

Let's Have a Relay 2026 — Tethys, Kam Pirngu

English translation

Thorn bushes grew, eating the light of the stars, alongside a river. Water plants saw someone harvesting the thorn bushes.

One day, two children killed a beast by the river, and cooked it with a fire. The children saw a light in the ocean, and went and followed it. They arrived at a tree, and sat under it. Here, the light taught the two children a magic spell. The children submerged their heads in the ocean and said the magic spell. The light made them glow, and made them grow wings for flying. Growing silent, it flew out of the ocean to the sky, to float as a burning star.

The magic spell made the thorn bushes quiet. The water plants wanted to grow like the thorn bushes. The two children flew through the sky, and saw a big black tree. Because of the light from the stars, the water plants obeyed the two children and the tree. Then the children used the spell to make the briar bushes fall asleep and grow fruit to eat. This is why briar bushes grow fruit.

Kam Pirngu torch

Tarawa mut tinik ta, makka ti-wirum ka ti-riuni, tak tum ndauni-mang. Pambam mut tum ti-waak tammak tikki ti-mut tinik ta.

Ngam pikkar-mang, pirrak na pawanga ngguwi-mang tak ti-rum ndauni, kukkuppi kir tak pinam-mang. Pambam ti-wir na kirumbau-manngak ngam ti-ngu, akkattu, turuwa kir. Kirraak mbamanga piu-mang, kirra kinggindang ngam ri kir. Ti-wa, ti-wirummak ngangaur ti-wir na kat rundi-mang. Ti-wirrak na ikkjuma tj-ambi-wirra ngam ti-ngu, kanngam ti-wat rundi. Ti-wirummak ngam ti-ngu kunggun kirum ti-wir na, kunggun tawa kirra kappun nua pak. Tarawa kiwup ti-wirum, kir pak ka ti-ngu ri ti-rannga, nua nggarwi tiuni-mang pinam.

Ti-wattak rundi kunggun kiwup ti-mut tinik ta. Turungu ti-mut tum nua tawa ina tak ti-mut tinik. Ti-wir na pappak uppan ti-rannga, pambam pippau-manngak mbum tamut tak ti-rum ndauni. Nua ti-wirum ka ti-riuni, randamba ti-mut tum ti-wirrak na tak ti-wippak. Tuwa ti-wa, ti-wirrak na ndurnur ti-mut tinik, tak kunggun tawa kirra rakki nua makka. Nua ti-wa, rakki mut tinik.

Phonology and Romanization

Here is the Kam Pirngu phonemic inventory and romanization.

		Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar
Stop	Voiceless	p - <i>p</i>	t - <i>t</i>		k - <i>k</i>
	Prenasalized	m̥b - <i>mb</i>	n̥d - <i>nd</i>		ŋg̥ - <i>ngg</i>
	Nasal	m - <i>m</i>	n - <i>n</i>		ŋ - <i>ng</i>
Approximant		(w - <i>w</i>)	r - <i>r</i>	(j - <i>j</i>)	

	Front	Back
High	i	u
Low	a	

Doubled consonants are geminates, and doubled vowels are long. Geminate /ŋ/ is spelled *nng*, which is not to be confused with the prenasalized velar stop /ŋg/ *ngg*. The letter *r* is generally a tap when single and a trill when double, but there's enough dialectal variation that you can really use any kind of voiced alveolar continuant.

Stress is always initial, except for the definite article *ti-*, which is never stressed.

A hyphen is used in contractions, such as *ti-wuram* “the fish”, *murru-mang* “a fear”, and *nda-ttu* “I go”.

Grammar

Kam Pirngu is an isolating, analytic, strongly head-initial language with ergativity and volition-based syntax. Zero derivation is a prominent feature of Kam Pirngu, and every content word can be used nominally, verbally, or adjectivally.

The ordering of a verb and its arguments is dependant on the volition the agent, if it is present. By default, a verb comes before its arguments, but if the agent acts with volition then it comes before the verb.

The majority of verbs require a patient (unmarked), a usually optional agent (ergative), and an optional recipient (unmarked). Verbs concerning sensations rather than actions require an experiencer (unmarked), and can take either a stimulus or agent (both ergative) as the source of the sensation, as well as an optional recipient (unmarked).

