of the third declension. They can be inflected in the past tense by prefixing <ta->.

Table 3.6: Declension of <seki> *pebble*

| | | |
|----------|-----|-------|
| Singular | -i | seki |
| Plural | -ii | sekii |

Table 3.7: Declension of <hano> *circle*

| | | |
|----------|-----|-------|
| Singular | -o | hano |
| Plural | -oi | hanoi |

Table 3.8: Declension of <tanevu> *maple*

| | | |
|----------|----|--------|
| Singular | -u | tanevu |
| Plural | -i | tanevi |

Table 3.9: Declension of <panan> *table*

| | | |
|----------|-----|--------|
| Singular | -n | panan |
| Plural | -ni | panani |

| Start | End |
|-------------|-----|
| Ø t s r j n | n |
| p v m | m |
| k | Ø |
| h nh | nh |

Table 3.10: Pronoun persons and their functions.

| Person | Role in subject (or bind) | Role in other |
|---------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Near | The speaker. | The subject of the sentence. |
| Far | The listener. | If the subject is the speaker, then the listener. Otherwise, the speaker. |
| Other | A third entity. | An entity that is neither the speaker, the listener or the subject. |
| Generic | A generic entity (akin to “one”). | |

Table 3.11: Personal pronouns.

| | Singular | Plural |
|---------|----------|--------|
| Near | sema | semai |
| Far | tarka | tarko |
| Other | kana | kanar |
| Generic | iuve | iuvei |

Table 3.12: Bind pronouns.

| | Singular | Plural |
|---------|----------|--------|
| Near | semaa | semaja |
| Far | tarkaa | tarkoa |
| Other | kanaa | kanara |
| Generic | iuvee | iuveja |

4 | Verbs

Verbs are conjugated for the number of the subject, tense and antipassivity. There are three conjugation schemes:

4.1 | 1st conjugation

First-conjugation verbs end in <-i> and are always transitive.

Table 4.1: Conjugation of <kahii> *open*

| | Nonpast | Past |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| Singular | kahii | kahir |
| Plural | kahia | kahina |
| Intransitive | | |
| Singular | kahin | kahirin |
| Plural | kahian | kahinen |

The antipassive forms are used when the direct object is absent in a transitive verb.

4.2 | 2nd conjugation

Second-conjugation verbs end in <-mi> and may be either transitive or intransitive.

Table 4.2: Conjugation of <temi> *hunt*

| | Nonpast | Past |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| Singular | temi | ten |
| Plural | tenu | tenu |
| Intransitive | | |
| Singular | temin | tenen |
| Plural | tenun | tenunen |

4.3 | 3rd conjugation

Third-conjugation verbs end in <-ki> and are always intransitive.

Table 4.3: Conjugation of <haki> fly

| | Nonpast | Past |
|----------|---------|-------|
| Singular | haki | har |
| Plural | harja | harna |

4.4 | Rii

<rii> be is conjugated irregularly and has no separate antipassive form.

Table 4.4: Conjugation of <rii> be

| | Nonpast | Past |
|----------|---------|------|
| Singular | rii | iri |
| Plural | raa | rina |

4.5 | Other forms of the verb

| Form | Recipe | Description |
|-------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Imperative | tur + <i>nonpast</i> | A command. |
| Infinitive | to + <i>nonpast singular</i> | The noun form of a verb. Can take direct objects or objects of prepositions. Can act as an adjective by mutating the particle to <no>. If modifying <saha> <i>thing</i> , the phrase means “an act of doing X” – e. g. <saha no nakoi> = a killing. |
| Passive | ker + <i>verb</i> | The verb adopts the same tense and number as the base action. |
| Causative | causer + ankai + <i>sentence</i> | Promotes an object of a preposition to a direct object. If the former OP is mutated, then the verb is mutated instead. If there is already a direct object, it becomes the OP of <vus>. |
| Applicative | <i>verb</i> + <i>preposition</i> | |
| Negative | pe + <i>verb</i> + pe | |
| Prohibitive | per + <i>verb</i> + pe | |

5 | Prepositions

Prepositional phrases, like other modifiers, follow what they modify.

Many prepositions change meanings when their objects are nasal-mutated. Typically, the basic form will indicate position, and the nasal-mutated form will indicate direction. Some prepositions experience an irregular mutation.

