Philippe Maurer. *Principense - Grammar, texts, and vocabulary of the Afro-Portuguese creole of the island of Príncipe, Gulf of Guinea*. 2009, vii + 280 pages. London - Colombo: Battlebridge Publications.

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Description of the book

Principense (PR) or Lung'Ie, one of the four Portuguese-related Gulf of Guinea creoles, is a 16th century creole spoken on the small island of Príncipe (142 km²) which, together with the island of São Tomé forms the Democratic Republic of São Tomé, Gulf of Guinea (Africa). Príncipe, which is probably best known as the island where Einstein's Theory of Relativity was proven in 1919, has currently approximately seven thousand inhabitants of which "about twenty to thirty people over sixty and a few younger ones" (p. 3) still have reasonable active command of the creole. Portuguese, the official language, as well as Cape Verdean creole, spoken by the descendants of contract laborers, are the dominant languages on the island. PR is also spoken by small numbers of speakers in the Diaspora, especially in the Lisbon area (Portugal).

Chapter 1, the introduction, provides a number of sociohistorical and sociolinguistic facts, a short overview of the few previous sources on PR, and the information that the linguistic material was intermittently collected during field work on Príncipe and in the Lisbon (Portugal) area since 1991.

Chapter 2 (7-28) deals with the phonology of the language. Maurer first introduces the spelling conventions and then goes on showing that PR exhibits seven oral vowels, all of which exhibit a nasal counterpart, and twenty-two consonants, which include, for instance, implosives and labiovelars. Minimal pairs are presented for vowels and consonants. He further argues that alveolar fricatives *s* and *z* are in complementary distribution with palatalized *f* and *ʒ* (before *i* and *y*). The syllable structure is strictly (C)V and a sandhi rule is described whereby a word-final vowel is deleted when followed by a word-initial vowel. The remainder of the chapter, which corresponds to its most substantial part, is dedicated to the tonal patterns of the language. Against previous work by Günther (1973) and Ferraz & Traill (1981), Maurer presents a large number of spectrograms in order to demonstrate that PR is a tone language.

Chapter 3 (29-172) forms the core of the book. Here, detailed descriptions of the Noun Phrase, the Verb Phrase and simple and complex sentences are presented. Like other creole languages, PR is a highly analytic language with strict SVO word order lacking morphologically marked number and gender. The different subsections on the Noun Phrase show that PR typically exhibits the following word order: PL-NUM-DIM/AUGM-N-DEM-POSS-ADJ-REL. The language also exhibits a postnominal singular indefinite article. Note further that the plural marker (*ine*) is also used as 3pl (cf. other Atlantic creoles). Restrictions on its use are related to animacy, since non-human nouns can only be pluralized when followed by a demonstrative. In some specific cases, the demonstrative marker occurs to the right of adjectives or full clauses (e.g. relative clauses).

Subject, object and plural possessive and plural independent pronouns essentially exhibit the same phonetic shape. Singular independent and singular possessive pronouns, however, exhibit distinct forms. An alternative possessive paradigm is obtained by *ki* + POSS ('with'+POSS). PR lacks null referential subjects, but a few cases null expletives are attested (e.g. *tê tôvada* 'it's stormy', lit. have storm), but they are generally in free variation with their overt counterpart.

The chapter on the Verb Phrase addresses several key issues in creole studies, such as TAM-marking, copula clauses and serial verb constructions in considerable detail. Maurer shows that PR

exhibits four preverbal TMA-markers, which may occur independently or in five combinations. He provides a fine-grained description of the semantics of each of the markers. As in the other Gulf of Guinea creoles (Hagemeijer 2007; Maurer 1995), the order of the markers is MTA. Following his 1995 work on Angolar, Maurer also argues for a basic syntactic distinction between dynamic verbs and two types of stative verbs (according to lexical aspect), which can be distinguished as follows: type-A statives do not exhibit an aspectual opposition in the past, whereas the type-B statives do. Habitual and future aspect marker *ka* changes to *sa* in negated sentences. The tables on p. 91-2 provide a clear overview of the functions of the TAM-markers. Furthermore, locative copula constructions in PR require the use of the copula; in all other environments the copula is typically omitted.

