

NOTES ON SAKUN GRAMMAR

Particles and prepositions

- a at start of clause, past tense marker also indicating a completed action or state, e.g., a sën - I know
- a imperative (and seems like homonym of the previous)
- da at start of clause, future marker, indicates that the action is in the future
- ha down as in *ya-ha* to come down, also below, from below
- ka to (+ verb) see 96:84
- ka not, perhaps always closely associated with pronoun as in phrase 96:120
- ka of, as in *ma ka ban*
- kë particle indicating that next word specifies something that has gone before (see 92:75)
- kë for, in, during, e.g., *kë vë'd* – in the night
- ma up as in *ya-ma* to come up; also up, above, from above
- më (mbë) inside, in state of
- më at start of clause, marks present, continuing action
- mu in -- *mu ha'd* in the earth (96:86), *mu harren* in (a state of) age (96:89)
- na at start of clause, an interrogative particle introducing a question
- na at end of one clause and preceding another, a particle that behaves like a comma
- në (OR ni) with as in *në ta* with them, and also instrumental as in *ni kimbak* see 96:92, but see also 96:108 for a different sense
- pë to or on (as of a place -- *pë Patla* see 96:98);
- ra suffix with several meanings, including perhaps indicating that the process described by the verb took some time
- shi together with (perhaps only with people?) -- *shi zhiri* see 96:90
- va in house of, similar to French *chez*
- va a particle that as a suffix appears to sometimes emphasize completion of a process, as in *ndedeva* to cross (complete the crossing)
- wa at end of clause, an interrogative particle ending a question as in *na da wa* - what thing?

PRONOUNS

Subject	Conjunctive	Disjunctive
I	<i>ni</i> (or sometimes <i>ně?</i>)	<i>kena</i>
you(s)	<i>kwa</i>	<i>ku</i>
he	<i>ca</i>	<i>tsoey</i>
she	<i>ka</i>	<i>mëk</i>
we (incl.)	<i>mën</i>	<i>mën</i> , and <i>mara</i> (all of us)
we (excl.)	<i>nyi</i>	<i>nyi</i>
you(pl)	<i>ki</i>	<i>ki</i>
they	<i>ta</i>	<i>ta</i>

Object	Direct	Indirect
me	<i>kënga</i>	?
you(s)	<i>tàn</i>	<i>kwo</i> or <i>kwáy</i>
him	<i>tè</i>	<i>tè</i>
her, it	<i>mëk*</i>	<i>mëk</i>
us (incl. and excl.)	<i>tën</i>	<i>tën</i>
you(pl)	<i>tuku</i>	<i>kiyar</i>
them	<i>ta</i>	<i>ta</i>

* for women, females, animals and things

Possessive adjective

my	<i>nga</i>
your(s)	<i>ta</i>
his	<i>tè</i>
hers	<i>ka</i>
our (incl. and excl.)	<i>té</i>
your(pl)	<i>tuku</i>
their	<i>ta</i>

VERB CONJUGATION

I have only a few abortive notes on this:

Note: etc. indicates that there is no subsequent change in the form of the verb

	Present	Future	past
Speak			
I	më dlatë ni		a dlaha ni
you(s)	më dlatu kwa		a dlaha kwa, etc.
he	më dlatu ca		
she	më dlato ka		
we	më dlatë mën, etc		
Listen to			
I	më xyetë ni		a xyam ni, etc
you (s)	më xyeto kwa		
he	më xyetë ca, etc		
Go			
I	a dlë ni		
you (s)	a dlë kwa, etc		
Give			
I	më maca ni, etc		
Eat			
I	më 'dowatë ni	da 'dowata ni	a 'dum ni, etc
you (s)	më 'dowatu kwa	da 'dowotu kwa	
he më	'dowatë ca, etc		

Implications and Problems.

The above suggests:

1. that verb roots are sometimes modified a) in the first, second, and third persons singular of the present tense, and b) between the present and past tenses.
2. that the suffix *të* and variants may mark some verbs' present tense.
3. that the suffix *ha* may mark some verbs' present tense.

However, it is almost unconceivable that the particle *a* can be both a past marker and a present marker. Something seems wrong with the present tense of Go, and I suspect that my informants interpreted 'go' as a completed action – on the analogy of *a së-n* 'I know.' *A dlë ni* might then be better glossed as 'I have left (even if I have not yet arrived).'

Analysis of the phrases should shed light on this question.

COMMON GREETINGS

	to one person	to more than one person	
morning	a vay kwa	a vay ki	
afternoon	a vak kwa	a vak ki	
goodbye	g(ë)ta vay	g(ë)tuku vay	
goodbye	aka vay mara		when leaving each other