Nominals

The nominal class is probably the largest word class in Kam Pirngu, followed by the verbs, and contains the open subclasses of nouns and adjectival nominals, as well as the closed pronoun and deixis marker subclasses. Nominals all share the ability to act as the argument of a verb, the complement of a preposition, to take the ergative case marking, and to be marked for definiteness.

Case

One of the defining characteristics of nominals is that they can inflect for case, and agree in case with the head noun they modify.. Nominals stay in the unmarked absolutive case when they are the patient, recipient, or experiencer of a verb, or the complement of a preposition. They take the ergative suffix *-(C)ak* when they are the agent or stimulus of a verb, which lengthens a final consonant, and turns a final high vowel into a glide. The ergative form of every noun is included in the glossary. When an ergative noun is followed by the indefinite clitic, the ergative suffix lenites to *-(C)au*.

Definiteness

Nouns and noun phrases in Kam Pirngu can be either definite or indefinite. Definiteness is marked with the proclitic *ti-*, which frequently triggers lenition of the initial consonant. The definite forms of nouns are included in the glossary. It also pairs with the deixis markers to form demonstratives. A singular indefinite thing is marked with the enclitic *-mang*, which attaches to the end of a noun or noun phrase and triggers lenition or assimilation in final consonants. The indefinite enclitic *-mang* agrees in case with the noun phrase it modifies. Mass nouns, which refer to what are conceived as substances rather than objects and items, do not take an article when indefinite.

<i>mbaru</i>	— “seal”	<i>mbarwak</i>	— “seal (erg.)”
<i>ti-maru</i>	— “the seal”	<i>ti-marwak</i>	— “the seal (erg.)”
<i>mbaru-mang</i>	— “a seal”	<i>mbarwau-manngak</i>	— “a seal (erg.)”

Modifiers

Nominals can serve as modifiers to other nominals. These modifiers include standard nouns zero-derived as adjectives, nominals that almost exclusively fill an adjectival role, numerals, collective nouns, and special deixis marking particles.

As Kam Pirngu is strongly head-initial, a noun phrase always begins with the head noun, and is followed by modifiers. There is probably some hierarchy that determines the order of a series of modifiers, but I don't have the specifics of that yet, other than that deixis markers and the indefinite article go on the outside.

Deixis

Kam Pirngu has particles that distinguish three levels of spatial deixis, although this torch only uses the proximal *pa*. These act as adverbs and adjectives and follow what they modify. To fill the function of demonstratives, they simply follow a definite noun. These spatial deixis markers can also act as generic place nouns.

	Plain		Definite	
	Absolutive	Ergative	Absolutive	Ergative
Proximal	<i>pa</i>	<i>paak</i>	<i>ti-wa</i>	<i>ti-waak</i>

When acting adjectivally, the deixis particles follow the noun they modify. Like other nominal modifiers, they agree in case with their head nominal.

Pronouns

Below is a table of Kam Pirngu personal pronouns, reduced to forms used in this torch. They cliticize when functioning as possessive pronouns.

Singular	personal	
	absolutive	ergative
3rd person	<i>kir</i>	<i>kirrak</i>
Plural	personal	
	absolutive	ergative
3rd person	<i>kirra</i>	<i>kirraak</i>

If an argument of a verb is unknown, unimportant, or otherwise unspecified, *tam* “body” can be used as a pronoun.

Verbs

There are two broad classes of verbs in Kam Pirngu. The majority are agent/patient (A/P) verbs, where the agent (A) is ergative, and the patient (P) is absolutive. The agent can come before or after the verb, depending on its volition, but it is always before the patient. Verbs concerning emotions and sensations are experiencer/stimulus (E/ST) verbs, where the experiencer (E) is unmarked absolutive and the stimulus (ST) is ergative. The experiencer always follows the verb, and the stimulus always follows the experiencer.

Tense

The present tense uses the unmarked form of the verb.

The past tense of a verb is formed by reduplicating the verb’s first syllable. Like the mutation caused by clitics, this is mostly but not entirely regular, so past tense forms are always listed in the glossary.

