
In the ongoing debate on whether creoles form a typological class, a frequently maintained argument is that most creoles are still so poorly documented that any attempt at typifying them as a separate class based on linguistic criteria is destined to be flawed. In a recent paper presented at the 9th Creolistics Workshop in Aarhus (11-13 April), however, John McWhorter received plaudits as he objected that, in fact, the number and quality of newly appearing creole grammars is quite encouraging and fully warrants the recent increase of typological research into creole languages. Such optimism is nourished, not in a small way, by the descriptive endeavors of scholars such as Philippe Maurer (PM) whose latest work (hereafter FPCBT) offers a detailed description of the Portuguese-based Creole formerly spoken on Java. FPCBT appears two years after PM’s groundbreaking Principense (Maurer 2009) grammar, which “ranks among the very best descriptive studies of any Iberian-Romance-based Creole” according to Quint (2011: 411) and succeeded in placing “one of the so far least well known creole languages (…) among the best known ones” according to Kihm (2010: 3). The value of FPCBT cannot easily be overstated either, as it rescues the closely-related, by now extinct Portuguese-based Creole (PC) of Batavia (present-day Jakarta) and Tugu (also on Java) from oblivion and makes an enormous amount of data on the language available to the scientific community. It is the latest addition to an oeuvre that already includes landmark grammars of Papiamentu (Maurer 1988) and Angolar (Maurer 1995).

Batavia PC was “a flourishing language during the 17th century, but the decline started in the second half of the 18th century, being progressively replaced by Malay” (p. 5). For the purpose of the book, PM treats Batavia PC and Tugu PC as two distinct languages, although recognizing that the latter is an offshoot of the former: “between 1660 and 1670, about 150 members of the Portuguese community of Batavia moved to the isolated rural area of Tugu” (p. 5). The Tugu variety was never spoken by more than a few hundred native speakers, but owing to its isolation managed to survive well into the 1970s (p. 5).

The aim of the book is to provide a “systematic analysis” (p. 3) of all the material available on the two varieties: following a brief Introduction (1-6), the book provides a clearly organized grammar (Chapters 2-5), a glossed and translated presentation of all available Batavia and Tugu PC texts (Chapter 6) as well as two word lists (Batavia and Tugu PC - English and vice-versa) (Chapters 7, 8). Although a considerable part of PM’s corpus stems from Schuchardt’s (1891) pioneering work on Batavia and Tugu PC, FPCBT is an invaluable addition to Schuchardt (1891) for several reasons: first, Schuchardt (1891) did not provide English translations of the creole texts; secondly, Schuchardt (1891) does not contain systematic grammatical analyses; thirdly, a collection of materials as well-organized and user-friendly as this one would be welcome for any creole (or non-creole for that matter); fourthly, PM’s corpus includes material post-dating Schuchardt (1891). To be precise, PM’s corpus consists of four subcorpora:

- a ca. 130-paged Batavia PC document with wordlists, short sentences and texts drawn up by a Dutch priest in 1780 (contained in Schuchardt 1891);
- several Tugu PC songs and texts all dating back to the 1880s (contained in Schuchardt 1891);
• a Tugu PC word list including grammatical indications from the year 1937 produced by a Dutch priest;
• a lullaby and some simple sentences in Tugu PC drawn up by Wallace in 1978.

The Introduction (Chapter 1) presents a brief socio-historical background. Chapter 2 (pp. 7-18) then deals with phonology. It is complicated enough to provide a phonological description of an extinct language and not made any easier by the fact that the available texts show inconsistent spelling and lack indications on pronunciation (p. 8), but PM clearly makes the best of the materials at his disposal. On a side note: the absence of the phoneme /ʃ/ in Batavia and Tugu PC cannot, as PM postulates (p. 14), be ascribed to this phoneme’s absence in Old (15th and 16th century) Portuguese, since it was in fact part of the Old Portuguese phonemic inventory (Teyssier 1983: 45).

Chapter 3 (pp. 19-110) offers a description of the morphosyntax. The chapter, recognizable in structure to readers familiar with PM’s Angolar and Principence grammars, deals in great detail with the noun phrase, the verb phrase, simple sentences and complex sentences respectively. To illustrate features, PM draws abundantly on each of the four subcorpora. On the downside, this causes an over-illustration of certain features, such as the ten examples offered to illustrate that Batavia and Tugu PC possess intranstive, mono- and ditransitive verbs (p. 65). On the upside, by exhaustively exploiting his corpus PM succeeds in offering an excellent overview of both diatopic (Batavia vs. Tugu) and diachronic (from ca. 1780 to ca. 1980) variation. (Note that some of the variation found in the corpus can of course reflect L1 interference of the authors).

