

Determining the Kikongo variety of the oldest Bantu dictionary (1652)

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1. Introduction

- *Vocabularium Latinum, Hispanicum, e Congense* (Van Gheel 1652)
- Compiled by Capuchin missionaries in present-day northern Angola
- Unspecified variety (‘Congense’): Kisolongo or Kisikongo?

2. Previous argumentation

- Bontinck (1976: 156): “*Si le dictionnaire dit de G. de Geel a commencé [sic] à s’étoffer à Sonyo, nous comprenons mieux la prédominance du dialecte de Sonyo dans la traduction kikongo, par exemple, l’emploi de la consonne r au lieu de d et de l.*”
- Bentley (1887: vii): “*I [...] am convinced that the dialect to which they refer is not that of the court of Kongo, but that of Sonyo or St. Antonio, [...]; the constant employment of the letter R instead of D, with other points, accord fully with the vocabulary of Cannecattim (which will be noted shortly), and which he describes as the Sonho dialect.*”
- **But:** the sound /r/ is absent in 20th-21st century Kisolongo!

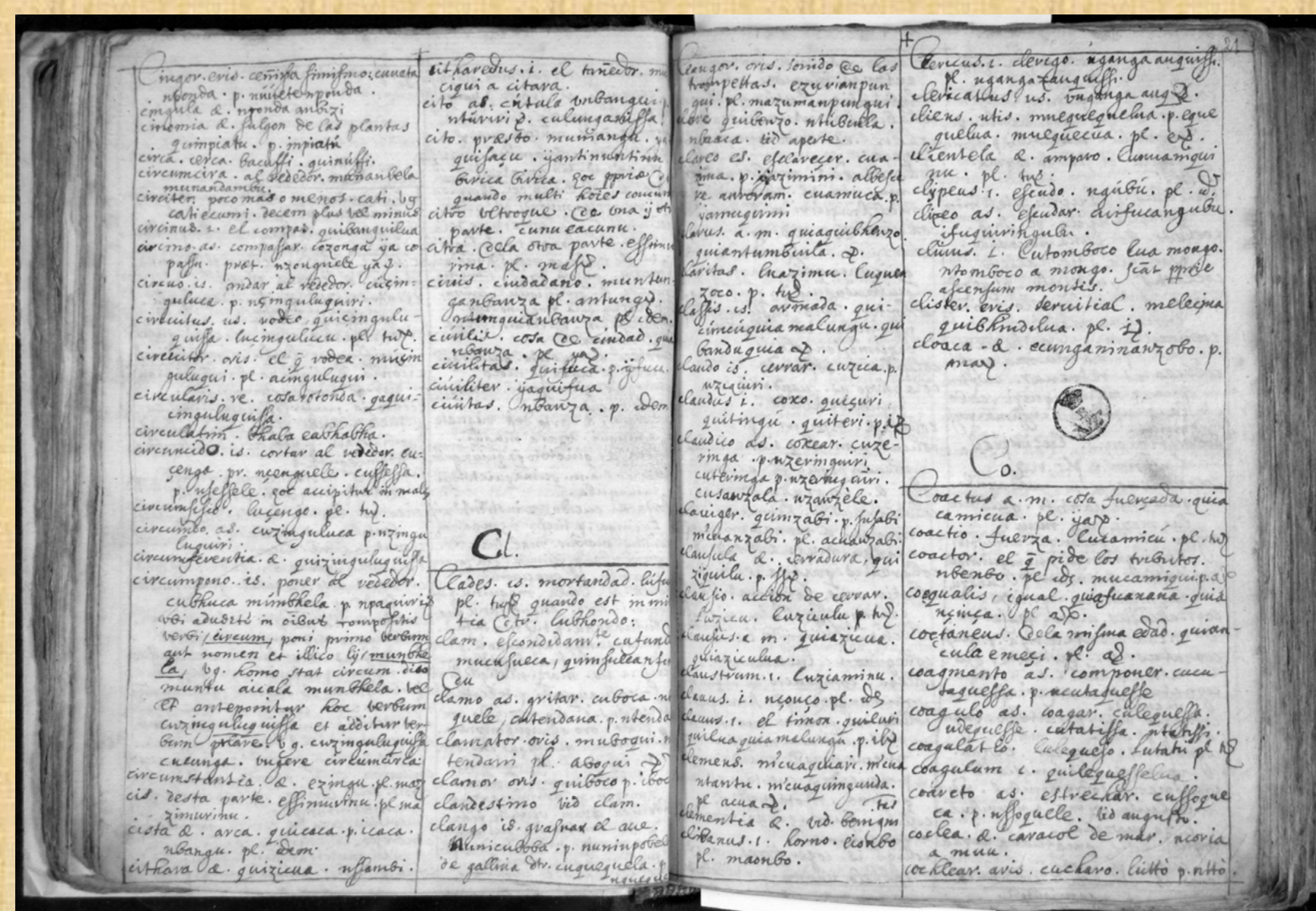


Figure 2: Extract from the *Vocabularium Congense* (Van Gheel 1652)

4. New Evidence

- **Prefix reduction/loss** in classes 5 and 10: shared innovations between 17th century variety and Kisikongo
- **Augment pattern:** shared innovation (e-o-o) between 17th century variety and Kisikongo

⇒ 17th c. variety more likely predecessor of Kisikongo

	NP class 5	NP class 10	Augment pattern
Protoform	*dI-/*lI- /*I-	*jiN-	*e-a-o
17 th c. variety	e-	N-	e-o-o
19 th c. Kisikongo	e-	N-	e-o-o
21 st c. Kisikongo	∅-	N-	e-o-o
20 th & 21 st c. Kisolongo	di-	ziN-	e-e-o

Figure 4: Shared innovations between the 17th century variety and Kisikongo

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Figure 1: Geografische ligging van Mpinda, Mbanza Soyo en Mbanza Kongo (overgenomen en bewerkt uit Nsondé 1995: 11)



Figure 2: Verspreiding van het Kisolongo (Solongo) en Kisikongo (Koongo) (overgenomen en bewerkt uit Nsondé 1995: 31)

Figure 1: Linguistic landscape of the Kongo Kingdom

3. Diachronic and comparative study of Kisikongo and Kisolongo

- 17th century variety: *Vocabularium Congense* (Van Gheel 1652); Brusciotto (1659)
- 19th century Kisikongo: Bentley (1887; 1895)
- Contemporary Kisikongo: Ndonga Mfuwa (1995)
- 20th century and contemporary Kisolongo: Tavares (1915); Lembe-Masiala (2007); fieldwork 2012



Figure 3: Doing fieldwork on Kisolongo in Muanda (DRC), September 2012

- NP cl. 5: **ebhata** ‘village’ (Van Gheel 1652); **ekonko** ‘grasshopper’ (19th c. Kisikongo); **kónkò** ‘grasshopper’ (21st c. Kisikongo); **divia** ‘field’ (20th c. Kisolongo)
- NP cl. 10: **nbulú** ‘jackals’ (Van Gheel 1652); **mbele** ‘knives’ (19th c. Kisikongo); **mbùumbà** ‘secrets’ (21st c. Kisikongo), **zimbele** ‘knives’ (20th c. Kisolongo)
- Augment cl. 6: **omatondo ma n’Zambianpungu ma maote** ‘the praises of God are good’ (Brusciotto 1659)
- Augment cl. 6: **emaki maßola** ‘the rotten eggs’; **vonda o mameme eme** ‘kill those sheep’ (Tavares 1915: 42); **tal’e madia mau** ‘look at this food’ (Tavares 1915: 16)

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