Proposed segmental orthography of Moloko

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2001

SIL
B.PP. 1299, Yaoundé
République du Cameroun
Acknowledgements
This paper was made with a lot of help from many people.

Firstly, to Cathy Bow, whose short-term work in Moloko to write a phonology paper and orthography suggestions provided a great foundation on which to build. I have never met you personally, but I am thankful for your careful work.

Next, to three Moloko friends – Pastor Oumar Abraham, Sali Justin, and Sambo Joël, who worked together to enter Moloko praise songs into the computer, thus experimenting with the newly born orthography. I am thankful for the way you have each given yourselves to develop your language, for your expertise in handling it, and for the way you honestly interacted with me as we worked together.

Next, to the group of men who worked tirelessly in meetings over several months to analyze the various orthography issues with us, to make decisions on the issues, and to test them. Some of these men were (in addition to the above three): Ali Gaston, Sada Simon, Alidou Paul, Mana Samuel, and Peslumta Pierre. Thank you for your commitment, and the passion of our discussions, where I saw how special it is to you to have your language written well.

Next, to my colleagues on the Moloko team – Ginger Boyd and Alan and DeEtte Starr, who were always there to encourage, challenge, innovate, and conspire in our meetings. It was here in the context of our discussions that I felt the greatest team spirit. Thank you for your expertise, your patience, and your hospitality.

I am thankful to our consultants: Stephen Anderson, to whose gentleness in correction I am forever indebted, Marti Giger, whose invaluable advice in literacy helped shape this whole thing, and Richard Gravina and Tony Smith, who gave advice from their expertise in neighboring languages.

Finally, a special thanks to Sambo Joël, who worked with me to produce a writing guide for Moloko, and then taught it, really testing out the issues. People can write Moloko now because of you!

For the glory of God!
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

This orthography proposal represents the present state of the development of the orthography in Moloko. It is based on a phonology statement and tentative orthography suggestions made by Cathy Bow in 1997. The orthography suggested by Bow was employed since 1997 by a few Moloko men when they wrote a Moloko songbook. Then, between July of 2000 and March 2001, a committee of Moloko men from the language committee met together with the SIL team to look at orthography issues and further develop the orthography. The men did some testing in three different areas of the Moloko region. They taught two variations of the orthography to two different test groups and studied how the participants could read and write each of the orthographies.

As of this moment, the symbols for each phoneme have been chosen and a set of spelling rules has been established. The orthography was taught and tested in a 2-day workshop for a dozen people literate in Fulfulde. The final revision was made afterwards, considering the results of the testing and suggestions by the consultants.

A treatment of tone is beyond the scope of this paper. Initial study indicates that there is both grammatical and lexical tone in Moloko. The abundance of minimal pairs for tone in both nouns and verbs indicate that tone must be written somehow. This area is currently under study and we await orthographic suggestions on how tone is to be written.

1.1 **Linguistic Classification of Moloko**

Moloko is a central Chadic language of the Wandala-Mafa group. It is spoken in the arrondissements of Tokombéré and Maroua, departments of Mayo-Sava and Diamaré, respectively, in the Far North Province of the Republic of Cameroon.

1.2 **Basic principles in the orthography design**

- Moloko words will be written according to their isolation form. The fact that the final syllable before a pause contains a full vowel means that every word said in isolation will have at least one full vowel regardless of their underlying form. These vowels are the vehicles for indicating the prosody on the word.
- The word image of the isolation form will normally be preserved when the word is in context or when affixes are added.
- Only one grapheme will normally be used for each consonant phoneme.
- Word division decisions are aided by the observation of word final allophonic variations, and also by the fact that word prosodies will cross morpheme boundaries but not word boundaries.

2. **THE ALPHABET**

2.1 **Choice of graphemes**

The symbols to be used were chosen in accordance with the *Alphabet Général des Langues Camerounaises*, adopting the forms most similar to Fulfulde, the trade language of northern Cameroon. Even though French is the language of education, virtually every Moloko who can read French can also read Fulfulde, and Fulfulde is much more widely employed by the people in the Moloko region.
## 2.2 Order of Alphabet

a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, mb, n, nd, ng, nj, o, p, r, s, sl, t, u, v, w, y, z, zl.

