



# **Bantu migrations : Population movements and contacts**

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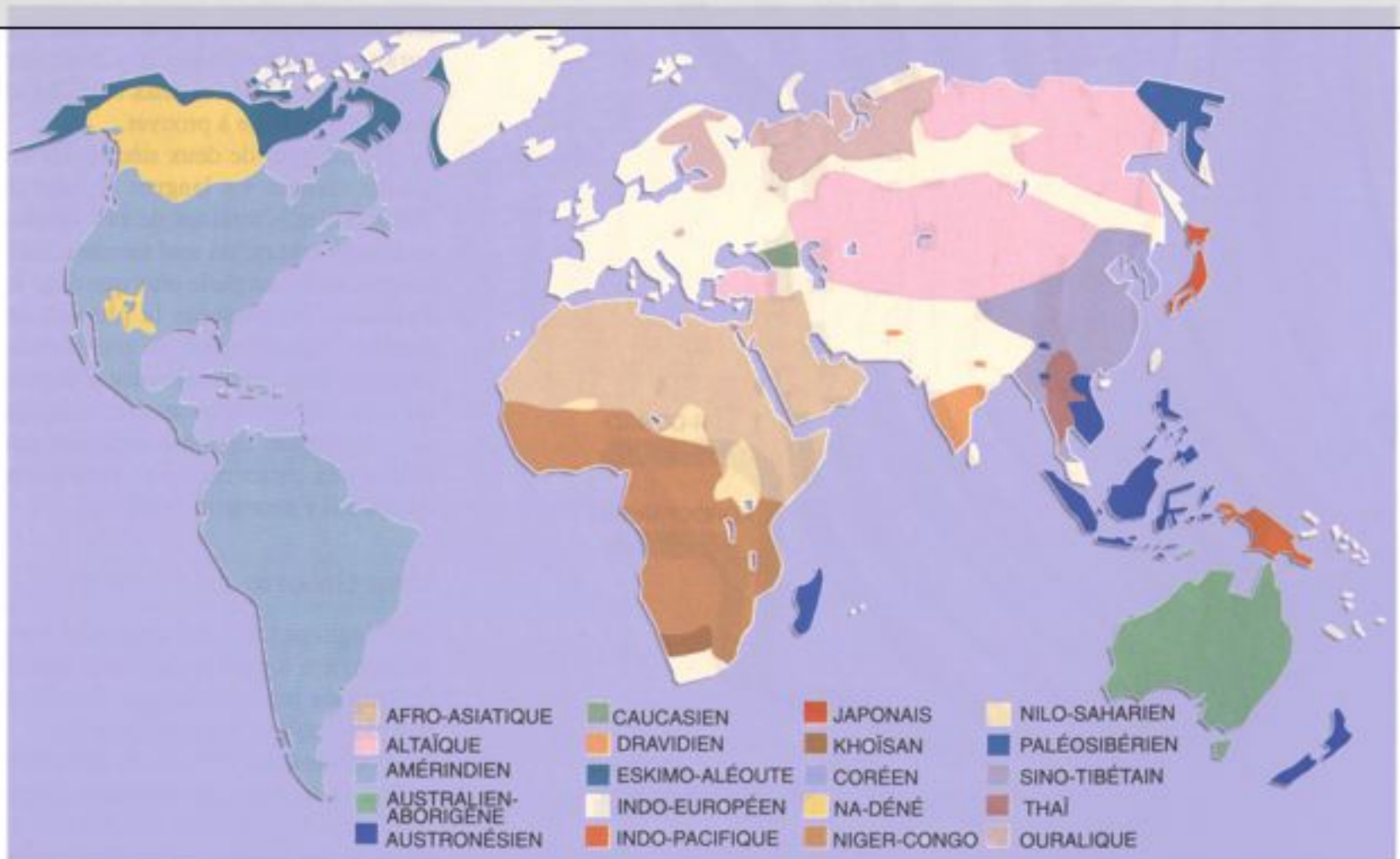
# Reconstructing the past in « oral tradition » societies

Interactions between languages, cultures and genes...

- Linguistics
  - ✓ language classifications and reconstructions, borrowings
- Population genetics
  - ✓ Male and female lines
- Archaeology
- Ethnology
  - ✓ marriage rules, cultural productions..
  
- But also paleodemography, paleoclimatology...

