

# ► The Past Tense in Nkwen Language

## Mènyù ma mə te nchya

- 1 . Today Past (P1)
- 2 . Yesterday Past (P2)
- 3. Remote Past (P3)

Markers		
P1	P2	P3
tɛ, ghɛ + verb	Kɛ + verb	Lyɛ + verb

## The Today Past (P1) Mènyù ma mè chya senè

This tense marks actions or situations which took place earlier than the moment of speaking on the same day and may be translated into English as **the Present Perfect Tense**.

- There are two markers, (**tɛ** and **ghɛ**) that stress the time of action or just **tonal differences** on verbs and nouns with the **low tone** dominating. E.g.
- Ngəlà kwùrè nnà. **Ngela has eaten meat.**
- Ngəlà **tɛ** nkŵurè nna. **Ngela has already eaten meat.**
- Ngəlà **ghɛ** nkŵurè nna mbà?a-mbà?a. **Ngela ate meat in the morning.**
- Mma yì **ghɛ** nla məjyə mbà?ambà?a. **Her mom cooked in the morning.**
- Өtàa wì **ghɛ** nghè mətanə ntenùn̄jè. **Our father went to the market in the afternoon .**

## The Today Past (P1) Mènyù ma mə chya senè.

### More Examples

1. Ngənchè kwùrè mèkū Ngenche has eaten/ate beans.
2. Ngətsé nyə mèlù?u. Ngeche had a drink.
3. Ngənèfèmè t̄ē nghè mətanə. Ngeniform has already gone to the market.
4. Ngəla?à t̄ē nzha? aty?̄ zhi. Ngela has already combed her hair.
5. Ətàa wwà gh̄ē nzū nna mbà?ambà?à. Their father bought meat in the morning.
6. Tankă wà gh̄ē nȳi ntenùn̄è. My friend came in the afternoon.
7. Mma wwò gh̄ē nghè adi'i afa?a mbà?ambà?à? Did your mother go to work in the morning?
8. Ndì wà gh̄ē nghè məghantənə? mbà?ambà?à. My older sister/brother went for a walk in the morning.
9. Ətàa Ala'a/Ətàa Əty?̄ gh̄ē ny?̄i ntenùn̄è. The President/Head of service/king came in the afternoon.

The Today Past (P1) Mènyù ma mə chya senə.

The question form.

- 1. Ngənchè kwùrè mèku? Has Ngenche eaten/ate beans?
- 2. Ngətsé nyə mèlù? Has Ngeche a drink?
- 3. Ngənèfèmè tɛ nghè mətanə? Has Ngeniform gone to the market already?
- 4. Ngəla?à tɛ nzha? aty? zhi? Has Ngela combed her hair already?
- 5. Өtàa wwà ghé nzú nna mbà?amba?à? Did their father buy meat in the morning?
- 6. Tankă wà ghé nyí ntenùñè? Did my friend come in the afternoon?
- 7. Mma wwò ghé nghè adi'i afa?a mbà?ambà?à? Did your mother go to work in the morning?
- 8. Ndì wà ghé nghè məghantənə' mbà?amba?à? Did my older sister/brother go for a walk in the morning.
- 9. Өtàa Ala'a/Өtàa Өtyé' ghé nyìi ntenùñè? Did the President/Head of service/king come in the afternoon?

## Periods of the day

1. Tankă wà ghĕ́ nyí  
My friend came

2. Bìi ghĕ́ nghĕ adiñi nədore  
We went to the park

3. Ùtàa wì ghĕ́ nghĕ afà?a  
Our father went to work

ntə̄twu?u - at mid night

fè?e njwe - at dawn

mba?amba?à - in the morning

ntenuñjè - in the afternoon

fè?e nkwifò - in the evening

ndèñtə-dì?i - at twilight

nkwifò/nətwu?u - in the night

senè - today

## The Yesterday Past (P2) Mènyù ma mè̄kè chya əzō

The yesterday past tense is sequentially lexicalized by a marker **kè**. This tense marks actions which took place not only yesterday but as far back as last year. E.g.

1. **Ndì wà kè làa ngwàsanjè əzo.** **My older sister/brother cooked corn yesterday.**
2. **Mma wì wu ntinkànjè kè yìi əzo.** **Our grandmother came yesterday.**
3. **Ndèmè wà kè ghè adizi nədorè nghà.** **My brother/sister went to the park last week.**
4. **Bìi kè gañè nkùñsè nghà.** **We held a meeting last week.**
5. **Ndèmè wà wu mèngye kè zò?o ngù?u.** **My sister got married last year.**
6. **Ndèmè ətàa wà kè kwò ngù?u.** **My paternal uncle/aunt died last year.**

## The Yesterday Past - More examples

1. Àzònjè **kè** ghè zè moo yi nghà. Azong visited his son last week.
2. Bii **kè** ghè aghanè nghà. We went for a visit last week.
3. Atâ **kè** zuč nèlonjè zhi ñorè yi. Atah bought his radio/guitar last month.
4. Asòngwè **kè** ghè mè dzwinè bwo ndèmè yi ngù'u. Asongwe went to live with his brother/sister/relative last year.
5. Afonjè **kè** twiñjè ətàa yi ngù'u. Afong buried his father last year.
6. À bë nghà bya tsètsonjè ma Akenè **kè** ghè zë mëngyë yë. It's two weeks now since Akene went to see his wife.
7. A bë àlùnjè nè akèmè tsètsonjè ma bi **kè** yii ndzwi fí. It's one and a half years now since we settled here.
8. A bë bëñorë bë tarë tsètsonjè ma moo yi **kè** jwë. It is three months now that his/her daughter gave birth.

## The Remote Past (P3) Mènyù ma mə tso?o nchyā'

- This tense marks events which took place in the **distant past** or at a period when the definiteness of the time is not of great consequence at the moment of speaking. It is lexicalized by a marker '**lyə**' or only by a tone melody. E.g.
- **Mma tsə lyə nko afonə nə mbwo ngu?u tsə.**  
**Mma tsə ko<sup>^</sup> afonə nə mbwo ngu?u tsə.** **A long time ago a woman caught a lion bear handed.**
- **2. Ïù-nchyambi lyə kə dzwi a məmə mèfuru məngò?ò.** **The early man lived in caves.**
- **Bè ba<sup>^</sup> nchyambi lyə kə jyə a mèntà mə tyi ñkè nkjurə ñnà mbə.** **The early men lived on fruits and raw meat.**
- **Tangàŋə wā nko?ondzəmə zhi zhəzhə.** **Tangang killed his cow alone.**

## The Remote Past- More examples

1. A bə əluŋə tanə tsətsoŋnə ma Azoŋə lyə ghə zə moo yε. It's been five years since Azong visited his son.
2. A bə əluŋə nəghəmə tsətsoŋnə ma Ata lyə zuň nəlonjə zhi zĩ. It's been ten years since Atah bought this his radio/guitar.
3. Asòngwe lyə ghə mə dzwinə bwo ndəmə yi a ngù'u wu ma nfò bye.  
Asongwe went to live with his brother/sister/relative the year the king died.
4. Afonjə lyə twiŋə ətàa yi a ndzəmə əluŋə sàmba tsətsoŋnə. Afong buried his father seven year ago.
5. A bə əluŋə nchə-nəfa' tsətsoŋnə ma Akenə lyə nzoro məngyə' yε. It's been eighteen years since Akene got married.
6. A bə əlùŋə nəbwù?u nə akəmə tsətsòŋnə zhitə ma bi lyə nyii ndzwi fí. It's been nine and a half years since we settled here.

