

# Yuktepat

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## Introduction

*Yuktepat* [juk.te.pat], composed of *yuk* [juk], “(spoken) language,” and *Tepat*, “Tepat,” refers to the official language (and substandard dialects) spoken by the inhabitants of the old Tepat Empire. *Yuktepat* is traditionally divided into three periods, Old, Classical, and New. Archaic *Yuktepat* is also sometimes used to refer to a variety of the language predating any written records. An additional distinction must be made between Spoken and Written *Yuktepat*. Written *Yuktepat*, properly referred to as *Mwentepat* (*mwen*, “writing, written language”), may also refer to its use as an academic and administrative language by the *Swíra*, who spoke the unrelated *Swíra* language.

	SPOKEN	WRITTEN
WHOLE	juk “language”	mwen “writing”
UNIT	hoq (<hoq) “word, morpheme”	klit “glyph”

Old *Yuktepat* refers to all varieties of *Yuktepat* before the language was standardized and made official throughout the Empire. Knowledge of old *Yuktepat* as it may have been spoken comes from three chief sources: internal reconstruction from later varieties of the language, analysis of phonetic elements in characters,

and to a lesser degree borrowings into other languages. For our concerns, Old *Yuktepat* is entirely a written language, with little certainty as to how it was spoken, except through internal reconstruction.

Classical *Yuktepat* refers to the standard language of the *Tepat* Empire during its heyday of cultural hegemony over the region, and specifically to that language as used in *Tepat* City. The traditional dividing line between Old and Classical *Yuktepat* is the Great Language Reform, which included the Character Simplification Program. The two chief sources of knowledge about Classical *Yuktepat* are the linguistic descriptions of the period and borrowings into Old and Classical *Swíra*. The *Tepat* believed their language to be very well designed and described that design in detail. Their texts include grammars that analyze syntax and indicate pronunciation with precision by a system of phonetic shorthand developed from logographs. (This system was later developed for use to spell inflections in *Swíra*.) The values of the phonemes given in texts can be deduced from descriptions of tongue position and lip-shape in those same grammars, and the observable phonetic values in *Swíra* loanwords and reflexes in the modern *Yuktepat*ic languages. Increasingly during the Classical *Tepat* period, the *Tepat* Empire encompassed regions of ethnically different people, and they adopted *Yuktepat* as a written language, although it is not known to what degree their spoken language resembled Written *Yuktepat*, or whether it was related at all.

New refers to everything after the collapse of the Empire due to the invasion of the *Swíra*, and thus refers to two things: the spoken and written language that is official in the New *Tepat* Kingdom, and the several unofficial, usually unwritten colloquial dialects (now separate languages) spoken by peasant communities in pockets throughout the south of the *Swíra* Empire. The modern languages are all related.

The present article deals primarily with written Classical *Yuktepat*.

## History

The oldest known forms of *Yuktepat* show a language with vestiges of fusional

morphology. Different forms were used for agentive pronouns and non-agentive pronouns. In some dialects possessive pronouns were identified with agentive pronouns, and in other cases with non-agentive pronouns; the same is true for pronouns referring to the subjects of intransitive verbs. Later non-agent pronouns encroached on the domains of all the other varieties. The invariable pronouns of Classical Yuktepat are the descendants of the non-agentive pronouns of early Old Yuktepat. Similarly, there was probably a time when verbs had different forms for different tenses, however the ranks of inflected verbs quickly became very limited. The inflectional system suggested by the reconstructed verbs is highly irregular. In fact many of the forms of the verbs appear to be suppletive. The verbs “to be,” “to be a,” “to exist / have,” and “to do” had different logographic representations not only for different tenses but also for negatives, and those forms probably sounded different. By the end of the Ancient Yuktepat period most of these forms were on their way to being auxiliary verbs, particles, and prepositions. Verbs may also have had a nominalized form with a nominalizing suffix *-(V)t*, which explains the many abstract nouns in later forms of the language which are disyllabic and end in *-t*. Archaic Yuktepat may have distinguished transitive and intransitive verbs by tone or by aspiration, with intransitive verbs aspirated, and the corresponding transitive verbs unaspirated.

Yuktepat has historically been very resistant to borrowing from other languages, but within the earliest language there is a layer of vocabulary which is usually attributed to the previous inhabitants of the Tepat Plain. This is most prominently exemplified by toponyms, but may also include names of deities, heavenly bodies, and some local flora.

As stated above, the Great Language Reform, a major standardization effort that resulted in the creation of an Academy, marked the official beginning of “Classical Yuktepat.” This was also the beginning of traditional Tepatic linguistics. Classical Yuktepat linguistics was wholly prescriptive because intellectuals believed the standard language was a carefully designed force for social progress. They not only did not write in other dialects but tried unsuccessfully to eradicate them. Ironically this preserved dialectal information because many educational texts were written to correct incorrect usages and pronunciations, often indicating the regions where such mistakes were made. These mistakes often correspond nicely to forms in modern languages, which are the offshoots of the speech of uneducated provincials. Using clues from modern languages and classical prescriptions, the phonologies and vocabulary differences of several old dialects have been reconstructed. Occasionally this process has been helped by looking at old Swira loanwords, some of which came from nonstandard dialects.

Prescriptivism bore much more heavily on syntax than pronunciation though because it was oriented toward the written language, not the spoken language. Tepat linguistic philosophy was greatly concerned with proper order. The written logograms provided few clues about sound, but differences in word order were immediately apparent. It was taken for granted that in different dialects a character would have spoken forms that were different, even unrecognizably so.