## 2.3 Consonants

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<td>p, P</td>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>paday, palongod, pembez</td>
<td>m'sapapar, mopocok, mepetpete</td>
<td>lap</td>
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<td>[b]</td>
<td>bahay, bogom, beke</td>
<td>mabasl, abor, mebebek</td>
<td></td>
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<td>/β/</td>
<td>β, F</td>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>fokotok, fenge</td>
<td>afa, at the house of stalk</td>
<td></td>
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<td>/v/</td>
<td>v, V</td>
<td>[v]</td>
<td>vakay, vorom, vwele</td>
<td>njavar, havor-vavor, zlevek</td>
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<td>/m/</td>
<td>m, M</td>
<td>[m]</td>
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<td>t'amak, amom, atome</td>
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<td>/mb/</td>
<td>mb, Mb</td>
<td>[mb]</td>
<td>mbahay, mbolom, mbalele</td>
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<td>w, W</td>
<td>[w]</td>
<td>war, welen</td>
<td>diwa, cecwe, sambewe</td>
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<td>t, T</td>
<td>[t]</td>
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<td>tatarak, atos, mepetpete</td>
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<td>/d/</td>
<td>d, D</td>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>dalay, dongo, darlenge</td>
<td>hada, adok, dede</td>
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<tr>
<td>/d'/</td>
<td>d', D</td>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>duwa, dagom, dedew</td>
<td>yaday, hado, pade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### [4] Consonants

|        |        |           | sl, sloth, slenkare    | aslar, aslesleb, kasl        |           |
|        |        |           | zlak-zlak, zlokay, zlazlew | agozlak, bozlon, azlere     |           |

The table above lists examples of consonants, their phonetic representations, and their allophones, along with examples of words where these consonants appear in different positions within a word. Each entry includes examples of words that start, continue, or end with the specified consonant, as well as examples of words where the consonant is found in the middle of a word. The column for word medial contains examples of words where the consonant is situated in the middle of a word, and the column for word final contains examples of words where the consonant appears at the end of a word. The examples are given in English and the specific words are marked with their phonetic representations. The entries are organized by phonetic symbol, with each section covering a different set of consonants, starting with /p/, /b/, /β/, /v/, /m/, /mb/, /w/, /t/, /d/, and /d'/, followed by examples for [4] and [A] consonants. The table also notes the allophones for each phonetic symbol, providing a comprehensive view of how these consonants are articulated in the language.
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<td>n, N</td>
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<td>Examples, by position</td>
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<td>nok</td>
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<td>ne</td>
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<td>/Nd/</td>
<td>nd, Nd</td>
<td>[nd]</td>
<td>ndan</td>
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<td>ndoztoy</td>
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<td>nden-nden</td>
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<td>/l/</td>
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<td>[l]</td>
<td>lovun</td>
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<td>løhe</td>
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<td>/ts/</td>
<td>c², C</td>
<td>[ts]</td>
<td>car</td>
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<td>/dz/</td>
<td>j, J</td>
<td>[dz]</td>
<td>javar</td>
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<td>jogom</td>
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<td>/s/</td>
<td>s, S</td>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>sar</td>
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<td>sono</td>
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<tr>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>z, Z</td>
<td>[z]</td>
<td>zar</td>
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<td>zom</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1 All of the word medial nd (also nj and ng) could be interpreted as consonant clusters. However, there are no unambiguous cases of word medial syllable final n.

2 [ts/tʃ] ’c’ and [dz/dʒ] ’j’. Since these sounds function phonemically as complete units, rather than clusters of two consonants, it should be simple for speakers to learn a single grapheme for each one. Fulfulde readers already read c and j for ts and dz.
<table>
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<td>nj, Nj</td>
<td>[ndz] labialised and no prosody words</td>
<td><strong>Examples, by position</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/njavar/ young man sit!</td>
<td><strong>word initial</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/njom/</td>
<td><strong>manjara termite</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ndz/</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ndZ] palatalised words</td>
<td>/nje/ sit!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/y/</td>
<td>y, Y</td>
<td>[y]</td>
<td><strong>Examples, by position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>k, K</td>
<td>[k] palatalised and no prosody words</td>
<td>/kara/ courage</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/kekeb/ sharp</td>
<td>/beke/</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>[kʷ] labialised words(^3)</td>
<td>/kokor/ gourd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>g, G</td>
<td>[g] palatalised and no prosody words</td>
<td>/gadan/ strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/ge/ do!</td>
<td>/maɗeŋ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/</td>
<td>h, H</td>
<td>[h] palatalised and no prosody words, word initial or medial</td>
<td>/hay/ millet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/heyew/ grasshopper</td>
<td>/meher/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h/</td>
<td></td>
<td>[hʷ] labialised words, word initial or medial</td>
<td>/hɔmboh/ pardon woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/hɔr/</td>
<td><strong>--------</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/w/</td>
<td></td>
<td>[w] word final, any prosody</td>
<td><strong>--------</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ng/</td>
<td>ng, Ng</td>
<td>[ng] palatalised and no prosody words</td>
<td>/ngay/ set</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[ng] labialised words</td>
<td>/dɔrlège/ hyena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ng/</td>
<td></td>
<td>[ngʷ] labialised words</td>
<td>/ngohom/ break!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) The labialisation of these velars is indicated by the labialised vowel (o).
**Labialised Velars**

Velars become labialised in labialised words. Also, Bow has posited the existence of distinct underlyingly labialised velar consonants: /k^w/, g^w/, h^w/, ng^w/. Phonetically they sound the same as /k, g, h, ng/ in labialised words. These consonants are found in words with no prosody or in palatalised words. If these labialised velars do occur in labialised words, there is neutralization with their unlabialised counterparts.