Table 5.1: List of prepositions.

| | |
|---|---|
| | <an hano> toward the circle |
| <sivi hano> inside the circle | <sivi nhano> into the circle |
| <sivi voru> at night | |
| <toa surna> belonging to the person | <tona surna> (e. g. give) to the person |
| <ke hano> outside the circle, not belonging to the circle | <ke nhano> toward the outside of the circle; (e. g. take) from the circle |
| <hunu hano> on the edge of a circle | <hunu nhano> along the edge of a circle |
| <peku hano> near the circle | <peku nhano> approaching the circle |
| <ina hano> far away from the circle | <ina nhano> away from the circle |
| <kar hanoi> between the circles | <karu nhanoi> into the space between the circles |
| <sivike hano> off the edge of the circle | <sivike nhano> through the circle |
| <vus rinu> on the wall (vertical surface) | <vusu ninu> onto the wall |
| <haka panan> on the table (horizontal surface) | <haka manan> onto the table |
| <varu hano> above the circle | <varu nhano> to above the circle |
| <meru nhano> below the circle | <meru nhano> to below the circle |
| | <varusivike nhano> over the circle |
| | <merusivike nhano> under the circle |
| <jula ransu> with a vine attached | <jula nansu> with a vine attaching |
| <hanu hano> around the circle (static) | <hanu nhano> around the circle (dynamic) |
| | <ma moru> until the night |
| <ma voru> during the night | <masivike moru> through the night, all night |
| <ne hano> by the circle (used in passive constructions) | |
| <irai hano> like the circle | |
| <tennu hano> on behalf of the circle | |
| <ras hano> because of the circle | |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ⟨paka panan⟩ under the table | ⟨paka manan⟩ to under the table, not concerning the table |
| ⟨nuo hano⟩ about (topic) the circle | |

6 | Conjunctions and dependent clauses

They are different depending on whether non-predicates or predicates are tied.

Table 6.1: Conjunctions.

| | Non-predicates | Predicates |
|-------------|----------------|------------|
| X and Y | X o Y | X varan Y |
| X or Y | X vi Y | X veuro Y |
| X xor Y | X vae Y | X rihan Y |
| X but not Y | X he nY | X ipe Y |

Clauses use a different set of conjunctions:

Table 6.2: Clausal ties.

| Tie | Definition |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| nerta ... nen ... | ... and ... |
| tuusi ... tuusi ... | ... or ... |
| nerta ... kan ... | ... but ... |
| nerta ... haasa ... | ... but not ... |
| siivan ... sivr ... | when ..., ... |
| irva ... hevi ... | because ..., ... |
| vin ... vin ... | in order to ..., ... |
| suu ... suu ... | if ..., then ... |

6.1 | Dependent clauses

Dependent clauses are done using the infinitive form. That is, relative clauses are made by modifying the antecedent with a nasal-mutated infinitive:

surna no nakor terne
person ADJ\INF cut-PAST leaf-PL
the person who cut leaves

Note that only the subject can be relativised. Hence it is necessary to use the passive or applicative form of a verb:

ana no ker nai ne surno

water ADJ\INF PASS drink by person-PL
 the water that the people drink

vansa no ker nevei sivi ne kana
 cave ADJ\INF PASS pray inside by PR.OTHER
 the cave in which he prays

Content clauses, thus, are infinitives, possibly in the passive or applicative form, or with objects.

7 | Numbers

Kavinan uses a base-14 system with special words for base 7. The following are the words for the first 14 natural numbers:

Table 7.1: First 14 natural numbers.

| # (10) | # (14) | |
|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 | 1 | kare |
| 2 | 2 | tarpa |
| 3 | 3 | hapan |
| 4 | 4 | pumo |
| 5 | 5 | jata |
| 6 | 6 | suro |
| 7 | 7 | ekin |
| 8 | 8 | akis |
| 9 | 9 | sisne |
| 10 | A | kursu |
| 11 | B | tortu |
| 12 | C | juron |
| 13 | D | mantu |
| 14 | 10 | sanpa |

The following are the multiples of 7 up to $182 = 13 \cdot 14$:

Table 7.2: Multiples of 7.

| # (10) | # (14) | |
|--------|--------|----------|
| 7 | 7 | ekin |
| 14 | 10 | sanpa |
| 21 | 17 | saporna |
| 28 | 20 | tarpasan |
| 35 | 27 | hapekin |
| 42 | 30 | hapasan |
| 49 | 37 | pumekin |
| 56 | 40 | pumosan |
| 63 | 47 | jatekin |
| 70 | 50 | jatasan |
| 77 | 57 | surekin |

| # (10) | # (14) | |
|--------|--------|------------|
| 84 | 60 | surosan |
| 91 | 67 | surpona |
| 98 | 70 | juhorna |
| 105 | 77 | juhorpo |
| 112 | 80 | akisan |
| 119 | 87 | tasane kin |
| 126 | 90 | juhotasan |
| 133 | 97 | havanekin |
| 140 | A0 | juhohavan |
| 147 | A7 | puvanekin |
| 154 | B0 | juhopuvan |
| 161 | B7 | jasane kin |
| 168 | C0 | juhojasan |
| 175 | C7 | jasanorpo |
| 182 | D0 | junahesan |

