

Torch

Ge baagha-báághata zengè, súlosèt fina dèlèngómoti maazemang ranáářèfrum khogum ěkeze dehedzighus. Idzuk řodum hídžita dèlèngířideti tsa'úsudzèt ge maazemang.

Hundrut, ha maraa dèlèngúnggiti, maazemang dèlèndzá'usrum ge 'udz ěřung maazè dèghogum. Ge ambè'údz, ge maazemang ranáářèfrum dèzengè, ěkeze dèradzetak an dzinè fèngadè retsino dèngadè dèreretsínindi. Fútuuti, fèsasè fègèrezeti ěřumfè, mi dèmús dèngadè dèreretsínimak.

Ge suludz, sásota alomok súúhiri alomi'i alumekúndimakènè. Ge alobúnduti súúhiri dèzuudaa, sásota alogèrezak khogum sembina, an alèhungge alèmuhumus meno. Súúhiri dèghisè dèsekénimako ěřung élo'o maktè. Súúhiri dèdzéénimak dzíneta alobundu alo'óklirum ka'a, an alotsa'us alohindim alořohak meese. Sásota nébiřum alugèrenzim alósrobèt khogum suu alomíkutak élo'o maktè. Lana, mi dzaatum hidze, súúhiri dèdzáá tu'uz dèhíndindi, an dèhéíkíkènè buru suludz.

Ha alomíkutak rondzè élo'o maktè, mi tava maazemang dèdzaatum hundrut an gáraba dèřitsirum buru maazè. Finata dèsekèk suu dómorunè, an dèveliik tsá'usrum nim élo'o maktè. Nim alomeese, sásota alomi'i alobúnduk ondaz legre ka'a ěřung maazè. Khogum hidze dèhiri, sulos fina domok u'n ka'a. Ándara dómok hiri'n fina tsá'usrum. Maazemang dèhungge dèmuhun sásota alélo'o dířitak túkutèt.

Nim nanotuno, tukut dèdzaati bundo ríndrakhrum. Ambè dèlëndro otuno tukut dèlamuu dèradzěřum.

Wordlist

Mekundo words can be understood as having two forms: an underlying form and a surface form (this is probably not how the speakers think of it, but it is helpful for analysis), with several changes happening between the two, most often lowering or insertion of a final vowel. Where the forms are different, the surface form is given first, with the underlying form in parentheses. Suffixes are attached to the underlying form, bringing back that vowel quality.

'okle (**'ókli**) – (vt) to eat

'udz – (n) place, location, land

ambè (**ámbe**) – (pn) non-human distal demonstrative; that, those

an – (p) and, but, conjunction

ándara (**ándar**) – (n) rain

baagha – (adj) old, ancient

bundo (**búndu**) – (vt) to enter, to go into, to arrive; (vc) to be able to, to have the ability to, it is possible that

buru (**bur**) – (prep) into, inside, within, during

dzaa – (vt) to become, to change into (takes irregular participle)

dzeenim – (vt) to change something, to make different

dzere (**dzér**) – (vt) to kill, to slaughter (used with animals, not humans)

dzinè (**dzíne**) – (n) child, kid

élo'o (**élo'**) – (n) magic, spiritual power

ěrung – (n) side, flank, hip; (prep) next to, near; (prep) about, regarding, on the topic of

ěkeze (**ěkezi**) – (n) aetosauroid, particularly *A. scagliai*; a large omnivorous quadrupedal reptile sometimes hunted for food

felii – (vt) to want, to desire, to wish for

fina – (n) plant

gáraba – (n) bone

ge – (prep) at, by, on, in; locative

gèrenzim (**gerénzim**) – (vt) to place, to put, to plant

gerez – (vi) to sit; (vi) to live in, to dwell, to reside

ha – (prep) from; source; ablative

heke (**heki**) – (vt) to leave, to exit, to come out of, to go away from

hedzighus (**hidzíkhush**) – (n) constellation, star-sign

hidze (**hídzi**) – (n) star

hindim – (vi) to shine, to glow, to give off light

hiri (**hír**) – (n) light, spark, shine, glow

hundrut – (adj) upright, correct, (p) yes, truly, indeed

hungge (**húnggi**) – (vt) to raise up, to lift, to wake up, to begin; (vc) begin, start; inchoative