Labialised velars are written in the following manner:
If [k^w] realizes /k^w/ in a no prosody or palatalised word, it is written kw.
If [k^w] is in a labialised word, it is written k (the labialisation is indicated by the vowel).

The vowel changes associated with the labialised velars are not indicated in the orthography since they are predictable.

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<td>kw, Kw</td>
<td>[k^w]</td>
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<td>tskwɔrak</td>
<td>mecəkwɛd</td>
<td>azekw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>palatalised and no prosody words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/g^w/</td>
<td>gw, Gw</td>
<td>[g^w]</td>
<td>gwbay much</td>
<td>agwɔzlak</td>
<td>gɛwɛz</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>palatalised and no prosody words</td>
<td>gwɛndɛn</td>
<td>first son toilet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/h^w/</td>
<td>hw, Hw</td>
<td>[h^w]</td>
<td>hwɔzlay spoil</td>
<td>cɛhwɛl</td>
<td>cɛhɛl</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>palatalised and probably no prosody words</td>
<td></td>
<td>stalk</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>/ng^w/</td>
<td>ngw, Ngw</td>
<td>[ng^w]</td>
<td>ngwɔdaslay simmer</td>
<td>mɛdɛlɛŋwez</td>
<td>lɛpɔrd</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>palatalised and probably no prosody words</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

These labialised velar phonemes sound the same as velars in labialised words. See section 2.4 for more discussion.

The pronunciation is [κ^wѰαѱ]. All schwas are written ə regardless of the underlying prosody influencing them. See section 2.4 for more discussion.
2.4 Vowels and prosodies

Variants of the /a/ vowel are represented by a, o, or e, according to the prosody. There are two word-level prosodies, palatalisation and labialisation. These prosodies affect the vowels and some of the consonants in a word.\(^6\) Each word carries no prosody or one of these prosodies. In the orthography, the underlying prosody in a word is indicated by the variant of the /a/ vowels in the word. There is always at least one full vowel in the citation form of a word because of the pause final influence of stress.

In words unaffected by a prosody, the full vowels are all written ‘a’. Examples:

- awak, goat
- kara, courage
- mongamak, wild cat

In palatalised words, the full vowels are all written ‘e’. Examples:

- dedewe, type of bird
- hayew, grasshopper
- hander, nose

In labialised words, the full vowels are all written ‘o’. Examples:

- bogom, type of hoe
- sono, joke, teasing
- tolom, trompette

<table>
<thead>
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<td>a, A</td>
<td>[a] no prosody</td>
<td>anjakar hen awak goat matabasi cloud</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>harac agwazlak scorpion hen kara hada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o, O</td>
<td>[o] or [ɔ] in labalised words</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>sakoey clan agoh viper hədo wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e, E</td>
<td>[e] or [ɛ] in palatalised words</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>heyew dedewe grasshopper type of bird dede grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[ɛ] next to a labalised velar in a palatalised word</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>madehwer old cecekw flute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^6\) Labialisation affects the velar on sonants (/k, g, ng, h/), and palatalisation affects the alveolar fricatives and affricates (/s, z, ts, dz, ndz/) (see consonant chart). Speakers do not seem to have any problem reading or writing one symbol for the two allophones. Examples:

- jan [dzaŋ] ‘pierce’
- jen [dʒəŋ] ‘luck/chance’
- mçapor[matsapor] ‘many things that are different’
- mçepe [mitʃepe] ‘to suspend’
- asa [asa] ‘if’
- ase [aʃe] ‘again’
- njavar [ndzavar] ‘young man’
- njemer [ndʒemər] ‘little bones’
- gala [gala] ‘courtyard’
- golom [ɡolom] ‘type of tree’

\(^7\) Probably the lower vowel is found in closed syllables, as Smith found in Muyang. Needs further study.
The /ə/ is an automatic insertion between consonants. Because the word prosody is already indicated by the full vowel in each word, the schwa will automatically harmonize, and so variants of /ə/ do not need to be marked.