However pronunciation was an important issue to those who traveled to areas where different dialects were spoken. Classical Yuktepat dictionaries usually included a rough pronunciation key for each character. It consisted of a combination of two characters whose pronunciation was assumed to be widely known. The first character represented the initial (onset), and the second the final (nucleus and coda) of the syllable. Disyllabic words / morphemes were sometimes spelled with two characters and sometimes with one character, depending on the theories favored by the person writing. Over time simplified versions of these characters became widely used as purely phonetic symbols in phrasebooks for Tepat travelers. When the Swira

conquered Tepat, their language was treated as another dialect of Yuktepat, spelled in Yuktepat logograms with a pronunciation guide given in the phonetic symbols. This evolved into the current Swíra mixed writing system, which spells roots and stems in logograms and inflections in phonetic symbols, much like the system used in Japan.

## Modern Yuktepat Languages

Modern languages descended from dialects of Old or Classical Yuktepat are spoken today by rural communities in several southern Swirako provinces. Three important Yuktepat languages, or dialect groups, still exist. In the western area of the peninsula, an old divergent western dialect has become an independent dialect group, preserving the voiced spirants and plethora of laterals of the old dialect. In the south, in several backwater communities speaking a group of similar dialects, there remains, as of old, a distinction of front and back /æ/ and /ɑ/, and the existence of front rounded vowels. Then of course there is the language of the later, post-Swíra-phase Tepat state, the official “Modern Yuktepat.” In some languages, tone and pitch accent have been exchanged for a stress accent, which falls on the original high-tone syllable of disyllabic words, and which does not fall on function words and phonologically reduced words.

A few other minority languages are spoken which are not identifiably Tepatic, although they would have been within the Classical Tepat cultural and political sphere. These were probably groups that originally spoke other languages but adopted Yuktepat as an official language when they joined the Tepat league. Among these residual languages there remains in the west another language in the region of the old League state Qolup. While of genetically obscure origin, it has abundant Yuktepat lexical items and shares many phonological features with the nearby Western Yuktepat languages.

## Numerals in Some Modern Dialects

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
0	løm	luim	lem	lwem	lem	lwe:	wem	lvem > vlem
1	uq	waq	iq	wiq	iq	wiq	wiq	vix
2	ny	nju	niw	ni	nwi > mi	niw	niw	zu
3	tam	tam	tam	tam	tam	ta:	am	tam
4	sei	sei	sei	se, si	sie	sei	sei	sei
5	woŋ	uŋ	oŋ	woŋ	oŋ	wo:	oŋ	voŋ
6	luq	luq	luq	luq	luq	luq	lu	luɣ
7	set	set	set	set	set	set	se	sel
8	hat	hət	hat	hat	hat	hət	hə	həl
9	qou, qu	qəu	qau	qo, qu	qua	qəu	qəu	ɣəu
10	tiep	təp	tap	tjap	tap	tjap	tya	tjap
100	høk	hjuk	hok	hjok	hok	hjok	hjo	hjok
1000	tien	tæn	tan	tjan	tan	tja:	tjan	tjan
10000	mìn	man	mìn	mìn	mìn	mì:	mìn	m̩

1 creation of front rounded vowels, 2 XX, 3 loss of medials, 4 loss of final glides, 5 final glides are transposed, 6 loss of nasals with compensatory length, 7 loss of final stops, 8 far western dialects

## Modern Yুক্তপাত

Vowels:

i	y	ɨ/ʉ	u
e	ø	ɘ/ɚ	o
æ	ɛ	a/ɐ	ɑ/ɒ

Diphthongs:

ej, je, æj, jæ  
øɥ, ɥø, ɛɥ, ɥɛ  
ʉɚ, ɚʉ, aʉ, aʉ  
ow, wo, ɒw, wɒ

Vowels in diphthongs must agree in backness and roundedness.

Consonants:

	[LAB]	[COR]	[ALV]	[ALV]	[PAL]	[VEL]	[UVU]	[GLOT]
[-asp]	p	t	ts	t <sup>l</sup>		k	q	
[+asp]	p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>	ts <sup>h</sup>			k <sup>h</sup>		
spirants			s			x		h
[+nas]	m	n				ŋ		
liquids	w	l			j			

## Another Yুক্তপাত Dialect

Syllable-final consonants: /n ʔ/  
l > r / C\_

## ...And Another Yুক্তপাত Dialect

No medial glides ( /j w/ > Ø)

Other dialects had different vowel systems, which variously added low mid vowels,

1. i e y ø ɨ/ʉ a/ɐ u ɔ

had a low back vowel,

2. i e ʉ ɚ ɑ u o

got rid of the central vowels,

3. i e (ɨ) (ɘ) a u o

or distinguished between front and back low vowels.

4. i e æ ɒ o u

Other dialects might add a front rounded vowel series /y ø/, and some had two low vowels, one front and one back (unrounded). Almost all dialects had the same three vowel heights.

## Early Sound Changes

### I. Vowel harmony

- u, i > i / \_Ca
- u > y / \_Ci, (\_Ce)
- a > e / \_Ci, (\_Ce)
- a > o / \_Cu, (\_Co)
- e > ʏ / \_Cu, (\_Co)
- i > ɯ / \_Cu, (\_Co)
- o > ø / \_Ci, (\_Ce)

### II. Monosyllabification (Or perhaps only vowel-loss to ensure CVC or CVCVC structure V > Ø / \_# in multisyllables)

### III. Mutual Conformation of consonants and vowels

- a > ɒ / \_q, q\_
- e > ʏ / \_q, q\_
- i > ɯ / \_q, q\_
- ju > (j)y
- jo > (j)ø

### IV. Unreleasing: all obstruents become unreleased in syllable-final position: C > C<sup>̚</sup> / \_.

- ts > t<sup>̚</sup>
- s > s<sup>̚</sup>
- x > k<sup>̚</sup>
- ʒ > q<sup>̚</sup>
- h > ʔ<sup>̚</sup>

