



AYU LANGUAGE ALMANAC

Version 4.5.0



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CANIS
Poland

I TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Table of contents.....	I
2	Foreword. About the language.....	2
3	Major changes.....	3
4	Related languages.....	3
5	Fictional worlds of Ayu.....	4
5.1	Tangia.....	4
6	Pronunciation.....	6
6.1	Vowels.....	6
6.2	Consonants.....	7
6.3	Reduction.....	8
6.4	Syllable stress.....	9
7	Writing systems.....	10
7.1	Greek standard.....	10
7.2	Coptic standard.....	11
7.3	Roman standard.....	12
7.4	Tangian cuneiform standard.....	13
7.4.1	Ideograms and logograms.....	14
7.4.2	Counting. Numeral system.....	15
7.4.3	Examples.....	16
7.4.4	Fonts.....	17
7.5	Other standards.....	17
8	Grammar.....	18
8.1	Morphosyntactic alignment.....	20
8.2	Past events.....	20
8.3	Current and future events.....	21
8.4	Remaining grammatical markers.....	22
8.4.1	Plural marker.....	22
8.4.2	Feminine gender marker.....	22
8.4.3	Pronouns, possessives and comitatives.....	23
8.5	Merging of markers.....	23

2 FOREWORD. ABOUT THE LANGUAGE

I designed the Ayu language in 2010. Before that time, I had a number of fictional languages designed, almost all of them poorly, with the exception of the Ahtialan language, which I started at age seven, in 1996. The Ahtialan language was a nifty design, unique, but overcomplicated. As years went on, I got bored with conlanging, and with my rising artistic, literary and ultimately mathematic skills, my attention shifted to worldbuilding. As I still needed fictional languages, especially later in 2016 with the dawn of the fictional world of Kyon, started by me, but ran by multiple people, and the fictional islandic country of Tangia that I was supposed to develop and describe there, I needed a fictional language that would not only do the job, but also not be a hinderance.

Ayu was initially supposed to be the opposite of Ahtialan in its very low complexity and was supposed to be pretty. In my view, it did that. I started with phonetics and took advantage in that I noticed that some very characteristic Greek words such as «ΝΕΥΡΟ-», «ΚΑΡΔΙΑ », «ΦΥΛΑΚΕΣ», «ΛΕΥΚΟΣ» could be easily made unique by erasure of the characteristic “s” sound that Greek has even three letters for («Σ», «Σ» AND «ς») and which even would perfectly combine with a Polynesian phonetic inventory, such as Fiji, Maori or Hawaii, which is some of the simplest in the universe. Hawaii is surprising the world by not having the sound /s/ at all. Ayu mirrored that characteristic, took the Polynesian glottal stop, took the Polynesian vowel chains (“ea”, “oa”, “ua”, etc.), but wrote it in the Greek and Coptic alphabets, which gave rise to its unique look.

First version of Ayu was peculiar. It did not allow the phoneme /e/ to appear outside of diphthongs and its phonetic inventory was too poor to ensure memorability. Words were longer than needed. Language was isolating, with strict SVO order. The language had power stress system (such as in English or Russian) and different syllables could be stressed.

In 2013, version “2” appeared, because the aforementioned proved unreliable. First, syllable stress was stabilised to initial position, making it easier to look up words in Ayu dictionary, as «Α» and «Ά» were, for a computer, no longer two letters. It turned from power stress to pitch stress. Phoneme /e/ could now be used independently. New consonantal phonemes appeared: /n/ and /ʎ/, language no longer shied away from /w/, and /ʎ/ disappeared, merging with /ʎ/. Consonant cluster /nx/ changed into /nn/.

In 2017, Kyon was designed, and within it, the country of Tangia where Ayu was supposed to be used. Work on that fictional world boosted the version to “3”. Translations and texts appeared, which greatly enriched vocabulary, but also pointed out at structural challenges of an undeveloped grammar. This first manifested itself when language strongly shifted from its characteristic isolating morphological behaviour towards agglutination. Pronouns were distinguished by genders (male, female, neuter), useful Turkic-like possessive case, as well as comitative case, appeared.

Year 2020 showed the highest amount of effort put into Kyon, when the main series of Polish wiki articles about Tangia were completed¹ with unprecedented amount of detail, including some crude mathematical simulations. It also included texts. As more grammatical functions were needed, more were developed. When Ayu received its own unique cuneiform alphabet to write on clay and its grammar was enriched by split ergativity and Ahtialan-derived high and low priority present tense constructions, it could no longer be called version three, so version “4” was developed.

¹ <https://jezykotw.webd.pl/wiki/Tangia>

3 MAJOR CHANGES

Version 1 was the most archaic and least used.

Version 2 introduced changes to phonetic system, by allowing separate /e/ among others.

Version 3 introduced textual translations and declension.

Version 4 introduced morphosyntactic markers for past and present-future tenses and cuneiform abugida.

4 RELATED LANGUAGES

The only active related language to Ayu is, at the moment, Mahan («MAĀN ĀTIANEÓ» or «MAĀN ĀAK») which retained isolating structure and variable pitch stress, many archaic Ayu features, is written in polytonic (ancient) Greek alphabet. Both have common origins. Mahan was designed in 2012 under codename “object seventeen”. Primary difference is that Ayu strongly developed agglutinatively, while Mahan strongly developed in its isolating manner.

They developed different features. For example, the Ayu language makes distinction between high and low priority present tenses, where high priority one demands action or highlights importance to the speaker, while low priority present tense simply informs of something. Mahan does not have that, but it has a vast array of emotional markers. Compare: «"Υ ΜΑΛ-ΠΑΝΙ» “He finally died” (with loathing), «"Υ ΜÒ-ΠΑΝΙ.» “By some miracle, he died”, «"Υ Υ-ΠΑΝΟ» “It is said it is not good that he died”, «"Υ ΙΑ-ΠΑΝΟ» “He did not want it, but he had to die”. Both languages are split ergative, but where Ayu puts the distinction at past and present-future tenses, Mahan puts the distinction at declaring direct and indirect evidence of described actions.