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<td>[i] or [I]</td>
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<td>palatalised words, before y in words of any prosody</td>
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<td>[y]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>between a /y/ and a /w/ or labialised velar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[u] or [Y]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>labialised words, next to labialised velars, and before w in words of any prosody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 See section 3.2 for more discussion.
9 Differences here seem to be according to the speaker or syllable pattern, but need further study.
10 As above.
3. **Orthography Rules and Conventions**

3.1 **Underlying a- prefix**

There are many words in Moloko which begin with a full vowel. This reflects an underlying a- prefix, which has lost its meaning and become part of the lexical word. The prefix is affected to varying degrees by the word prosodies. Palatalisation appears to be the stronger prosody and the a- prefix in virtually all palatalised words is pronounced [e] or [æ], according to the speaker. In labialised words, however, some prefixes are pronounced [o] and some [a], according to the speaker. In order to standardize the spelling, we have made a rule that states that the only vowel that can begin a word is ‘a’.\(^{11}\) Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ako</td>
<td>[oʊkɑ]; [oʊkɑ]</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akor</td>
<td>[ɑkɑʊr]</td>
<td>rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agoh</td>
<td>[æɡoh]</td>
<td>viper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aroh</td>
<td>[ɔrɔh]</td>
<td>pus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ale</td>
<td>[əle]</td>
<td>eye, thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anen</td>
<td>[ænɛn]</td>
<td>snake, something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agone</td>
<td>[ægən]</td>
<td>today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ateme</td>
<td>[ætæmə]</td>
<td>onion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayewed</td>
<td>[æwɛd]</td>
<td>whip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 **Syllable patterns**

Bow found the basic syllable patterns in Moloko to be the following:

CV. This is the most common syllable type. All consonants can occur as the onset, all vowels as the nucleus. Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>baba</td>
<td>[bɑbɑ]</td>
<td>father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tere</td>
<td>[tɛrɛ]</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sono</td>
<td>[sɔnɔ]</td>
<td>teasing, joke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. This syllable pattern is only found word initial.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>awak</td>
<td>[aʊwɑk]</td>
<td>goat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ale</td>
<td>[əlɛ]</td>
<td>thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akor</td>
<td>[ækɔr]</td>
<td>stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>[ə]</td>
<td>associative particle, preposition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CVC. This syllable type occurs word final, and in a limited number of word medial cases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tomak</td>
<td>[tɔmɑk]</td>
<td>sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fefen</td>
<td>[fɛfɛn]</td>
<td>millet stalk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fɔrzlan</td>
<td>[fɔɾzlan]</td>
<td>mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malgamay</td>
<td>[mɑlɡɑməj]</td>
<td>jawbone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gamsɔdo</td>
<td>[ɡɑmsɔdo]</td>
<td>maternal grandfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sɔyfa</td>
<td>[sɔjɪfa]</td>
<td>life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dɔwlay</td>
<td>[dɔwleɪ]</td>
<td>millet drink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The onset can be any consonant, the nucleus any vowel. Only certain consonants can occupy the coda however. All voiced plosives and affricates (/b, d, g, gΩ, dz, mb, nd, ng, ngΩ, ndz/) are excluded from the coda. Word medially, syllables can only end with r, l, and m.

---

\(^{11}\) Words can begin with ə when there is no a prefix and an underlying w or y, for example əwla (my) and əyna (a name from Fulfulde).
3.3 Elision and fast speech phenomena

There are many changes that occur when words run together in a phrase. The general rule is to spell using the citation form of the word — the pronunciation when the word is pronounced in isolation.\(^{12}\) Some of these changes are:

**Vowel deletion.** When a word ending with a vowel precedes a word beginning with a vowel, one vowel deletes. Examples:

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{kege} & \rightarrow [\text{kege}] \quad \text{you do} \\
    \text{kegelmay} & \rightarrow [\text{kagelmay}] \quad \text{What are you doing?}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{mæze} & \rightarrow [\text{mæze}] \quad \text{person} \\
    \text{mæzehay} & \rightarrow [\text{mæzehay}] \quad \text{people}
\end{align*}
\]

**Word final ay is pronounced [i] in context.** Examples:

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{alay} & \rightarrow [\text{alay}] \quad \text{he digs} \\
    \text{alay p̣dē} & \rightarrow [\text{alip̣dē}] \quad \text{he digs a hole}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{dalay} & \rightarrow [\text{dalay}] \quad \text{girl} \\
    \text{dalay ahay} & \rightarrow [\text{dalihay}] \quad \text{girls}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{zay} & \rightarrow [\text{zay}] \quad \text{peace} \\
    \text{zay daw} & \rightarrow [\text{zidaw}] \quad \text{greeting (is there peace?)}
\end{align*}
\]

