

Recherches interdisciplinaires sur le présent et le passé de l'Afrique bantouphone

Interdisciplinary research on the present and the past of Bantu-speaking Africa

Prof. Koen Bostoen & Dr. Guy Kouarata

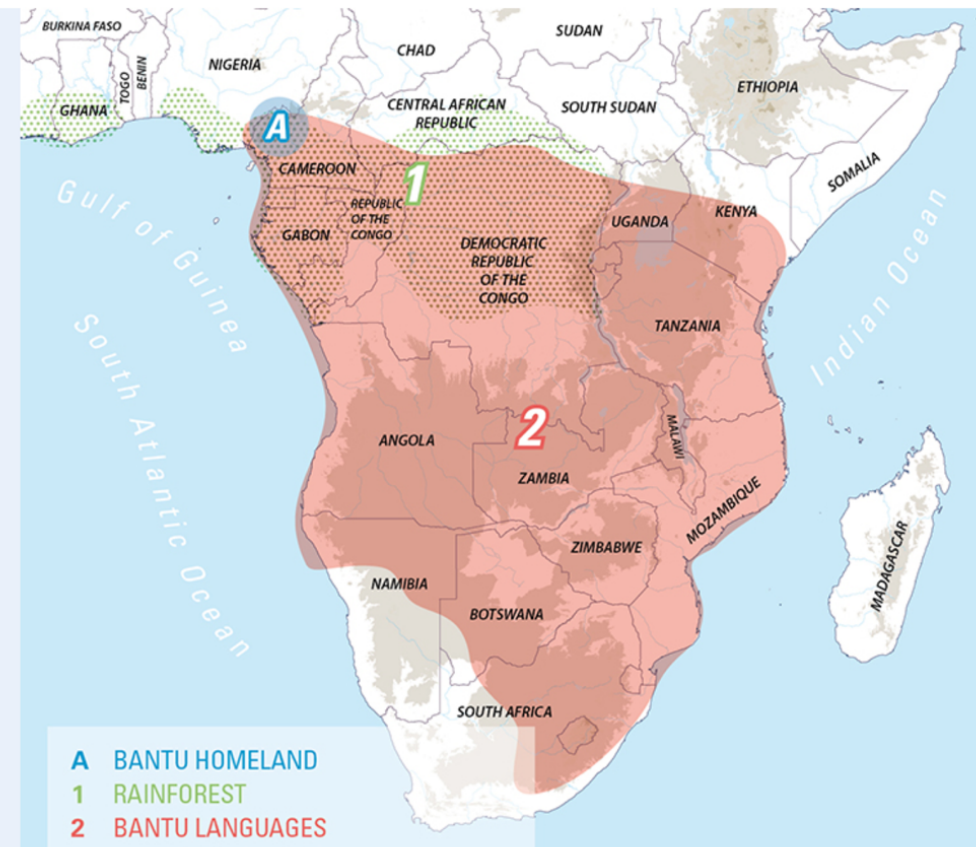
BANTUGENT

The **UGent Centre for Bantu Studies (BantUGent)** stands for a **transdisciplinary approach** to the past and present of Bantu languages, Bantu speech communities and their (im)material worlds, both in Africa and in the diaspora.

Our research starts from the **data-driven study of language and/or (im)material culture** and relies on methods and theoretical insights from disciplines as diverse as linguistics, archaeology, anthropology, (art) history, botany, zoology, genetics, etc.

Within the field of Bantu linguistics, which is BantUGent's centre of gravity, we strongly focus on **historical linguistics**, including **language contact**, and **corpus linguistics and lexicography**, which we strive to combine.

Our research is also integrated in several courses of the UGent [BA in African Languages and Cultures](#) and [MA in African Studies](#), such as [Introduction to African Linguistics](#), [Language Documentation and Description in Africa](#), [African Historical Linguistics](#), [Bantu Corpus Linguistics and Lexicography](#), [Comparative Bantu Grammar](#), and [African Archaeology](#).



