Black through White: African words and calques which survived slavery in Creoles and transplanted European languages.
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Reviewed by Laura Álvarez López

The volume under review consists of 14 chapters dealing with the African-derived vocabulary retained in Creole languages and contact varieties of European languages. In most chapters, the analysis of semantic domains and word classes makes use of the same methods, namely, classifying the items in the 12 semantic domains proposed by Baker (1982), and discussing alternative etymologies when necessary.

In the introduction the editors state that although the study of Africanisms in different types of contact varieties has the potential to provide further information on how Creoles and other contact varieties have emerged, this line of study has not yet been sufficiently exploited. With the aim of shedding light on the nature of diverse contact situations, they propose a set of research questions dealing with the following issues: a) the distribution of lexical Africanisms across distinct semantic domains and the extent to which this reflects socio-history; b) the correlation between the attested source languages and demographic data; c) the significance of the relative proportions of different word classes among the African-derived vocabulary of each language variety.
The following chapters include contributions from several authorities in the field as well as data from a wide variety of contact languages: Portuguese-lexifier Creoles in Africa, Latin American varieties of Spanish and Portuguese, Mauritian Creole, several English- and French-lexifier Caribbean Creole languages as well as Berbice Dutch Creole, Ndyuka, and Saramaccan. Several authors have annexed lists of African lexical items.

In the first chapter Nicolas Quint points out that most of the African features of Cape Verdean Creole are found in the language system and not in the lexicon. The core vocabulary is Portuguese and Africanisms are semantically and statistically peripheral, the Manding component being dominant among the African-derived words. The author states that systematic semantic comparisons may constitute a promising line of research.

In Chapter 2, John Ladham discusses article agglutination, an etymological feature found in several Portuguese-lexifier Creoles. He explains that agglutination in the Gulf of Guinea Creoles has originated in an Edo noun prefix. According to Ladham, most African lexical items of all the Gulf of Guinea Portuguese-lexifier Creoles come from Bantu languages (mainly Kikongo and Kimbundu) and Edo (including closely related Edoid languages). Since the borrowing of adjectives, verbs and adverbs occurs less frequently than the borrowing of nouns, it is suggested that the high proportion of the Edo contribution to other word classes than nouns might indicate that Edo played a more important or a more specialized role than Bantu languages in the formation of these Creoles.

Angela Bartens’ Chapter 3 on lexical Africanisms in Latin American varieties of Spanish and Portuguese deals with both the retention of Africanisms and innovation through re-Africanization. The author discusses the origins of the African-derived vocabulary collected in different regions of Latin America and argues that most of these words are not restricted to specific groups of speakers or regions and that many of them have adopted Ibero-Romance morphology and are therefore no longer identified as loanwords by the speakers. Comparing the etyma in varieties of Spanish and Portuguese and Creoles of the Americas, Bartens shows that her sample has a common Bantu core that might be due to a common origin and, in some cases, to parallel borrowing. The studied Africanisms do not set the Latin American varieties of Spanish and Portuguese apart from the Creoles.

In the fourth chapter John Lipski presents an overview of Afro-Bolivian Spanish. The author sees this variety as a result of the pidginization of Spanish by African-born 'bozal' slaves who learned Spanish as a second language. During the late seventeenth and (probably) early eighteenth centuries Black Bolivians migrated to the Yungas from the mining regions in the highlands, and today
their descendants in North Yungas have at least passive competence in this restructured variety of Spanish. Seven possible Africanisms are presented but the etymologies proposed remain to be verified. Lipski concludes that the number of words of African origin is limited due to the history of this variety which arose when the communities had already stopped receiving new African-born members.

Philip Baker has written Chapters 5 and 6 about French-based Creoles. Words and calques of African origin in Mauritian Creole are the topic of Chapter 5. There is a considerable amount of reliable data available on the sources of enslaved Africans in Mauritius and the majority of slaves were brought from Bantu-speaking regions. However, the Malagasy arrived 14 years before the first Bantu slaves, a fact which might explain the relatively high proportion of items of Malagasy origin. Malagasy and Bantu languages account for 80-85% of all Africanisms, as speakers of these languages constituted 90% of the arrivals. Among other things, Baker discusses the distribution of lexical items from different source languages in different semantic domains and underlines the importance of considering possible etyma from more than one language when convergence between two or more languages might have occurred.

The African vocabulary retained in the Creoles of Haiti and the Lesser Antilles is the scope of Chapter 6. There is a lack of information concerning slave imports during the seventeenth century to these regions. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that Kwa languages are the main contributors, accounting for almost half of the items. These results might be due to the large amount of items in the semantic domain 'Beliefs and Customs'. When that domain is excluded, 55% of the remaining words are of Bantu origin. Baker argues that the findings can be related to the history of the peopling of these islands and that his data support the hypothesis that the groups with higher demographical weight in the earliest periods of colonization contribute more words in general and more lexical items that belong to other word classes than nouns in particular.

