TENSE / AUXILIARIES
Lesson 37

Tense in Kiribati is not marked by a change in form of the verb, but either by a participle preceding the verb or the context of the sentence or discourse.

1. present/past indeterminate

The absence of any auxiliary particle before the verb may be understood variously as past or present, according to the context. In isolation, however, such a sentence is often interpreted as being past:

E nakon te titooa.       He went to the store.
E nakon te titooa ngkai. He's going to the store now.
E nakon te titooa ngkoananoa. He went to the store yesterday.

2. a immediate indeterminate

The auxiliary particle a preceding the verb or other auxiliary carries a sense of immediacy or unfinishedness, and can be used to express past, present or future:

E a roko te kaibuke.       The ship just came.
E a roko te kaibuke ngkai. The ship arrives now.
E a roko te kaibuke ngaabong. The ship comes tomorrow.
E a roko te kaibuke ngkoananoa. The ship came yesterday.

This particle is very common in Kiribati speech, but the actual time referred to is usually indicated by context.

3. tabe n continued action

This auxiliary can be most often translated by using the English 'is ing' construction, although the word tabe may be translated as 'busy':

E tabe ni mm'akuri ngkai.       He is (busy) working now.
It can be interpreted as past tense if the context so indicates:

E tabe ni mm'akuri ngkoananoa.
He was (busy) working yesterday.

(A similar particle, kume n, has a slightly more limited use.)

4. **nangi** immediate future

Kiribati is usually more explicit with regard to the future. This form can be most aptly translated as 'about to':

E nangi nako.  
He's about to go.
E **nang** kiitana Betio.  
He's about to leave Betio.

5. **na** general future

This is the general auxiliary for the future:

E **na** nako.  
He will go.
Ti **na** mm'akuri ningaabong.  
We will work tomorrow.

6. **a_tib'a** immediate past

This is used for an action that has 'just' occurred:

E **a_tib'a** nako te kaibuke.  
The ship just left.
E **a_tib'a** roko teuaarei.  
That man just arrived.

7. **a_tia n** completed past

Tia can be used as a verb in its own right, meaning finished, which is a good approximation of its sense as an auxiliary. Auxiliaries which still retain some verbal status are usually linked to the verb with n, putting the following verb in the 'infinitive' form:

E **a_tia n** ni kabooa te raiti.  
He bought the rice.
E **a_tia n** roko te meeri.  
The mail came.
8. additional auxiliaries

Beyond these basic seven cases, there are additional forms and combinations of these forms which give variations of time and meaning to the verbs, as well as other auxiliaries which have nothing to do with setting the time of the sentence. Some of these are listed below:

a tib'a tia n  just finished
a kaman        already
a kaman tia n  already finished
a manga        again
a kan          almost (and will)
kuri n         almost (but didn't)
kona n         can
riai n         must
bia            would that
ti             only
kan            want to

In position, these all come after the subject pronoun and before the verb. Any verb appearing in this position before the main verb of the sentence must be followed by n(i) as mentioned above. For example:

N na kataia n roko.
I will try to come.
A. Change the tense in the following sentences from the present/past indefinite to the immediate indefinite form:

ex: \[ \text{E nakon te titooa. = E a nakon te titooa.} \]

1. \[ \text{E nakon te oonaoraki ngke e bong.} \]  
   \[ \text{go to hospital last night} \]
2. \[ \text{E roko te kaibuke ngke e ingaabong.} \]  
   \[ \text{came ship this morning} \]
3. \[ \text{E kam'aa te am'arake ngkai.} \]  
   \[ \text{cook food now} \]
4. \[ \text{E kaburooa te ran ngkoananoa.} \]  
   \[ \text{boiled water yesterday} \]
5. \[ \text{E uaatii ana kunnikai ngkai.} \]  
   \[ \text{wash clothes now} \]
6. \[ \text{I kanakoa natiu nakon te titooa ngkai.} \]  
   \[ \text{send my son store} \]
7. \[ \text{E katinea ana takataka ngkoananoa.} \]  
   \[ \text{weight copra yesterday} \]
8. \[ \text{E oki man te m'aiee ngkai.} \]  
   \[ \text{return dance now} \]
9. \[ \text{E nako ni mm'akuri n te ingaabong aei.} \]  
   \[ \text{go to work this morning} \]
10. \[ \text{E nako te waanikiba ngke e ingaabong.} \]  
    \[ \text{airplane this morning} \]
11. \[ \text{Kam rikai ngkoananoa.} \]  
    \[ \text{stop to see me yesterday} \]
12. \[ \text{E nako te bao n te ingaabong aei.} \]  
    \[ \text{transport this morning} \]
13. \[ \text{Kam uoti amii boki ngkoananoa.} \]  
    \[ \text{bring books yesterday} \]
14. \[ \text{E rangi ni kukurei nanou ngkai.} \]  
    \[ \text{happy his spirit} \]
15. \[ \text{E okira mweengana n te wiiki aei e nako.} \]  
    \[ \text{return to his home last week} \]
16. \[ \text{Ti am'arake im'aain nakora ngkoananoa.} \]  
    \[ \text{eat before our going yesterday} \]
17. \[ \text{E baki te teei ngkai.} \]  
    \[ \text{hungry child} \]
18. \[ \text{I motirawa man au mm'akuri.} \]  
    \[ \text{rest from my work} \]
19. \[ \text{Kam katiai amii mm'akuri.} \]  
    \[ \text{finish your work} \]