The Mahan language has no significance in worldbuilding or usage in any fictional stories. Its last major review was in August 2012.

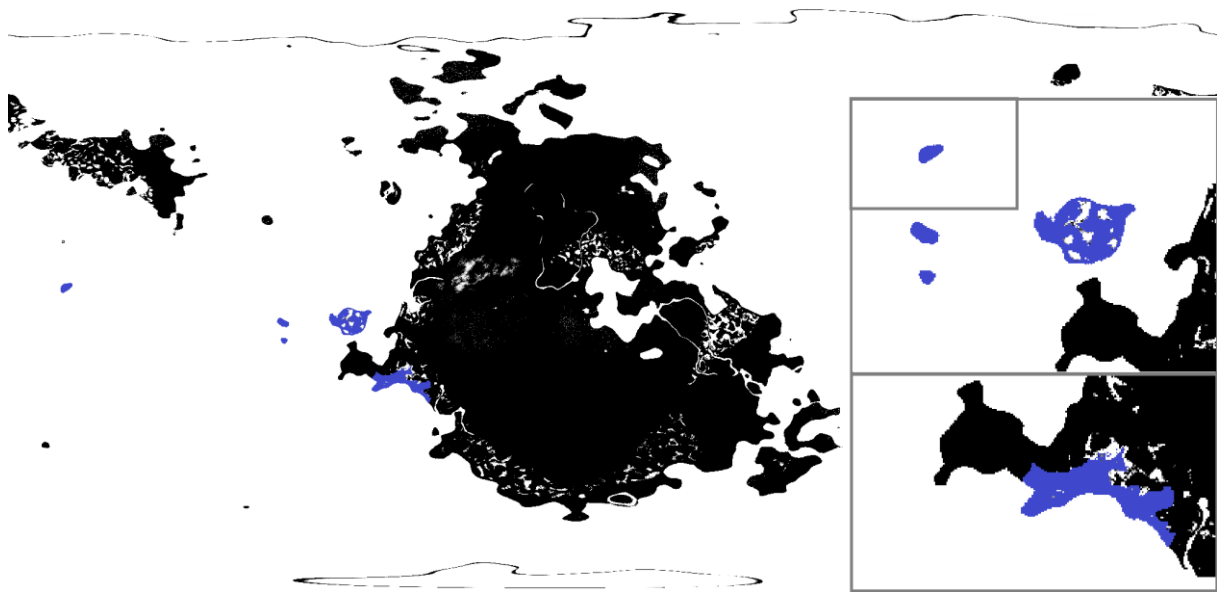
Some relationship with clearly distinct Pinu-Miami language continuum can be claimed. Pinu-Miami also saw usage in early years of Kyon language. For instance, the Miami language used «ma» as definite article, equivalent of English “the”. The oldest versions of Ayu and Mahan also had it («MA»). They were at least five different simple dialects written in Maori Latin alphabet. One of them, Pinu, gave its name to Tangia’s southern neighbour, the Pinu country, on the maps of Kyon.

5 FICTIONAL WORLDS OF AYU

Ayu was used in a number of fictional worlds. It is not associated with one project. It was used in the Aoma world in the state of Nirane, which is a discontinued project. It was also used in project Mavi, where under the name of “Muri” it was used as language of lesser dragons of the Ruby Mountain. It is also a language of Kaeri civilisation in the most recent, but suspended due to lack of experience, world of Ahari. Most of all, it is used for Tangia, a country of Kyon conworld, which is the only one that I am going to further describe here.

5.1 TANGIA

Kyon is an interesting worldbuilding project. Everything happens on a planet with no magic or fictional processes, on a planet with different astrophysical properties, just to simulate what human civilisations would do with their mythologies if the night sky was different. Kyon’s planetary map was carved by, at peak, twelve players, who described their countries on their parts of the globe. Mine was Tangia.



Location of island of Tangia and its colonies: twin islands of Akeira and Hiranea, remote island of Atirai, and continental colony of Buania. Buania was developed by another person, and given to me for development later.

Kyon features a supercontinent and a number of interesting astrophysical properties in agreement with laws of physics. Planet rotates slowly (1 day and 1 night = 44.3 hours, twice as long as on Earth), its year is shorter (136.35 Earth days), and its axial tilt is higher $31^{\circ}18'54''$.³⁶ Because of that first characteristic, the tropical zone is larger than on Earth, encompassing all of Tangia and its colonies. However, because axial tilt is large, thermal equator (band of sunlight cast on the planet) travels far from summer to winter, causing significant shifts of weather patterns even on the equator. Single continent causes wind flow and oceanic currents to always flow west to east (planet rotates backwards), and large oceanic oscillation control whether on Tangia that air blows from the ocean or from the continent.

Moisture brings crops, which are food, which help sustain civilisation dwelling between 12-kilometre high mountain plateaus. Tangia has something of a ring of such mountains in its interior and would use them to transmit messages via Morse code-like system using campfires, mirrors and shutters, until telegraph is invented. This system of rapid light communication connects distant spots on the island, and even on the seas, significantly outperforming courier cavalry if weather was good, creating a network of mid-altitude observatories into an advanced and well-paid system called **Rangfen**, the Light Net.

Politically, Tangia is divided into regions ruled either by a local monarch, or a president elected by aristocracy, or a council of chieftains. They all have one leader, one way or another, and all of them form a State Council which has one extra seat for the Emperor. The Emperor, in the past, was more like the Speaker of the English parliament, but eventually Empress Yul-Yoa Kalia made State Council *her* Council on grounds of a powerful surge of theocratic motion, turning the country into a single-ruler state, to much support of the population.