### V. Loss of epiglottals / pharyngeals: pharyngeal > glottal

- ħ > h
- ʕ > ʔ

### VI. ml, nl, ŋl > pl, tl, kl

### VII. [+nas] > Ø / V\_C{. #}

### VIII. w > Ø / [LAB]\_

## Modern Yুক্তপত

### Glide-conditioned Fronting

wi, ju > y; iw, uj > yɥ  
we, jo > ø; ew, oj > øɥ  
ju > iw, jo > ew

### Rounding of the Unrounded

wi, iw > u, wɣ, ɣw > (w)o  
ji, ij > i, jɣ, ɣj > (j)e

## Dialectal Changes

### Changes affecting low vowels

a > æ / (j\_, \_j)  
a > ɑ / (w\_, \_w)  
a > (æ, ɑ)  
j > Ø / \_ [+front]  
æ > ε, ɑ > ɔ

### Changes Relating to Laterals

p<sup>h</sup>l, p<sup>h</sup>l, kl, k<sup>h</sup>l > tl, t<sup>h</sup>l  
kl, k<sup>h</sup>l > l<sup>ɥ</sup>  
lj > ʎ

### Palatalization

lj > ʎ  
nj, mj > ɲ  
ts, tj > tʃ; tʃ<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>j > tʃ<sup>h</sup>  
tʃ > ts; tʃ<sup>h</sup> > ts<sup>h</sup>

### Other (Far Western Dialects)

q > ɣ (> h)  
q<sup>h</sup> > x > h  
ts > s, ts<sup>h</sup> > h  
ny, ly > z, ʒ  
z, ʒ > r  
p > v / V\_V  
w > v  
pw > w  
ml, nl, ɲl > l<sup>n</sup> (nasal lateral)

## Phonology

Among Classical Yuktepat consonants there is a preponderance of stops (and affricates, which pattern with them), which are divided into aspirated and unaspirated. Except for nasals and liquids, all consonants are phonemically voiceless, although phonetically, obstruents may have been voiced in intervocalic position. The standard consonant system is shown below, as reconstructed by the best contemporary scholars.

	[LAB]	[COR]	[ALV]	[PAL]	[VEL]	[UVU]	[GLOT]
[-asp]	p	t	ts		k	q	ʔ
[+asp]	p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>	ts <sup>h</sup>		k <sup>h</sup>	q <sup>h</sup>	
spirants			s		x		h
[+nas]	m	n			ŋ		
liquids	w	l		j			

It is uncertain whether the affricates were /ts ts<sup>h</sup>/ or /tʃ tʃ<sup>h</sup>/. Some dialects were missing one or more of the above phonemes; in fact the official dialect eventually merged /ʔ/ with /q/. An important western dialect group is also characterized by the addition of more lateral phonemes, including lateral affricates or lateralized stops, and velarized or palatalized laterals. In traditional transliteration, /ts/ is <c> and /j/ is <y>. The aspirated consonants are written without the <h> superscripted, so <ph>, <th>, <ch>, etc. The glottal stop, from before the classical period, is written <ʔ>.

Although varying from dialect to dialect, the typical Yuktepat vowel system has seven members.

	[+front]	[-front, -round]	[-front, +round]
[+hi]	i	ɨ/ʉ	u
[-hi, -lo]	e	ə/ɤ	o
[+lo]		a	

The [-front, -round] vowels may be either back or central. The high central vowel is written as <ɨ> and the mid central vowel as <ə>. Although <ɨ>, <ɨ̂> and <ə̂>, <ə̂> are represented differently in Yuktepat grammars and transliterations, there is no reason to believe that they were pronounced differently in the great majority of dialects, or that any dialect distinguished them all. Their reflexes are generally the same in modern languages. But <ə̂> and <ɨ̂> occur mostly in content morphemes, and <ə> and <ɨ> occur mostly in function morphemes. Continuing to distinguish between them would seem to be part of the Tepat's attempt to create a perfect language where, logically, both categories of words were distinguished in all areas (grammar, phonology, and semantics). But they



were at most allophones.

There is also reason to believe that classical Yuktepat as spoken in Tepat City had front rounded vowels. In fact New Tepat, the official language of the modern Tepat state, has front round vowels. Whether they were already present at that distant time or not, there is no doubt that they arose from earlier diphthongs which contained front vowels and back rounded vowels together.

There is also reason to believe the mid vowels were more correctly [ɛ] and [ɔ] than [e] and [o].

## Syllable Structure

The canonical Yuktepat syllable consisted of at minimum a consonant followed by a vowel. Most syllables also ended in a consonant, including the semivowels /w/ and /j/. Complex onsets, which could contain an obstruent, lateral, and a semivowel, were also allowed. Thus the syllable could be C(l)(j, w)V(C). With the exception of the coda, the syllable was arranged strictly in terms of increasing sonority. A lateral could *not* precede an obstruent, and a glide could *not* precede a lateral or obstruent. If a complex onset included a lateral, the first consonant had to be an obstruent. If a complex onset included a glide, the consonant before the glide had to be an obstruent or lateral.

- hiq “one”
- lop (classifier)
- jaʔ (prefix, relativizer)
- klit “glyph, character”
- lwem “zero”
- ts<sup>h</sup>jul “(go, come) from”
- \*\*lkit
- \*\*wlem
- \*\*jts<sup>h</sup>ul

While any consonant could begin a word, a more restricted set were allowed in other positions. In the earliest stages of the language it is probable that all kinds of consonants could be found in codas, and that complex codas were also possible. Over time, it came to pass that all obstruents in syllable-final position were unreleased – so aspirated consonants and fricatives could not end a morpheme. Therefore the consonants permissible morpheme-finally were /p t k q ʔ m n ŋ l j w/.