Valency

Valency can also be changed without auxiliaries through **causative alternation** (there are other zero change operations which do not occur in this torch). Essentially, in most cases a transitive verb can lose its marked argument (A, ST) without issue, but it needs a construction to promote a marked argument to an unmarked position. A verb’s available arguments are marked in its glossary entry, where optional arguments are in parentheses and mandatory arguments are not.

purrat - v. (<i>a</i>)/(<i>r</i>)/ <i>p</i> . to drop, fall	mandatory patient, optional agent and recipient
kun - v. <i>a</i> /(<i>r</i>)/ <i>p</i> . to do, make	mandatory patient and agent, optional recipient
ramba - v. <i>e</i> /(<i>st</i>). to hear, listen	mandatory experiencer, optional stimulus

There are also several ways to change valency with auxiliaries.

The passive voice uses the auxiliary *pam* “to see” to remove the agent of a verb. The lexical verb is placed after as a modifier of *pam*.

Ti-marwak makka kuram-mang. —“The seal eats a fish.”

Pam makka kuram-mang. —“A fish is eaten.”

The antipassive voice uses the auxiliary verb *kun* “do, make”, which takes a transitive agent/patient verb as a modifier, gets rid of the patient, and promotes the agent to the subject of the newly formed compound intransitive verb.

Ti-maru kun makka. —“The seal eats.”

The causative construction is made by applying causative alternation to an antipassivized verb. The causer, as the new agent, is placed in the ergative before the verb, and the causee follows the verb.

Kirrak kun makka ti-maru. —“She feeds the seal.”

Verbal modification

Verbs can be followed by modifiers, which generally have adverbial and/or resultative functions.

Ndaak piwinam ti-wuram. — “I burnt the fish.”

Ndaak piwinam tamut ti-wuram. — “I burnt the fish black.”

Ndaak maumakka ti-wuram. — “I ate the fish.”

Ndaak maumakka kiwup ti-wuram. — “I ate the fish quietly.”

Prepositions

Kam Pirngu has a set of words which primarily function as prepositions indicating spatial, temporal, or semantic relationships and roles, and some also see use as conjunctions. These prepositions are mainly derived from body part nouns and motion or posture verbs.

Syntax

Like other modifiers, relative clauses follow the noun or noun phrase they modify. They are not explicitly marked with complementizers or relative pronouns, and the shared noun is gapped in the relative clause without a resumptive pronoun. Relative clauses are also used in deverbal adjective constructions, where the adjective is a stative verb in a relative clause. Relative clauses can be distinguished from nominal modifiers in two ways. Firstly, they don’t agree in case because they’re acting as verbs instead of nouns, and secondly they come after the indefinite article *-mang*. Cardinal numerals are typically used as verbal adjectives which don’t agree in case and which follow *-mang*.

Verbs like *ngaur* “know” and *pam* “see” can have the stimulus role filled by a standard noun phrase or a dependent clause. By default, the stimulus is marked ergative, which is no issue for a noun phrase. Kam Pirngu, however, doesn’t permit full clauses to have an ergative marking, so the stimulus role is commonly filled by the proximal demonstrative in the ergative (*ti-waak*), which then takes the content clause as a subject complement in a null copula construction.

Kam Pirngu lacks dedicated coordinators, and typically joins elements by placing them next to each other without overt marking. In writing, this is indicated with commas.

The preposition *tak* “with” can be used like English “and” to join non-contrasting elements. Because the implicit unmarked coordination also has a default cumulative meaning, *tak* is never required, but

can be helpful for disambiguation. It also implies a sense of connection and togetherness that the unmarked coordination lacks.

Glossary

The following glossary is a list of all ~~existing~~ relevant Kam Pirngu words, their pronunciation, the reconstructed Proto-KP form, their part (or parts) of speech, and their English translation.

Stems are listed with all possible forms in bold. Verbal stems have the reduplicated form, and nominal stems have the definite, indefinite, and ergative forms.

