

Documenting variation in the Kikongo dialect cluster: Report on the 2012 fieldwork in the Lower Congo Province (DRC)

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1. Background

Four UGent researchers carried out **linguistic fieldwork** on Kikongo varieties of the Lower Congo (DRC) from August to September 2012.

2. Objectives

- Collect **lexical and grammatical data** on poorly known varieties of Kikongo, with a focus on the Eastern and Western extremities of the Lower Congo Province;
- Discover hitherto **unknown varieties**;
- Gather data on the **geographical distribution** of Kikongo dialects.



Figure 1: UGent linguists and their informants during fieldwork in Boma. (Photo © G-MdS)



Figure 2: Documenting pottery making in Nsangi Binsu. (Photo © G-MdS)

4. Results

- **Discovery** of four Kikongo varieties which were hitherto (almost) unknown in the scientific literature: **Cizali, Cimbala, Cilinji, and Cizobe**;
- **Documentation** of six more poorly documented or undocumented Kikongo varieties: **Kimbata, Kimboko, Kinkanu, Kimpangu, Ciwoyo, and Kisolongu**;
- Collection of hitherto inaccessible **text corpora** for several other Kikongo varieties;
- **Ethno-archaeological data** on female pottery traditions in Nsangi Binsu, east of the Inkisi river (video, tapes, interviews).

3. Types of data collected

- **Basic vocabulary** (contextualized Swadesh-100 list);
- Vocabulary to check **sound correspondences**;
- **Culinary vocabulary**;
- Basic grammatical information with special attention for **verbal derivation and tense/aspect**;
- **Information structure** by means of a dedicated questionnaire with special attention to **focus**;
- **Text corpora** (both oral and written).

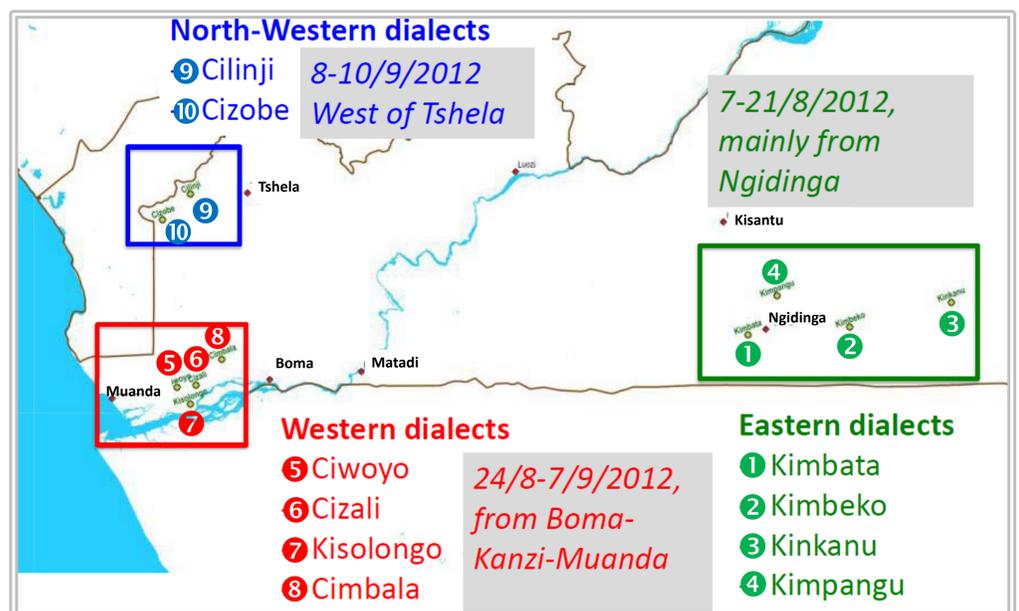


Figure 3: Location of the fieldwork in the Lower Congo (DRC).

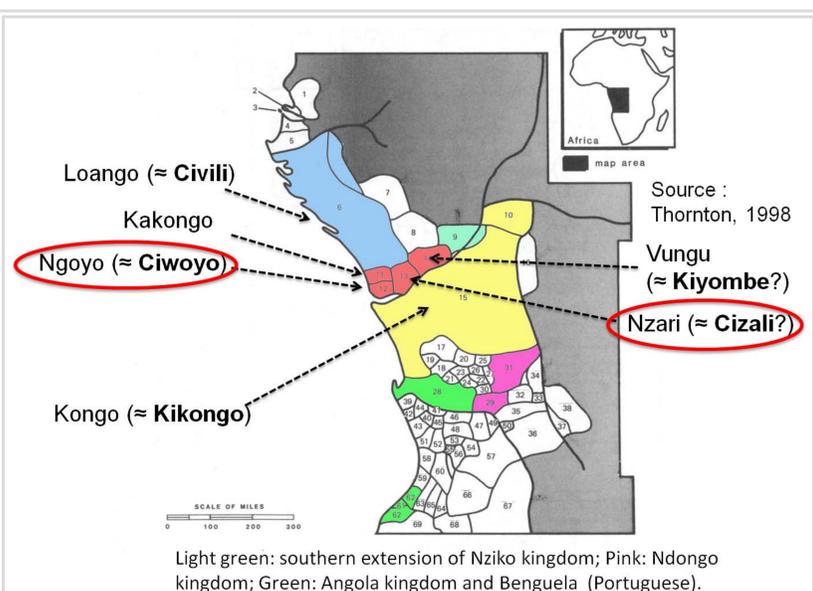


Figure 4: Geographical extension of **Central-African kingdoms around 1652**, several of which can be linked to newly documented Kikongo varieties.



Figure 5: Gathering data on sound change in **Cilinji**. (Photo © G-MdS)

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