Bantu Expansion Working Group

Tervuren, March 25, 2009
CLHASS (Contribution de la Linguistique à l’Histoire de l’Afrique Sub-Saharienne)

- Genetic diversity vs. linguistic uniformity
- Increasing the linguistic contribution to the reconstruction of African prehistory
3 Themes

1. Towards a new classification of African languages

2. Deriving historical inferences from linguistic reconstructions

3. Modelling languages, populations and environmental constraints
Classification

- Updating current four-way linguistic classification

- Identify all « possible » isolates and re-evaluate their linguistic affiliation
Modelling

- Use of archaeological data on population densities
- Evaluation of favorable ecological niches
- Inference of possible migratory routes at different time windows
Reconstruction

Goal: Determination of possible specific modes of contact between food producers and hunter-gatherers

Reconstruct historically significant lexical items (wild fauna and flora, hunting and fishing techniques, agriculture, animal husbandry, pottery, metal-working...
Data collection and reconstruction

- 500 CLHASS Historical wordlist
  - Dictionaries
  - Specific existing wordlists
  - Specific data collection
- Table of correspondences PB > Bantu Lg X
- Virtual reconstructions Bantu Lg X > PB for CLHASS wordlist
- Interpretation of virtual reconstructions
- Analyses of substratum and language contacts
Tools and resources

- Digitized dictionaries
- Reconstruction software
- Website (from April 15, 2009)
  http://www.ddl.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/clhass/