

Tibetan *yin.n’ang* ཡིན་ནའང་ — variably *yin.na.yang* ཡིན་ན་ཡང་ or *yin.n’i* /yine/ ཡིན་ནའི་ — appears to have **three distinct uses**:

- ① **Counterexpectational:**
“Tashi’s tall.”
ཡིན་ནའང་སྤང་པོ་མི་འདུག
yin.n’ang sbyang.po mi-’dug.
YIN.N’ANG clever NEG-AUX
‘**However**, [he] isn’t smart.’
- ② **Forming *wh* free choice items:**
Context: Pema is very friendly.
སྤྱི་ཡིན་ནའང་ལ་སྐད་ཆ་བཤད་གི་རེད།
su yin.n’ang=la skad.cha bshad-gi-red.
who YIN.N’ANG=DAT speech talk-IMPF-AUX
‘[She] talks to **anyone**.’
- ③ **Concessive scalar particle:**
Context: Don’t worry. The test is easy.
དེབ་གཅིག་ཡིན་ནའང་སློག་ན་ཡིག་ཚད་མཐར་འཁྱེལ་གི་རེད།
dep gcig **yin.n’ang** klog-na, yig.tshad mthar.’khyol-gi-red.
book one YIN.N’ANG read-COND exam succeed-IMPF-AUX
~ ‘If [you] read **even just** one book, [you] will pass the exam.’

Morphologically, *yin.n’ang* is transparently:

ཡིན་ + ན་ + ཡང་ > ཡིན་ནའང་ > ཡིན་ནའི་
yin na yang yin.n’ang yin.n’i
COPULA + COND + EVEN

I document these uses and present **compositional semantics for ①, ②, ③** from these ingredients.

Particles with similar ranges of uses and morphological makeup are also attested in Dravidian (Balusu, tomorrow) and Japanese (*demo*).

① Counterexpectational ‘but/however’

“*yin.n’ang q*” is anaphoric to a previous assertion *p* and commits the speaker to *p, q*, and an expectation that “if *p*, likely not *q*.”

Proposal: *Yin.n’ang* conventionally cooccurs with an unpronounced propositional anaphor *p*, as in (1). *EVEN* scopes over the entire clause and associates with the proposition *p*.

(1) $[[pro(=p)]_F yin -na] =yang q$ LF: *EVEN* (if it’s $[p]_F, q$)
COPULA -COND EVEN

- p* is asserted prior and not denied. $\Rightarrow p$
- Let *P* be a set of relevant alternatives to *p*, including *p*.
- EVEN* requires “if *p, q*” less likely than “if *p’, q*” for all other *p’* in *P*
 - This requires low credence in “if *p, q*,” supported by an expectation that “if *p*, likely not *q*” \sim if *p*, likely not *q*
- If *P* exhausts all relevant possibilities, the assertion of “*EVEN* (if it’s $[p]_F, q$)” implicates the truth of the consequent *q* (von Fintel 1994 §5.3.3). $\sim q$

Selected references: Alonso-Ovalle 2016. Are all concessive scalar particles the same? *SALT* • Crnič 2011. On the meaning and distribution of concessive scalar particles, *NELS 41* • Erlewine 2019. *Wh-quantification* in *Alternative Semantics*, *GLOW in Asia XII* • Lahiri 2010. Some *even*’s are *even (if) ... only*: The concessive “even” in Spanish • Shimoyama 1999. Internally headed relative clauses in Japanese and E-type anaphora, *JEAL* • von Fintel 1994. Restrictions on quantifier domains, *UMass*

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On the syntax of *X yin.n’ang* in argument position

Taking its morphology at face value — *COPULA + COND + EVEN* — *yin.n’ang* is **a conditional clause**.

But “*X yin.n’ang*” is in argument position in ② and ③!

See especially ② above, where *X-yin.n’ang* is dative marked.

- I adopt Shimoyama’s (1999) E-type approach for (Japanese) head-internal relatives: the clause is interpreted as adjoined at LF, with a pronoun interpreted in its surface position:
- Literal ②: She talks to [even if they’re who] \Rightarrow
- LF: *EVEN* ([if they_i’re who], she talks to *them_i*)

② *Wh-yin.n’ang* free choice items

Proposal: I adopt the denotation for *wh*-phrases with no ordinary semantic value (Ramchand 1997, Beck 2006, Kotek 2014), and Erlewine 2019’s covert \exists to create an existential ordinary value.

Complete LF: *EVEN* $[_\alpha$ if \exists [they’re who_i], she talks(*HABITUAL*) to them_i]
 $[_\alpha]^\circ = \wedge$ if they_i’re *someone* (= if they exist), she talks to them_i
 $[_\alpha]^{alt} = \{ \wedge$ if they_i’re *x*, she talks to them_i : *x* human }

- *EVEN*(α) asserts $[_\alpha]^\circ$, which expresses the free choice effect: for any animate individual *x*, in a situation that minimally differs from our own where “*x* exists” is true, “she talks to *x*” will be true.
- The prejacent $[_\alpha]^\circ$ asymmetrically entails each alternative in $[_\alpha]^{alt}$, so the presupposition of *EVEN* is satisfied.

③ Concessive scalar particle (CSP)

“[CSPs are] licensed in two types of environments: *DE* and modal environments. It is glossed with *even* in *DE* environments and under existential modals; it is glossed with *at least* in imperatives, under universal modals and under attitude predicates. The associate of [a CSP] is the lowest element on the pragmatic scale.” — Crnič 2011: 5

LF for ③: *EVEN* $[_\alpha$ if it_i’s (just) [one]_F book, [if you read it_i, you will pass]]

- The prejacent $[_\alpha]^\circ$ is the least likely (or most noteworthy) among its alternatives, satisfying *EVEN*. (③ is ungrammatical with other numerals.)
- (2) བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཨང་གསུམ་པ་ཡིན་ནའི་ལེན་མི་འདུག / *ལེན་འདུག
bKra.shis ang [gsum]_F-pa **yin.n’i** len-mi-’dug / *len-’dug.
Tashi # 3-rd YIN.N’ANG get-NEG-AUX / *get-AUX
‘Tashi didn’t **even** get third place.’ / *‘got *yin.n’ang* third’
LF: *EVEN* [if it_i’s third_F place, Tashi didn’t get it_i]
- Assuming that getting first place is least likely (or most noteworthy), *not* getting third place will be the least likely, satisfying *EVEN*. (Considering only first, second, third place.)

(3) ཁ་ལག་ཉིས་ཡིན་ནའི་ཟ་དང།
kha.lag [tis]_F **yin.n’i** za-(dang)!
food a.little YIN.N’ANG eat-IMP
‘Eat **at least** a little food!’ (e.g. to a child)
LF: *EVEN* [IMP [if it_i’s [a little]_F food, you eat it_i]]

- In a context where a stronger request — e.g. IMP [if it’s *a lot* of food, you eat it] — is also appropriate, the speaker’s choice to make the weaker request with ‘a little’ is noteworthy, satisfying *EVEN*.

This derives the ‘at least’ flavor of concessive scalar particles, also described as a “settle for less” interpretation (Alonso-Ovalle 2016).