

1 **Pikunda-Munda and Batalimo-Maluba**
2 **Archaeological Investigations of the Iron Age Settlement**
3 **History of the western and northern Congo Basin**

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6 **Abstract** The spread of pottery-producing communities into the Central
7 African rainforest is commonly linked to the so-called ‘Bantu Expansion’.
8 It is considered the primary linguistic, cultural, and demographic process in
9 Holocene sub-Saharan Africa. To describe the expansion of putative Bantu-
10 speech communities through the rainforest into southern Africa, substantial
11 migrations through the so-called ‘Sangha River Interval’, which mostly coin-
12 cides with the Sangha River valley, are proposed. This paper presents a coher-
13 ent picture of the archaeological settlement history in the western and northern
14 Congo Basin, uncovered by fieldwork of the late 1980s along the rivers Ngoko,
15 Sangha, Likwala-aux-Herbes, Ubangi, and Lua. Archaeological research of the
16 *River Reconnaissance Project*, directed by Manfred K. H. Eggert from 1977
17 to 1987, produced a pottery sequence for the Congo Basin. Archaeological
18 features and findings uncovered during the project’s field campaigns in the
19 northern and western Congo Basin have only recently been studied in detail.
20 Due to a total lack of subsequent archaeological fieldwork in this region, this
21 analysis provides the only reliable source for a reconstruction of the cultural
22 dynamics within the region. Archaeological data and the sequence of pottery
23 styles within the western Congo Basin, along the Sangha River, cannot sup-
24 port the claim that this region, due to a climate-induced extension of savannas,
25 played a unique role as a ‘corridor’ within the expansion of putatively ‘Bantu’
26 speaking groups during the latter half of the 1st millennium BCE.

27 **Résumé** La propagation des communautés productrices de poteries dans
28 la forêt tropicale d’Afrique centrale est généralement liée à ce que l’on ap-
29 pelle ”l’expansion bantoue”. Elle est considérée comme le principal processus
30 linguistique, culturel et démographique de l’Afrique subsaharienne holocène.
31 Pour décrire l’expansion des communautés de langue bantoue présumées à
32 travers la forêt tropicale jusqu’en Afrique australe, on propose des migrations
33 importantes à travers ce que l’on appelle ” l’intervalle de la rivière Sangha