Like its sister-creoles, PR exhibits widespread verb serialization, which includes a few more unusual types, such as the use of *vwa* 'to fly' in the V1 slot indicating "*the rapidity of the action associated with the second verb in the series* (p. 117)", for instance in *vwa fêzê* 'rapidly prepare' (lit. fly make). This construction is also attested in sister-creole Santome and Papiamentu. In addition to serial verb constructions, PR also presents a small array of mostly nominal prepositions.

PR further has a standard clause or sentence-final negation marker (*fa*). Arguments and adjuncts typically occur to the left of *fa*. Only a few specific temporal adjuncts, such as clauses introduced by *dina* 'since' occur to the right of *fa*. However, there are a few exceptions to the final marker: a preverbal marker (*na*), without the final marker, occurs in purposive and desiderative clauses introduced by *pa* 'for'. This brings me to another interesting feature of PR, which is apparently not attested in the other Gulf of Guinea creoles, namely the validator *na*. This functional element has the same shape as the rare preverbal negation marker. It occurs between the subject and TAM-markers and "*reinforce[s] the assertion of the truth value of a proposition in affirmative sentences* (p. 67)."

In the section on simple sentences, Maurer addresses a whole range of constructions. Focus, Topics and interrogatives are derived by fronting constituents. Interrogative sentences are accompanied by an optional clause final interrogative marker (*a*). It is shown that when fronted constituents are recovered by an anaphoric pronoun, animacy plays a role: plural human antecedents are recovered by a 3pl pronoun, whereas plural non-humans, especially inanimates, show a tendency toward 3sg. As expected from an analytic language, voice (causative, reciprocal, reflexive, etc.) is expressed syntactically. Maurer further briefly shows that PR exhibits asyndetic and syndetic coordination. He also provides an overview of argument and adjunct clauses and the complementizers and conjunctions they are introduced by. Chapter 3 ends with an overview of the three sentence final particles *a*, *ê* and *ô*, as well as the presentational marker *ya*.

Chapter 4 (173-177), "*Miscellaneous features*", deals very briefly with examples of interjections and onomatopoeic expressions, reduplication and ideophones, which is a well-represented feature of the Gulf of Guinea creoles. Ideophones in PR modify adjectives, participles, nouns and verbs.

Chapter 5 (179-210) contains seven stories from PR's oral tradition and three songs. All the texts have translations, but only the first three stories are glossed as well. Chapter 6 (211-244) and Chapter 7 (245-256) contain, respectively, the PR-English and the English-PR word lists. The PR-English glossary also provides etymologies of the listed items. The great majority of lexicon is derived from Portuguese, but PR also exhibits quite some African lexicon. It is mentioned on p. 211 that 14% of the lexicon is related to Nigerian languages (overwhelmingly derived from Edoid languages), but this percentage appears to rest on a mistake, since out of 1650 lexical entries only approximately 100 items are Nigerian-related (= approx. 6%).

Appendix I (257-260) contains a story and a respective word list in the three creole languages of S. Tomé and Príncipe, Lungwa Santome, Lunga Ngola and PR. For those interested in the Gulf of Guinea creoles, this is a good practical example which gives a rough idea of the degree of

divergence and similarity of these creoles. Appendix II (261-273) contains the transcribed 1888 manuscript of Manuel Ferreiro Ribeiro, which was the source for Schuchardt's (1889) article on PR. The references are followed by an index of linguistic terms.

Another valuable feature of the grammar consists of the significant number of PR audio files that refer back to examples or texts in the book. These can be downloaded for free at the editor's website: http://www.battlebridge.com/books/maurer/audio_files.html. This includes examples for tone patterns, which correspond to spectrograms (Ch. 2), and the full audio version of the oral texts (Ch. 5). It is also mentioned on page iv that the website should be checked for audio updates. It would perhaps have been interesting to include an audio CD in the book itself. The book further contains several black and white photographs of the island and its inhabitants.

Evaluation

Irrespectively of the fate of highly endangered PR, Maurer's descriptive grammar represents a very substantial increase in our knowledge of this creole language and stands out as a fundamental document for language documentation and preservation. It goes without saying that Maurer's book has now become the reference grammar on PR, since it constitutes a crystal clear improvement of the first monograph on PR, which was written in German by Günther (1973). The examples and analyses of the latter author and the scarce other previous work are critically revisited by Maurer throughout the grammar. In fact, Maurer's publication not only has the advantage that it addresses PR in much more detail, but also that it is written in English and thus accessible to a much wider audience. As the title of the book and the book overview above indicate, this publication goes well beyond being just a grammar.