In Chapter 4 (pp. 111-116), PM presents a brief analysis of word formation (reduplication, derivation and compounding). As expected, Batavia and Tugu PC have borrowed a few derivational morphemes from Malay, their principal contact language. Perhaps more surprising is that Batavia and Tugu PC contain no less than 10 Portuguese-derived derivational affixes, at least half of which is productive (including the past participle ending -du and gerundive -ndo). This is surprising since the available historical documentation suggests that Batavia and Tugu PC were cut off from Portuguese after the arrival of the Dutch on Java in the early 17th century. Either we should be sceptic of these historical data, or we might speculate that (some of) the morphemes may already have been productive in Papia Kristang (the predecessor of Batavia PC, see further below), or both.

Chapter 5 (pp. 117-126) is an assessment of Malay, Javanese, Dutch and Indo-Portuguese influence on Batavia and Tugu PC. It provides an excellent overview of foreign (particularly Malay) influences on the creoles, at all levels of the grammar. A minor point of criticism is that it remains unclear what is meant by “Indo-Portuguese”—an Indian, non-creolized variety of Portuguese or (one of) the Indo-Portuguese Creoles?—and how and when it could exert influence on Batavia and Tugu PC.

Following the grammatical descriptions of Chapters 2-5, Chapter 6 (pp. 127-194) presents all the texts from PM’s corpus systematically glossed and translated into English (in addition to Dutch and Malay, which most originals are translated in). Apart from one text provided in Appendix II of the book (see further below) and some unreadable material deliberately left out by PM, Chapter 6 brings together all Batavia and Tugu PC texts hitherto discovered.

Two extensive word lists (Batavia and Tugu PC to English, and vice-versa) are provided in Chapters 7 and 8 (pp. 195-328). The fact that PM provides etyma for over 90% of the
entries makes Chapter 7 additionally useful. Conveniently, the origins of the words (Portuguese, Indo-Portuguese, Dutch, Malay, or 'other') are summarized in percentages at the start of Chapter 7. A reference list and two Appendices bring the book to a close. Appendix I is an off-print of the Grammar Section of the 1780 Batavia PC document. In Appendix II, PM presents what he labels a “Portuguese pidgin text” drawn up in the travel account of a certain George Meister as early as 1692. It is not clear why PM labels it a 'pidgin' text, whereas Schuchardt (1891: 10) found it to be creole. As far as I can tell, there are no major qualitative discrepancies between the 1692 'pidgin' text and the creole texts of PM's corpus. For instance, while Meister's text surely has a rather telegraphic character, this is in fact typical of the Batavia and Tugu PC texts at large. (John McWhorter (p.c.) assumes the telegraphic character of this creole might be due to its linguistic environment, Malay and Javanese both being highly telegraphic languages.)

PM largely refrains from digressing on issues such as the historical relationships between Batavia and Tugu PC and other Asian Portuguese Creoles or on how this creole's grammar fits into the larger creole typological picture. His decision not to do so is comprehensible, since it would clearly have gone beyond the scope of the book. Below, I will briefly address a few issues not tackled in the book which I believe merit closer attention.

Since Batavia was never a Portuguese colony, PM (p. 3) correctly assumes that Batavia PC was probably “brought to Batavia from abroad”. Also, Batavia and Tugu PC resemble Papia Kristang, the Portuguese-based creole spoken mainly (and presumably formed) in Malacca (p. 5). The correspondences between them are still found at all levels of the grammar (cf. the comparative data in e.g. Baxter 1990). An obvious conclusion seems to be that Batavia and Tugu PC descend historically from Papia Kristang (cf. e.g. Holm 1988: 293), which, though of course not a new insight, is relevant to stress as it shows once more that the transfer of a creole language from one place to the other by means of the relocation of slaves was possible under the right circumstances (something that is often debated also in the context of the Atlantic creoles).

Furthermore, considering the structural similarity between Tugu PC and Batavia PC, the former must have been a creole (i.e. native tongue) when it was separated from the latter. Since this separation happened around the 1660s, we may assume that a native speaker community existed in Batavia already in the mid-17th century. In fact, considering the strong correspondences between Batavia and Tugu PC and Papia Kristang, and since creoles (i.e. native tongues) are more likely to diffuse geographically than pidgens, we may well assume the Papia Kristang variety brought to Batavia in the early / mid-17th century was already a full-fledged creole and mother tongue of the slaves. This, in turn, could have implications not only for our understanding of the emergence and spread of Portuguese-based Creoles in Asia but also, I assume, for larger debates on creole genesis (e.g. abrupt vs. gradual creolization, the pidgin-creole cycle, etc.).