idzuk – (n) air, sky, weather
indrakh – (vt) to cut, to slice, to chop
iřid – (vt) to build, to make, to create
ka'a (ka') – (n) a type of large tree in the Cupressaceae family with reddish bark; wood of that tree
khisè (khíso) – (vt) to bite, to sting, to prick
khogum – (n) bottom, underside, lower part; (prep) below, under
lamuu – (vt) to resemble, to be like; (vc) should, must, ought to, obligation
lana – (p) then, next
legre (légri) – (adj) black, dark
lèng – (vi) to live, to exist; (vt) to be; copula
maazè (maaze) – (n) river, stream
maazemang – (n) type of horsetail-like plant that grows in or near shallow water, with several edible parts including the strobili/cones
maklè (máklo) – (n) word, name
maraa – (n) night
meese (meesi) – (n) wing, fin, sail
mi – (prep) to, toward, for, until; allative, dative, benefactive
mi'i (mi') – (vi) to go; (vc) going, associated motion away from deictic center
míkuru (míkúru) – (vt) to say
meno (menu) – (p) negative particle
muhun – (vi) to sleep
mus – (vt) to finish, to complete; (vc) to finish, to end, to do to completion; terminative, completive
naařèf – (vt) to forage, to gather, to collect, to harvest
nébiri (nébir) – (vi) to fly, to blow (of wind)
ngadè (ngádo) – (vt) to maintain, to manage, to work on, to take care of; (vc) to do slowly and carefully
nim – (prep) with, using; instrumental, comitative
omè (ómo) – (vt) to see, to look at, to watch
ondaz – (adj) big, large
osrob – (n) head
otuno (utúnu) – (n) manner, way of doing things
retsinim (ritsínim) – (vt) to burn
retsino (ritsínu) – (n) fire
ritse (rítsi) – (vi) to burn
řo'o (řo') – (vt) to keep, to own, to possess, to have
rondzè (róndze) – (adj) strong, powerful
sasè (sáso) – (n) same-gender sibling, brother of a man, sister of a woman
sèkenim – (vt) to teach, to instruct, to introduce

sèkè – (vt) to know, to remember, to recognize, to be familiar with
sembina – (n) a type of tree
sulos – (adj) wet, aquatic, associated with water
suu – (n) water
súúhiri – (n) sea-lights, blue lights sometimes seen in disturbed seawater, bioluminescent dinoflagellate bloom
suludz – (n) sea, ocean
tava (tafa) – (adj) many, a lot
tu'uz – (adj) quiet, silent
tša'us – (vi) to grow, to become larger
tša'usudz – (n) field, copse, place where plants naturally grow
tukut – (n) strobilus, cone, edible seed pod or spore organ of a plant
u – (pn) 3rd person human plural pronoun; they
utuu – (vi) to work, to do things (takes irregular participle)
zengè (zéngo) – (n) day, time
zuudaa – (n) short, low, shallow

Phrases

Two phrases with less obvious meanings are used in the text.

maazè dèghogum, "river's bottom" – (n) end of a river, where a river meets the sea
ngadè retsinim, "manage burn" – (vt) to cook

Context

There is one very important thing to know about the speakers of Mekundo: they are in the Triassic period. At this point, dinosaurs were getting started, mammal ancestors had probably evolved fur but nobody is sure, and plants hadn't figured out flowers yet. This means that most living things are very different than we're used to!

I've tried to include relevant details in the wordlist so that the meaning of the text can get across without any paleontological research being necessary. It doesn't really matter what an aetosauroid is, just that they're animals that can be eaten. I am excited to see what they become when this text is adapted to other contexts!

Phonology

The phonological inventory of Mekundo is not particularly necessary to this text, but several phonological processes are important.