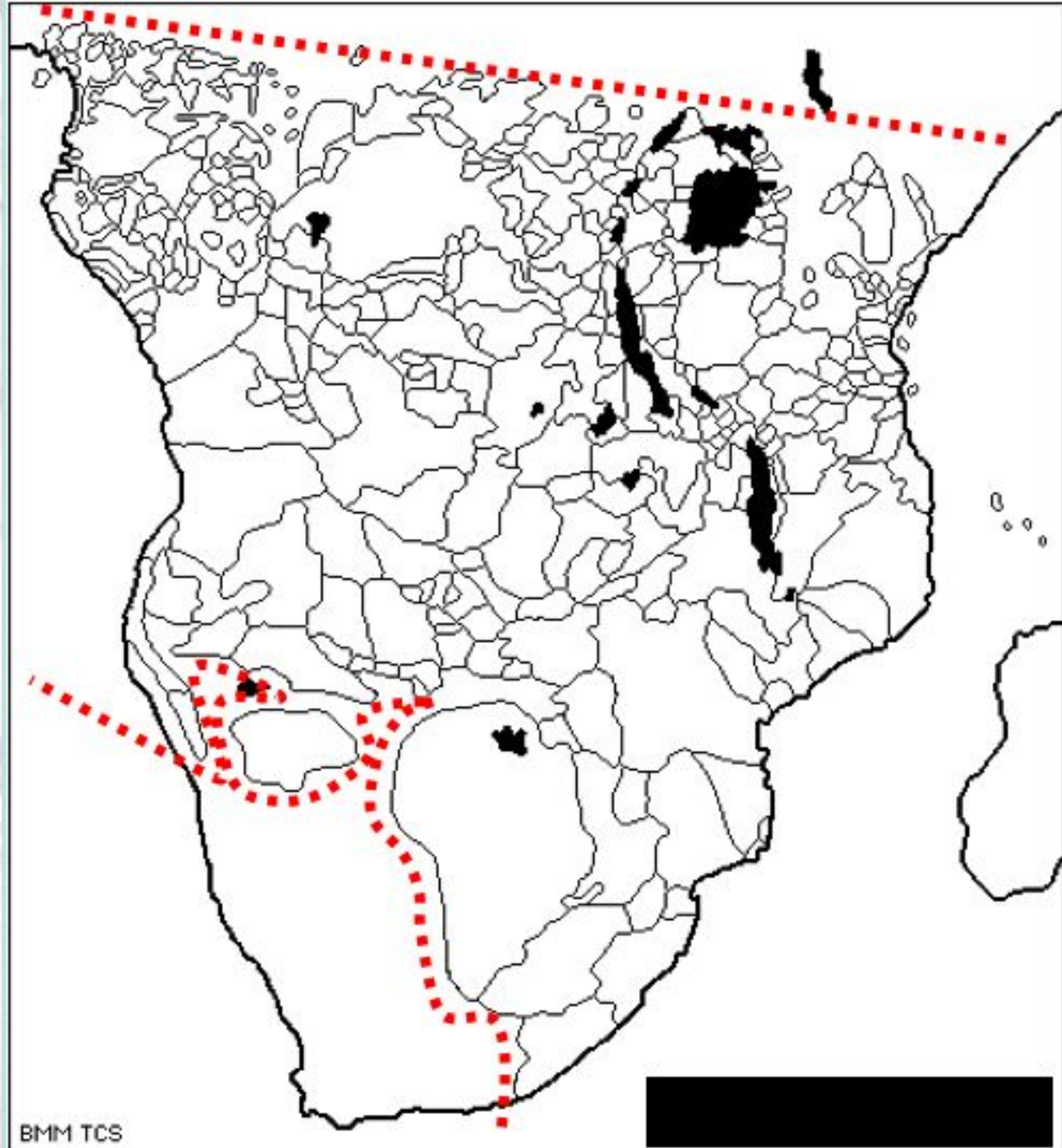


# Linguistic Families



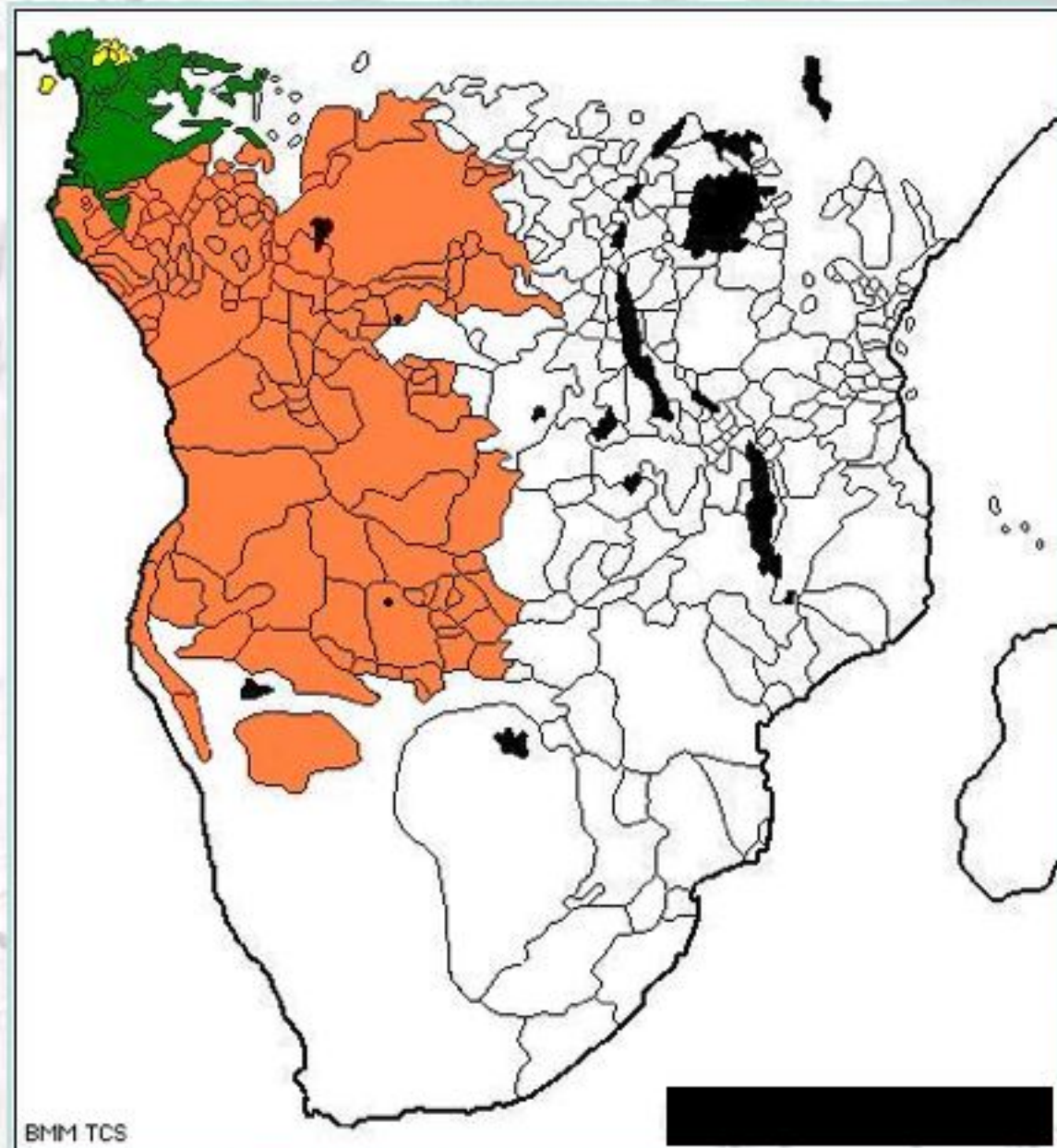
**2. LES FAMILLES DE LANGUES VIVANTES DANS LE MONDE.** Cette carte représente la classification de la plupart des familles de langues, qui sont généralement reconnues par tous les linguistes. Cependant, certaines familles, comme celle des langues amérindiennes, sont

controversées : on a représenté les langues amérindiennes partout où les langues indo-européennes récemment adoptées, comme l'anglais, le français ou le portugais, ont provoqué la disparition d'une famille de langues.