Partners



Explaining BantUGent research at ISP Kikwit (DRC), August 15, 2019, from left-to-right: Joseph Koni Muluwa, Koen Bostoën & Léon Mundeke (© Sara Pacchiarotti)



Doing fieldwork in Busoga on Lower Nyole, January 16, 2016, circling clockwise: Hamba Baziryo and Wangira Noah, Michael Marlo (Missouri U), Deo Kawalya (Makerere U) and Minah Nabirye (BantUGent) (© Gilles-Maurice de Schryver). The research was published in the following [paper](#).

Africa

Burundi

→ [Department of African Languages and Cultures & Department of Kirundi-Kiswahili, University of Burundi, Bujumbura](#)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

- Department of Historical Sciences, [Kinshasa University](#) (UNIKIN)
- Department of Historical Sciences, [Lubumbashi University](#) (UNILU)
- [Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de la Gombe, Kinshasa](#)
- [Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Kikwit, Kikwit](#)
- [Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Mbuji-Mayi, Mbuji-Mayi](#)

Kenia

→ [University of Nairobi](#)

Namibia

→ [University of Namibia, Windhoek](#)

South Africa

- [University of Western Cape, Cape Town](#)
- [University of Pretoria](#)

Tanzania

→ [University of Dar es Salaam](#)

Uganda

→ [School of Languages, Literature and Communication, Makerere University, Kampala](#)

African PhD students



Joseph Koni Muluwa (°1964)
Vice-rector ISP Kikwit (DRC)



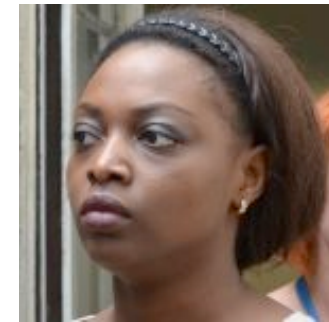
Jean-Pierre Donzo (°1963)
Professor ISP Gombe (DRC)



Igor Matonda (°1984)
Head Department UNIKIN (DRC)



Michel Onokoko (°1962)
UDPS (DRC)



Mandela Kaumba (°1988)
UNILU (DRC)



Minah Nabirye (°1972)
post-doc UGent
Associate Makerere University
(Uganda)



Deo Kawalya (°1980)
Professor Makerere University
(Uganda)



Ferdinand Mberamihigo (°1971)
Professor University Burundi



Ernest Nshemezimana (°1976)
Professor University Burundi



Manoah-Joël Misago (°1975-†2022)
Professor University Burundi

BantUGent Documentation

BantUGent maintains an extensive digital, searchable inventory with scientific documentation on Bantu language communities. Since we started to accumulate this digital documentation as part of the successive cross-disciplinary [KongoKing](#) (2012-2016) and [BantuFirst](#) (2018-2023) projects, it pertains first and foremost to the **languages, archaeology, botany, ethnography & anthropology, and history of West-Coastal Bantu-speaking peoples**, and more particularly the **Kikongo Language Cluster**. Nonetheless, because the scope of BantUGent research covers the entire Bantu language distribution area and beyond, the digital inventory increasingly incorporates more documentation from other parts of Africa, including many academic sources that tend to be difficult to access. The contents of our **digital BantUGent documentation inventory** can be consulted [here](#).



Extract from the *Vocabularium Latinum, Hispanicum, e Congense. Ad Usum Missionariorū transmittendorū ad Regni Congo Missiones* from 1652 (Rome: National Central Library, Fondo Minori 1896, MS Varia 274), the oldest surviving dictionary of a Bantu language.

[This unique resource was transcribed using professional dictionary writing software and is, as is the case for all other BantUGent documentation, now available in various digital, searchable formats.]



Map from 1619 by [Jodocus Hondius, Sr.](#) representing Congo and Ethiopia.

[In addition to texts, the BantUGent documentation also includes Images of various kinds, such as historical maps, but also pictures from recent research trips. In our Documentation Archive we also keep all the raw material collected via fieldwork.]

Bantu language text corpora

(Historical) Bantu corpus linguistics has recently become one of BantUGent's most visible showcases on the international scene. Following [Tognini-Bonelli \(2001\)](#), corpus linguistics is **the analysis and description of language use as documented in texts**, including transcribed oral texts. To analyze and describe 'real' language, one needs "large quantities of actual occurrences of that language" assembled in an electronic corpus. Over the past two decades, BantUGent has developed such corpora for several Bantu languages in order to allow for their corpus-based (and in some cases even corpus-driven) study, both in terms of **grammar** and the **lexicon**.

