

## 1. Introduction

KongoKing is a 5-year interdisciplinary and interuniversity project funded by the European Research Council, looking into the hitherto little-known origins of the Kongo kingdom through the combination of archaeology and historical linguistics. Its geographical span covers the south of the Republic of Congo, northern Angola, and the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). For further information on the research project, see <http://www.kongoking.org>

This summer's fieldwork season saw the archaeologists work during July and August mainly at Ngongo Mbata and Mbanza Nsundi in order to evaluate the potential of sites there. Both locations are situated in the Lower Congo Province of the DRC.

### Further reading

2012 archaeology report : <http://www.kongoking.org/fieldwork-archaeology-2012.html>

2012 linguistics report : <http://www.kongoking.org/fieldwork-linguistics-2012.html>

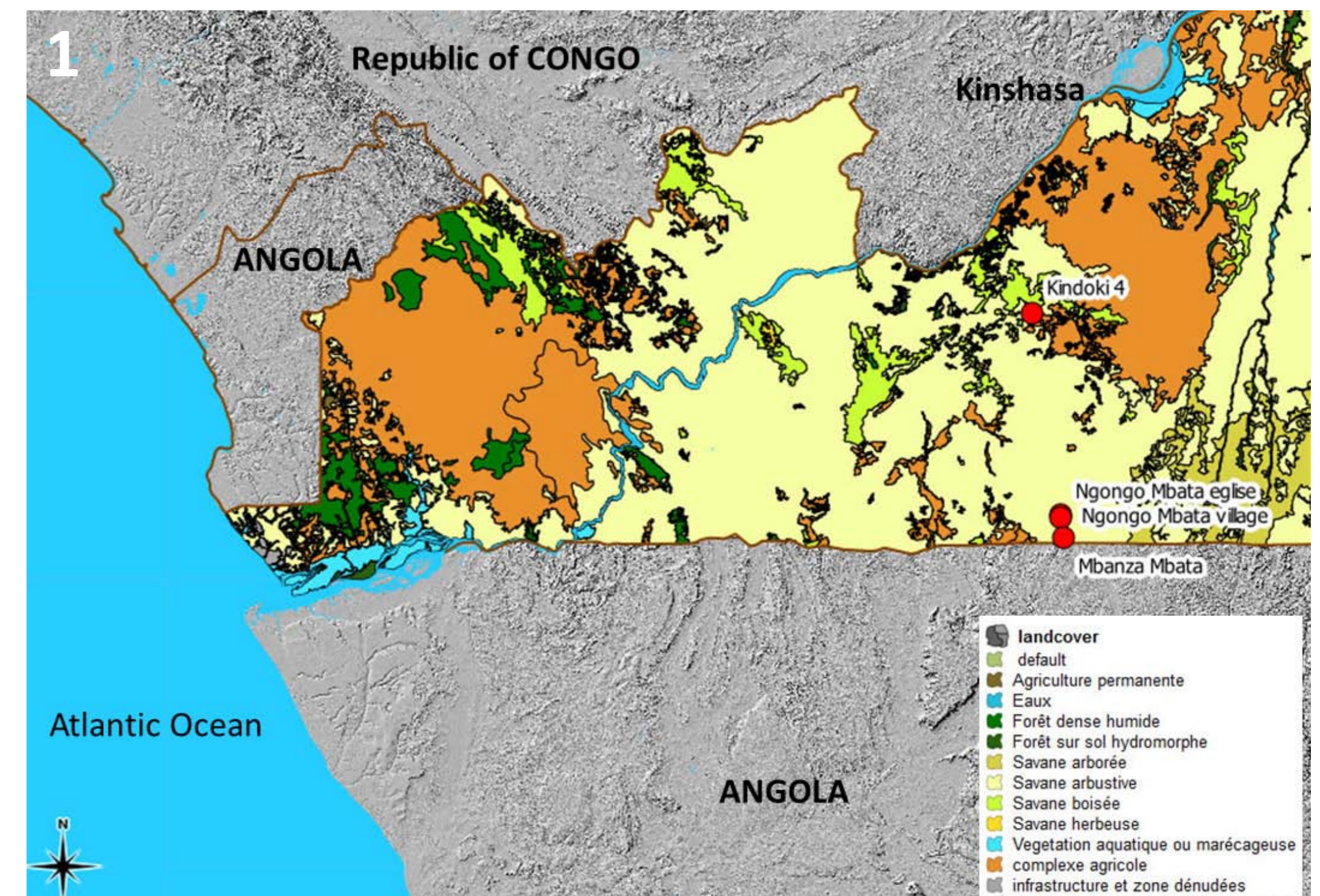


Figure 1: Location map of excavated sites.

## 2. Mbanza Nsundi

Mbanza Nsundi is situated about 11 km north-west of the little town of Kisantu where research quickly focused on the Kindoki hill, and specifically on the Kindoki 4 archaeological site. In the 230m<sup>2</sup> test excavated, we discovered one Stone Age level (MSA or LSA) and four Late Iron Age occupation levels.

In detail, there is a first village occupation level at -60cm, dated around Cal AD 1447-1527 by two convergent carbon dates (LIA1); followed by a second occupation level at -40cm associated with a date around Cal AD 1647-1688 drawn from two 14C samples (LIA2). In the third level at -30cm, a cemetery counting 11 tombs was found (LIA3) followed by a fourth village level in the top 30cm of the hill (LIA4). One of the tombs (structure 9) is associated with a date around Cal AD 1645-1684 or Cal AD 1734-1806, the top level (LIA4) didn't receive reliable dating because of its shallow depth.



Figure 2: Ongoing excavations at the Kindoki 4 cemetery.



Figure 3: Adult (probably male) in grave n°9, Kindoki 4 site.

Figure 4 & 5: Excavation of the stone structures to the south of the Ngongo Mbata church.



## 3. Mbanza Mbata

The second part of the mission focused on Mbanza Mbata, situated west of the Inkisi river, and close to the Angolan border and some 15km east of the small town of Kimpangu. The main objective was to test excavate Mbanza Mbata (provincial capital in the former Kongo kingdom), Ngongo Mbata (important village and market in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century) and Ngongo Mbata kia Madiadia (17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> capuchin missionary church already excavated in 1938).

In the 16m<sup>2</sup> test excavations, this church was rediscovered together with an alignment of small stone structures to its south – maybe the Capuchins cells – of which one was studied in detail and a 14C sample will clarify the relation with the earlier excavated church. The four units excavated on Ngongo Mbata hill, comprising 12m<sup>2</sup>, have unearthed an habitation level of the Late Iron Age (awaiting results of C14 dating) and one of the Late Stone Age (quartz debitage). Finally, the 3m<sup>2</sup> survey on the Mbanza Mbata hill has provided another habitation level of the Late Iron Age.

## 4. Future prospects and research

Although this first field season was fruitful, the project has just started. In the coming year, we will:

- Work in the laboratory on the material obtained during the 2012 field season (e.g. study of palaeoenvironmental samples and cataloguing of ceramics,...)
- Restudy the material of the 1938 excavations by M. Beckaert at Ngongo Mbata and surrounding area
- Comb through testimonies dating between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (texts, maps, engravings, ...)
- Carry out further excavations during June – August 2013 on a far larger scale in the Lower Congo (DRC) on the sites identified last summer
- Evaluate during the 2013 summer period the potential of museum collections in Kinshasa, i.e. the National Institute for Museums (IMNC) and the Kinshasa University (UniKin)
- Start fieldwork in Congo-Brazzaville