**Major Bantu subdivisions**  
(from lexico-statistical data,  
Bastin and Piron 1999)







# Bantu Migrations



- ✓ From where?
- ✓ When?
- ✓ Why?
- ✓ Migratory routes?

# Bantu Migrations

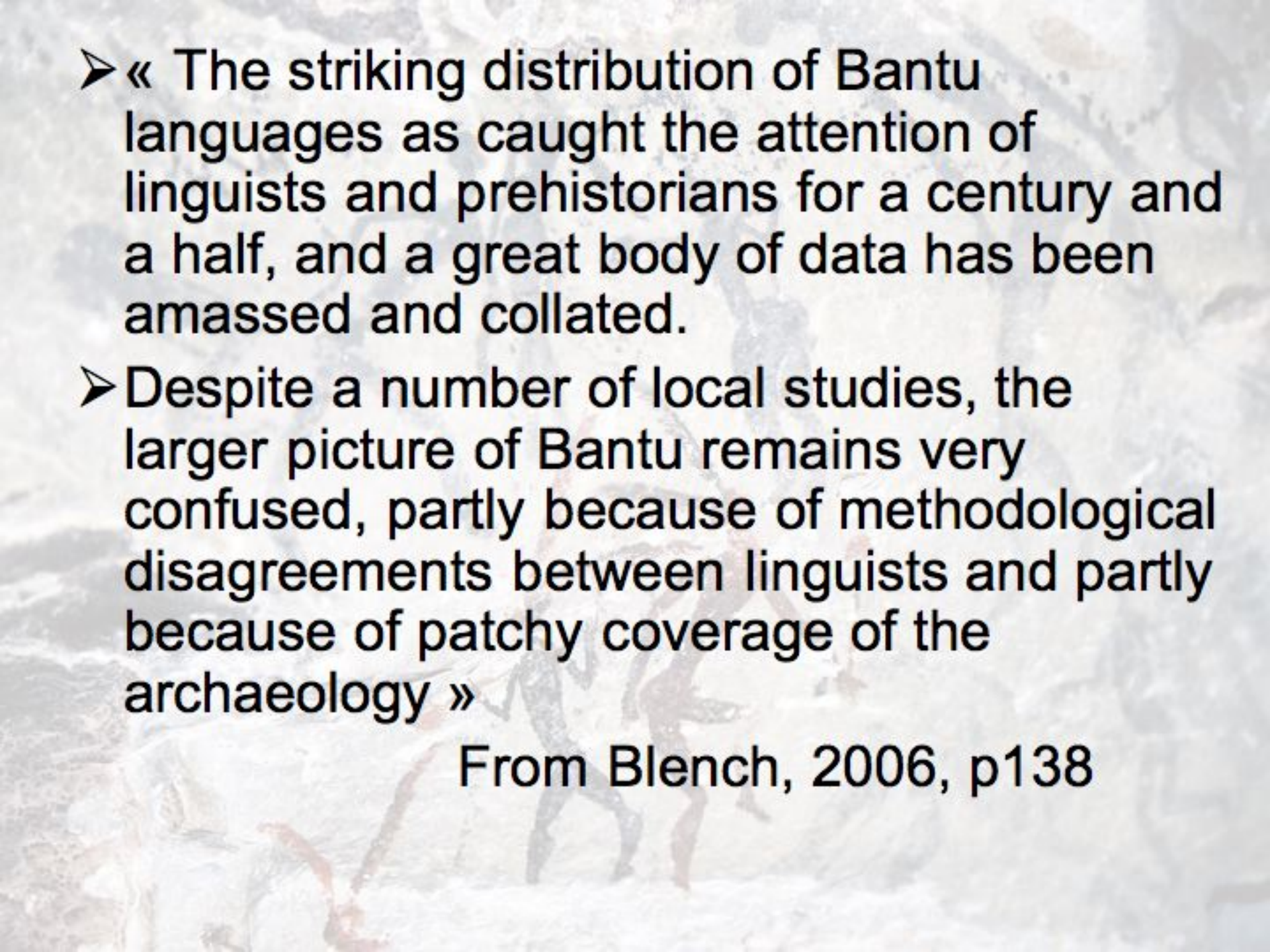
- Homeland
- Migration routes
  - ✓ Eastern/Western stream (Vansina vs. Ehret)
  - ✓ North of the Forest?
  - ✓ Across the Forest?
  - ✓ Along the coast line?
- Demic diffusion
- Agriculture
- Pottery
- Iron technology