Note that slaves from Southern India were also brought to Batavia by the Dutch in the same early period (Holm 1988: 294), which may explain some of the Indo-Portuguese lexical influences on Batavia and Tugu PC presented by PM in Chapter 6. The fact that these non-Malaysian slaves adopted Batavia PC rather than retaining (or creating) their own language seems further evidence that Batavia PC was already a well-developed (viz. nativized) creole at an early date.

A global comparison of the Asian Portuguese Creoles (cf. Baxter 1996) clearly supports the traditional classification of Batavia and Tugu PC and Papia Kristang (together with East Timor
PC) as a Malayo-Portuguese subgroup (see already Schuchardt 1889: 476; cf. Ferraz 1987: 338; Clements 1996: 1, 2; Baxter 1996). However, a number of salient features are shared also between the Malayo-Portuguese varieties on the one hand and the Indo-Portuguese ones on the other. These features include (a) a predicate copula derived from Port. tem ‘[3s] have’, (b) a past tense marker derived from Port. já ‘already’, (c) a future tense marker derived from Port. logo ‘immediately, later, soon’, (d) a negated future tense marker derived from Port. não ha de ‘[3s] not have to’, (e) an interrogative ‘how?’ derived from Port. que laia? ‘lit. what way?’ and (f) a first person singular pronoun derived from Port. eu (subject) rather than from Port. me (object) (see Baxter 1996, Clements 2000). Firstly, these features are either absent from or not systematically spread across the Afro-Atlantic Portuguese-based Creoles and thus lend support to the classification of Asian Portuguese Creoles as a branch separate from the Afro-Atlantic Portuguese Creoles as proposed by Ferraz (1987).

Secondly, the nature of these features is such that they allow speculating about a common origin for the Asian Portuguese Creoles (Clements 2000). If there was a common origin, several questions remain: was this a proto-creole with one clear geographic origin, spreading to different places through relocation of slaves? Or was this an expanded Asian Portuguese pidgin spoken by European traders and sailors which served as model for creoles emerging in different Asian coastal areas? In this context, it is perhaps interesting to note that Malay, like all Asian Portuguese Creoles, has one verb functioning as a possessive, existential, locative and adjectival copula (e.g. Ansaldo, Matthews and Smith 2011: 295), whereas Korlai’s main substrate language, Marathi, for instance, does not (Dhongde and Wali 2009: 196). While of course this does not prove anything, it can (albeit very tentatively in the absence of other evidence) be taken as an indication that perhaps a common origin should be sought in Malay-speaking territory.

On a creole typological level, it is interesting to note that the bare form of nonstative verbs has a default present tense reading in Batavia and Tugu PC (p. 61). This is rather untypical for creoles (where the bare form usually yields a past perfective reading), but more typical for pidgins. Also, not considering the negated future (nada < Port não ha de ‘[3s] not have to’), two of the three overt TMA markers of Batavia and Tugu PC have an adverbial origin (p. 53). This is not very common in creoles either, whereas pidgins do typically show semi-grammaticalized adverbs for indicating tense and aspect relations. None of this is to say that Batavia and Tugu PC weren’t creoles (there is no doubt that they were, since they were spoken natively), but it is nonetheless something that requires an explanation. I know of two other creoles showing similar traits, these being Tok Pisin (cf. e.g. Faraclas 2007) and Tayo (cf. Corne 1999, I thank Mikael Parkvall for pointing this out). The parallels between these creoles clearly cannot be ascribed to a shared lexifier (Portuguese, English and French respectively), but might instead result from shared socio-linguistic factors (e.g. the length and stability of the prior pidgin phase) or from the nature of (and degree of contact with) surrounding languages (cf. the previous comments on the telegraphicness of Batavia and Tugu PC).

But while these issues remain for future research, I conclude that the principal aims of FPCBT—to systematically describe Batavia and Tugu PC and make the materials on the language easily accessible to linguists—have been met with style. I would also like to applaud the collaboration of PM with Battlebridge Publications (run by Philip Baker), who continues to publish top-notch works at linguist-friendly prices, which in the case of FPCBT (10 cents per page) results in an unusually attractive quality-to-price ratio.
References


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