

## Call for papers Bantunivar workshop WOCAL10

**Title:** Bantu universals and variation

**Organisers:** BaSIS team Leiden (Jenneke van der Wal, Elisabeth Kerr, Zhen Li)

**Description:**

*"[W]ork on African languages has reached the critical mass necessary to make insightful comparative work between African languages possible. I think this is especially true of the Bantu languages, for perhaps no other language family possesses so many distinct languages that have so much in common syntactically."*  
(Henderson 2011:23)

As the field of Bantu typology is gaining momentum, we are organising a workshop with the aim to obtain a picture of the synchronic variation within the Bantu language family. We aim to go beyond lexical data to consider morphosyntax, phonology, and semantics, and welcome presentations from any framework.

Topics to be discussed include, but are not limited to:

- **Typological generalisations.** Which gaps and patterns have been encountered? Which implicational relations exist between formal properties of Bantu languages? For example, Marten and Van der Wal (2014) show that all languages that have instrument inversion also have locative inversion, and Van der Wal (2020) shows a relation between multiple object markers and object symmetry.
- **Explanations.** How can parameters (e.g. Marten et al. 2007) explain the generalisations found? Where and to what extent do we see the influence of areal contact? How does Bantu behave in comparison to universals found across the world? For example, recent work compares Greenberg's Universal 20 patterns in Bantu languages with other language families (e.g. Carstens 2008, Muriungi 2009; Cinque 2005), and Van de Velde (2019) explains how the unexpected variation in nominal word order can be understood by the Adnominal Modifier Apposition & Reintegration mechanism.
- **Methodology.** Looking beyond one or two languages to universals and variation across a language family poses many methodological questions. Which software can be used for storing Bantu typological-comparative data? Is there now enough descriptive material for meaningful quantitative analyses (cf. Nurse & Philippson 2003)? How do we decide on sample size (e.g. Nurse 2008)? Previous projects have used map tools (e.g. SOAS Bantu Project 2014-2018) and phylogenetic methods are becoming popular alternatives to earlier lexicostatic methods (Marten 2020; Grollemund et al. 2015).
- **Micro- vs. macrovariation.** The Bantu area has been characterised as a convergence zone (Marten 2013) with an overall high degree of morphosyntactic similarity – yet there is a lot of microvariation. Are there different types of generalisations within subgroups from those at the pan-Bantu level? What do these universals and variation tell us about the 'spirit' of the family (Sapir 1921, Baker 2008)? While we do not want to focus on reconstruction and classification issues, the synchronic picture may reveal different types of variation on the micro vs. macro level.

The invited speaker for this workshop is Daisuke Shinagawa, Associate Professor at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan.

### **Call for abstracts**

For this workshop, we invite abstracts from scholars working on any of the above issues in any theoretical framework. Abstracts should be max. 2 pages A4 font size 12pt including examples and references. Please submit your abstract through EasyChair, indicating BANT in the 'Keywords' field to indicate that the abstract is intended for this workshop.

### **Contact**

For further questions on the workshop, please contact Jenneke van der Wal ([g.j.van.der.wal@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:g.j.van.der.wal@hum.leidenuniv.nl)).

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