BantUGent warmly welcomes scholars who want to do research using one of our existing corpora, or to build and examine a new corpus of their own (Bantu) language as part of a [doctoral](#) or [postdoctoral](#) research project.

Available Bantu corpora (in addition to corpora for Afrikaans, English, Hausa and Somali, which may be used for comparative purposes) are listed below.

- Cilubà
- isiNdebele
- isiXhosa
- isiZulu
- Kikongo*
- Kirundi
- Kiswahili
- Lingála
- Luganda
- Lusoga
- Northern Sotho
- Sesotho
- Setswana
- siSwati
- Tshivenda
- Xitsonga

Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies 2019, 37(4): 361–381

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AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES
ISSN 1607-3614 EISSN 1727-9461
<https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2019.1697624>

A corpus-driven study of the expression of necessity in Luganda (Bantu, JE15)

Deo Kawalya,¹ Gilles-Maurice de Schryver^{2,3*} and Koen Bostoen²

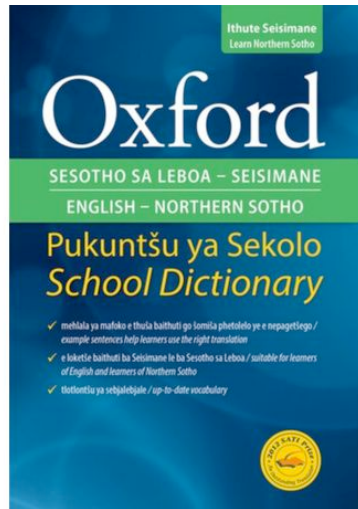
DE GRUYTER MOUTON

JALL 2016; 37(2): 247–286

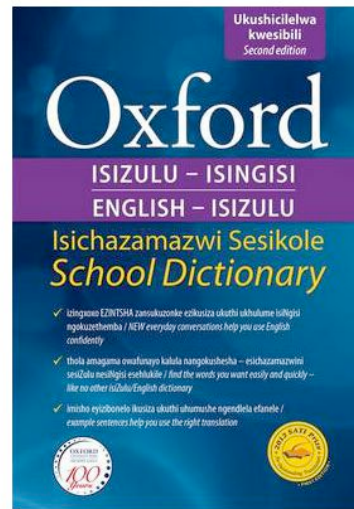
Ferdinand Mberamihigo, Gilles-Maurice de Schryver*
et Koen Bostoen

Entre verbe et adverbe : Grammaticalisation et dégrammaticalisation du marqueur épistémique *umeengo/umeenga* en kirundi (bantou, JD62)

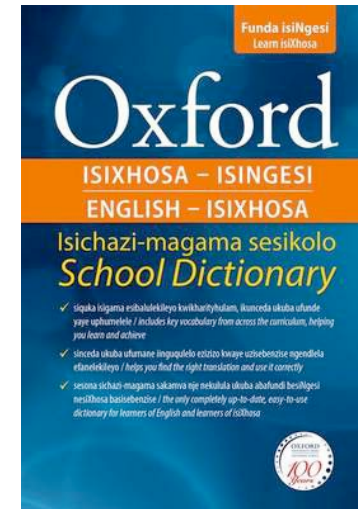
Bantu language dictionaries



Sesotho sa Leboa



Isizulu



Isixhosa

Online Swahili - English Dictionary

Change page language: [Kiswahili](#) | [English](#)

<https://africanlanguages.com/swahili/>



Gilles-Maurice de Schryver (°1971)

Linguistic fieldwork in collaboration with source communities



Jean-Pierre Donzo (°1963) & **Marie-Faustine Beloko** (°1967)
working with Loonga speakers in Lodja (DRC)



Guy Kourata (°1969) during Kongo orthography workshop, Kinshasa, 2021



Sara Pacchiarotti (°1982) during classes at ISP Kikwit, 2022

African knowledge systems in past and present

**Edible Fungi Consumed by the Lamba and Bemba
People of Haut-Katanga (DR Congo)**

Bill Kasongo Wa Ngoy Kashiki, André De Kesel, Ernest Kabange Mukala,
Koen Bostoen, and Jérôme Degreef