Open-syllable (CV) morphemes typically (but not necessarily) did not begin with aspirated consonants, or contain the vowels /e a o/. They frequently included the vowel /ə/. Two function morphemes, /ə/ and /i/, consisted of a single vowel with no onset. Both of them were also enclitics.

## Morpheme Structure

The morpheme as well as the word was an important phonological unit. All morphemes in Classical Yuktepat were one or two syllables. Monosyllabic morphemes could be open or closed, and disyllabic morphemes always consisted of first an open syllable and then a closed syllable. These shapes were associated with different kinds of morphemes. The first pattern, CV, is found in function words. Content morphemes ended in consonants. The last pattern, CVCVC is found only in some nouns, especially proper nouns. (Indeed, the names of most Tepat individuals are of this

type, as are many place names, and the names of heavenly bodies. Most of these forms are apparently not of native origin, although it is impossible to be sure exactly where they came from. It is often assumed they were inherited from the civilization that previously occupied the area of Tepat, but nothing is known about their language. There is another class of bisyllabic nouns which are of native stock, and typically end in -Vt or sometimes -Vm. Those endings are believed to be prehistoric derivational endings, which may have been used to form nouns from verb roots. This is also believed to underlie the Kəcə noun suffix /at<sup>1</sup>/.) The vast majority of morphemes were C(l)(j, w)VC monosyllables. Because of the strict morpheme forms, Yuktepat had a nearly self-segregating morphology. This was a design feature that grammarians attempted to cultivate in later revisions of the standard language.

A few words of foreign origin exhibit otherwise unknown forms, such as CVCV, or had more than two syllables. There was a tendency to alter these to fit canonical morphemic forms. Otherwise longer word-forms occurred only in compound words. Compound words also had CC sequences across morpheme boundaries, but sometimes on the phonetic level these were reduced to a single consonant, and the “self-segregating” morphology was violated.

## Phonotactics

The glide /j/ could not occur next to the vowel /i/, and /w/ could not occur next to /u/. Front vowels could not occur in the same syllable as a uvular consonant (several dialects took this further and did not permit them before velars either). Some dialects did not permit back vowels to occur with /j/ or front vowels to occur with /w/.

With the joining of morphemes to form compound words, several new rules came into play. First, a stop ending a morpheme and /h/ beginning the next morpheme were pronounced together as an aspirated consonant.

## Phonetic Rules

1. Unreleasing: C → C<sup>̣</sup> / \_#
2. Velar assimilation: q → k / {\_k, \_j}
3. Uvular assimilation: k → q / \_q
4. Glottalization: C → C<sup>ʔ</sup> / ?\_
5. Glottal Deletion: ? → Ø / \_C<sup>ʔ</sup>
6. Aspiration: C.h → .C<sup>h</sup>
7. De-fronting: V[+front] → V [-front] / {\_C[uvular], C[uvular]\_}

There are also some idiosyncratic cases of assimilation. The final glottal stop of /jaʔ/, which forms nouns denoting persons, assimilated totally to any following consonant except /w j/. A similar process affected the final sound of /hiq/, “one.”

/jaʔ/ + /ŋin/ → [jaŋŋin], “member”

/hiq/ + /kal/ → [hikkal], “one (person)”

# Grammar

Some major features of Yuktepat grammar

- SVO, head-initial
- Primarily ergative
- Analytical
- Extensive use of classifiers
- Verb-framing

Although traditional Yuktepat grammar barely recognizes word classes, and words shift classes easily without overt changes in form, several word classes can be recognized:

- Verbs
- Nouns
- Quantifiers
- Classifiers
- Relativizers
- Particles

Nouns:

- Can be the subject of a sentence
- Can form a predicate following the copula *siw*
- Do not follow tense / predicate proclitics

Verbs:

- Form predicates with a preceding tense proclitic

Stative verbs:

- Can be preceded by a degree modifier such as *njet*, “very”
- Cannot be preceded by the imperative *haj*

Dynamic verbs:

- Cannot be preceded by a degree modifier such as *njet*, “very”
- Can be preceded by *haj*

As you will see, many words can be argued to belong to more than one class. This kind of fluidity, along with the importance of word order, is the major reason that traditional grammarians downplayed classification of words in favor of their linear order. Yuktepat is an SVO language – the order of constituents in a sentence is subject, then verb, then object. This is the typical order of sentences with transitive verbs. However, the object may be shifted to the front and preceded by the particle *pa*.

Being ergative, when the verb is intransitive, its subject is usually treated like a transitive verb’s patient, and comes afterwards. Verbs have either one or two arguments, so there are no ditransitive sentences. Indirect objects in English correspond to subordinate verb phrases in traditional Yuktepat (prepositional phrases in Modern Yuktepat). Verbs in a complementary or

subordinate relationship follow each other with no inflection and generally no intervening particle.

A noun phrase is built around a noun and may also contain classifier phrases (preceding the noun) and the article or relative clauses (following the noun).

Correlative + Quantifier + Classifier + NOUN + Article + Possessive + Relativizer + Relativized Phrase

*njal tam sut map =i nat =i siknjak tepat*  
 all three CLASS copy =of he =of history Tepat  
 “all three of his copies of the ‘The History of Tepat’”

*ts<sup>h</sup>il hɣt maj klam =i mjam slut*  
 this eight CLASS mirror =of guard pass  
 “these eight mirrors which guard the passes”

The definite article is /ə/, which is enclitic with the preceding word. All nouns and such words end in consonants, canonically, so they divide up neatly into syllables, and the /ə/ forms a CV syllable with the last consonant of the preceding word. Originally this clitic may have been a syllabic /n/. The article refers specifically to an aforementioned noun. It never refers to something of which there exists only one, such as the sun. It also usually does not occur when the noun phrase contains demonstratives or relative clauses that would identify the noun uniquely.