# Interpretation of reconstructions

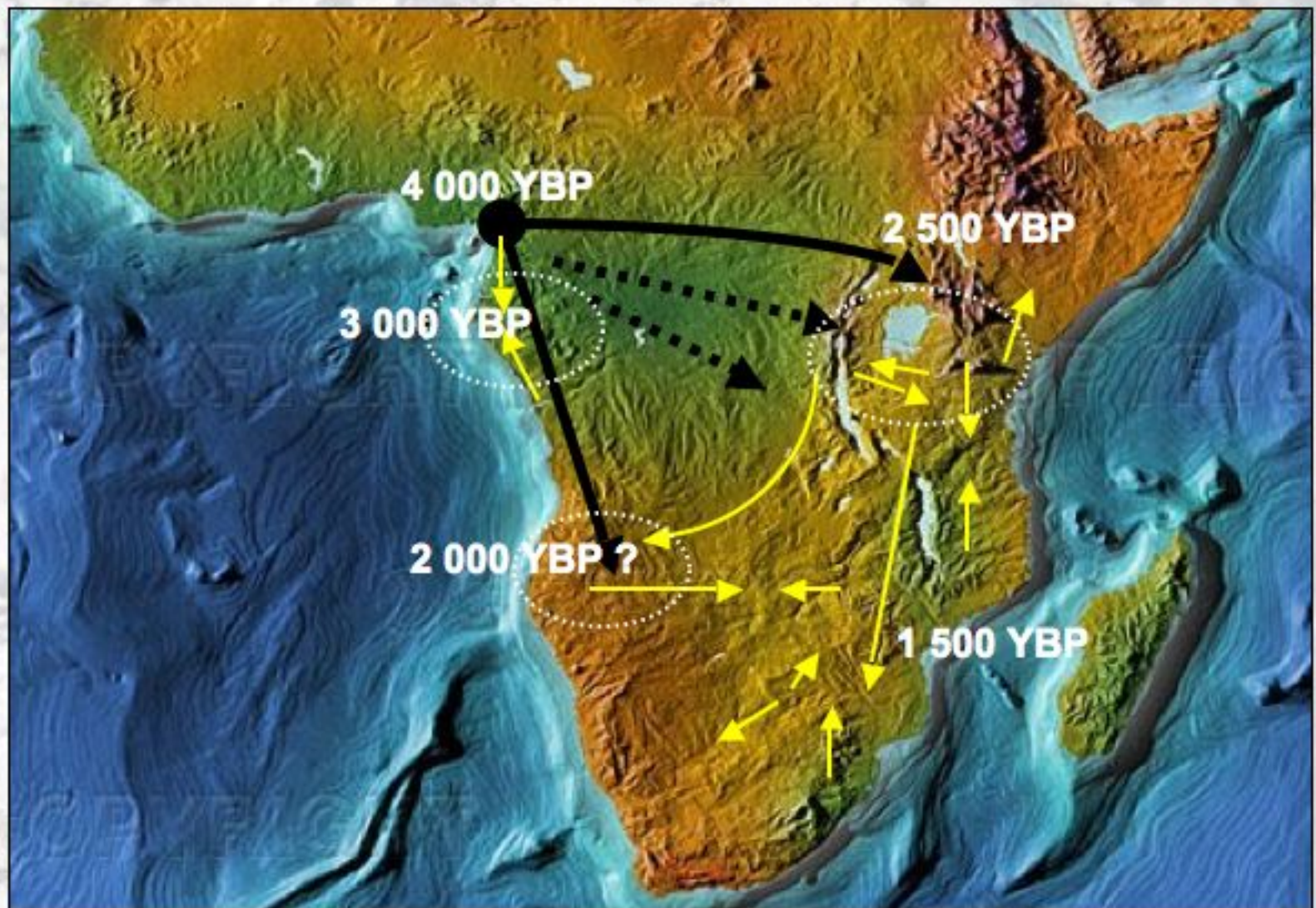
- **Guthrie** (1967-71) Bantu origin in present-day Zambia
- **Vansina** (1990, 1995) Rapid movement to the Great Lakes and a secondary movement southward into Gabon and subsequent migrations of Proto-East and Proto-West. Propagation of language and culture among local populations (?)
- **Ehret** (1998): Savanna group



- 
- « The striking distribution of Bantu languages as caught the attention of linguists and prehistorians for a century and a half, and a great body of data has been amassed and collated.
  - Despite a number of local studies, the larger picture of Bantu remains very confused, partly because of methodological disagreements between linguists and partly because of patchy coverage of the archaeology »

From Blench, 2006, p138



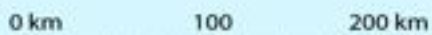


# Hunter-gatherers

The background of the slide is a faded image of ancient cave paintings. It shows several human figures in various poses, some holding long spears or staffs. The paintings are in earthy tones like ochre, red, and black, set against a light-colored, textured rock surface.

- How many different groups?
- Pygmies?
- San ?
- Other groups?





# Linguistic Classification of Pygmy groups

➤ Gyeli (Cameroon)	Bantu A80
➤ Baka (Cameroon, Gabon)	Ubangian
➤ Kola (Gabon)	Bantu B20
➤ Bongo (Gabon)	Bantu B30, 40, 50, 60, 70
➤ Aka ( CAR, Congo)	Bantu C10
➤ Twa (Mongo) (DRC)	Bantu C60
➤ Cwa (Kuba) (DRC)	Bantu C80
➤ Bambote (Lake Tanganyika, DRC)	Bantu D20
➤ Sua-Mbuti (Ituri, DRC)	Bantu D30
➤ Twa (Rwanda, Uganda, DRC)	Bantu JD60
➤ Cwa (Luba) (Katanga, DRC)	Bantu L30
➤ Sua-Efe (Ituri, DRC)	Central Sudanic
➤ Asua (Aka) (Ituri, DRC)	Central Sudanic



A map of Africa showing the distribution of various linguistic groups of hunter-gatherers. The map uses color-coding to represent different linguistic families: red for Bantu, blue for Ubangi, green for Central Sudanic, purple for Eastern Sudanic, brown for Cushitic, and tan for Khoe-San. Major rivers and geographical features are also shown. The legend in the bottom left corner provides the key for these colors.

### Linguistic Groupings of Hunter-gatherers

- Bantu (Niger-Congo)
- Ubangi (Niger-Congo)
- Central Sudanic (Nilo-Saharan)
- Eastern Sudanic (Nilo-Saharan)
- Cushitic (Afro-Asiatic)
- Khoe-San
- Unclassified