**Word final /aw/ is pronounced [u] in context.** Examples:

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{asaw} & \rightarrow [\text{asaw}] \quad \text{I want} \\
    \text{asaw bay} & \rightarrow [\text{asubay}] \quad \text{I do not want}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{cew} & \rightarrow [\text{tΣew}] \quad \text{two} \\
    \text{cewga} & \rightarrow [\text{tΣuga}] \quad \text{by two}
\end{align*}
\]

**hV deletes in context.** Examples:

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{bahay} & \rightarrow [\text{bahay}] \quad \text{chief} \\
    \text{bahay aloko} & \rightarrow [\text{bayaloko}] \quad \text{our chief}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{hɒmay} & \rightarrow [\text{hɒmay}] \quad \text{run} \\
    \text{kɒhɒmom} & \rightarrow [\text{kɒhɒmom}] \quad \text{you (plural) run}
\end{align*}
\]

**Word final n (plus preceding vowel) is deleted in context.** Examples:

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{bəɜæn} & \rightarrow [\text{bəɜæn}] \quad \text{mountain} \\
    \text{a bəɜæn ava} & \rightarrow [\text{a bəɜænava}] \quad \text{to the mountain}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{ndəhan} & \rightarrow [\text{ndəhan}] \quad \text{he} \\
    \text{ndəhan ava} & \rightarrow [\text{ndəhanava}] \quad \text{he is here}
\end{align*}
\]

---

\(^{12}\) The final syllable in a phrase is stressed and an underlying full vowel or schwa will always be pronounced as a low, full vowel. Bow found neutralisation of contrast in a few instances.

\(^{13}\) This is two morphemes and the underlying image of each is preserved. See section on verb morphology.

\(^{14}\) The verb prosody is also lost.

\(^{15}\) Note that there is also hV deletion.
Re-syllabification of words in context. Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Syllabification</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kafat</td>
<td>[kafat]</td>
<td>day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kafat anen</td>
<td>[kaftenen]</td>
<td>one day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anjakar</td>
<td>[andzakar]</td>
<td>hen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anjakar øwla</td>
<td>[andzakrula]</td>
<td>my hen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma</td>
<td>[ma]</td>
<td>mouth, language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asabay</td>
<td>[asabay]</td>
<td>no more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma asaw asabay</td>
<td>[maswasabay]</td>
<td>I do not want to hear anymore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Word boundaries

The word in Moloko may be:

- a proper name
  - Amtamba
  - My father’s name is Amtamba.

- a noun
  - hor | woman
  - akor | rock
  - mahaw | snake
  - Slomay na baba øwla Amtamba
  - Hor agas ala kolef.
  - The woman is hunting fish.

- a pronoun
  - ne | me
  - nok | you (singular)
  - ndahan | he
  - loko | we (inclusive)
  - lôme | we (exclusive)
  - lôme | you (plural)
  - tòta | they
  - øwla | my
  - ango | your (singular)
  - ahan | his
  - aloko | our (inclusive)
  - alôme | our (exclusive)
  - alôme | your (plural)
  - atôte | their

- a verb, with or without affixes
  - lo | go!
  - amat | he dies
  - la ala | come here!
  - Slolohom va a lôhe.
  - We were in the bush.

- a preposition
  - a...ava | to, in
  - Nalo a kosoko ava.
  - I go to the market.
  - Kølef a zøraka ava.
  - The fish is in the mayo.
  - kɔ...aka | on
  - Nanje kɔ wɔyen aka.
  - I sat on the ground.

16 Patterned after Boyd’s orthography.
17 See section 3.8 for more discussion on verbs.
- an adverb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jawga</th>
<th>all</th>
<th>Babaza ahay jawga tata aba?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dow</td>
<td>also</td>
<td>Ayaw, tata aba.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayaw</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Yes, they are well.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bolen</th>
<th>one</th>
<th>Tamak owlahay mofad.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mofad</td>
<td>four</td>
<td>I have four sheep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sokat</td>
<td>hundred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a conjunction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nata</th>
<th>and</th>
<th>Anjekar nata awak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>association</td>
<td>Hay a bahay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It is the chief’s house.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a negative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bay</th>
<th>not</th>
<th>Nanjakay bolen bay.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asabay</td>
<td>no more</td>
<td>I can’t find even one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- an interrogative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Way</th>
<th>who</th>
<th>Nangehe na way?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amtamay</td>
<td>where</td>
<td>Who is he?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dow</td>
<td>question word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- a discourse particle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Na</th>
<th>focus</th>
<th>Asa kanday kage kaandan na solomga.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nde</td>
<td>then</td>
<td>Nde ehe na voymete owl na way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Who then is my neighbor?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- an adjective. Some adjectives are derived from their corresponding noun, by adding an
  adjectivizing suffix ga, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solom</th>
<th>goodness</th>
<th>Solomga</th>
<th>good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Godan</td>
<td>strength</td>
<td>Godanga</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boray</td>
<td>heart</td>
<td>Borayga</td>
<td>someone who stands under suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayz-dayz</td>
<td>redness</td>
<td>Dayz-dayzga</td>
<td>red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koledede</td>
<td>smoothness</td>
<td>Koledede ga</td>
<td>smooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payecece</td>
<td>coldness</td>
<td>Payececega</td>
<td>cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tere</td>
<td>another thing</td>
<td>Terga</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medere</td>
<td>something planted</td>
<td>Mederga</td>
<td>planted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that if the last syllable of the noun is re, then the final vowel drops when the ga is added. \(^{18}\)