Abbreviations used in this glossary are:

<i>a.</i>	agent
<i>art.</i>	article
<i>conj.</i>	conjunction
<i>deix.</i>	deixis marker
<i>e.</i>	experiencer
<i>n.</i>	nominal
<i>p.</i>	patient
<i>prep.</i>	preposition
<i>pron.</i>	pronoun
<i>ptcl.</i>	particle
<i>r.</i>	recipient
<i>st.</i>	stimulus
<i>v.</i>	verb

ambi, ammambi, tj-ambi, ambi-mang, min-nambi, ambjak [am̥bi] *hampi - *n.* head, top

attu, akkattu, tj-attu, attu-mang, attwak [attu] *haktu - *n.* trip, journey, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to go, to send

ina, t-ina, ina-mang, inaak [ina] *hina - *n.* comrade, family member, *used in the reciprocal construction*

ina tak - *adj.* like, akin to

iuma, ikkjuma, t-iuma, iuma-mang, iumaak [iuma] *hikma - *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to drown, sink, submerge

ka [ka] *kah - *prep.* from

kam, kanngam, ti-wam, kam-mang, kammak [kam] *gam - *n.* mouth, language, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to speak

kappun, kakkappun, ti-wappun, kappum-mang, ming-gappun, kappunnak [kappun] *katpun - *n.* leaf, wing, any flat object, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to spread out, to flap, to be flat, flatten

kat, kandat, ti-wat, kar-mang, ming-ngat, kattak [kat] *gad - *n.* a word, a spell

kat rundi - *n.* magic spell, *lit.* “hidden word”

kindang, kinggindang, ti-windang, kindam-mang, kindanngak [kindaŋ] *gintaŋ - *n.* ass, buttocks, seat, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to sit, place, set

kir, kirrak, -wir [kir] *kir - *3rd person singular pronoun*

kirum, kiwirum, ti-wirum, kirum-mang, ming-girum, kirumbak [kirum] *kitumb - *n.* light, a light brilliant color, white, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to shine, flash, shimmer, glow
 kiwup, kiwiwup, ti-wiwup, kiwuu-mang, ming-giwup, kiwuppak [kiwup] *kigup -*v.* (a)/(r)/p. to be calm, silent, quiet
 kun, kunggun, ti-wun, kum-mang [kun] *kun - *v.* a/(r)/p. do, make, *auxiliary for the causative and antipassive*
 kuppi, kukkuppi, ti-wuppi, kuppi-mang, ming-guppi, kuppjak [kuppi] *kudpi - *n.* heat, hearth, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to heat, warm up, cook, treat with heat
 makka, maumakka, ti-makka, makka-mang, makkak [makka] *makka - *v.* a/p. eat, *n.* food
 mang, mamang, ti-mang, mam-mang, manngak [maŋ] *maŋ - *art. singular indefinite*
 mbanga, mbamanga, ti-manga, mbanga-mang, mbangaak [m̄baŋa] *mbaŋga - *v.* a/p. to come, arrive
 mbum, mbummum, ti-mum, mbum-mang, mbumbak [m̄bum] *mbumb - *n.* fat, blubber, smth big, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to be fat, big
 mut, ti-mut, mur-mang, muttak [mut] *mut - *n.* non-woody plant, *v.* a/(r)/p. to plant
 na [na] *na - *num.* two
 ndauni, ndaunauni, ti-nauni, ndauni-mang, min-nauni, ndaunjak [ndawni] *ndagni - *n.* flow, stream, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to flow, stream, to pour, spill
 ndur, ndurnur, ti-nur, ndur-mang, ndurak [ndur] *ndur - *n.* sleep, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to sleep, to put to sleep
 ngam, ti-ngam, ngam-mang, ngammak [ŋam] *ŋam - *prep.* in, during, (*with ri*) under, below
 ngaur, ngangaur, ti-ngaur, ngaur-mang, ngaurrak [ŋaur] *ŋahur - *n.* knowledge, *v.* e/(st). to know, *v.* a/(r)/p. to teach
 nggarwi, nggarngarwi, ti-ngarwi, nggarwi-mang, nggarwjak [ŋgarwi] *ngarki - *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to float, to live, to be
 nggu, ti-ngu, nggu-mang, ngguak [ŋgu] *ŋgu - *n.* sea, ocean
 ngguwi, ti-nguwi, ngguwi-mang, ngguwjak [ŋguwi] *ŋguki - *n.* beast, a large terrestrial herbivore
 nua [nua, nw] *nuha - *prep.* for (*generally marks a benefactor or goal*), *conj.* because
 pa, paak, ti-wa [pa] *pa - *deix.* here, *proximal marker*
 pak, pappak, ti-wak, pau-mang, pakkak [pak] *pak - *n.* flight, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to fly, to make fly, throw
 pam, pambam, ti-wam [pam] *pamb - *n.* look, *v.* e/(st). to see, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to show, *passive auxiliary*
 panga, pawanga, ti-wanga, panga-mang, pangaak [paŋa] *paŋa - *n.* death, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to die, to kill
 pikkat, pippikkat, ti-wikkat, pikkar-mang, pikkattak [pikkat] *pikkat - *n.* the sun, day, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to be exposed to the sun
 pinam, piwinam, ti-winam, pinam-mang, pinammak [pinam] *pindam - *n.* fire, *v.* (a)/(r)/p. to burn
 pip, ti-wip, piu-mang, pippak [pip] *pip - *n.* tree
 pir, ti-wir, pir-mang, pirrak [pir] *pir - *n.* child

