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 ressources

- Digitized dictionaries

- Reconstruction software

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