Tangian flag: Lykaon moon on the blue twilight sky.

Tangia's slogan is «TANFYA XO'YM!», “Tangian night”, meant to mean that its influence is to stretch so far that there would be a night over some Tangian territory at any point. This is, obviously, a blatant reference to the British Empire. And much like it, Tangia is a marine empire.

Tangia is described as a highly developed country, with well developed writing, famed for its optical technology, and discovery of vulcanised rubber – latex tree being native to the island – far before Earth did it. It is a police state, with army permeating through many public offices, where tribal scarification turned to citizen marking. It has an unmatched navy and rather strong, although slightly outdated land army.

As weaknesses, which were numerous, insufficient supply of food and repeating plagues torment its overblown population. The country rapidly burns through its supply of wood to maintain the navy and has to import vast quantities of it, chiefly from its colonies. It employs a ridiculous monetary system with aotai as primary coin and 9 other currency systems, with complicate already complex bureaucracy. The country has polygamy, and has slavery, of which it will be ashamed century later.



Lykaon moon over Tangia. Space Engine program² rendering.

² Universe atlas developed by Russian Vladimir Romanyuk.

6 PRONUNCIATION

Phonetic inventory of Ayu is simple. It features five cardinal vowels and a separate letter for diphthong “ei”. It features only twelve consonants, ten of which appear in the English language, one appears only metalinguistically, and one does not appear in English at all, but is easily replaceable with one that does. Due to high recognition of Spanish language in both Europe and U.S.A. and its high phonetic consistency, I will provide Spanish approximations as well.

6.1 VOWELS

Letter	Sound	English (UK) and Spanish (Madrid) equivalents	Commentary and nuisances
A α	/ä/	EN: A-like sound spelled “u” in “hut” ES: “Casa”	May turn breathy-voiced after /h/. May nasalise after nasal sounds.
E ε	/ε/	EN: “Bed” ES: “Se”	May turn breathy-voiced after /h/. May nasalise after nasal sounds.
H η	/ei/	EN: “Say”, “name” ES: “Rey”	May turn breathy-voiced after /h/. May nasalise after nasal sounds.
I ι	/i/	EN: “Key”, just short ES: “Cinco”	May turn breathy-voiced after /h/. May nasalise after nasal sounds.
O o	/o/	EN: “Hot” ³ ES: “Sóltano”	May turn breathy-voiced after /h/. May nasalise after nasal sounds.
Υ υ	/ʉ/, /w/, /y/	/ʉ/: EN: no equivalent. Closest: “goose”. ES: no equivalent at all. /w/: EN: “water”. ES: no equivalent. /y/: German “über”.	May turn breathy-voiced after /h/. May nasalise after nasal sounds. In preposition «υ», it is pronounced as /i/, /j/. Will turn to /w/ if another vowel follows.

Ayu permits any diphthongs. Most of them are pronounced as one sound after another, but it needs to be noted that diphthongs «ευ» and «αυ» are pronounced somewhere between [œʉ] and [œː].

³ Caution: US English has a different sound here. Use “lord” as reference instead.

6.2 CONSONANTS

Letter	Sound	English (UK) and Spanish (Madrid) equivalents	Commentary and nuisances
Γ γ	/j/, /ɲ/	/j/: EN: “Yell” ES: “Patio” /ɲ/: EN: “Singing” ES: “Domingo”	Does not occur independently. Means /j/ in «γι» and /ɲ/ in «νγ».
Κ κ	/k/	EN: “Key” ES: “Con”	Aspirated if stressed syllable follows. May turn into [c].
Λ λ	/ɫ/	EN: “Well”, known as “dark l” ⁴ ES: No equivalent. See Catalan “altres”	Will turn to /l/ if followed by «i».
Μ μ	/m/	EN: “Mother” ES: “Mirá”	
Ν ν	/n/	EN: “No” ES: “No”	
Π π	/p/	EN: “Parent” ES: “Padre”	Aspirated if stressed syllable follows.
Ρ ρ	/r/ ~ /ɾ/	EN: “There after” ⁵ , known as “rolled R” or “tapped R”. Scottish: “run” ES: “Pero”	Trill is phonemic, but tap is most commonly used, also in transliteration.
Τ τ	/t/	EN: “Stone”. Unaspirated ES: “También”	Aspirated if stressed syllable follows.
Φ φ	/f/	EN: “Father” ES: “Fantasma”	
Χ χ	/h/	No equivalents in EN or ES. Replaceable with “h” in EN “horse” and ES “jaca”. See Ukrainian “ГОЛОС”, Czech “hlava” for correct pronunciation	Depending on region of conworld, it can be /h/. It is designed for regional difference.
'	/ʔ/	No equivalents in EN or ES, but known in both. It is the characteristic abrupt stop in the throat in English “uh-oh” (/ʔaʔəʊ/). Cockney, Scottish and Estuary English: “cat”.	

⁴ Occurs in Received Pronunciation UK English only at end of syllables. Occurs in some American English accents in all positions.

⁵ From widely known accents, occurs in Scottish as standard and in Received Pronunciation between vowels and sometimes initially, where it then is considered posh. Does not occur in American English accents.

6.3 REDUCTION

Ayu from version 4.4 features standardised reduction of vowels and consonants. Those concern joining consonants, vocalic chains and sounds in the most commonly used words.