## Quantifiers

Quantifiers are words that can occur within a noun phrase before a head noun (with or without a classifier, but usually with one), as well in some expressions with adverbial function (“twice, thrice”). Quantifiers include both numerals and words which refer to amounts that are not exact, such as some, few, several, many, etc. The Yuktepat basic numerals are shown below.

Digit	Yuktepat name	> Classical Swíra
0	leum > lwem, lum	lyom, lum
1	hiq	ug
2	nuj, niw	nyu, nui
3	tam	tam
4	sej	sē
5	woŋ	on, wō
6	luq	lug
7	set	set
8	hət	(h)ot
9	qəw	gō
10	tjap, hiqlum	tyep, uglum
11	tjaphiq	tyepug
12	tjapnuj	tyepnyu
20	nujtjap	nyutyep
30	tamtjap	tamtyep

100	hʝok, hiqlumlum	yok, uglumlum
1000	tjan, hiqlumlumlum	tyen
10,000	tjaptjan	tyeptyen
1,000,000	min	min, mun

More quantifiers:

- waj "a few"
- dem "several, a few"
- tiŋ "each in turn"

Ordinal numerals are formed by adding the prefix *t<sup>h</sup>* to cardinal numbers. E.g.,

would be

*t<sup>h</sup>-tam*      *sut*      *siknjak-tepat*.  
 ORD-three    CLASS    history-Tepat  
 “the third volume of *The History of Tepat*”

## Classifiers

In most cases quantifiers had to be followed by a classifier or counter. Which classifier was appropriate was usually determined by the properties of the thing counted. For example, the classifier *lop* was used to count long, thin, flexible objects. In some cases the usage is idiomatic. Together the quantifier and classifier formed a classifier phrase, which followed the noun which was being counted. Classifiers themselves overlapped with nouns, and many could be used alone as nouns, and serve as classifiers for themselves. Commonly used classifiers include:

<i>hon</i>	long stiff objects
<i>k<sup>h</sup>al</i>	individual people (=‘a head’) (> Swi <i>ukkal</i> , “one head,” Phs <i>ökka</i> )
<i>lep</i>	things with handles (tools, weapons, etc.)
<i>lop</i>	long, thin, flexible objects
<i>maj</i>	hard, flat objects; surfaces
<i>mjuk</i>	crowds, groups
<i>nem</i>	handfuls
<i>pej</i>	cup, bottle, indefinite measure of liquid
<i>p<sup>h</sup>ot</i>	plants, fungi
<i>qaj</i>	thin, flat, flexible objects; sheets
<i>siʔ</i>	animals (< <i>sih</i> )
<i>sut</i>	volumes, member of a series
<i>toj</i>	machines
<i>wa</i>	animals
<i>wem</i>	people (polite)

The general-purpose classifier is *kəl*, which generally means “piece.” It can be used for all things that have no classifier of their own, and many things that *do* have their own classifiers, whenever

the classifier is unknown.

Some classifiers were added to numbers to perform adverbial functions.

*tow* times, number of repetitions  
*mat* times, repetitions, magnification

Some classifiers referred to specific units of measurement.

*si* year (referring to the age of something)  
*tik* year (cycle of the sun)  
*sik* season, one-quarter division of the year  
*kit* month (cycle of the moon)  
*li* day  
*wol* largest unit of time within a day (about 2 hours 24 minutes)  
*phon* unit of time measurement (about 14 minutes)  
*tsok* medium unit of time measurement (about 84 seconds)  
*nan* small unit of time measurement (about 8 seconds)  
*mjek* smallest unit of time measurement (a little less than 1 second)  
(Note that these units of measurement are all within the decimal system.)

*won* *k<sup>h</sup>il* *hiq* *wol*  
five *k<sup>h</sup>il* one *wol*  
“five *khil* per *wol*”

While classifiers are used for counting objects, they can also elucidate the specific meaning of a word that usually has a broad meaning. For example, *muk* can mean variously “tree,” “wood,” “stick,” or “branch.” It is essentially “wood,” the substance of which all these things consist. Its use with different classifiers clarifies which of the more specific meanings is intended.

*hiq<sup>h</sup>ot muk* one tree  
*hiqhon muk* one stick, one (wooden) rod  
*hiqkəl muk* one piece of wood

For another example, take *nwon*, “land, earth.”

*hiqmaj nwon* a plot of land  
*hiqnem nwon* a handful of dirt

While, as seen above, many classifiers are coterminous with various nouns, there are in fact several classifiers coterminous with verbs – particularly the verbs of handling. See below the section about [Classificatory Verbs](#).

Classifiers could also be used with personal pronouns to form a sort of possessive construction.

Classifiers are sometimes encountered which are used anaphorically.

Finally, the deliberate misuse of classifiers, pairing words which have no semantic relationship to each other, is a staple of much Tepatic humor. A fairly common example is to refer

to a human with a classifier normally used with animals. Other more bizarre examples, such as referring to someone with the classifier *qaj*, usually used with sheets of paper, also exist.

## Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns were generally obligatory.

- wok I
- wat we (sometimes I)
- kim you
- nat he, she, they (members of the Tepatic League)
- kal he, she, they (barbarians)
- ko? it, they (<koh)

Standard Classical Tepat made attempts to “rationalize” the pronominal paradigm, either by making plural pronouns with the prefix *lan-*, replacing *wat* with *lanwok*, or by replacing *wat* with a compound form *wokkim* or *woknat*. They didn’t catch on and *wat* stayed put.

To form a personal possessive construction, personal pronouns were combined with classifiers, or followed the noun after the particle *i*.