**Champignons consommés par les Pygmées du Gabon :
analyse linguistique des myconymes baka et kóya**

Joseph Koni Muluwa, Hugues Calixte Eyi Ndong,
Jérôme Degreef et Koen Bostoen

First farmers in the Central African rainforest: A view from southern Cameroon

Katharina Neumann^{a,*}, Koen Bostoen^b, Alexa Höhn^a, Stefanie Kahlheber^a, Alfred Ngomanda^{a,1},
Barthélémy Tchiengué^c

**Reconstructing West-Coastal Bantu Vocabulary as Evidence for Early Banana Cultivation
in Central Africa**

Sifra Van Acker¹, Sara Pacchiarotti¹, Edmond De Langhe² & Koen Bostoen¹

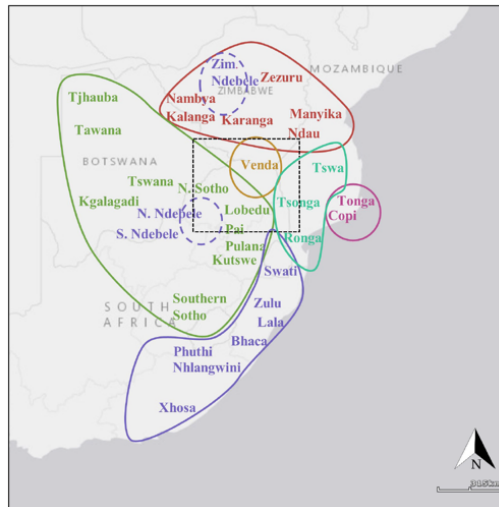
**Were the first Bantu speakers south
of the rainforest farmers?**
A first assessment of the linguistic evidence