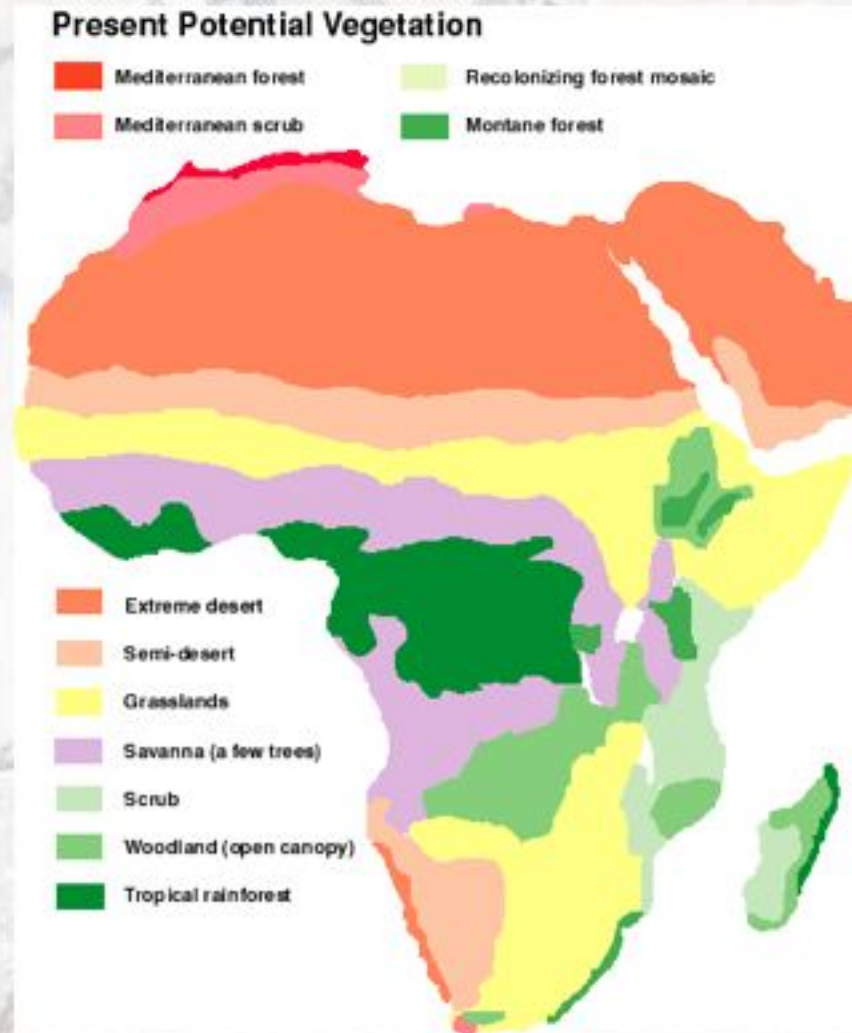
# Questions rarely asked

- Contacts between Bantu populations and hunter-gatherers
  - ✓ Where and When?
  - ✓ Types of interactions
  - ✓ Evolution of these interactions with time

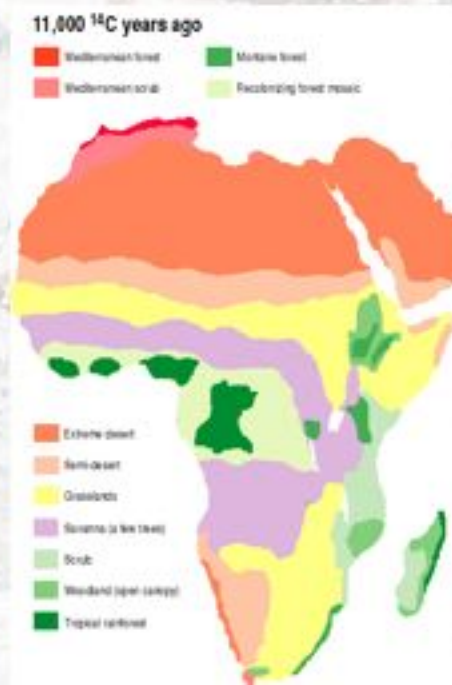
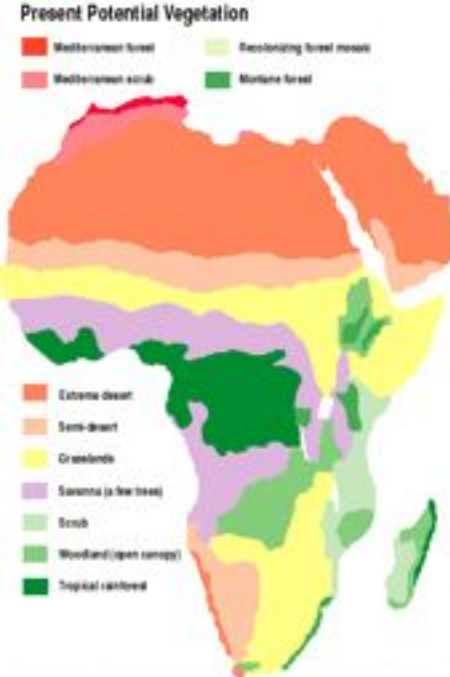




# Environmental conditions







# Dahalo case

- Originally, a « click » language
- Contact with Cushitic (pastoralists) speakers
- Today, they speak a Cushitic language with about 80 words containing clicks



# Nilo-Saharan groups

- Ik and Soo:
  - ✓ Isolate within Eastern Sudanic?
- Okiek:
  - ✓ Speak a Southern Nilotic language
  - ✓ Closey related to some of their neighbors' languages
- Laamot:
  - ✓ Speak a Southern Nilotic language
  - ✓ Not closey related to any other Southern Nilotic language

# **Khoekhoe case**

- Originally, speakers of « click » languages
- Acquired pastoralism from north-eastern group(s)
- Today, they retain their original click language and seem to have assimilated some Bantu groups
- Some of the San groups speak some Khoekhoe languages (a situation similar to the Bantu/Pygmy case but with clicks)



# The Pygmy/San linguistic paradox

- Apparently opposite situation between Pygmy/Bantu vs San/Bantu
- No « Pygmy language » (Pygmy groups speak a language closely related to a language of a neighboring tribe, generally Bantu)
- A large number of San groups have retained their own Khoisan languages (and clicks are found in a number of Bantu languages)
- Similar process but a different chronology?