## Question Words, Demonstratives, Correlatives

Yuktepat correlatives were formed by the compounding of two elements, the first indicating one variable (interrogative, demonstrative, etc.) and the second one the other variable (thing, person, place, quality, etc.).

	Interrogative	Demonstrative		Indefinite	Universal	Negative
		Proximal	Distal			
Thing	<i>nal</i>	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>l</i>		<i>hwal</i>	<i>njel</i>	<i>mul</i>
Person	<i>na-</i>	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>-</i>		<i>hwa-</i>	<i>nje-</i>	<i>mu-</i>
Location	<i>na-</i>	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>-</i>		<i>hwa-</i>	<i>nje-</i>	<i>mu-</i>
Time	<i>na-</i>	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>-</i>		<i>hwa-</i>	<i>nje-</i>	<i>mu-</i>

## Tense

The oldest Tepat language had optional, adverbial time markers. These developed into obligatory tense markers as time became of central importance to Tepatic thought and the ideology of progress took hold in society. Old Yuktepat used particles to distinguish at minimum five tenses: present, past, immediate past, future, and immediate future. In addition, particles indicating the distant past and distant future are known but little used, and effectively unproductive, absent, in the common tongue. These markers were purely of time rather than of aspect, but the time expressed by them is rather flexible. Thus their usage has been stretched for expressive purposes or rhetorical

effect, especially in poetry. For example, usual usage might deem the regular past tense appropriate for a ten-year-old event, and the immediate future appropriate for tomorrow, but usages such as the following have occurred:

- “It was only ten years ago when she was still dancing with me in the sunshine...” (immediate past)
- “He will speak to me tomorrow! I must wait until tomorrow!” (distant future)

In which case the immediate past emphasizes the vividness of the speaker's recollections, and the regular future suggests that even tomorrow is too long her to wait.

Classical Yuktepat reduced the tense markers to only three in the standard language, for the present, past, and future – although the past and future markers may be expressively reduplicated to indicate remoteness in time. The Classical tense markers (which naturally varied from dialect to dialect) were:

- past            *əl*
- present        *kə*        (may be related to the noun *ket*, “being, existence”)
- future         *tu*

Beyond indicating the time some happened, the tense markers are the chief predicators of the language. They are used to indicate that what follows them *is*, in fact, the predicate, since there is no morphological difference between parts of speech. The hallmark of verbs is that follow one of these markers. But anything that directly follows them is to be interpreted as a verb. A verb can be derived from nearly any noun by simply placing one of the tense markers in front of the word. Thus the position of a word has more to do with its syntactic role than the verb itself.

Tense markers are properly proclitics in that they don't attach to following *word* so much as the entire predicate. Because the tense is already marked for the entire predicate, no more tense marking need be applied within the predicate. The marker is assumed to apply to all following verbs as well, at least until a new tense marker is introduced. Since most Yuktepat sentences contain more than one verb, often in serial constructions, this saves many repetitions. However, these markers are nearly always required before the first verb of the predicate.

The imperative particle *haj* replaces tense markers. It usually implies a second person subject, but may be used with other persons to have an exhortative sense.

*haj q<sup>h</sup>wot ko?*  
IMP kill it  
“Kill it!”

*wat haj joq*  
we IMP swim  
“Let's go swimming!”

## Polarity

Negation is expressed by the particle *mi*. It is placed directly in front of the tense proclitics, and usually contracts with them into a single form expressing both negation and tense.

- *mi əl* → *mil* “did not”



- *mi kə* → *mik* “does not”
- *mi tu* → *mit* “will not”

The particle plays a role in asking questions. One of the standard ways to ask questions is to offer two alternatives, one an affirmative statement and one the negation of the same affirmative statement.

*kim kə= jat mi jat ηat tsʰɪp*  
 you PRES=know not know place market  
 “Do you know where the market is?”

## Voice and Valence

All verbs have a minimum of one obligatory argument and a maximum of two, thus they are all either intransitive or transitive. There are no ditransitive or avalent verbs. Additional syntactic roles, such as the indirect object in an English expression like “John gave Mary a *salvia officinalis* seedling” is expressed as the object of an additional verb which is included with the first verb in a complex predicate.

Neither transitive or intransitive verbs are formally marked. The same lexical items are used both transitively and intransitively, depending on context. For example, *kjaw* can mean both “change (oneself)” or “change (something else).” This is like many English verbs but unlike, say, Japanese 変える and 変わる. If a verb is to be interpreted transitively, there will be an argument both after and before it (ignoring the intervening tense particle). If the verb is to be interpreted intransitively, it will have a single argument, usually following the verb. Standard written Yuktepat is not pro-drop, so if an argument is not visible (or should I say audible?), it does not exist.

## The Copula

In contrast to some languages, Yuktepat has more than one word corresponding to our copula. A different verb meaning “call” is used when giving someone’s name. No copula is required at all when the predicate is a state or quality; here the term for the state or quality is treated as a verb itself, and attaches directly to the verbal proclitics. When the complement is a *noun*, there are two possible verbs, depending on whether the statement is one of identity or class membership.

- *siw* “to be; identity, =”
- *mən* “to be (one of, a member of), to be a . . .”
- *xɪŋ* “to be (called, known as)”

The first of these, *siw*, is considered *the* copula, because its behavior is distinct from other verbs, including those equivalent to a copula in other languages. Unlike most verbs, *siw* does not need to be preceded by a tense proclitic. Rather than indicating tense through a proclitic, it has suppletive forms for each of the tenses.

- *sol* PAST
- *siw* PRESENT
- *sɪŋ* FUTURE

The future tense form *sɔŋ* was originally in Old Yuktepat a verb meaning “become.” Its function has been replaced by the serial verb construction *kjaw siw*, literally “change be,” or *kjaw mən*.