1. **Word-final vowel reduction:** Short unstressed vowels lower at the end of a word, with /i/ and /u/ going to /e/ and /o/ respectively, and /e/ and /o/ reducing to /ə/.
2. **Pretonic vowel reduction:** Short vowels also lower in the syllable before the main stress, following the same rules.
3. **Copy vowel insertion:** If a word underlyingly ends in /ʔ/ or /ɾ/ (romanized as <'> and <r>), a copy of the final vowel is inserted after it. This is not affected by word-final vowel reduction.
4. **Umlaut:** An underlying unstressed short /ə/ or /a/ becomes /e/ in the syllable before an underlying /i/. This vowel may then reduce back to a /ə/, or the triggering /i/ may reduce to /e/, making the process somewhat non-obvious.
5. **Intervocalic Fricative Voicing:** The fricative phonemes /f/ and /x/ (romanized <kh>) voice to [v] and [ɣ] (romanized <gh>) intervocalically.

Primary stress is marked with an acute accent. The schwa is written <è>, or when marked as stressed, <ě>. If the penultimate vowel is stressed, it is not marked, as this is the most common position. Inflectional affixes generally do not move stress, so in a complex verb, the primary stress should be on the stem, which may help to identify it.

Noun Morphology

Nouns are relatively simple. They can be marked for number, possession, and demonstratives, but often have no marking at all.

Adjectives

Adjectives typically precede nouns, with no special marking.

tu'uz dzinè
quiet child
"quiet child"

An adjective can be reduplicated to intensify it.

tu'uz-tu'uz dzinè
quiet-INTSV child

"very quiet child"

Adjectives can also be used independently to mean "the [adjective] person" or "[adjective] thing."

tu'uz

quiet

"quiet one," "quiet thing"

Number

Nouns referring to humans are inherently singular, and take a suffix to mark them as plural. Nouns referring to non-humans are inherently unmarked for number, but can be specified with the same plural suffix, which has a few different forms depending on the final underlying sound of the word (only forms that appear in this text are included).

dzinè ~ dzíneta

child ~ children

suludz ~ sùludzèt

ocean(s) ~ oceans

Final sound	Form
Vowel Final	- <i>ta</i>
Consonant final	- <i>èt</i>

If a noun is modified by an adjective, the plural suffix goes on the first adjective instead of the noun. This only applies to true adjectives, not participles or possessors.

tu'uzèt dzinè

quiet-PL child

"quiet children"

Possession

If a noun is possessed, it takes a prefix agreeing in person and number with the possessor, and the possessor precedes it. Non-human possessors do not distinguish number. (3rd person human agreement has complications, but only one form is used in this text.)

	Singular	Plural
1st person	<i>ga</i> ⁻¹	<i>do</i> -
2nd person	<i>la</i> ⁻¹	<i>eli</i> -
3rd human	<i>fe</i> -	<i>alu</i> -
3rd non-human	<i>dè</i> ⁻¹	

¹The vowel becomes [e] if the initial vowel of the stem is an underlying /i/.

The vowel of the prefix is dropped before a vowel-initial root. Pretonic vowel weakening often affects these prefixes. Pronominal possessors are almost always dropped, leaving only the agreement; independent pronouns are rare in Mekundo.

gèdzinè
1S-child
"my child."

zengè didzuk
day 3N-weather
"the day's weather"

Demonstratives

There's a basic proximal/distal distinction, with different proximal forms depending on the animacy of the noun. These can become prefixes on nouns.

	Independent	Vowel-Initial	Consonant-Initial
Proximal (Human)	<i>endze</i>	<i>endz</i> -	<i>endzi</i> -
Proximal (Non-human)	<i>nan</i>	<i>nan</i> -	<i>na</i> -
Distal	<i>ambè</i>	<i>amb</i> -	<i>ambe</i> -

endzedzinè
PROX.H-child
"this child"

ambidzuk
DIST-weather
"that weather"

Verbs

Verb elements go in the following order, with asterisks marking the required elements for a finite verb.

