

**“From asymmetric grammatical treatment of nouns to gender: animacy-based noun classification in Central Africa and its typological significance”**

While investigating the linguistic diversity of the Ituri rainforest in Central Africa, Schebesta (e.g., 1952) and Vorbichler (e.g., 1963) observed that several languages of this zone display grammatical traits reflecting a categorization of nominal referents according to a  $\pm$ animate distinction. However, only few languages of the area have been described explicitly to possess an overt animacy-based gender system. Based on a wider linguistic survey, I show that this is partly because Central African languages tend to implement noun categorization grammatically in a far more extensive sphere of language structure that concerns behavioral properties of nouns. These can but need not lead to fully-grown gender systems. The cross-linguistic picture of noun classification in the area is not only relevant for African linguistics but also informs the general question of how certain gender systems emerge and develop.