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The linguistic significance of African proper names in Gullah

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THE LINGUISTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF AFRICAN PROPER NAMES IN GULLAH*

Aside from bringing Gullah (the English-related creole which still thrives among rural Blacks on the coast of South Carolina and Georgia in the United States) to the attention of more linguists and to the forefront of studies on Atlantic creoles, another one of Lorenzo Dow Turner's contributions has been putting African proper names among the core evidence in support of the African substrate theory of the formation of these new languages. Generally, his *Africanisms in the Gullah dialect* (1949) has been warmly welcome (see, for example, Hall 1950, McDavid 1950, McDavid & McDavid 1951, and, in spite of a few words of caution, Blok 1959), and to this date it has become a classic reference in Atlantic creole studies.

However, the theoretical role played by the African names in Gullah (about 87 percent of the vocabulary Turner invokes) in proving the African linguistic substratum of this American creole has occasionally been disputed (e.g., by Swadesh 1951 and Hair 1965, even though they voice no strong objection to the essence of the African substrate theory).¹ The following aspects of Turner's work have particularly drawn criticisms: (1) Turner does not discriminate between names that are geographically widespread and those that are rather restricted; nor does he distinguish names that are/were common anywhere among Geechees (as many speakers of Gullah in both Georgia and South Carolina prefer to be called) from those that are/were rather rare (Swadesh). (2) Quite untypically of the African customs invoked by Turner, the African names have generally lost their erstwhile possible meanings to their bearers (Swadesh); and the etymologies suggested in the book generally amount to no more than the identification of their

homophones/homonyms in African languages, in which the meanings of the forms are often quite unrelated (Hair). (3) The history suggested by the proper names is not paralleled by that suggested by the rest of the vocabulary; and Turner's different lists do not corroborate one another – e.g., the proportion of the etymologies in the ritual texts conflicts with that of the etymologies of the proper names in the first and main list² (Hair).

Cassidy (1980, 1983) notes that only ten out of the long list of about 4,000 African lexical selections³ collected by Turner are attested in the texts included in *Africanisms in the Gullah dialect*. He also deplores the fact that Turner did not rank the putative Africanisms according to their relative meaningfulness in speech, which would have assigned the proper names, not a first position (in spite of their number), but perhaps a third position, linguistically speaking. Assuming that Africanisms that contributed significantly and early to the formation of Gullah would either be attested in everyday conversation or retained as fossils in ritualized texts, he concludes his analysis (1983) by hypothesizing that those discussed by Turner must be relative newcomers in Gullah. They must be subsequent to the older African selections which are putatively part of the common proto-pidgin base (lexical and grammatical) of at least the English-related creoles of the New World. According to him, if this proto-pidgin started in Africa (thus underlying all Atlantic English-related creoles), the most likely location must be the Gold Coast (around the present location of Ghana) and Southern Nigeria, where the grammatical morphemes of the putative African origin can be traced back. In case the Anglophone creoles of the New World originated in Barbados (as he argues in Cassidy 1982), then Africans from these parts of Africa must have played a central role in the development of their proto-creole.⁴

The purpose of this paper is to re-examine the formal linguistic significance of Turner's African proper names with regard to supporting his African linguistic substrate hypothesis. My concern is not so much to dispute their status as linguistic items (cf. Blok), but rather to determine how much weight they carry as evidence in support of Turner's thesis. Among a number of things, I wish to focus on an aspect of these names that the literature does not seem to have dealt with: their phonetic characteristics. I wish to compare the pronunciations of these names in Gullah with their proposed possible African etyma and see whether they suggest (1) that the Africans in the New World simply spoke something close to and determined essentially by the colonial English they heard from their overseers and other European residents

of their plantations, or, instead, (2) that their speech was simply a semantic, morphosyntactic, and phonological restructuring of their acrolect as determined by the putative African substratum. I will also compare these African survivals in Gullah with European nouns that have now survived in African languages but have apparently not affected their structures. Thus I will present a parallelism that may shed light on the case of Gullah.

However, before getting to the heart of the issue, it may be useful to reconsider the theoretical question of the status of proper names in language. Two main positions can be identified. According to the first and traditional position (adopted by Blok), proper names have no meanings; as such their linguistic status in comparison with that of common nouns and other lexical items is rather secondary or peripheral, and the information they carry is rather cultural or encyclopedic. From this point of view, Turner would not have proved much with his long list of African names, since it says little about a linguistic substratum *per se*. Apparently, it is primarily on the basis of this theoretical assumption that Blok concludes his review with the following quotation, thereby indicating that Turner had not yet proved his thesis.

The above remarks, inspired as they are by my great interest in the subject, in no way detract from the fact that Mr. Turner's book, because of its conscientious and comprehensive method, may serve as an example to *those who will try after him to determine the "African" elements in the present Negro idioms in America* on the same scholarly bases. As such this description of Gullah already deserves full appreciation including the attention of the student of African languages [pp. 320-1, emphasis added].

