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, 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

**Champ scientifique**

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**ERC-SG-SH6** - ERC Starting Grant - The study of the human past

**Appel à propositions**

ERC-2011-StG_20101124

**Voir d'autres projets de cet appel**

**Régime de financement**

ERC-SG - ERC Starting Grant

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