

Vowel height in African Languages: an areal survey

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In Democratic Republic of Congo, there are three main communities, the Bantu, the Nilotics and the Pygmies. These last, always marginalized, live mainly in the equatorial forest (Province of Equator, of Bandundu and of western Kasai) under dependence of the other communities that use them to various tasks.

Member of a research team on the 'Cultural Tourism on the Pygmies of Congo Kinshasa', performed since October 2008 jointly by the Department of Old studies and Sciences of religions of the University of Ottawa and the Centre of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics of the University of Kinshasa, we are interested, in the setting of this project, to the languages spoken these natives in a triple goal:

- *To identify the languages of these reduced people and to find the reasons that push them to communicate in the languages of their neighbours Bantu, thus ignoring the survival of their linguistic heritage;*
- *To make phonological and morphological description of these languages;*
- *To collect their oral literary texts in order to protect them as cultural heritage.*

Pending on that, two linguistic and sociolinguistic questionnaires have been submitted to Balumbe (Pygmies of Basankusu, Equator) and to Twa (Pygmies of Bikoro, Equator and of Inongo, Bandundu).

The results of these linguistic investigations permit to achieve descriptive studies on these languages to fill the hiatuses noted in this domain, comparatively to the surrounding countries such as Cameroon and the RCA where several interesting studies exist.