- plural markers. Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kora</th>
<th>dog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kora ahay</td>
<td>dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kora aloko ahay</td>
<td>our dogs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{18}\) It is suspected that the same would happen for any of the other consonants which can be word internal codas (l, m, y, w). Needs further study.
3.5 Compound words

Since compound words are thought of as single words, they are spelled as such, and considered as one root. This will sometimes deform the spelling of the root words of the parts. Examples:

- **ma language**  
  - Moloko: [ma]  
  - Loko: [lok'o]  
  - Our

- **ale thing**  
  - Alok: [ele]  
  - Ako: [ok'o]  
  - Fire

3.6 Reduplicated words

Complete reduplication is spelled with a hyphen. Examples:

- **zlok-zlok**  
  - Termite

- **zën-zan**  
  - Shrew

- **zën-zon**  
  - Gourd for planting

- **zën-zen**  
  - Obscurity

- **ndën-nden**  
  - Sword

Reduplication of one or two syllables is spelled as one word. Examples:

- **padococo**  
  - Sweet

- **karekeke**  
  - Acidic

- **mokərarkər**  
  - Ancestors, a big stomach

- **wasekeke**  
  - The action of multiplication

3.7 Borrowed words

Moloko borrows freely from surrounding languages. These words will be spelled using Moloko orthography rules, where possible. Examples:

- **from French**  
  - **akwel**  
    - School (école)

- **from Fulfuldé**  
  - **barka**  
    - Blessing
  - **adzyko**  
    - Head scarf
  - **slenkare**  
    - Aluminum

- **from English**  
  - **basokwar**  
    - Bicycle (via Fulfuldé)
  - **nasen**  
    - Machine (via Fulfuldé)
3.8 Verb morphology

Probably one of the more complex aspects of Moloko orthography, verb morphology is in ongoing study. The desired general principle for orthography is to guard the root image of the verb root and each affix. Word final phonologic changes suggest where word boundaries should be.

The consonants of the verb root and its prosody are found in the imperative singular. The underlying vowels can be seen in the infinitive and the first and second plural conjugated forms.\(^{19}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>imperative singular</th>
<th>first person singular</th>
<th>first person plural</th>
<th>underlying form of root</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bah</td>
<td>nabah</td>
<td>məbohok</td>
<td>bah</td>
<td>pour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kad</td>
<td>nakad</td>
<td>məkdək</td>
<td>kad</td>
<td>put</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zom</td>
<td>nazom</td>
<td>məzəmok</td>
<td>zom</td>
<td>eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceke</td>
<td>nəcəke</td>
<td>məcəkək</td>
<td>cək</td>
<td>get up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When affixes are added or there are other elements to the verb phrase, the written form should preserve the verb root image (guarding the consonants of the root but changing the vowels as necessary). The root image of each affix or particle should also be preserved.

The infinitive is written as one word. It is always palatalised.

- məbehe: to pour
- məkəde: to put
- məzəme: to eat
- məcəke: to get up

Subject pronouns are attached:

- nasar: I know
- kasar: you (s) know
- asar: he knows
- məsərok: we (incl) know
- nasorom: we (excl) know
- kasorom: you (pl) know
- tasar: they know

The root form of the subject affix should be preserved even when it is affected by a prosody:

- nave: I give birth
- nadad: I fall
- nazom: I eat

19 Underlying vowel or schwa contrast is neutralised in the imperative forms because of pause final stress. Further study in stress and tone may clarify if the underlying vowels must always be marked in the orthography. For the moment, the vowels in conjugated verb roots will be written according to their phonetic sound to preserve possible lexical differences.