Word and meaning	Standard (literary) pronunciation	Most common pronunciation
-ΛΥΝ PLURAL MARKER	/l̥ɯn/	[l̥ðũ]
-ΟΥ IN ANY POSITION	/o̥ɯ/	[œɯ]
-ΑΥ, -ΕΥ IN ANY POSITION	/ḁɯ/, /e̥ɯ/	[œ:]
ΜΑ „THE”	/ma/	[mə]
ΦΑΝΓ ΑΠΟΡΙ CITY FANG APORI	/faŋ 'ʔapori/	[fãũ 'ũɯapori] [fãŋ 'gapori]
Νο HIGH PRIORITY MOOD	/no/	[nə]
ΝΥ FUTURE TENSE MARKER	/nɯ/	[ny]
ΝΥ FUTURE TENSE MARKER	/nɯ/	[ny]

The consonant [ɯ] is in common use for reduced linking consonants, but it also often is a result of reduction of end final /n/:

Word and meaning	Standard (literary) pronunciation	Most common pronunciation
ΟΝΑΚΑ „MY FRIEND”	/ʔo'naka/	[ʔəũɯaka]
Νόν „Is”, HIGH PRIORITY MOOD	/non/	[nðũ]

In later times (in case of Kyon, from year 9300 EK), reduction /k/ → [c] became common in some isolated words..

Word and meaning	Standard (literary) pronunciation	Most common pronunciation
ΚΑΟΡΙ LOCAL NAME, KAORI	/'kaori/	['c ^h œ:ri]
ΚΙΥΝΑ LOCAL NAME, KAORI	/'kjuna/	['c ^h yna]

6.4 SYLLABLE STRESS

Syllable stress by standard is initial. Stressed syllable is longer or shorter than unstressed ones. Stressed vowel is pronounced with a higher pitch rather than stronger.

In songs and for emphasis, the stress can be shifted elsewhere. In rare cases, syllable stress that used to be variable and distinguished word meanings, can still do so, such as in «ΆΥΡΑ» “complete” and «ΑΥΡΆ» “fast”.

If a stressed syllable follows /p/, /t/, /k/, then those consonants become aspirated. Examples: «ΠΥΛΥΙ» [pʰɯɫɯi] “Social grace”, «ΤΗΛΑΝ» [tʰejɫan] “Emperor”, «ΚΑ’Ο» [kʰaʔo] “Summer”, «ΟΚÓΜΥ» [ʔo'kʰomɯ] “My crab”, «ΤΟΤΆΝΥ» [to'tʰanɯ] “His master”.

In some dialects, it is initial for nouns and final for verbs, in which cases the stress shifts to initial when the phrase is in negation:

«ΙΑ ΧΑΡΆ ΚÓΜΟ.» „I have a fish.” «ΠΆ ΙΑ ΧΆΡΑ ΚÓΜΟ.» “I don’t have a fish.” «ΙΑ ΜΙΝΑΜÍ.» „I return.”
«ΠΆ ΙΑ ΜÍNΑΜΙ.» “I don’t return.”

7 WRITING SYSTEMS

There are at least four systems used in writing the Ayu language. The most popular is Greek alphabet. The related and very similar Coptic letters are occasionally used for their aesthetic appeal. Latin alphabet is sometimes used for transliteration. In the fictional world of Tangia, specialised cuneiform abugida is used to write the language.

Because all of them have their own rules for orthography, these writing systems are called “standards”.

7.1 GREEK STANDARD

The Greek standard uses the following letters:

/ä/	/o/	/ε/	/i/	/u/	/ei/
Α α	Ο ο	Ε ε	Ι ι	Υ υ	Η η
/œ̃/	/õ/	/œ̃/			
Αυ αυ	Ου ου	Ευ ευ			
/m/	/p/	/n/	/t/	/k/	/ŋ/
Μ μ	Π π	Ν ν	Τ τ	Κ κ	Νγ νγ
/f/	/h/	/j/	/r/	/l/	/w/
Φ φ	Χ χ	Γ γ	Ρ ρ	Λ λ	Υ υ
/ʀ/					
,					
			/h/		
			(Σ σ ζ)		

Texts are written using uppercase letters only. Words are separated by middle dot «·». In place of a question mark, a semicolon is used «?».

Example:

ΜΕΥ·ΝΙ·ΧΟΝ·ΤΙΑ·ΤΗ·Ε·ΡΥΛΥΝ,
 ΧΟ·ΝΕ·ΚΟ·ΜΙΝΑΜΙ·ΦΟ·ΙΛ;
 ΑΝ·ΝΟ·ΤΙΝΥΕ,·ΑΝ·ΜΟ·ΣΥ·ΜΕ!
 ΡΑΚΟ·ΝΑΜΕΛΟ·ΑΦΡΑΝ.

Academic and casual writing usually features normal modern Greek orthography rules. Both lower and uppercase letters are used, question mark replaces semicolon for questions, and text is written with space separating words.

7.2 COPTIC STANDARD

The Coptic standard is often used in place of Greek for its aesthetic appeal. It directly mirrors the standard and letters used with the Greek standard. Font used is “MPH 2B Damase”. It uses the following letters:

/ä/	/o/	/ε/	/i/	/u/	/ei/
Α	Ο	Ε	Ι	Υ	Η
/œ#/	/o#/	/œ#/			
ΑΥ	ΟΥ	ΕΥ			
/m/	/p/	/n/	/t/	/k/	/ŋ/
Μ	Π	Ν	Τ	Κ	ΝΓ
/f/	/h/	/j/	/r/	/l/	/w/
Φ	Χ	ΓΙ	Ρ	Λ	Υ
/ʀ/					
,					
			/h/		
			(C)		

The Coptic style uses identical punctuation rules to Greek standard.

Example:

ΜΕΥ·ΝΙ·ΧΟΝ·ΓΙΑ·ΤΗ·Ε·ΡΥΛΥΝ,
 ΧΟ·ΝΕ·ΚΟ·ΜΙΝΑΜΙ·ΦΟ·ΙΑ;
 ΔΝ·ΝΟ·ΤΙΝΥΕ,ΔΝ·ΜΟ·CΥ·ΜΕ!
 ΡΔΚΟ·ΝΔΜΕΛΟ·ΑΦΡΔΝ.