Subject*	Aspect	Passive	Negative	Root*	Tense*	Object
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Subject Agreement

Verbs agree with their subject in number and person, using the same prefixes as possession. Subject pronouns are usually dropped.

Tense

Verbs are marked for one of three tenses: non-past, past perfective, and past imperfective. They also have a participle/non-finite form. The non-past and past perfective both have different forms for transitive and intransitive verbs, but the intransitive non-past does not occur in this text so has been left out.

The form of the suffixes depends on the final sound of the word they're attached to. A final consonant is deleted before the suffix is added, and in the table, C represents that final vowel.

	Transitive Non-Past	Transitive Past Perfective	Intransitive Past Perfective	Past Imperfective	Participle
vowel	-řo	-k	-mus	-ti ¹	-rum, -tum ²
r		-tak	-ndus		-řum
glottal		-hak	-mus	-di ¹	-dum
nasal	-ndro	-Cak	-mus	-ndi ¹	-ndum
p, b, f	-Cro	-vak	-mbus	-eti	-Crum
k, g, kh		-ghak	-nggus		
z		-zak	-nzus		
s, ts, dz		-tsak	-ndzus		
d, t		-tak	-ndus		

¹ Raises an underlying unstressed /a/ or /ə/ in the final syllable to /e/

² The usual form is *-rum*, but a handful of words ending in long vowels take the irregular *-tum*; this is marked in the dictionary entry.

Sembina dètsá'undzus.

tree 3N-grow-PP.I

"The tree grew."

Dzinè fomok sembina.

child 3S-see-PP.T tree

"The child saw the tree."

Alolámuuti sembina.

3P-resemble-PI tree

"They resembled trees."

Passive

The passive voice is marked by a prefix, which works how you expect. Passive verbs take transitive endings, even though they only have one argument.

Initial Sound	Passive
vowel	<i>r-</i>
consonant	<i>ra-</i> ¹

¹ Vowel becomes *e* if the first vowel in the stem is an underlying *i*, then may reduce to *è* pretonically.

Dzinè ferómoti.

child 3S-see-PI

"The child was seen."

Negation

The negative has two parts: a prefix and a particle. The prefix is very lightweight and sometimes completely disappears into other morphology.

Consonant-Initial	o-
Consonant-Initial (Pretonic)	è-
Vowel-Initial	'-

A negated verb is also followed by the particle *meno*.

Ga'omok dzinè meno.

1S-NEG-see-PP.T child NEG

"I did not see the child."

Alolámuuti sembina meno.

3P-NEG-resemble-PI tree NEG

"They did not resemble trees."

Aspect

There are several aspect prefixes which can be applied to verbs, but only the habitual comes up in this text. The form, as usual, depends on the initial sound of the word.

Initial sound	Habitual
vowel	<i>lèng-</i>
ř	<i>lèndr-</i>
l	<i>lènd-</i>
glottal	<i>lèng⁻¹</i>
nasal	<i>lèC-</i>
p, b, f	<i>lèmb-</i>
k, g, kh	<i>lèngg-</i>
z	<i>lènz-</i>
s, ts, dz	<i>lèndz-</i>
d, t, r	<i>lènd-</i>

¹ Deletes initial consonant.

Felèngómořo retsínota.
 3S-HAB-see-NPT fire-PL
 "He often watches fires."

One particular use of the habitual is that, when paired with the past imperfective, it behaves more like a gnomic, describing general truths unbounded by any particular time.

Fina dèlèndzá'useti.
 plant 3N-HAB-grow-PI
 "Plants grow."

Object Clitics

If the object of a verb is a pronoun, it may cliticize onto the end of the verb. Note that the forms in the table already show word-final vowel weakening, as these always come at the end of a word. (Some irrelevant forms have been removed from the table.)