20 What Bow refers to as the initial a- prefix in verb roots is reflected in the subject prefix, examples: [nəndəwayne] ‘I swallow’ and [nəndəway] ‘I insult’ (‘a- prefix’ verb)

- ndaway: I insult
- mendewe: to insult
- nəndəway: I swallow
- nəndəwom: we swallow

Bow’s ‘a-’ prefix in verbs may in reality be something of tone/stress in the verb root. More study is needed.
Below are some other elements of the verb word and verb phrase:

**Kaslay tamak.** You slaughter the sheep.  
*ka-sl-ay*  
you (SINGULAR)-verb root-ay

**Kaslaw tamak.** You slaughtered the sheep for me.  
*ka-sl-aw*  
you –verb root-indirect object (BENEFICIARY)

**Kaslaw na.** You slaughtered it for me.  
*ka-sl-na*  
you (SINGULAR)-verb root-indirect object  
direct object (singular)

**Kaslaw na va.** You already slaughtered it for me.  
*ka-sl-na va*  
you (SINGULAR)-verb root-indirect object  
direct object  
PERFECTIVE

**lom ala**  
Come here! (imperative plural)  
*l-om ala*  
verb root-imperative plural suffix  
(directional)

**amassere na ala**  
the one who sent him here  
*a-massere*  
relativizer-infinitive  
direct object (singular)  
(directional)

**ataray ma**  
he calls  
*a-tar-ay*  
he-verb root-placeholder  
mouth (collocates with many speech verbs)

### 3.9 Grammatical tone

In Moloko verbs, tenses or aspects are distinguished by a difference in tone and length of the subject-marking prefix. For example:

```
-------  ------  
[naazom daf]  Naazom daf.  I will eat boule.

---  ___  _  ___  ___  
[nal o a kosoko ava]  Nalo a kosoko ava.  I am going to the market.  
[naal o a kosoko ava]  Naal o a kosoko ava.  I will go to the market.
```

---

21 Placeholder affix which drops off when other affixes are added.

22 The indirect object affixes are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>translation</th>
<th>indirect object affix</th>
<th>translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a-jonaw</td>
<td>He helps me.</td>
<td>-aw</td>
<td>me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-jonok</td>
<td>He helps you.</td>
<td>-ok</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-jonan</td>
<td>He helps him.</td>
<td>-an</td>
<td>him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-jonaloko</td>
<td>He helps us all.</td>
<td>-aloko</td>
<td>us (inclusive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-jonalome</td>
<td>He helps us (exclusive).</td>
<td>-alome</td>
<td>us (exclusive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-jonalokweye</td>
<td>He helps you all.</td>
<td>-alokweye</td>
<td>you (plural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-jonata</td>
<td>He helps them.</td>
<td>-ata</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 Towards speaker. *alay* indicates away from speaker.

24 Either present and future tense or completed versus incomplete or some kind of irrealis. Currently under study.
The first example in each pair represents an action that is currently happening. The tone of the subject prefix is low and the vowel is short. These verbs are spelled with a single vowel in the prefix: *nazom, nalo*.

The second example of each pair represents an action that is in the future or is not yet complete. In this case, the tone is higher and the vowel is longer than for the first example. The subject prefix on these verbs is written aa: *naazom, naalo*.

### 3.10 Punctuation and capitalization

Basically follow the rules for French.

**The period (.)** indicates the end of the phrase. Examples:

*Nege na starele owla va.* I did my work.
*Motoko a moglele yam.* We go to draw water.
*Awak anjakay kara.* The goat found the dog.

**The comma (,)** indicates a small pause in the middle of the phrase, to show coordination or to separate a subordinate proposition from other elements in the phrase. Examples:

*A saaw mazome daaf na, com nabalay ahar.* If I want to eat, I wash my hands.
*Mzohok yam, mbohok a so ava arah va pedede.* We drew water and filled the pail to the rim.
*Tota away abaya : Anjakar, awak, tømak, kara, tido.* They said (this is the story of) : The hen, the goat, the sheep, the dog, and the leopard.

**The question mark ( ?)** indicates the end of an interrogative phrase. Examples:

*Kalo va amtamay ?* Where are you going?
*Kanjakay almay ?* What did you find?
*Nok aba daw ?* How are you?

**The exclamation point ( !)** indicates the end of an exclamatory or imperative phrase. Examples:

*Yawa !* There!
*Ne na nocej alu owla !* I’ll be lost! (Lit. I will lose my things)
*A, kasar bay ! Kasar bay !* You don’t know!
*Ne daw, toko jayga !* Me too, let’s go together!
*Ôya ! Hadak ajaw va !* Ow! Something pricked me!

**The colon ( :) and the quotation marks (« »)** indicate that what follows is a citation of a text, or words or thoughts of someone. If the citation is a direct quotation, one must also put quotation marks around the citation. Examples:

*Tawoy abaya : « Zarga aba tota na hor ahan, aslay agwogor ana sla. »* They said: “There was a man who, along with his wife, cut some grass for his cow.”
*Tawoy abaya : Anjakar, awak, tømak, kara, tido.* They said (this is the story of) : The hen, the goat, the sheep, the dog, and the leopard.
*Kara : « Kalo hom amtamay ? »* The dog said, “Where are you going?”