7.3 ROMAN STANDARD

The Roman standard splits into two, although the differences are minor. The literary style is used to transliterate texts. The academic style is used for transliterating Ayu phrases and proper names when the subject is not about Ayu language, for instance, when transliterating names of people and places in Tangian world in a Polish or English text.

/ä/	/o/	/ε/	/i/	/u/	
A a	O o	E e	I i	V v	
/œʷ/	/oʷ/	/œʷ/		/eᶽ/	
Av	Ov	Ev		Ei ei	
av	ov	ev			
/m/	/p/	/n/	/t/	/k/	/ŋ/
M m	P p	N n	T t	K k	Ng ng
/f/	/h/	/j/	/r/	/l/	/w/
F f	H h	Y y	R r	L l	V v
/ʔ/					
'					
	/h/				
	(S s)				

Roman features both uppercase and lowercase letters. In literary style, only uppercase is used, space separates words, and instead of a semicolon, the question mark is used. In academic style, uppercase and lowercase are both in use, as in most languages that use Latin alphabet, and instead of letters «V v», «U u» is used.

The word «ʔ» which is the equivalent of English “of”, and which is pronounced /i/, is transliterated in the Roman standard as «i» rather than «V» or «u».

Example:

MEV NI HON YA TEI E RVLVN,
 HO NE KO MINAMI FO IL?
 AN NO TINVE, AN MO SV ME!
 RAKO NAMEL AFRAN.

7.4 TANGIAN CUNEIFORM STANDARD

Ayu cuneiform was designed with the part of Kyon fictional world where the state of Tangia has influence. According to its lore, thousands of years older Marao civilisation left its ideographic cuneiform writing in many places before it died out. While Tangians could not read Marao writings, they were inspired to develop their own.












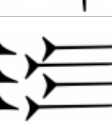









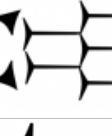


In current world, the cuneiform is written in the same way that it would have been back then and how it was in very ancient Mesopotamia, except instead of a reed stylus, a much more available bamboo is used. Both plants give identical styluses, except bamboo is stronger than reed.

Tangian cuneiform is an abugida, that is, a consonant-based system with diacritical marks for vowels which are always in use, and which is supplemented by a relatively limited number of ideograms.

Glyph	Pronunc.	Glyph	Pronunc.	Glyph	Pronunc.
	/ä/		/o/		/i/
	/ε/		/u/		/ei/
	/œt/ Eueu		/ou/ Oroy		/æt/ Auau
	/aj/ Atai		/m/		/p/
	Nv		Tτ		Kκ
	/f/		/h/		/j/
	/r/		/l/		/ʀ/
	/w/		/ŋ/		/ŋ/ (obsolete)
	(vowel placeholder)				

7.4.1 IDEOGRAMS AND LOGOGRAMS

The cuneiform standard uses ideograms and logograms. Some examples are shown in the tables below.


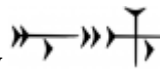
Glyph	Pronunc.	Meaning	Glyph	Pronunc.	Meaning
	Τανγυα <i>Tangua</i>	Tangia state		Κοραε <i>Korae</i>	Human
	Τηλαν <i>Teilan</i>	Emperor		Χατυ <i>Hatu</i>	Man
	Υ <i>I</i>	Of		Ιννα <i>Inna</i>	Woman
	Τηλεα <i>Teilea</i>	State, country		Χαγιανο <i>Hayano</i>	King
	Ιτικορηρο <i>Itikoreiro</i>	Republic		Ελαλυν <i>Elalun</i>	Tribe
	Χαρανι <i>Harani</i>	Desert		Αρανκαλερα <i>Arankalera</i>	Colony
	Ναραται Χαγιανορι <i>Naratai Hayanori</i>	Naratai Kingdom		Τονγαμι Ιτικορηρο <i>Tongami Itikoreiro</i>	Tongami Republic
	Λυτα νι Φαρι <i>Luta ni Fari</i>	Lutafari Republic		Νομευραι Ιτικορηρο <i>Nomeurai Itikoreiro</i>	Nomeurai Republic
	Γιο Ελαλυν <i>Yo Elalun</i>	Buania		Χιρανεα <i>Hiranea</i>	Hiranea
	Χαρανι νι Μαραο <i>Harani i Marao</i>	Marao Desert		Ορυμιλο νι Ρητικα <i>Orumilo ni Reitika</i>	Orumilo and Reitika Kingdoms
	Χαρανι νι Τακανγαρι <i>Harani i Takangari</i>	Takangari Desert		Κυνατλα Χαγιανορι <i>Kunatla Hayanori</i>	Kunatla Kingdom
	Ακηρα <i>Akeira</i>	Akeira		Ατιραι <i>Atirai</i>	Atirai


7.4.2 COUNTING. NUMERAL SYSTEM

Numeral system is feature-style and uses digit 10 as base. Numbers are signalled with a classifier of a tiny dent above on the left of the first digit. Numbers from 1 to 4 are right-pointing supershort cuneiform glyphs stacked one on top of another. Glyph 5 is a vertical mid line with a diagonal one beneath, and numbers from 6-9 are just 5 with supershort cuneiform stacked on top of it. Then number 10 is a vertical stroke. Numbers 11-14 are vertical stroke with horizontal strokes stacking to its right, until digit 15 is digit 11 with a diagonal stroke beneath it. Numbers 16-19 are just digit 15 with supershort cuneiform stacked above it. Then, number 20 is two vertical lines.




7.4.3 EXAMPLES


 or in syllabary
 
 «TANŦYA» “Tangia”.


