

Sivmikor Relayening Torch With English

Text

Heni tsanni zbas hen a sanda moy jo ney Sesanat zan ivetyo neh Netxanutyo. Divi tsan, ehu jow makahalowh ney Salut Koteyh fanda, ev ex movna na fen wotu ho dalinda.

Dilavna a nedaz dembi nu banzayn reyz nofte zulevleg. Veyd ve kuji jaw zulevleg ster, ajov nofte. Rexponyu, rozne rekyo mar zinjini xoz, jreg sav ava ner ron murug. Behre ro heya, mawxus gak, gow wol mi zulevlegza zvus nofte kuvi. Henvawn nuy "Twarnam, nofte zulevleg reyn zow?" Henzivna nuy "Kavuxkays la halay! Divi xnofte, bas manal snel ho dalinda!"

Gow nofte vay ava ner o zulevleg jul yavri ey xah ster zay kasi. Uvi xnofte, movna nu tabra kehu zinjijay, gow skovna ho dalinay.

English Translation

This is a story told by the seven thousand or so Sesanat people living in the town of Nechanut. It's about the mythological character Salut Kote, and how she learned to respect her ancestors.

One day Salut Kote's mother led her into the forest to gather blueberries. They saw a blueberry bush and started picking from it. Her mother stumbled and broke a beehive, and the bees swarmed out and attacked them. They ran away and managed to escape from the bees, but this made them drop all the blueberries. She asked her mother, "Why did we gather blueberries, anyway?" Her mother replied, "Don't ask such questions! Gathering blueberries ties us to our ancestors!"

So they gathered blueberries again the next day, and many more times after that. Each time, the gathering reminded her of the bees... which reminded her of her ancestors.

Pronunciation Guide

Sivmikor's orthography mostly follows the IPA. The exceptions are:

- <j> = /ʒ/
- <x> = /ʃ/
- <y> = /j/

The vowels <e> and <o> are generally pronounced open-mid, as [ɛ] and [ɔ], regardless of context.

The <h> is pronounced [x] in coda position.

Grammar Notes

Clauses

A clause consists of a verb followed by its arguments.

Each verb dictates which arguments it can take. Some verbs are intransitive, and take only one argument, which is never marked for case.

Others take more than one argument, and assign some combination of cases to those arguments. The available cases are Agent (typically for the *cause* of the verb), Patient (typically for the one *affected* by the verb), and Theme (typically for what the verb is *about*). Each verb in the lexicon is labelled with which cases it assigns to which arguments.

For example, the verb *hen* "tell" has the argument structure "A tells T to P". This means that the person doing the speaking is the Agent, the person hearing what's being said is the Patient, and the thing being said is the Theme.

Watch out, sometimes the arguments look backwards from an English perspective. This tends to happen when the object of the English verb is actually the *cause* of the action, with the English subject seen as a "victim" of events beyond their control. For example, the verb *wol* can be translated as "lose", but it's the *patient* that loses the *agent*, not the other way around.

Any arguments can be dropped if they're irrelevant or obvious from context, leaving the remaining arguments in their original cases. For example, *hen a sanda* (Agent case) means "the person tells (something), the person speaks", while *hen ti sanda* (Patient case) means "the person is told (something)".

Case marking is optional for animate Agents and inanimate Patients.

Nominalization

A clause can be nominalized by putting **ex** in front of it. This works like putting "the fact that..." in front of an English clause, e.g. *ex hen a sanda nu tsan* means "the fact that the person told a story".

The nominalizer becomes **vi** in agent case, **na** in theme case.

A verb without arguments can be turned into a noun representing the action itself by prefixing **x-**.

Topicalization

Topics are sometimes yanked out of their clause and moved all the way to the front, before the verb. When this happens, the topic loses its case marking, with its relationship to the verb left to context and the cases of the remaining arguments.

Clitics and Affixes

In Sivmikor, the same clitic or affix can vary considerably in form depending on the adjacent sounds in the word it's attached to. I won't give the full tables here, but I'll list all the variations that appear in the text.

Definiteness

Sivmikor distinguishes four levels of "definiteness":

- The base form of the noun is both indefinite and non-specific. The speaker doesn't have a referent in mind, or doesn't consider its identity important.
- The indefinite form means the speaker has a specific one in mind, but doesn't think the listener is familiar with it.
- The definite form means the speaker thinks the listener knows which one is meant because of shared context. With kinship terms, this often implies *possession* by the last person mentioned, e.g. *Heni ze nedaz*, literally "I spoke to the mother", generally implies that I spoke to *my* mother.
- The anaphoric form is used for entities that have already been mentioned earlier in the conversation.