The book roughly follows the structure of Maurer's (1995) grammar of Angolar (written in French), one of the other Gulf of Guinea creole, spoken on the island São Tomé. The other two creoles, Santome, which has by far the greatest number of speakers, and Fa d'Ambô (spoken on the small island of Annobón and in the Bioko Diaspora) still lack published grammars. Note also that none of these languages has currently any official status. Apart from its descriptive function, the publication of the PR grammar also constitutes an important tool for synchronic and diachronic comparative work on the Gulf of Guinea creoles, which arguably have a common ancestor that came into existence on the island of São Tomé and then spread in time and space into four different language varieties. The grammar will also be very precious in the ongoing debate on creole typology and typologists will also easily find their way in this grammar and be able to measure, for instance, the extent of the impact of African languages or language clusters on this creole. A significant finding of Maurer's etymological research on the items in the word list is that the lexical contribution of the Nigerian substrate, in particular the Edoid substratum, is more significant than was previously thought. Several other features, such as the presence of labiovelars, widespread verb serialization and body-part reflexives, are in line with the lexical findings.

Maurer has used us to solid and rich descriptive work (e.g. Maurer 1988, 1995) and this grammar is no exception: the grammar parts are equipped with 1274 glossed sentences and the texts (Chapter 5) with 927 lines, part of which has glosses; the word list contains 1650 lexical items, which is a very tangible extension to the approximately 500 items listed in Günther (1973). The fourteen tables included in the different chapters provide a useful overview of the phenomena under discussion, but unfortunately the book lacks an index of tables.

Throughout the grammar, the source of the example sentences is always indicated (cf. explanation on p. 5): distinction is made between elicited material, spontaneously produced sentences, and examples adapted from previous work on PR. It follows from the data discussion that the elicited sentences, which constitute the most common type, were tested with different informants whose grammaticality judgments were—as expected—not always consensual. Moreover, in the introduction to the texts (p. 179), it is mentioned that some changes to the texts

were introduced in order to correct interferences from Portuguese and reconstruction of unintelligible parts. Gladly, these changes are referred in footnotes, although one may wonder to what extent these interferences represent lectal variation and may ultimately be indicators of normal language contact and variation.

With respect to the treatment of the different grammar domains, the range of topics addressed is considerable, but the degree of treatment of the main and subtopics is quite variable. Some topics are only touched upon quite briefly, such as reduplication or the syntax and semantics of bare noun phrases, or left untouched altogether, such as vowel harmony. Nevertheless, the impressive range of glossed example sentences in the book and the audio material on the website have the great advantage that linguists will be able to further inspect features not explicitly described or analyzed in the book.

Philippe Maurer's Principense grammar is a must have for all the reasons pointed out in this review. Since the description of PR is free of any particular linguistic framework, this will certainly be the language's reference grammar for many years to come and, given the endangered status of the language, perhaps even its last one. It therefore deserves a place on the shelves of linguists working on Portuguese-related creoles, Atlantic creoles, creole typology, and general typology. The book's descriptive nature and the extra features, such as the word list and the texts, also make it quite suitable to people without a strong linguistic background, which of course includes inhabitants of the Gulf of Guinea islands who are interested in their own linguistic patrimony.

With the publication of Maurer's grammar, endangered PR now "outranks" many better-known and more vital creole languages, which still lack a (decent) descriptive grammar. Maurer's achievement puts Principense in a whole new spotlight at a time this language is struggling for survival. The regional government of the island of Príncipe is trying to prevent PR's language death and has recently made several efforts to revitalize the language. One of the initiatives which has come to my knowledge was a local presentation of the grammar by Maurer himself and the distribution of a few copies. Although at this point most of the island's inhabitants interested in the grammar will face the barrier of English, it is important that they have access to this important piece of the island's heritage. In the case of São Tomé and Príncipe, there is generally little access to the academic progress made on the country's creole languages and any attempts to bridge this gap should therefore be welcomed as a small step towards raising local linguistic awareness.

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