 «THΛEA Y TANŦYA» “State of Tangia”, ornamental.


 «THΛEA Y TANŦYA» “State of Tangia”, normal.


 «TANŦYA XO'YM» “Tangian Night”. State slogan and ideology.

The cuneiform are written much differently from any standard writing. While “standard writing”, in essence, is the technique of staining a soaking material such as paper or papyrus with a strong ink, cuneiform are placed by pressing a triangular bamboo stylus on clay. This gives glyphs, or wedges, which in Ayu come in two forms, short (“wedge”) and long (“wedge and blade”). Apostrophe-like cuts separate words. The shapes are pressed using different strength and speed of pressing, different angles, and by pressing different stylus’s surface, for instance, its triangular edge, or the long edge, or flatly triangular edge and flat blade, etc.



Triangular clay prism with Ayu cuneiform in the process of drying.

Use of knives and similar objects without cuneiform-optimal geometry is not recommended. While possible, the writing loses its characteristic wedge-like shape. If that would be accepted, then it would be more energetically favourable to design a cut-based alphabet rather than imitate cuneiform’s wedge-like shapes. Some letters require triangular shape of the cut and its orientation (pointing down or right) to distinguish their vowels, which is not possible to achieve, or achieve efficiently, using a blade.

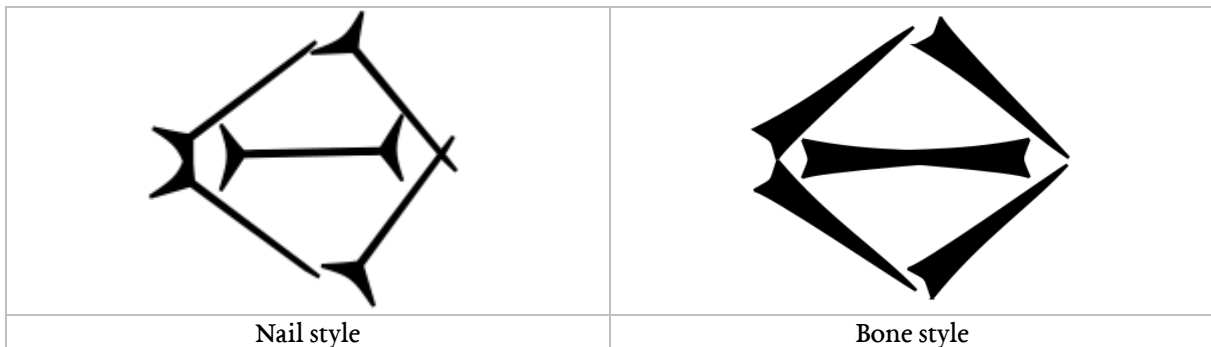


Dried up prism with inscription ready.

The cuneiform can be placed onto a number of materials. Most recommended is air drying clay, red or grey. It is also possible to use a plastic clay that hardens in an oven in +100°C after 15 minutes. It can even be placed on flour-based pastry.

7.4.4 FONTS

Currently there are two fonts: **nail** and **bone**. They are rendered in Inkscape, vector graphic.



7.5 OTHER STANDARDS

A Cyrillic standard was considered based on its compatibility with Greek, Coptic and Latin standards. However, as it was never used for any purpose, and taking into account the fact that in the Polish conlanging community the Cyrillic alphabet is remarkably overused, while Greek is underused (and therefore more appreciated), Cyrillic found no support.

Due to Tangian cuneiform's syllabic characteristic (an abugida-type syllabary), it is possible to use other abugida systems or syllabaries to write Ayu. Inuktitut (ᐃᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ) and Amharic (አግርኛ) alphabets both contain sufficient inventory to satisfy Ayu's rather simplistic phonemic requirements.

8 GRAMMAR

Ayu was initially treated minimalistically from the perspective of its grammar. However, as new translations appeared, specialisation of various functions occurred. Symbol # indicates position of the inflected word or phrase. For readers not familiar with linguistic terminology, this chapter may prove challenging. Considering that vast majority of languages are nominative-accusative, including virtually any language with any relevance whatsoever, this may increase the challenge. Ergative-absolutive languages sporadically occur, but to make things worse, none are 100% ergative. Basque, Eskimo languages, Caucasian languages such as Georgian, and ancient Sumerian (oldest written language in human history) are all ergative-absolutive.

To understand the concept of ergativity, one must exit the dimension of nominative-accusative world most of us are submerged in. To exit it, one must first even become aware of that world. This is hard mental gymnastics. Even more so for the speakers of English, because, except for some pronouns like “he” and “she”, the English language does not mark anything.

Some languages use grammatical markers to distinguish the “doer” of the action (**John** punched **Joe**), making the **nominative case**, and the “taker” of the action (**John** punched **Joe**), which makes the **accusative case**. In posh linguistic jargon, we call the “taker” the “**agent**”, and the “taker” the “**patient**”. The word “patient” as taker of the action might be easier to remember, because when you are sick, you seriously would prefer to be the patient than the doctor. Doctor is the agent and you are the patient, if you are sick. Activity flows from him to you, it is how you get healed.

“Grammatical cases”, meanwhile, are about marking words to reflect all this. In English, the agent-patient marking was present, but died out, with exception of some pronouns: you still see this distinction by “he punched him”, rather than “he punched he” (which you would do with other words, like “lion punched lion”).

For a speaker of a nominative-accusative language, there is no hassle of distinguishing the most fundamental logical difference between different verbs: whether a verb even has a “taker”. Millennia go and this question does not cross ordinary people’s minds. But notice how English sentence “**John** sleeps” has no patient. It is hard to say from whom the action flows, is John doing the action or receiving it, how does the action flow, or is the action even flowing. It is more logical to notice “sleeping” is a static, very passive state rather than an activity of any dynamic. Is he doing the sleeping? Or is sleeping happening to him? We call such verbs “intransitive”, because, as a side effect, they cannot be transformed into passive voice, since they do not have a patient. “Transitive”, such as “punch”, take a patient, and can be transitioned into a passive voice, which in English would be “Joe was punched by John”. Agent and patient word order was flipped, but meaning remained. This is done in English to put more attention to what is happening to poor Joe.

