

The suffix –ó in Kenga: venitive and past, one or two functions?

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Kenga is a Nilo-Saharan language spoken in Chad. It belongs to the Central Sudanic group, more precisely to the Sara-Bongo-Baguirmi group of languages. It is a tone language and its basic word order is SVO. The verbal system distinguishes between six TAM forms marked by suffixes and reduplication; they are conjugated for person and number, partly by tone. In addition, Kenga has a verbal suffix -ó which occurs with all six forms. It is said to have two distinct functions (Vandame 1968): a) it signals that the action expressed by the verb is oriented towards the speaker's location (venitive), b) it signals past time reference. It is important to realise that the unmarked verb form can have present as well as past time reference. According to our analysis, therefore, the suffix –ó really has only one function instead of two; it is the venitive function which is basic, whereas certain pragmatic contexts lead to an interpretation with past time reference.