B. Change the above sentences to the continued action form:

ex: \[ \text{E nakon te titooa. = E tabe n nakon te titooa.} \]
C. Change the following sentences into the immediate future tense:

ex: E nakon te titooa. = E nangi nakon te titooa.

1. E teirake ni mm'akuri n te aoa waniua.
   start work eight o'clock
2. E moana ana motirawa n te wiiki ae e nako.
   start vacation last week
3. E nako Tabiteuea ni mm'akuri ikekei.
   to work there
4. A roko ara kaakoo mai Tarawa.
   come cargo
5. E a bane te tano mai Banaba.
   finished soil
6. A oki taani mm'akuri mai Banaba.
   return workers
7. A bootaki aomata n te m'aneaba.
   gather people
8. Ti bootaki ni kukurei ni kaawan te tua.
   celebrate at the government station
9. Kam nako Tarawa n te kaibuke ae e na roko.
   ship which will come
10. E kainaki te reirei n te bong aei.
    closed school today
11. E nako a akawa ibukin ana utuu.
    fishing for his family
12. E kabooa nako ana rebwerewbe.
    sell his motorbike
13. E kabaaki waana n ona tai ni motirawa.
    build his canoe during vacation
    build houses new
15. E m'aeer nako man ana auti aarei.
    moves from his house
16. E maeka i Betio irouila ana karou.
    lives with his parents
17. Ko tiku i Hawaii inanon teniuia te nam'akaina.
    stay for three months
18. Ko okira Kiribati n te nam'akaina ae Tuurai.
    return to in the month of July
19. E moanaki te kooti n Aokati.
    started course in August
20. A okiri abaia taan tei imwiin aia kabooowi.
    return to their homes representatives after meeting

D. Change the above sentences into the future tense:

ex: E nakon te titooa. = E na nakon te titooa.
E. Change the tense in the following sentences to the immediate past:

ex: E nakon te titooa. = E a tib'a nakon te titooa.

1. E matuu iroura.  
   sleeps with us
2. E roko mai Amerika.  
   come from
3. A nako Maiana ngke e ingaabong.  
   go to this morning
4. E roko te kaibuke mai Biiti.  
   come ship Fiji
5. E bane ana reirei i Biiti.  
   finished study
6. I katea au auti irarikin te m'aneaba.  
   build house next to maneaba
7. E kateaki te um'a n reirei n ara kaawa.  
   built school our village
8. E okira Kiribati imwiin te tai ae e maan.  
   return to after a long time
9. E kaukaki te titooa are i Betio.
10. E roro n akawa Taom ngke e ingaabong.
11. E tabekaki nako Abemama n te Kauabong.  
    transferred to Tuesday
12. E mm'akuri n te aobiti n te wiiki ae e nako.  
    work office last week
    come from Australia
    return his book my friend
15. Ko roko n au auti n te bong aei.  
    come my house today
    go to store shopping
17. Kam kaoki bokin te aobiti.  
    return office
18. E waaki te katei auti i Betio.  
    started house building at Betio
19. E a tia te meeri are e uruaki.  
    finished ferry broken
20. E a moana m'anangana te waanikiba nako Tamana.  
    begun departure airplane to Tamana

F. Change the tense of the above sentences to the completed past:

ex: E nakon te titooa. = E a tia n nakon te titooa.
G. Written. Translate the following sentences into Kiribati:

1. He arrived from Tarawa.

2. She's going to work at the school.

3. I just got my letter from my parents.

4. He's going fishing tomorrow.

5. He returned home yesterday.

6. She is (busy) cooking the food.

7. They were (busy) talking yesterday.

8. The plane is about to land at Bonriki.

9. We're about to come to the office.

10. We will take the bus to Bairiki.

11. They will go by bus to Teaoraereke.

12. He fed the pigs.

13. The boys just left for school.

14. He just bought his new car.