Political centralization, economic integration and language evolution in Central Africa: An interdisciplinary approach to the early history of the Kongo kingdom

Fact Sheet

Project Information

KONGOKING

Grant agreement ID: 284126

Status
Closed project

Start date 1 January 2012
End date 31 December 2016

Funded under
FP7-IDEAS-ERC

Overall budget
€ 1 400 760

EU contribution
€ 1 400 760

Hosted by
UNIVERSITEIT GENT

Belgium

Objective

The magnificent Kongo kingdom, which arose in the Atlantic Coast region of Equatorial Africa, is a famous emblem of Africa’s past. It is an important cultural landmark for Africans and the African Diaspora. Thanks to its early introduction to literacy and involvement in the Trans-Atlantic trade, the history of this part of sub-Saharan Africa from 1500 onwards is better known than most other parts. Nevertheless, very little is known about the origins and earlier history of the kingdom. Hence, this grant application proposes an interdisciplinary approach to this question. Archaeology and historical linguistics, two key disciplines for early history reconstruction in Africa, will play the most prominent role in this approach. Paradoxically, if the wider region of the Kongo kingdom is one of the best documented areas of Central Africa from a historical and ethnographic point of view,
documented areas of Central Africa from a historical and ethnographic point of view, it is virtually unknown archaeologically. The proposed research team will therefore undertake pioneer excavations in several capital sites of the old kingdom. Similarly, no comprehensive historical study has covered the languages of the Kongo and closely affiliated kingdoms. Nonetheless, the earliest documents with Bantu data, going back to the early 16th century, originate from this region. The proposed research team will therefore undertake a historical-comparative study of the Kikongo dialect cluster and surrounding language groups, such as Kimbundu, Teke and Punu-Shira, systematically comparing current-day data with data from the old documents. Special attention will be given to cultural vocabulary related to politics, religion, social organization, trade and crafts, which in conjunction with the archaeological discoveries, will shed new light on th

Field of science
/social sciences/economics and business/business and management/commerce
/humanities/history and archaeology/history
/humanities/languages and literature/languages - general

Programme(s)

Topic(s)

Call for proposal

ERC-2011-StG_20101124

Funding Scheme

ERC-SG - ERC Starting Grant

Host institution

UNIVERSITEIT GENT

Address
Sint Pietersnieuwstraat 25
9000 Gent
Belgium

EU contribution
€ 1 347 960

Website
Contact the organisation

Principal investigator
Koen André Georges Bostoen

Administrative Contact
Saskia Vanden Broeck (Ms)
## Beneficiaries (3)

### UNIVERSITEIT GENT

- **Belgium**
- **EU contribution**: € 1,347,960
- **Address**: Sint Pietersnieuwstraat 25, 9000 Gent
- **Activity type**: Higher or Secondary Education Establishments
- **Website**: [Contact the organisation](#)
- **Principal investigator**: Koen André Georges Bostoen (Dr.)
- **Administrative Contact**: Saskia Vanden Broeck (Ms.)

### UNIVERSITE LIBRE DE BRUXELLES

- **Belgium**
- **EU contribution**: € 38,400
- **Address**: Avenue Franklin Roosevelt 50, 1050 Bruxelles
- **Activity type**: Higher or Secondary Education Establishments
- **Website**: [Contact the organisation](#)
- **Administrative Contact**: Beata Bibrowska (Ms.)

### MUSEE ROYAL DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE

- **Belgium**
- **EU contribution**: € 14,400
- **Address**: Leuvensesteenweg 13, 3080 Tervuren
- **Activity type**: Research Organisations
- **Website**: [Contact the organisation](#)
- **Administrative Contact**: [Administrative Contact](#)