# **Proto- Grassfields roots not found in North-West Bantu (zones A/B/C)**

- PG \*-dɪŋi "bamboo" might be cognate with \*-dàŋɡí found exclusively in zones E, G N and P
- PG \*ŋjàm "axe" might be linked with \*-jèmbè / \*-gèmbè "hoe"
- PG \*tém "clear bush" (also found with the meaning "cut" in Efik)



# **Efik roots not found in North-West Bantu (zones A/B/C)**

- Efik bɔp "bind" attested exclusively in the East
- Efik dɔŋ "to pack" is identical to \*-dɔŋg- ("id.") found in the south but not in A/B/C (nor Eastern Africa, so... !)
- Efik fori "strip off" looks reasonably like \*-pùd- ("id."), found everywhere but zones A and B –
- Efik tat "untie" is likely to be cognate with \*-tátud-
- Efik te "to say" (also in Nkonya and Tiv) is obviously related to \*-tɪ "id." not found in A nor B, but in C32 and C71 - widespread in the East
- Efik funj "to fan" looks like \*-pɔŋg- ("id."),



# **Tiv roots not found in North-West Bantu (zones A/B/C)**

- Tiv aɬo "grass" might be related to \*-cúá
- Tiv ləyəm "be slack" is surely related to \*-dɛ̀g-
- Tiv de "leave" is perhaps related to \*-dɛ̀k-
- Tiv gɔv "bend" probably related to \*-gòòb-
- Tiv kwə "crack" related to \*-kùà
- Tiv hidə "come back" perhaps related to \*-pìduk-

# Archaeological dates

- At 3500 BP : new neolithic population (pottery, village settlements) in forest environment at Epona II, Gabon (Clist, 1995)



# Agriculture

- Expansion Niger-Congo is not linked to agriculture : no archaeobotanical evidence before 3800 BP (Neumann, 2003)
- But linguistic evidence for ancient reconstructions for yam and sorghum: use of wild forms before cultivated crops without changing terms :  
foragers > transplanters > farmers  
(Blench, 1996, 2006)



# How ancient is banana cultivation?

## ➤ Ancient?

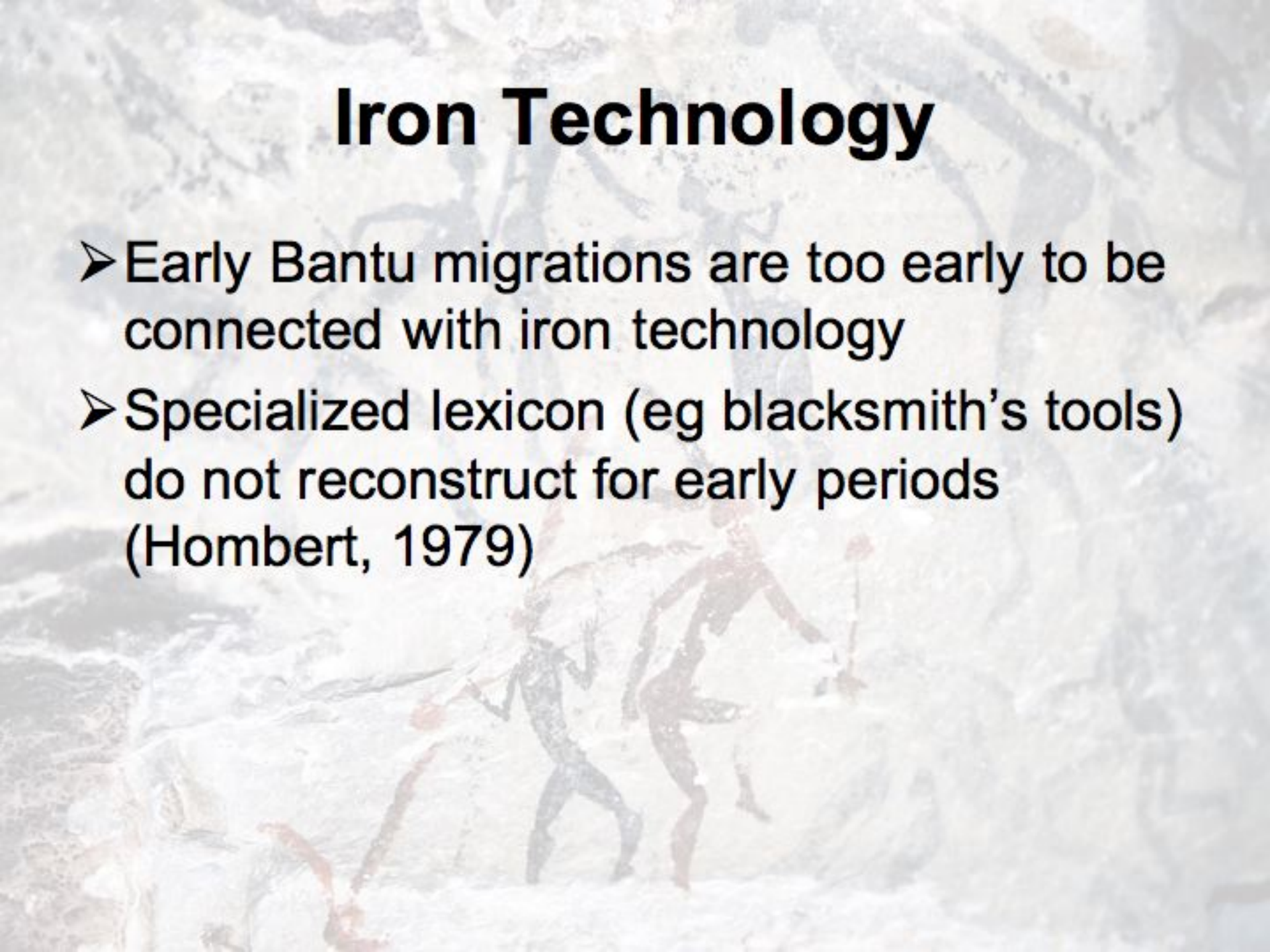
- ✓ Greatest diversity of « plantains » (AAB group) in central africa : introduction before 1000 BC (de Langhe)
- ✓ Banana phytoliths at 500 BC in southern Cameroon (Mbida et al, 2000) and at 3300 BC (?) in Uganda
- ✓ Crops of african origin (bulrush millet, sorghum, finger millet) found in India from 2<sup>nd</sup> Millenium BC: reverse route possible for bananas, cocoyams, sugar-cane and water yam?