Koen Bostoen and Joseph Koni Muluwa



Sifra Van Acker (°1994) during ethnobotanical fieldwork in Idiofa, 2021

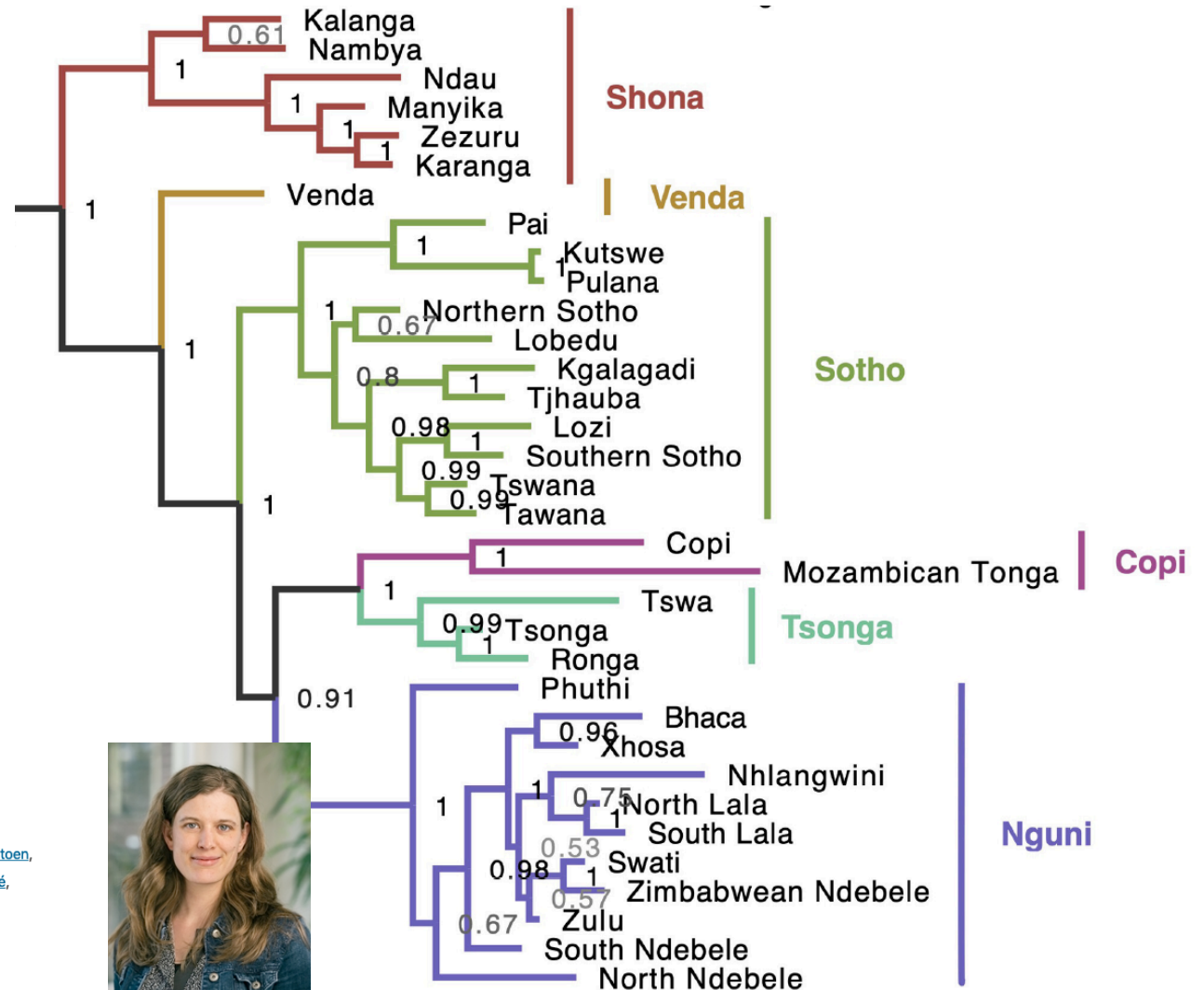
Bantu Historical Linguistics



Genetic substructure and complex demographic history of South African Bantu speakers

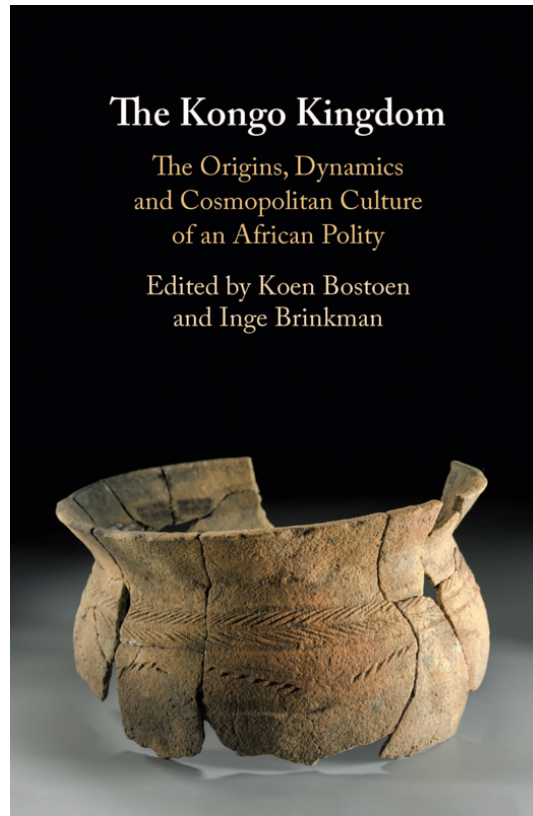
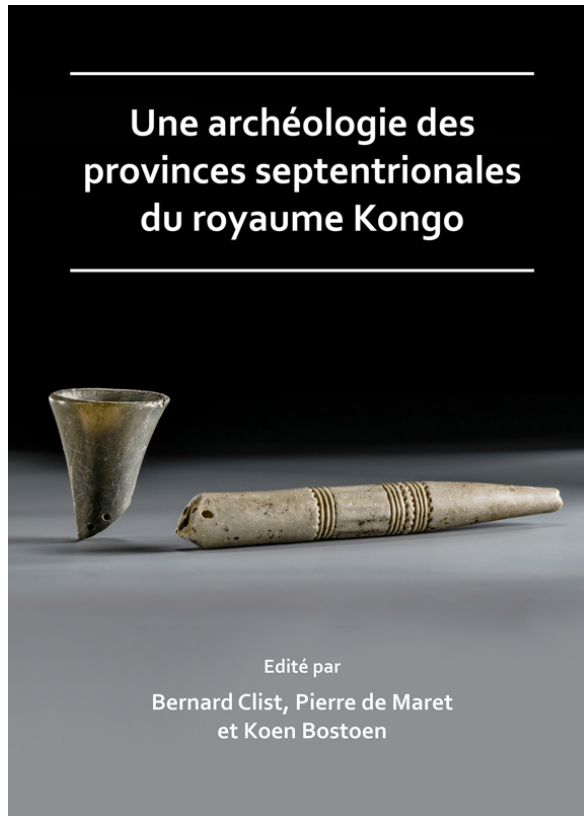
[Dhriti Sengupta](#), [Ananyo Choudhury](#), [Cesar Fortes-Lima](#), [Shaun Aron](#), [Gavin Whitelaw](#), [Koen Bostoen](#), [Hilde Gunnink](#), [Natalia Chousou-Polydouri](#), [Peter Delius](#), [Stephen Tollman](#), [F. Xavier Gómez-Olivé](#), [Shane Norris](#), [Felistas Mashinya](#), [Marianne Alberts](#), [AWI-Gen Study](#), [H3Africa Consortium](#), [Scott Hazelhurst](#), [Carina M. Schlebusch](#) & [Michèle Ramsay](#) ✉