rakki, rarrakki, ti-rakki, rakki-mang, rakkjak [rakki] *ratki - *n.* fruit, *v. p.* to grow fruit

ramba, randamba, ti-ramba, ramba-mang, rambaak [ram̃ba] *rampa - *n.* ear, *v. e/(st).* to hear, listen, heed, obey

ri [ri] *ri - *prep.* to

ruk, ruuruk, ti-ruk, ruu-mang, rukkak [ruk] *rug - *n.* earth, ground, land, *v. (a)/(r)/p.* to land

rundi, rundundi, ti-rundi, rundi-mang, rundjak [ruñdi] *runti - *n.* hiding space, *v. (a)/(r)/p.* to hide

ta [ta] *da - *n.* many, *plural particle*

tak, tattak, ti-rak, tau-mang, takkak [tak] *tag - *prep.* with, against, next to, *v. p.* to be near, *conj.* and

tam, ti-ram, tam-mang, tammak [tam] *tam - *n.* body, person, animal, *reflexive marker, pron. indef.*

tamut, taramut, ti-ramut, tamur-mang, min-damut, tamuttak [tamut] *tamut - *n.* a deep cool color, blue, purple, black, *v. (a)/(r)/p.* to be blue, purple, black, dark

tannga, ti-rannga, tannga-mang, tanngaak [taŋŋa] *daŋŋa - *n.* sky

tawa, tarawa, ti-rawa, tawa-mang, tawaak [tawa] *taba - *v. (a)/(r)/p.* to grow, to become

ti [ti] *di - *art. definite, proclitic that triggers post-vowel lenition, becomes tj- before a and u*

tikki, tittikki, ti-rikki, tikki-mang, tikkjak [tikki] *titki - *v. a/(r)/p.* To pluck, to harvest

tinik, tirinik, ti-rinik, tinju-mang, min-ninik, tinikkak [tinik] *dinik - *n.* thorn, *v. (a)/(r)/p.* to pierce

tiuni, tittjuni, ti-riuni, tiuni-mang, min-diuni, tiunjak [tiuni] *tigni - *n.* stars (*mass noun by default*), *v. p.* to shine, sparkle

tum, tundum, ti-rum, tum-mang, tummak [tum] *tum - *n.* rainwater, fresh water, *v. (a)/(r)/p.* to rain

tum ndauni — *n.* river, *lit.* “flowing fresh water”

tungu, turungu, ti-rungu, tungu-mang, tungwak [tuŋu] *tuŋgu - *v. (a)/e.* to hunger, to want

tuwa, turuwa, ti-ruwa, tuwa-mang, min-nuwa, tuwaak [tuwa] *duka - *v. a/(r)/p.* to follow, pursue

tuwa ti-wa - *adv.* then, *lit.* “following this”

uppan, tj-uppan, uppam-mang, uppannak [uppan] *hupppan - *prep.* through