	Vowel-Final		Nasal-Final ²		Consonant-Final	
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
3rd human	-vè	-ho	-mfè	-No	-èvè	-o
3rd non-human	-nè	-nèta ¹	-nè	-nèta	-ènè	-èneta ¹

¹ The non-human plural forms are used to emphasize plurality, while the "singular" form does not specify a number.

² Delete final consonant

Dèghíseko.
 3N-sting-PP.T=3P
 "It stung them."

Clause Chaining

If a sentence contains multiple verbs, they can be combined with reduced morphology. All the verbs take subject agreement, and potentially negation or the passive, but only the last verb in the chain takes tense marking and object clitics.

Dzinè fèmi'i fómořonè.

child 3S-go 3S-see-NP:T=3N

"The child is going and looking at it."

They can even have different arguments, with each verb being preceded by its subject. One way to think of it is that a verb without a tense suffix just takes the tense of the next verb after it.

Dzinè fèmuhun ganáářèvak fina.

child 3S-sleep 1S-gather-PP:T plant

"The child slept while I gathered plants."

Sometimes verb chains can be used somewhat derivationally. Certain verbs that have specific uses in clause chains are listed as (vc) in the wordlist, standing for "Verb Chained."

Dèhungge dèhindimus.

3N-begin 3N-glow-PP:I

"It began glowing," LIT: "It began and it glowed"

Syntax

As you have probably guessed from all the examples, the basic word order is SVO.

Prepositions

Mekundo is prepositional. In most cases, prepositions are unmarked.

mi maazè

ALL river

"to the river"

If the object of a preposition is a pronoun, the pronoun becomes a clitic, using the same forms as the object clitics of verbs.

mivè

ALL=3S

"to her"

Participles

Verbs have a participle form, included in the tense table. This can follow a noun to modify it.

dzinè múhundum
child sleep-PTCP
"the sleeping child."

These can take objects, and may behave more like relative clauses.

dzinè náářèfrum fina
child gather-PTCP plant
"the child who gathered plants"

The participle can also be used as the object of another verb. If the subject of both would be the same, the participle takes no person marking.

Gaveliĩřo múhundum.
1S-want-NP.T sleep-PTCP
"I want to sleep."

However, if the subjects are different, person marking is present.

Gaveliĩřo dzine fèmhundum.
1S-want-NP.T child 3S-sleep-PTCP
"I want the child to sleep."

Conjunction

To conjoin nouns or adjectives, the word *an* is used. This word covers the meanings of both "and" and "but," with contrast largely being shown by increased stress on the word.

Fèlèndro zuudaa an rondzè.
3SA-COP-NP.T short CONJ strong
"He is short and strong." OR "He is short but strong."

When not focused, typically in the non-contrastive "and" sense, this word can cliticize, becoming =*an* after a consonant and =*n* after a vowel (including copy vowels). In the romanization, the clitic is marked with an apostrophe, which can be distinguished from a glottal stop because it occurs next to a consonant (something glottal stops never do).

Fèlèndro zuudaa'n rondzè.
3SA-COP-NP.T short=CONJ strong
"He is short and strong."

To conjoin verb phrases, the most common strategy is clause chaining, with no explicit conjunction, but *an* can also be used. This is often used to emphasize the contrast between the phrases, or to separate more complex phrases that might become confusing with clause chaining. It typically does not cliticize onto verb phrases.

Fègèrenzus an fèmu'hundus.
3S-sit-PP.I CONJ 3S-sleep-PP.I
"She is sitting, but sleeping."

Conditionals

One type of conditional is used in this text, which specifically indicates that the second part follows naturally or automatically from the first part. The condition is preceded by the ablative preposition *ha*, and the verb is conjugated normally. The verb of the result clause is put in the participle form, which takes subject agreement, and the clause may optionally be preceded by the allative preposition *mi* to emphasize the cause-and-effect relation.

Ha gagèrénzindro, (mi) dètsá'usrum.
ABL 1S-plant-NP.T tree, (ALL) 3N-grow-PTCP
"If I plant trees, (then) they will grow," or "When I plant trees, they grow."

Bibliography

(This is mostly here because I think it's funny.)

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