[Nature Communications](#) 12, Article number: 2080 (2021) | [Cite this article](#)



Hilde Gunnink (°1989)

Reconstructing ancient African history



Mbanza Nsundi royal cemetery, DRC, 18th century CE



Remains of the oldest church in the DRC, Ngongo Mbata, first half 17th century CE

ERC-funded KongoKing project: www.kongoking.net

Reconstructing ancient African history

Population collapse in Congo rainforest from 400 CE urges reassessment of the Bantu Expansion

Dirk Seidensticker^{1*}, Wannas Hubau^{1,2*}, Dirk Verschuren³, Cesar Fortes-Lima⁴, Pierre de Maret⁵, Carina M. Schlebusch^{4,6,7}, Koen Bostoen¹

De pest zat in het Congolese regenwoud

Zo'n 1900 jaar geleden verdwenen haast alle menselijke nederzettingen uit het Congolese regenwoud. De oorzaak, meldt taalkundige Koen Bostoen (UGent) met een schare collega's in *Science Advances*, was wellicht een langdurige epidemie ten gevolge van een nattere periode.

In ongeveer dezelfde tijd veroorzaakte 'de pest van Justinianus' een ravage in de toenmalige Romeinse en Ethiopische rijken. Een pestvariant die vandaag nog in Centraal-Afrika voorkomt, is de oudste levende variant van de bacterie die in de middeleeuwen bij ons de zwarte dood veroorzaakte.

De studie steunde onder meer op

Een variant van de pest
jongde
bewoners
uit het
Congolese
regenwoud.

archeologisch en genetisch onderzoek. Uit taal-analyse bleek dat de huidige sprekers van Bantotoelen in de regio niet afstammen van de gemeenschappen die ongeveer 4000 jaar geleden het regenwoud koloniseerden.

Geografe Veerle Vanacker (UGent) en haar collega's melden in *Nature Communications* dat Noord-Amerikanen de kolonisatie door de Europeanen en de daarmee gepaard gaande opmars van landbouw, tien keer sneller erodeerde dan voordien. De laatste eeuw alleen al was de landerosie even groot als de voorbije drie millennia samen. Onder meer de ontbossing droeg daartoe bij.

Una larga epidemia afectó a África hace más de 1.500 años

Un nuevo estudio elaborado por un equipo multidisciplinar de científicos podría reescribir la historia del poblamiento del continente africano. Los expertos aseguran que las poblaciones colapsaron entre el 400 y el 600 d.C., y no se recuperaron hasta hace unos 1.000 años.



Igor Matonda (°1984)



Peter Coutros (°1986)



Jeune Afrique, April 2021



ERC-funded BantuFirst project: www.bantufirst.ugent.be

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ASANTE SANA
MERSI MINGI
MATONDO MINGI
MURAKOZE CYANE
WEBALE NNYO
KE LEBOHA HAHOLO
KE LEBOGA KUDU
NGIBONGA KAKHULU
NDZA KHENSA SWINENE
ZIKOMO KWAMBIRI
THANKS A LOT
MERCİ BEAUCOUP
MUITO OBRIGADO