Intransitive verbs are a philosophical question, but nominative-accusative languages such as any European or African and most Asian languages, are not going to waste time on philosophy. If “John sleeps”, then “John” is the agent, he is doing the action. End of story. Therefore, if marking exists (and it does not in English, except for the aforementioned pronouns), then “**John** sleeps” and “**John** punches **Joe**” are going to have identical markers for “John” (I used red colour due to lack of such grammar in English), while poor “Joe” will be different (blue, in the example). This you can easily observe in the Polish language: “John **śpi**” versus “John **bije Joego**”. This “-go” very clearly indicates who is punched, and its absence indicates who is violent here. This allows Polish to grant total freedom in word order: “**Joego** **bije** John” still means Joe is being punched!

Meanwhile, linguists continue to ponder whether intransitive verbs such as “sleep”, in “John sleeps” for instance, show the only participant as an agent or a patient. An extremely rare group of languages, called Tripartite languages, manage to distinguish all three. Extinct Ainu language of Japanese Hokkaido and

fictional language Na'vi from James Cameron's "Avatar" were Tripartite. These languages sharply distinguish transitive and intransitive.

So, instead of "John punches Joe" and "John sleeps", as in world's vast majority of languages, you would have "John punches Joe" and "John sleeps". What I marked with colours, a Tripartite language would mark with three totally different word endings.

Ergative languages are vastly more popular than Tripartite, but they are still overshadowed by our Nominative-Accusative languages. With transitive phrases, it starts the same, but different world begins with intransitive verbs. Suddenly, in "John sleeps", John is the patient, he receives the action, not creates it. Then who does the action to John? No one! Intransitive verbs in ergative languages have patients, not agents. That action passively happens to John, which is why he is the patient. This means that if in transitive "John punches Joe" it is Joe that is marked grammatically, then the same marker would go to "John" in "John sleeps". In short: "He hits him", but "him sleeps" (or: "him is being slept", somewhat).

To evade confusion, if markers exist, and we can talk about Ergative-Absolutive alignment, we rename the marker used to signal the agent of the transitive verb like "punch" to **absolutive**, while the patient of a transitive verb and the sole participant of intransitive verb to **ergative**. Best way to provide examples is to simply use Ayu. Notice that in «ΧΑΡΥΑ ΦΗΝΟΝ.» "Turtle sat." and «ΧΑΡΥ ΑΤΟΝ ΕΜΕΡΕ'Α.» "Turtle struck the frog." the ergative case marker «-Α» always attaches itself to the patient. Absolutive case is unmarked. This means that sole participants of verbs such as "sleep" or "sit" are going to have the «-Α» glued to them the same way as recipients of actions in transitive statements like "Turtle struck the frog".

This has profound effect on grammar. Passive voice "Joe is punched by John", where you can skip the agent to put all attention to what is happening to the patient, and make "Joe is punched", stops existing. Ergative languages can do mirrored structures where the patient is skipped and all attention is put on the agent. This is called "antipassive". Passive and antipassive are obviously not translatable one to another. They mean different things. What you can say with passive voice in English, you will not be able to say in an Ergative language. But they have antipassive, and you do not.

Difficulty with understanding Ergativity is that hardly any Ergative languages is completely Ergative. A normally Ergative language can flip to Nominative alignment of marking depending on a lot of factors, on discourse participant, on tenses or verb aspects, on type of marking involved, on which single-participant intransitive verbs have a doer and which a taker, on contrast, on emphasis, on clarity, et cetera. In Ayu, the split occurs in tense. This is why all previous examples were in the past tense. However, as present-future tenses have different markings, the Ayu language is somewhat tripartite as well.

To complete this lecture on morphosyntactic alignment, Nominative-Accusative, Ergative-Absolutive, Split Ergative and Tripartite are not the only alignments seen in the world. The English Wikipedia mentions, apart from zero-marking systems such as in English or Chinese, also Austronesian, Active-stative and Ditransitive/Monotransitive systems. In terms of comprehension complexity, that is another can of worms, thankfully irrelevant here, and thus I will ignore it.

8.1 MORPHOSYNTACTIC ALIGNMENT

Ayu features ergativity split along two tenses, past being one, and present and future collectively being the other. This means that when talking about past events, the morphosyntactic features align the agent of the intransitive verb with the patient of the transitive verb, treating the transitive verb's agent differently. When events are present or future, different markers are used, and they align the agents together, treating the patient differently.

When discussing examples, we will take an intransitive verb «ΦΗΝΟ» “to sit” and a transitive verb «ΑΤΟ» “to strike”. Due to lack of inflection of “hit” in English, word “strike” is used here for clarity. We will take «ΧΑΡΥ» „turtle” and «ΕΜΕΡΕ» „frog” as agent and patient.

8.2 PAST EVENTS

The markers used in Ayu when talking about past events are as follows.

Ergative case. Marker: «-’A»/«-YA».

Absolutive case. Marker: «-N».

Verb tense marker. Past «-A»/«-N».

Examples:

Intransitive.

«ΧΑΡΥΑ ΦΗΝΟΝ.» “Turtle sat.”

Transitive.

«ΧΑΡΥ ΑΤΟΝ ΕΜΕΡΕ’Α.» “Turtle struck the frog.”

There are exceptions to the marking. For example, ergative of «ΙΑ» “I” is «ΙΑΙΑ», not «ΙΑΥΑ».