Thus, numerals of the form $a \cdot 14 + b$, with $1 \leq a \leq 12$ and $0 \leq b < 14$, are formed as such:

Table 7.3: Rules for $a \cdot 14 + b$.

| b | |
|-----|-------------------------------|
| 0 | $(a \cdot 14)$ |
| 1 | $(a \cdot 14)$ o kare |
| 2 | $(a \cdot 14)$ o tarpa |
| 3 | $(a \cdot 14)$ o hapan |
| 4 | $(a \cdot 14)$ o pumo |
| 5 | $(a \cdot 14)$ o jata |
| 6 | $(a \cdot 14 + 7)$ he are |
| 7 | $(a \cdot 14 + 7)$ |
| 8 | $(a \cdot 14 + 7)$ o kare |
| 9 | $(a \cdot 14 + 7)$ o tarpa |
| 10 | $(a \cdot 14 + 7)$ o hapan |
| 11 | $(a \cdot 14 + 14)$ he nhapan |
| 12 | $(a \cdot 14 + 14)$ he narpa |
| 13 | $(a \cdot 14 + 14)$ he are |

The words for $183 \leq n \leq 196$ are formed irregularly:

Table 7.4: Terms for $183 \leq n \leq 196$.

| # (10) | # (14) | |
|--------|--------|-------------------|
| 183 | D1 | junaha he mantu |
| 184 | D2 | junahesan o tarpa |
| 185 | D3 | junaha he nortu |
| 186 | D4 | junaha he ursu |
| 187 | D5 | junaha he nisne |
| 188 | D6 | junaha he nakis |
| 189 | D7 | junaha he nekin |

| # (10) | # (14) | |
|--------|--------|-------------------|
| 190 | D8 | junaha he nuro |
| 191 | D9 | junaha he nata |
| 192 | DA | junaha he mumo |
| 193 | DB | junahesan o tortu |
| 194 | DC | junaha he narpa |
| 195 | DD | junaha he are |
| 196 | 100 | junaha |

The multiples of 196, up to 14^3 , are as follows:

Table 7.5: Multiples of 196.

| # (10) | # (14) | |
|--------|--------|---------|
| 196 | 100 | junaha |
| 392 | 200 | tarjuu |
| 588 | 300 | hapaju |
| 784 | 400 | pumoju |
| 980 | 500 | jasiju |
| 1176 | 600 | surjuu |
| 1372 | 700 | ekinuu |
| 1568 | 800 | akisiju |
| 1764 | 900 | sisneju |
| 1960 | A00 | kursuju |
| 2156 | B00 | tortaju |
| 2352 | C00 | juronuu |
| 2548 | D00 | mantaju |
| 2744 | 1000 | mahervu |

Thus, a number $a \times 196 + b$ is expressed as $\langle a \times 196 \text{ o } b \rangle$, with the following exceptions:

Table 7.6: Terms for $14^3 - 14 \leq n \leq 14^3 - 1$.

| # (10) | # (14) | |
|--------|--------|--------------------------|
| 2730 | DD0 | mahervu he nanpa |
| 2731 | DD1 | mahervu he mantu |
| 2732 | DD2 | mahervu he nanpa o juron |
| 2733 | DD3 | mahervu he nortu |
| 2734 | DD4 | mahervu he ursu |
| 2735 | DD5 | mahervu he nisne |
| 2736 | DD6 | mahervu he nakis |
| 2737 | DD7 | mahervu he nekin |
| 2738 | DD8 | mahervu he nuro |
| 2739 | DD9 | mahervu he nata |
| 2740 | DDA | mahervu he mumo |
| 2741 | ddb | mahervu he nanpa o tortu |
| 2742 | DDC | mahervu he narpa |
| 2743 | DDD | mahervu he are |

8 | Names

Kavinan distinguishes *nominal* and *non-nominal* names. Nominal names include the following:

- native surnames
- some native place names
- names of native holidays

Non-nominal names include the following:

- given names
- all foreign names

The particle <voo> (or <moo> with nasal mutation) is often used before names.