## ➤ Linguistic evidence : 3 stems : \*-kɔ̃ (CS 1090), \*-kɔ̃ɔ̃ndɛ (CS 1144), \*-kɔ̃ɔ̃ndɔ̃ / \*-ŋkɔ̃ndɔ̃ (CS 1146)



# Iron Technology

- Early Bantu migrations are too early to be connected with iron technology
- Specialized lexicon (eg blacksmith's tools) do not reconstruct for early periods (Hombert, 1979)



# Rock art

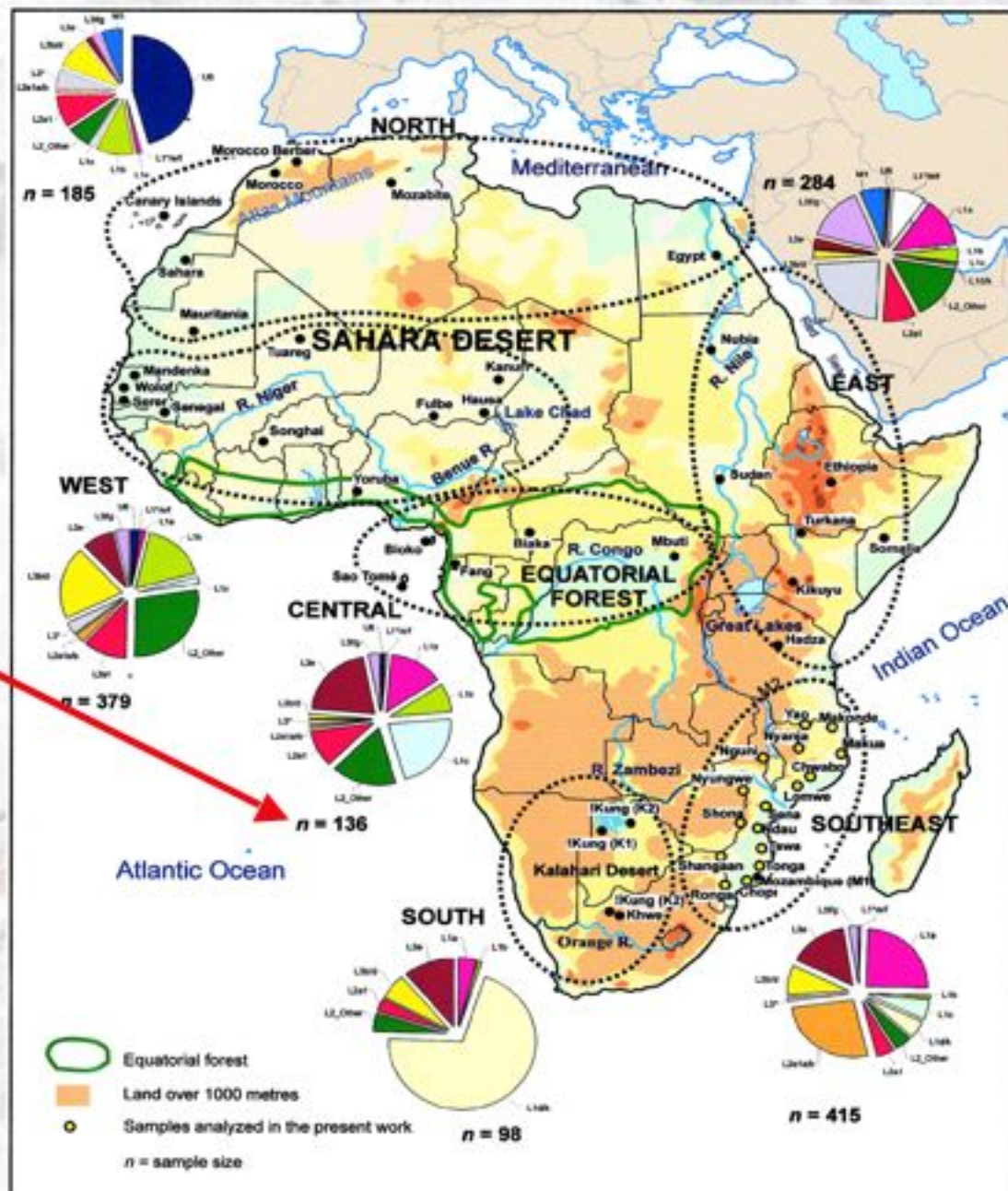
## ➤ Three styles :

- ✓ San
- ✓ Bantu
- ✓ « Northern » Hunter-gatherer  
specific style in central Tanzania)



Salas & al. (2002)