There is no distinguishing between the high impact and low impact markers, as happens with present and future, which is described further.

8.3 CURRENT AND FUTURE EVENTS

Important aspect of current and future tenses, where nominative-accusative alignment is manifested, is a distinction between an activated and inactivated aspects, so named after activating the agent, although a better term is **high priority present tense** and **low priority present tense**. The high priority present covers some usage of the English present perfect case, although rather than describing the present through the scope of a past event, it is used for events that are currently (in the sense of *right now*) taking place, that are having important effect now, or simply for emphatic purposes. High priority verbs mean something has high impact on the current situation. Those agents are inflected by added «-NO» marker. Inactivated constructions or low priority present indicates something which has less impact, and those are uninflected, leaving nominative and accusative nouns both unmarked, enforcing SVO word order on the sentence.

The markers used in Ayu when talking about present events are as follows.

Nominative case marker. «# NO».

Accusative case marker. «#-».

Verb tense marker. Present «#-». Future «NY #».

Examples (high priority):

Intransitive.

«ΧΑΡΥ ΝΟ ΦΗΝΟ.» “Turtle sits.”

«ΧΑΡΥ ΝΟΝΥ ΦΗΝΟ.» “Turtle will sit.”

Transitive.

«ΧΑΡΥ ΝΟ ΑΤΟ ΕΜΕΡΕ.» “Turtle strikes the frog.”

«ΧΑΡΥ ΝΟΝΥ ΑΤΟ ΕΜΕΡΕ.» “Turtle will strike the frog.”

Examples (low priority):

For an inactivated situation, no marking will occur.

Intransitive.

«ΧΑΡΥ ΦΗΝΟ.» “Turtle sits.”

«ΧΑΡΥ ΝΥ ΦΗΝΟ.» “Turtle will sit.”

Transitive.

«ΧΑΡΥ ΑΤΟ ΕΜΕΡΕ.» “Turtle strikes the frog.”

«ΧΑΡΥ ΝΥ ΑΤΟ ΕΜΕΡΕ.» “Turtle will strike the frog.”

The high impact and low impact present reporting is not only limited to alarmist warnings, but also to emphatic statement with high importance to the speaker. Moreover, both present and future can blend:

«ΤΑΝΥ ΝΟΝ ΜΕΥΡΑΝΑΑ. ΡΑ ΙΑ ΝΟ ΑΤΥΑ!» “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want!” (*literal from English*)

8.4 REMAINING GRAMMATICAL MARKERS

Grammatical markers include:

1. Plural marker,
2. Feminine gender marker,
3. Possessive markers to nouns and comitative markers to nouns and verbs,
4. Group of people marker (“clan” marker),
5. Verb-based noun marker,
6. Noun topicalisation marker,
7. Imperative mood,
8. Vocative case.

8.4.1 PLURAL MARKER

Plural marker «-ΑΥΝ» is not used as often as in European languages. It appears mostly as emphatic highlighting of plurality of its word root. Therefore, «ΕΛΕΝ» might mean both “God” and “gods”. When singularity needs to be highlighted, conjugation might fulfil that role. When plurality needs to be highlighted, «-ΑΥΝ» is additionally used.

Examples:

«ΕΛΕΝΕΤΟ ΑΓΙΑΝΕΟ» “His god speaks”.

«ΕΛΕΝΑΥΝΤΟ ΑΓΙΑΝΕΟ» “His gods speak”.

8.4.2 FEMININE GENDER MARKER

The feminine gender, much like the plural marker, highlights femininity of the word root. This is a topic with a culturally fuzzy border, in practice the marker is used mostly with words for social functions and names of work positions. The marker is «-ΛΑΙ».

Example:

«ΕΟ, ΤΑΓΙΑΡΙ ΓΙΥΑ-ΓΙΟΑ ΚΑΛΙΑ, ΤΑΝΓΥΑΝΑ ΤΗΛΑΝΛΑΙ.» „Behold Yul-Yoa Kalia, the empress of Tangia.”

8.4.3 PRONOUNS, POSSESSIVES AND COMITATIVES

Ayu has an array of possessive markers used with nouns and comitative markers used with nouns, pronouns and verbs. While syllable stress of Ayu is generally initial, possessive prefixes do not move it, and first root syllable remains stressed. When that happens, that syllable is put under acute mark, which helps distinguish inflected words from uninflected ones. Examples:

«PITY» “name”, but «OPÍTY» “my name” and «EPÍTY» “your name” and «MEPÍTY» “her name”.

«AKA» “friend”, but «OÁKA» “my friend” and «ENÁKA» “your friend” and «MENÁKA» “her friend”.

	Pronoun	Possessive	Comitative
1st singular (I)	IA	O-	-AI
2nd singular (you)	NE	E-	-NI
3rd singular (he)	TO	TO-	-TH
3rd singular (she)	MH	ME-	-MH
3rd singular (it, inanimate)	I	I-	-NHI
3rd singular (it, animate)	ANT	ANI-	-ANTI
1st plural (we)	IAIA	AA-	-AHNI
2nd plural (you)	TAO	AO-	-AAI, -AI
3rd plural (they, inanimate)	NIA	XA-	-XH
3rd plural (they, animate)	API	PI-	-PAI

8.5 MERGING OF MARKERS

Ayu combines or merges some markers. This concerns mostly negating marker «PA», high priority marker «NO», locative marker «EN», existence “be” marker «ON» and possessive markers «-N» and «AO».

Examples:

«ONEN» Is on («ON» + «EN»)

«NEN» Yours («NE» + «-N»)

«ANNO» High priority imperative («AN» + «NO»)

«PAIA» I don't («PA» + «IA»), «PAIANY» I won't («PA» + «IA» + «NY»)

«NON» Strongly convinced “is” («NO» + «ON»)