Table 8.1: Usage in situations where names are employed.

| Role of name | Native | Non-native |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Vocative | As-is | |
| Object of <rii> | As-is | As-is and drop verb |
| Object of preposition | As-is | Use <voo> |
| All other cases | Use <voo> | |

A | Dictionary

| a

akanu *n3* center, middle
 akii *v1* be understood by
 ana *n1* water
 ankai *v1* cause
 asami *v2i* move, go
 asuva *n1* pile, heap

| e

evuki *v3* rise (sun)

| h

haa *intj* hey, hi nuvoi haa greet
 hakanernui *v1* express, write
 haki *v3* fly
 haki *v3* feel
 haki *a3* full
 hamii *v1* accept, welcome to
 hamii welcome!
 hana *a1* this
 hanami *v2i* spin, turn
 hano *n3* circle, ring, sigil
 harava *n3* mountain
 harsami *v2t* know (a thing)
 havi *a3* equal
 havu *n3* land
 hee *a3* all, completely always
 singular
 heeke *a3* again, repeated
 heraki *v3* sleep

hertu *n2* afternoon, daytime
 hisiki *v3* be scared
 huve *v3* dry

| i

inanasami *v2i* travel
 iveko *a3* old

| k

kaan *n3* what, who, etc, something,
 anything
 kaara *n1* seed
 kaha *n1* shop, store
 kahei *v1* sell
 kahii *v1* open
 kajos *n3* food, meal
 kajoshaki *a3* fat
 kajumi *v2t* hope
 kana *n3* island
 kane *a3* large
 kapuu *n1* sun
 kasta *n3* coin
 kaume *n3* place
 kee *intj* well
 keni *n3* reason
 kerii *v1* receive
 keron *n3* box
 keru *n3* when
 keu *a2* that, last (day, night, time,
 etc)
 kunehu *n3* torture

| m

maje *a3* very, much, many precede what it modifies
 matei *v1* hate, be disgusted by, reject
 mavii *v1* take away
 minami *v2i* step, jump
 muvaki *v3* drown, set (sun)

| n

nai *v1* drink
 naimi *v2t* concern, worry
 nakoi *v1* kill, cut
 nakovimi *n3* weapon
 nakumi *v2i* die
 nana *n3* grandparent
 narti *n3* animal
 narumu *a2* perhaps, probably, maybe
 naune *n3* knee
 navaka *n1* a monster with barbed antlers that wears snakes as bracelets
 navemi *v2t* matter, have an impact, bother
 nei *v1* become
 neiru *n2* shrub, bed
 nereu *v1* see
 nevei *v1* pray to
 noomi *v2* end
 nuvoi *v1* say, speak nuvoi haa greet sema pe nuvor kaan I didn't say anything; never mind

| p

paa *n1* father
 panai *v1* owe, have to
 panan *n3* table
 panuku *n2* accident, misfortune
 pina *n1* step, jump

| r

raihi *n3* anniversary, birthday
 rakami *v2t* know (a person)
 ankai X rakami Y introduce Y to X

ranai *v1* thank, bless, wish good luck to ranai thanks, thank you
 ransu *n2* vine, tentacle
 ranu *a3* happy
 reimi *v2t* taste like
 retami *v2t* describe
 rinu *n2* door
 rusa *a1* only
 ruu *v3* time

| s

saha *n3* thing
 sakami *v2i* ride
 sankur *n3* candy, sweet food
 santa *a3* enjoyable, wet
 sapaa *n1* frog
 sapi *n3* tomorrow
 sarita *n1* evening, night
 sarkii *v1* meet (a person) sema
 sarkii tarka see you soon
 satanu *n2* sweat
 sei *v1* try, attempt
 seki *n3* pebble
 siimi *v2t* pile up something, lay down
 sirmi *v2t* befriend
 sukami *v2t* wash
 sunako *n3* knife
 surirana *n1* everyone
 surna *n1* person
 suu *a2* more, most
 suumi *v2t* start, begin

| t

tanevu *n3* maple
 taremi *v2t* sense, feel
 tarun *a3* wise
 tasmi *v2i* stretch, span, reach
 tasmiana *n1* sea
 tekui *v1* shoot with a bow
 temi *v2t* hunt
 ternu *n2* leaf
 tervu *n3* tree
 toate *n3* internal organ

u

uneki v3 fight, play a sport
 urai a3 unpleasant

v

vaaki v3 laugh
 vanru n2 morning
 vansa n1 cave
 vante n3 ivy
 varai v1 construct, make
 varmi v2t find

varta n1 language
 vasemi v2i apologise to vasemi
 sorry!
 venemi v2t sympathise with
 venpe a3 safe
 vesami v2t hear
 vesnai v1 listen, ask
 vimi n3 tool
 virii v1 want, would like
 voru n3 night
 vurto n3 (block of) salt
 vuu n2 mother