The affixes are:

- Indefinite: **-ni**, **-wh**, **-yh**, **-yn**, **-yo**,
- Definite: **-da**, **-za**
- Anaphoric: **-ay**

When a noun is topicalized, the definiteness marker becomes a separate word in front of the noun.

- Non-specific: **hur**
- Indefinite: **ena**
- Definite: **sto**
- Anaphoric: **divi**

Case

Case is indicated by a clitic (written as a separate word) before the noun.

- Agent: animate **a**, inanimate **mi**, **ve**
- Patient: animate **ti**, inanimate **o**
- Theme: animate **ho**, **jow**, inanimate **la**, **nu**, **nuy**
- Genitive: **mar**
- Conjunction: animate **ava**, inanimate **ev**, **ey**
 - Usually corresponds to English "and" or "with".
- Apposition: **neh**, **ney**
 - Means "who is also", e.g. *san ney Salut Kote* = "people named Salut Kote" (literally "people who are also Salut Kote").
- Augmentation: **jaw**
 - Means "with", "bearing", "having"
- Locative: **zan**, **zay**

Roles

When you introduce an important person or thing, you can assign it a *role* to make it easier to refer back to it later.

In this text, we see:

- Role 3: assigned with **fanda**, referenced with **vay** (patient **sav**, theme **gov**).
- Role 4: assigned with **dembi**, referenced with **ner** (patient **sun**, theme **gir**).
- Role 5: assigned with **xoz**, referenced with **jek** (patient **sok**, theme **gak**).

Typically Role 3 is used for the protagonist of a story, Role 4 for a supporting character, and Role 5 for an antagonist or obstacle.

Verb Modifiers

Various markers can go before the verb to modify its meaning.

- Start of a state or action: **ajov**
- Habitual: **bas**
- Ability: **fen**
- Perfective: **vus**

Negation

Negation is marked on the verb by the prefix **kav-**.

Pronoun Clitics

When verb arguments are pronouns, they often cliticize to the end of the verb.

- First person:
 - Agent: **-i, -m**
- Second person:
 - Agent: **-ys**
- Role 3:
 - Agent: **-va**
 - Patient: **-vna**
- Role 4:
 - Agent: **-nyu, -zi**
 - Patient: **-wn**

Relativizer

This goes on the front of a verb to mark that it modifies the preceding noun. Its forms include **k-**, **s-**, **z-**.

Adverbs

Adding **ro** in front of a verb turns it into a manner adverb, e.g. *wotu* "respect" > *ro wotu* "respectfully".

Lexicon

banza (noun) = forest

behre (verb) = leaves, departs (A leaves T)

dalin (noun) = ancestor

dila (verb) = brings, takes, leads (A brings P to T)

ehu (verb) = is about (P is about T)

gow (conjunction) = so, as a result

hal (noun) = thing

hen (verb) = tells, says (A tells T to P)

heya (verb) = runs, moves rapidly (intransitive)

ivet (noun) = city, town

jo (numeral) = about seven (used when giving rough estimates of quantity)

jreg (verb) = attacks (A attacks P)

jul (adverb) = again

kasi (noun) = time after

kuji (noun) = bush

manal (verb) = ties, binds (A ties P to T)

makahalo (noun) = legendary or mythological character
mawxus (verb) = escapes, gets away from (A escapes T)
moy (numeral) = one thousand
mu (verb) = gives (A gives T to P)
murug (noun) = crowd, swarm, horde
neda (noun) = mother
Netxanut (proper noun) = the name of a settlement
nofte (verb) = gathers, collects, harvests (A gathers P from T)
rek (noun) = house
rexpo (verb) = stumbles, falters (intransitive)
reyn zow (adverb) = why?
reyz (conjunction) = in order to, with the aim of
ron (preposition) = as, in the form of
rozne (verb) = damages, breaks (A damages P)
san (noun) = person
Sesanat (proper noun) = the name of an ethnic group
sko (verb) = "and then the same thing happens" (with new arguments)
snel (pronoun) = you and me (patient case)
tabra (noun) = memory, mental image
ter (verb) = is numerous (intransitive); often relativized as *ster* to mean "many".
tsan (noun) = story (of a person or thing), history
twarna (verb) = ponders, thinks deeply (A ponders T)
uvi (verb) = is all of them (intransitive); often relativized as *kuvi* to mean "all".
uxka (verb) = requests, asks for (A asks P for T)
veyd (verb) = sees, notices (P sees A, *note the "backward" arguments!*)
wol (verb) = loses (P loses A, *note the "backward" arguments!*)
wotu (verb) = respects, admires (A respects T)
xah (noun) = time, occasion
yavri (adverb) = the next day
zinij (noun) = bee
zulevleg (noun) = blueberry