The seventh chapter by Silvia Kouwenberg deals with the Ijo-derived lexicon of Berbice Dutch Creole spoken in Guyana. The feature that a significant number of the items belong to the 'basic' (i.e., not culture-specific) lexicon and that it can be traced back to a single source language is considered atypical when compared to other Caribbean Creole languages. Another atypical feature is that among the Eastern Ijo-derived vocabulary, verbs constitute the word class with the most numerous representation. The author also discusses properties of Berbice Dutch such as negation patterns, aspectual markers and postpositions, highlighting the fact that those do not match Eastern Ijo structures as closely as she would have liked them to in order to apply notions such as 'substrate transfer' or 'continuity' to her findings.
In the eighth chapter, Farquharson and Baker focus on Jamaican Creole English. They explain that it is difficult to establish the number of speakers of different African languages taken to the island, last but not least because the area of embarkation of 30% of the enslaved Africans brought there is unknown. Rough estimates of percentages of language groupings are presented for the time period 1656 to 1807. Farquharson and Baker’s study is based on a corpus of 306 words of African origin from a wide range of sources and percentages of the overall ethno-linguistic composition of the slave population are compared with those for the items of African origin. The results show that Kwa is the principal source and the main contributor to all the 12 semantic domains, followed by Bantu and Benuic. These results also indicate that, in addition to being well represented during the early decades, maintaining or even increasing its representation over later decades constitutes a criterion favoring a greater number of a given African language’s (or language family’s) lexical items becoming established in a Creole.

Chapter 9 written by Bartens and Farquharson deals with the African-derived lexicon of six English-lexifier Creoles: San Andrés and Providence (Colombia), Nicaragua, the Bahamas, Belize, and Limón (Costa Rica). The study is based on a list of 119 words that can be assigned African etymologies. These words survived into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, while others may not have been recorded or may have fallen into disuse. The authors explain that they excluded lexical items for which questionable etymologies were presented in previous works. They also see a need for discussing etymologies previously proposed as relatively secure ones and for going back to the African sources in order to eliminate errors and misinterpretations. Furthermore, a method of calculating affinities between the African-derived lexicon in different varieties is presented. The comparison reveals that between 84 and 95% of the lexical Africanisms are shared with Jamaican Creole. These results, in combination with the socio-historical background information about people of African descent who were sent to most of the places where Western Caribbean English-lexifier Creoles are now spoken, suggest diffusion of the vocabulary from Jamaica. The unanswered question is why Bahamian has so much in common with the other varieties, since no enslaved Africans or their descendants seem to have been brought there from Jamaica.

Chapter 10, written by Philip Baker, gives an overview of words and calques in the Eastern Caribbean Creole of St Kitts-Nevis, two islands colonized by speakers of French and English in the seventeenth century. According to the author, Atlantic, Bantu, and Mande languages contributed more to the lexicon than the proportion of speakers of these languages would suggest. After comparing data from Jamaican with the results from St Kitts and Nevis, Baker
concludes that data on the numbers and sources of enslaved Africans transported to the Americas provide only limited information as far as the origins of individuals who disembarked in a specific region are concerned. Furthermore, the results show that convergence might be an important factor in the formation of the lexicon of contact languages: phonetic, semantic and/or functional similarities in two or more of the main linguistic groups well represented in a community seem to increase the possibility of words becoming established.

In the eleventh chapter, which deals with the African lexical contribution to Ndyuka, Saramaccan as well as other Creoles, John Huttar poses the following questions: In which domain do we find lexical Africanisms? Which lexemes within a domain are of African origin? Which form classes and substrates do we find? He concludes that the semantic domains where most Africanisms can be found include objects and activities that, in general, did not interest the Europeans. Following cross-linguistic patterns of lexical borrowing, most words of African origin in these languages are nouns, and generic lexemes are more likely to come from European languages. The author also explains why the Bantu contribution to Ndyudka is stronger than expected merely considering slave trade records.

Chapter 12 offers a list of (potential) idiomatic calques and semantic borrowings compiled by Parkvall and Baker. The authors explain that it is not easy to determine if what has the appearance of being a calque really is a calque or if we are dealing with a lexical innovation. Another difficulty resides in the fact that a regional origin for an idiomatic expression might be identified in West Africa, but this obviously does not equal identifying a specific source language.

In Chapter 13 Anthony Grant aims at casting light on matters of settlement and diffusion by studying the elements of Amerindian origin in Caribbean Creoles. These elements are mostly nouns and fewer in number than Africanisms. Some of these Americanisms were transmitted between European languages before entering Creoles or introduced from Creole varieties spoken in a distinct region, in other words, they were not acquired locally. The author argues that a combination of methods used in Historical Linguistics and Creolistics can help identifying Americanisms which are characteristic for a subset of Creoles, and are not universally found, as well as establishing genetic sub-branches among the Caribbean Creoles.

In the closing chapter, Philip Baker recapitulates the research questions and summarizes the principal findings of the preceding chapters, pointing out a series of difficulties. One problem is that the lists of Africanisms are not complete and only cover words used from the nineteenth century onwards. On top of that, it has been difficult to identify Africanisms and their etyma and
potential etyma; the source languages involved are difficult to identify and convergence between items in two or more languages needs to be considered. What African languages were spoken in the relevant regions? How can one identify the origins of the enslaved Africans when the place of embarkation is unknown for one third of the slave population? With respect to semantic domains, the author underlines once more the difficulty of working with partial data and states that the African vocabulary is widely distributed among the domains and is not restricted to specific activities associated with African cultures or slavery. The proportion of nouns among Africanisms in these varieties ranges from 37 % to 93 %. Further research might reveal if a higher proportion of non-nouns correlates with a higher degree of African influence on the lexicon and other linguistic levels. As Philip Baker says, this book has given rise to more questions than answers, and by raising all these questions the articles have the potential to contribute to the advancement of this field of studies.

References