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25 This section was patterned after Boyd’s orthography.
Use of capital letters

Capital letters are found:

• **at the beginning of a sentence.** Examples:
  
  *Bomba bomba kela dorgod…*  
  *(the beginning of a story)*
  
  *Bahay owa nage memey nanjakay sayfa*  
  *My Lord, what must I do to find life?*
  
  *amondeye kelobay na ?*  
  *Jesus replied,*
  
  *« Nandaday Hombretom ango…. »*  
  *“Love your God…”*

• **for proper names and for respect.** Examples:
  
  *Moloko, Sambo, Bahay Hombretom*  
  *Moloko, Sambo, Lord God*

• **at the beginning of a title.** Examples:
  
  *Ma asak a ma moloko*  
  *Moloko alphabet (the foot of the language)*
  
  *Mabomba anjakar na tømak*  
  *The fable of the hen and the sheep*
4. APPENDIX

A story that illustrates the orthography:

Bomba bomba kọla dərgod!  
Taway abọya: Anjakar, awak, təmak, kọra, tədo.

Anjakar awọy: « T anday taslaw aka babọza ahay va. Nde taslaw ka babọza ahay va na, nəhəmay mogo. »  
Atəwelay: « Bababa kəlak, kəlak, kəlak, kəlak. »  
Anjakay awak.  
« Kətəwe almay, anjakar? »  
« Nətəwe bəyna hajan na ta gəsomala anjakar, sləm na va. Nəhəmay mogo əwla. »  
Nde awak awọy : « Hajan na cəje agan na məze na, ta kədəm awak, kədəm awak. Təwok koy əwde. »  
« Bababa kəlak. »  
« Mee, mee. »

Awak ambadalay na, anjakay kọra.  
Yawa, tanjakay kọra na.  
Kọra: « Kalohom amtamay? »  
« A nəlohom aletəme bəyna hajan na ta sləm anjakar, hajan na kədəm awak. Nəhəhom aletəme. »  
« Nde kəhənom na meme? »  
« A məhənom. »  
« A ne dəw, toko jəyga. Cəje agan ana məze na, ta kədəm kəra, kədəm kəra, kədəm kəra. Təwok əwde! »

« Bababa kəlak. » « Meme meme meme. » « Sələo məsələysol, sələo məsələysol. »

Tanjakay təmak.  
« Təmak! Meme! »  
« Aa, kəlohom amta? » Təmak a megye.  
Kọra ta : « Nəlohom aletəme bəyna hajan na cəje agan ana məze na ta sləm anjakar, hajan na ta kədəm

A fable about a hen, goat, sheep, dog, and leopard.

The hen said, "They slaughtered my children! I am fleeing (to die)!"

Sounds of crying

She meets a goat.

The goat asks, "Why are you crying, hen?"

The hen replies, “I am crying because each day they say to catch a chicken and slaughter it! I am fleeing. The goat says, “Each day someone gets sick and they say, “Slaughter a goat! Slaughter a goat!” We need to cry together and see if our cries mesh.” Sounds of crying.

The goat comes upon a dog. The dog asks, “Where are you going?”

They reply, “We are fleeing because every day they say to catch a chicken, every day they sat to slaughter a goat. We are going to see the idols”

The dog asks, “How are you fleeing?”

They reply, “We are running.”

The dog replies, “Let’s go together – when someone gets sick, they say to kill a dog, kill a dog, kill a dog. Let’s cry together now!”

Sounds of crying.

They meet a sheep.

They greet him, “How is it, sheep?”

The sheep says, “Where are you going?”

They reply, “We are fleeing because every day sickness comes and they say to kill a chicken, every day they say to kill a goat,
every day they say to kill a dog, when a man gets sick.”
The sheep says, “Me too, it is like you say, every day when something happens, they say to bring a sheep. When the ancestors trap someone, they say, bring a sheep! No matter what sickness, they say to bring a sheep. Try crying your cry.”

Sounds of crying.
The sheep joins in.

They meet up with a leopard.
The leopard asks, “Where are you going?”
They reply, “We are fleeing to the idols because every day they say to kill a chicken, every day to kill a goat, every day to kill a dog, every day to kill a sheep. They wave the body to the ancestors. We are running to the idols”
The panther says, “OK, try crying your cry.”
Sounds of crying

The panther joins in.
The animals say, “You don’t know how to cry!”
The panther replies, “If you say I don’t know how to cry, I will eat you!”

The end
5. REFERENCES

Bow, Cathy. *A Description of Moloko Phonology*. SIL, Yaoundé, 1997.