The copula also forms its own optional contractions with the negative marker.

- *mi sol* → *mjɔl* “was not”
- *mi siw* → *miw* “is not”
- *mi sɔŋ* → *mjɔŋ* “will not be”

One can simply say, “I pick berries,” or “I hunt bears,” or “I farm pigs,” but, in Yuktepat it is also acceptable to begin the predicate with “to be,” as in:

“I am pick berry”

“I am hunt bear”

“I am farm pig”

because in such cases one is not simply talking about what one is doing at the moment, but about what one does habitually, and more specifically about one’s occupation. When describing one’s occupation or identity, “to be” is often used. It conveys a stronger and more emphatic sense of identity, a suggestion that the activity is a matter of essence, and a strong identification with what one is doing, a sense of permanence. Imagine “one who” inserted after “to be.”

“I am one who picks berries,” “I am a berry picker”

“I am one who hunts bears,” “I am a bear hunter”

“I am one who farms pigs,” “I am a pig farmer”

One could be more specific and say, “I am *jaʔ* pick berry,” but it is not necessary.

This can be used not only with words denoting activities, but also with words denoting states or conditions to suggest that the state or condition is an inherent or inborn one.

“I green.” = “I am green.”

“I be green.” = “I am one who is green; I am not one who is some other color.”

There is a difference in meaning depending on whether the copula or *mən* is used for “be” here. The copula implies uniqueness – that one is the sole person who picks berries or hunts bears, etc. The verb *mən* implies that while picking berries or such is an essential feature of you, you are merely a member of a group of such people whose identity consists in picking berries.

## The Empty Verb

/mok/ is the “empty verb”: it has no meaning of its own, only serving as a placeholder for another verb in the sentence. Its meaning may be described as “to do something.” Thus “A mok B” means “A does something to B.” It is used when the speaker does not wish to specify a particular action, or to pose a hypothetical situation in academic discourse, which could be generalized to just about any action.

## Auxiliary Verbs

Auxiliary verbs follow the tense proclitics.

- I. *nɨŋ*, “to be able (to do); can (do)”  
*wok kə= nɨŋ juk tepat*  
I PRES=can speak/language Tepat  
“I can speak Yuktepat.”
- II. \*/qoq/ > /qoʔ/ > /qo/ > /qʁ/ = J. *-te oku*, “something done in preparation for a later event.”  
*wok kə= qə mot p<sup>h</sup>al*  
I PRES=prepare save money  
“I am saving my money (for the future)”
- III. *xep*, “to experience”  
*nat əl= xep k<sup>h</sup>aŋ sɨj tepat*  
3sg. PAST= experience go city Tepat  
“She has been to Tepat City.”
- IV. *jaw*, “to want”  
*wok kə= jaw k<sup>h</sup>aŋ tslok =ə*  
I PRES=want go store =the  
“I want to go to the store.”  
*wok kə= jaw kim k<sup>h</sup>aŋ tslok =ə*  
I PRES=want you go store/shop =the  
“I want you to go to the store.”
- V. *sjɔw*, “to make, conceive, cause”  
*lan kal əl= sjɔw wok ts<sup>h</sup>ʃul sjuk =ə*  
PLUR. 3sg. PAST= cause 1sg. go building =the  
“They made me leave the building.”

## Serial Verbs

In Yuktepat several verbs may follow each other directly without any intervening particles or words or any morphological marking. They belong in the same predicate and share the same subject and tense proclitics, effectively forming compound verbs. Often one element supplies the result, goal, or direction of action of the preceding verb. Verbs of motion in particular are inclined to aggregate in this manner.

## Result

In a complement of result the second verb in the series gives the result of the action of the first verb in the series. The negator *mi* may be inserted between the two verbs, meaning that the result of the second verb failed to obtain from the action of the first verb.

*wok* əl=                    *k<sup>h</sup>jen* *ts<sup>h</sup>ʔt*                    *ts<sup>h</sup>ʔl*   *sut*                    *sotoj*  
 I        PAST=                look    understand    this    CLASS                book  
 “I read the book and understood it.”

*Nat*    əl=                    *slat*    *naq*    *k<sup>h</sup>ow*  
 he      PAST=                hit      break    plate  
 “He dropped the plate and it broke.”

*wok*    əl=                    *k<sup>h</sup>jen* *mi*      *ts<sup>h</sup>ʔt*                    *ts<sup>h</sup>ʔl*    *sut*                    *sotoj*  
 I        PAST=                look    not      understand    this    CLASS                book  
 “I read this book but didn’t/couldn’t understand it.”

### **Manner and Direction of Motion**

Yuktepat was historically verb-framing, although in Modern Yuktepat it became satellite-framing through the grammaticalization of certain motion verbs. When talking or writing about motion, manner and direction are expressed in separate lexemes. Thus “walk,” “run,” “swim,” etc., refer only to the manner of movement and not to any source or destination. When they occur with an object, the object does *not* refer to the direction, but to the area which is covered by the motion, e.g., “I walked [about] the park” or “I walked [for] five miles.”

For indicating direction, the two most common words are *k<sup>h</sup>ay* and *ts<sup>h</sup>ʔul*, which indicate the goal and the origin of motion, respectively, and may be translated as “(go) to” and “(come) from.” There is also *way*, which indicates a general direction but no particular destination and may be translated as “towards.” They can also be used by themselves when it is only desired to indicate direction without indicating means.

Beyond the above mentioned directional indicators, there are also the words:

- *tsoŋ*: from, out of
- *plaj*: before, in front of, precede, advance
- *hen*: behind, after, follow, return
- *tsang*: over, above, up, to ascend
- *wop*: under, below
- *sek*: before, ahead
- *hat*: out of, off of

These can also describe motion. However, they do not describe motion necessarily. They may also indicate static location if they are not combined with any other verbs of motion.