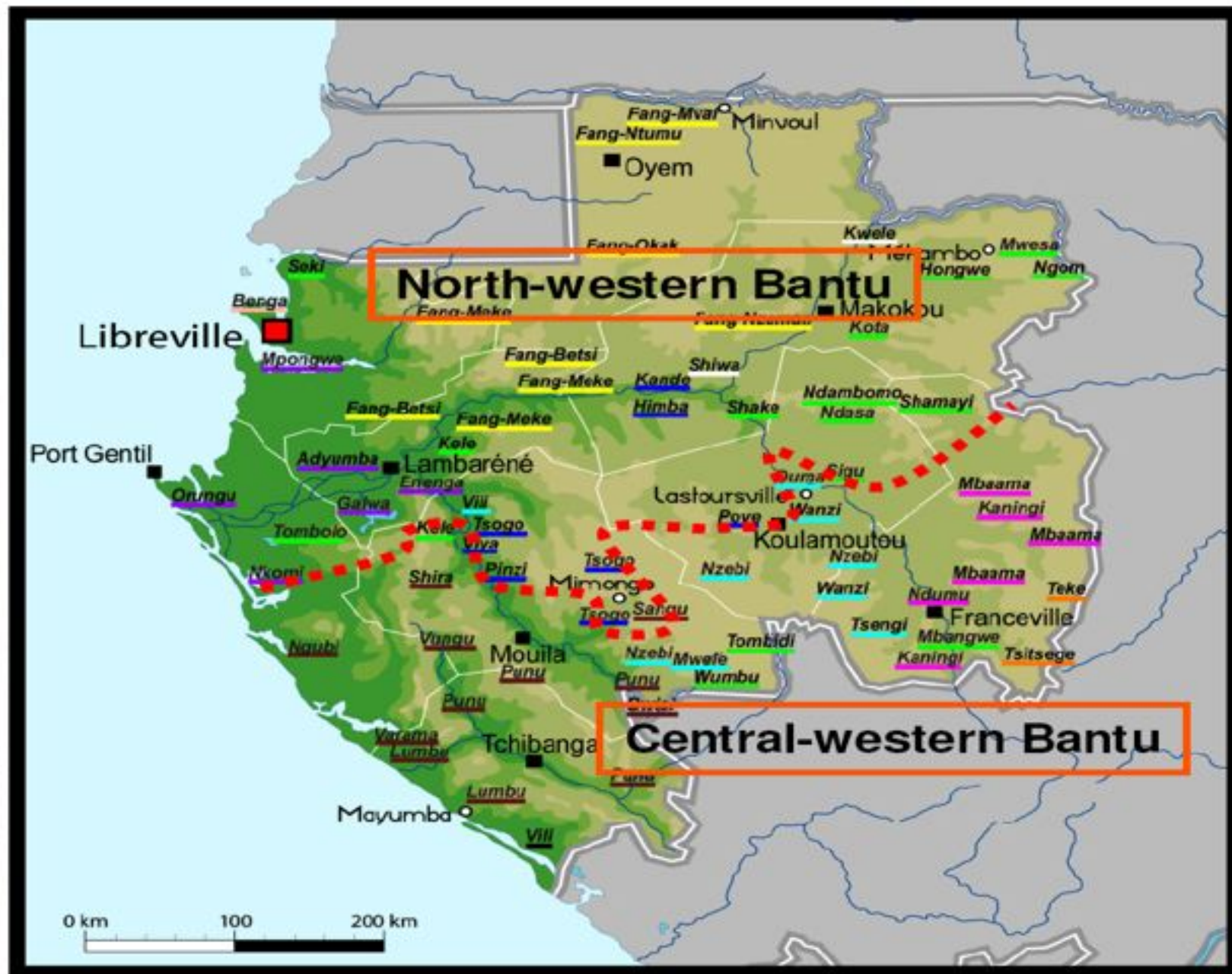
Sample size



# Population genetics

- Eastern (Mbuti) vs Western Pygmies (Gabon, Cameroon): 18.000 years separation)
- Genetic distance between western bantu and western pygmies vs eastern pygmies and western pygmies





A30

A80

B20

B40

B60

H12b

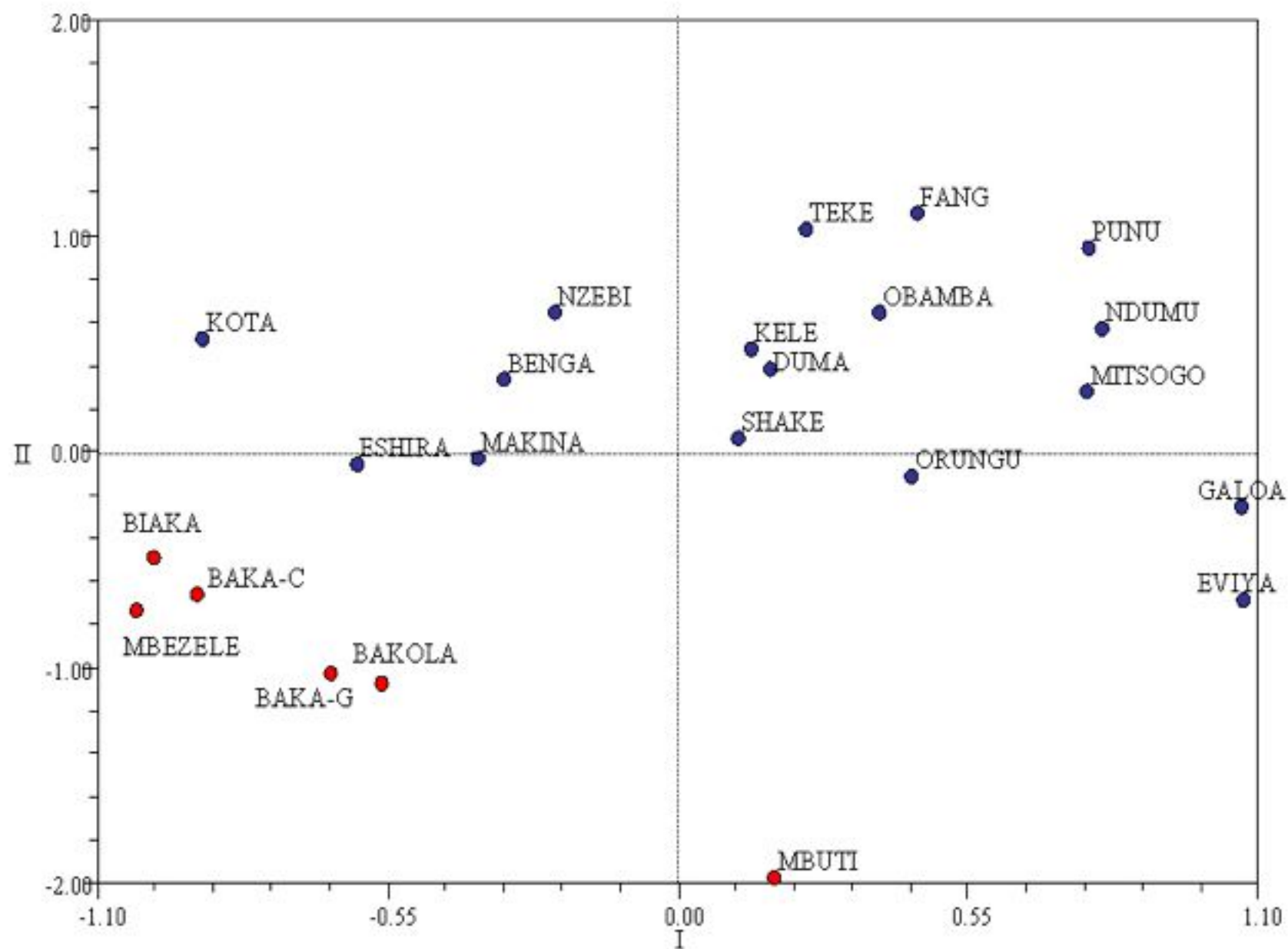
A70

B10

B30

B50

B70









Thanks to :

- Patrick Daouda-Mouguiama
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FIN

