

Possible topics BA/MA-dissertations supervised by Koen Bostoën

Interdisciplinary approaches to African deep history

- Any topic linked to the deep history of Africa, especially Bantu-speaking Africa, involving data from different disciplines, such as archaeology, genetics, and historical linguistics (possibly in collaboration with Dr. Peter Coutros and Dr. Jessamy Doman)

Historical-comparative linguistics

- The **historical-comparative study of the lexicon, phonology, morphology and/or syntax** of any genealogical cluster of African languages, but preferably Bantu languages, for which comparative data are already available or for which new comparative data need to be collected through fieldwork. Especially welcome are comparative studies on the **West-Coastal Bantu languages** (Guthrie's groups B40-80, H10, H30, parts of H40 and L10) as a follow-up to the historical linguistic research of the ERC-CG BantuFirst project (<https://www.bantufirst.ugent.be/>) (possibly in collaboration with Prof. Sara Pacchiarotti and/or Dr. Guy Kouarata).
- **Historical-comparative approaches to language contact in deep African history**, especially interactions between migrating Bantu speakers and autochthonous hunter-gatherers, such as Khoisan speakers in Southern Africa (e.g., the integration of clicks in Bantu languages) and Pygmies in Central Africa (in collaboration with Dr. Hilde Gunnink).
- **Historical-comparative study of vocabulary belonging to specific semantic domains**, such as animals and plants, crops, crafts, diseases, trade and politics, religion, etc., possibly in conjunction with a **Words-and-Things/Conceptual History** approach in order to reconstruct African history from language data as certain historians of Central and Eastern Africa, such as Jan Vansina, David Schoenbrun, Christopher Ehret, Kairn Klieman, Kathryn de Luna and Rhiannon Stephens did. Especially welcome are topics associated with the Bantu Expansion or with the history of early African states (possibly in collaboration with Prof. Inge Brinkman and/or Prof. Gillian Mathys). One specific issue is the historical-comparative study of Bantu vocabulary linked with pastoralism and especially milking.

Language documentation and description

- **Documentation and description of the lexicon, phonology and/or grammar of any non-described or poorly described African language**, especially languages

belonging to the **Benue-Congo/Bantu language family and/or endangered languages**. Possible target languages are the **Congolese B50-B60-B70-B80 Bantu languages** (cf. <http://www.kwilubantu.ugent.be>; <https://www.bantufirst.ugent.be/>) (possibly in collaboration with Prof. Sara Pacchiarotti) or **Namibian and Zambian languages**, such as Kwamashi, Sifwe and Sishanjo (possibly in collaboration with Dr. Hilde Gunnink). For some of these languages, oral data samples are already available at the department. Research on any other African language for which oral data samples can be collected through fieldwork in Africa and/or in the African diaspora is also most welcome.

- **In-depth and typology-oriented study of a specific grammatical aspect of any better-documented and better-described African language**, especially languages belonging to the Benue-Congo/Bantu language family and preferably through a corpus-based approach (possibly in collaboration with Prof. Gilles-Maurice de Schryver). Possible target languages are Ciluba, Kiswahili, Kirundi, Kikongo, Luganda and Lusoga for which text corpora are already available at the department, but also other African languages for which a new text corpus can be built. Possible topics: the expression of tense, aspect, mood and/or modality); focus and topic marking (or information structure more generally); word order inversions; relative and cleft constructions; syntax and semantics of verbal derivation and voice constructions (passive, middle, neuter, etc.); object marking; negation; locatives and motion verbs; etc. (possibly in collaboration with Prof. Maud Devos, Prof. Sara Pacchiarotti, Dr. Hilde Gunnink,)

Swahili

- Any topic on Swahili language, culture and society, with special interest for subcultures (urban, youth, street, music, etc.) and research involving Kiswahili language data (possibly in collaboration with Prof. Devos and/or Prof. Brinkman).
- Any topic on Swahili literature (possibly in collaboration with Prof. Devos and/or Prof. Brinkman).
- For students doing educative MA: any topic concerning Swahili teaching as part of the UGent BA program of African Languages and Cultures
- **The study of non-standard varieties of Kiswahili**, possibly linked with research on the impact of language contact.