Over time, prepositions developed out of some of these words. Most modern Yuktepat prepositions are phonologically reduced forms of verbs. In the phonological reduction of prepositions we see several trends. Final consonants are lost, and vowels are centralized. The high vowels /i/ and /u/ become /i/ and the lower vowels, /a/, /e/, and /o/, become /ɤ/. Diphthongs are simplified, so that diphthongs in /j/ become /i/ and those in /w/ become /u/. Aspiration on the initial consonant is lost. Occasionally, a stop may be lost before the lateral, or the lateral may be dropped instead.

- *k<sup>h</sup>ay* > *ka* “to”

- *ts<sup>h</sup>ju* > *tsil*, *tli* “from”
- *tsoŋ* > *tsə* “out of”
- *plaj* > *pli* “ahead of”
- *hen* > *he* “behind”
- *tsaŋ* > *tsa* “above”
- *wop* > *wo* “below”

## Extent

The word *slaj*, which in isolation means “extent,” or “range,” can be used to emphasis the extent of the action of a verb.

*wok kə= k<sup>h</sup>jan slaj q<sup>h</sup>wot min*  
 I PRES=sad extent kill self/body  
 “I’m so sad I could kill myself.”

## Comparison

The verb *tsil*, which means “compare,” is found in expressions of the comparison of two quantities or degrees.

*wok tu= tsil hjap uk njan*  
 I FUT= compare apple and orange  
 “I will compare apples and oranges.”

*wej tsil tepat*  
 big compare Tepat  
 “bigger than Tepat”

*noj kə= tsɣq tsil nap*  
 womanPRES=good compare man  
 “Women are better than men.”

## Classificatory Verbs

Counting is not the only situation in which classifiers are relevant. In addition to the above-mentioned classifiers which are combined with numerals and differ according to the properties of the thing counted, there are also several types of verb which differ according to the properties of their objects. As a matter of fact some of these verbs also serve as classifiers when combined with numbers. The most important are the verbs of handling and carrying. The major verb of handling is *xap*, which refers to items that (1) can be held and carried in one’s hand (2) can be carried in one piece – e.g., not loose items like sugar or dirt. Things that must be carried in a pouch of some sort are carried by *wat* (<\*was). By contrast, *nap* deals with things that may be borne across the shoulders or back, like a bundle of firewood, and *waq* with things that may be conveyed or shipped but not literally carried, like a wagon full of hay. Verbs such as these may be

combined with a directional complement like *k<sup>h</sup>ay* or *ts<sup>h</sup>ɯl* to mean “bring” or “take.”

*wat kə= hap plek k<sup>h</sup>ay ts<sup>h</sup>ɯp =ə*  
we PRES=hold basket go market =the  
“We took a basket to the market.”

## Subordination and Relativization

The all-purpose relativizing particle is *i*, which indicates that the word or phrase which follows it is to be interpreted as attributing something to the word that immediately precedes it. It can precede nouns, noun phrases, adjectives, verbs, verb phrases, prepositional phrases, entire sentences – basically, any type of expression at all. The immediately preceding word, to which it attributes things, is a noun or a word which is to be interpreted as a noun. It was likely enclitic on this noun.

It can be omitted when it seems clear that a word or group of words is intended to be an attribute of the preceding word, most commonly when it is (or would be) followed by an adjective / stative verb. Naturally, it is frequently omitted in newspaper headlines, where space is precious. In main clauses pronouns were not omitted in standard speech, but they could be omitted sometimes in relative clauses. A noun within the relative clause could be omitted if it was the same as the head noun, more common when it was the subject though than the object. Similarly, tense markers were also frequently omitted within relative clauses. Observe the following:

*slot =i wok əl= njet koʔ*  
horse =REL I PAST= ride it  
*slot =i wok əl= njet*  
horse =REL I PAST= ride  
*slot =i wok njet*  
horse =REL I ride  
*slot wok njet*  
horse I ride  
“the horse that I rode”

The second-to-last, *Slot i wok njet*, is probably the most common form. The preceding forms would be used when more clarity is desired, such as in formal papers. The last form would be the one used in newspapers, especially headlines. In the following examples, *i* is omitted. In the first example, the phrase consists of a noun and a one-syllable stative verb that is commonly used to modify that noun – a frequent environment in which to delete relativizers. In the second example, the two elements are intimately associated, such that they really form a single name.

*sjuk kaw*  
building tall  
“a tall building”

*sɟi tepat*  
city Tepat  
“Tepat city” (the capital of the league)

The particle *i* is not the only relativizer. There are also other particles with more limited use. They often combine within themselves the function of being the head of the clause.

- /sjow/  
object  
*sjow wok xat*  
REL I eat  
“what I ate”
- /jaʔ jah/  
agent. Cf. Kəcə /eʔ/. By modern Yuktepat, has become a prefix denoting occupation.  
*jaʔsiknjak*, “historian”
- /tsi/  
verbal complementizer
- /siq/  
time (</siq/)  
*sɨq kal tsʰjul tom*  
REL he from house  
“When he left the house”
- /ŋat/  
place, location (</ŋac/). Cf. Kəcə /atʃ/  
*ŋat lan-kal swom*  
REL PL-he live  
“the place where they live”
- /ŋaj/  
way, manner, “like”; adverbializer and adjectivalizer of similarity. Cf. Kəcə /ɲi/, “way of doing.”
- /im/ (</i + mən)  
occasionally encountered indefinite article; considered a relativizer because it is a contraction of the relativizer *i* and the verb *mən*, meaning “that which is a (member of the class of).”