Turner will not be reconsidered here according to the above view, but rather according to the other position which may be associated with Searle (1958), Kripke (1972), and McCawley (1975) and which has also been defended in Mufwene (1983, 1984b). According to this alternative position, the descriptions that have been treated traditionally as meanings of common nouns are, strictly speaking, encyclopedic, or cognitive-denotative, information rather than actual linguistic meanings. Like the identificational information associated with proper names, they too vary from individual speaker to individual speaker and perhaps also from speech context to speech context. Thus, the linguistic meanings of common nouns amount more or less to the referential function "kind of individuals or of substance called XYZ" and differ from one another only encyclopedically depending on the referential value assigned to the variables in the function. This meaning differs

very little from that of proper names as “(set of) individual(s) called XYZ” (see Mufwene 1983). That is, proper names and common nouns may be treated for formal linguistic purposes as linguistic units of similar theoretical status. As indicated in Mufwene 1984b, what makes their linguistic semantics regards in part that cognitive-denotative information associated with them that has formal reflexes in the encoding of utterances, e.g., gender, number, or status of the bearer (where these distinctions are communicated formally).

Even though less widely known or accepted in formal linguistics, this second view of proper names seems to me to be more accurate and sympathetic to Turner’s use of proper names as evidence for the putative African linguistic substratum in Gullah. It makes it possible to address some questions more objectively, and is therefore the one assumed in this paper.

If the African proper names in Gullah had continued to be culturally descriptive among Geechees (and apparently in most cases they were borne only as basket and childhood names and were replaced by common Western names in adult/public life), this central part of Turner’s evidence would have carried more weight, in the eyes of Hair and Blok in particular. There is, however, reason to doubt that, taken alone, this objection was so significant. In many of the African communities to which Turner’s names have been traced back and others, names have not always been, nor have they continued to be, descriptive of circumstances of birth or other factors (see, for example, the Shona names discussed in Pongweni 1983⁵). Yet they have not ceased to be African! (In fact the same argument can be made of most Western names, which have now bleached semantically into mere identification-al labels for individuals, groups, or families and have yet continued to be acknowledged as Western – i.e., French, Irish, Welsh, English, and German).

While the case of Gullah certainly proves changes in customs, it is doubtful that it constitutes concomitant linguistic change of the kind where, for example, the English word *hound* has ceased to denote dogs and now denotes only a special kind of dog.

A linguistically more significant argument would have consisted, for instance, in suggesting that while some of these names were restricted to a particular gender or age group in some of the African languages, these restrictions have either changed or been obliterated. However, for those who believe strongly in the African substrate theory, the nature of the features shared by the African languages that came into contact on the plantations of the New World or at the forts of West Africa is

such that gender or age specifications would have been rather peripheral and overlooked anyway, since they must have varied in often conflicting ways from language to language. In fact, under the circumstances of the formation of Gullah it would have been pointless to invoke this kind of argument, and capitalizing on it would have been tantamount to being biased. In the process of borrowing (though it is rather inadequate to speak of borrowing here), loan words are well known to change (aspects of) their meanings. For instance, the English word *vest* used to mean "garment" in Latin (and Old French) but now has different meanings in British and American English. Better yet for the African substrate theory, the meaning of the Anglo-Saxon word *girl* has changed particularly with regard to gender specifications; however, it has not ceased to be Anglo-Saxon nor to be part of the core vocabulary of English. (Nor indeed have other linguistic influences on English, e.g., French, made the language less Germanic). Thus, what the argument in regard to changes in gender restrictions would have proved is only the obvious, viz., that the putative African substratum (whatever this stands for in Gullah) was not preserved intact and had a price to pay for its selection over the English superstratum.

One thing many students of English-related Atlantic creoles have often overlooked in their studies of the geneses of these languages (see, for example, Alleyne 1980) is the role of the English varieties spoken by the British seamen, settlers and other colonists from whom the Africans whose descendants now speak these creoles were learning English. Hancock (1982, 1985) is one of the few exceptions (see also Cassidy 1982); and McDavid & McDavid's (1951) words of caution in this regard have generally been ignored. Eliason (1956) points out that most of the British colonists in the Carolinas were illiterate or semi-literate and spoke only regional/rural dialects of British English in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (There is, besides, little evidence that "Standard English," if this concept were established at all at that time, had the same general significance that it has in the twentieth century). The documents he has quoted in his book reveal through their phonetic spellings that many of the pronunciations associated with Gullah and other Atlantic creoles were perhaps the normal speech ways of the very British Whites from whom the Africans were learning the only kind of English to which they may have been exposed. See, for example, *Bror* (*Deep Waters*), (*according to*) *appintment*, (*sum clauth for a sute of*) *clouse* (p. 47), *sartain* (*of the brethren*), *for guine* (*to the play house*), *for guyn* (*to fulish plays*; p. 48), *I kep* (*busy*; p. 54), (*two*) *hunard* (*miles*; p. 74). Similar phonetic peculiarities are also suggested

by the documents published or cited in Wood (1974). Thus, racial features, "laziness" or "clumsiness" (Bennett 1908, 1909; and Gonzales 1922) had nothing, and African phonetic peculiarities (Turner 1949, Alleyne 1980) perhaps little of significance (by way of substratum), to do with the particular phonetic characteristics of Gullah today. There is incidentally nothing in this literature suggesting that white speech was influenced by black speech (contrary to claims by some linguists in the 1960s).

Students of Atlantic creoles and Black English know well that the seventeenth- and eighteenth- century Englishness of some of the features of these languages is not restricted to phonology. Time and time again morphosyntactic features (and even some semantic features; see Craig 1980) have been related to some rural British variety – e.g., the use of the habitative *be*, of the prenominal distal deictic *them/dem*, of the preverbal progressive *a* (with or without an *-ing* on the verb), and the absence of the gerundial *-ing* marking on the verb where it would be required in (today's) Standard English. Many such features are also attested in the documents cited or quoted in Eliason (1956) and Wood (1974).

I do not intend to suggest that Afro-Americans did not contribute anything to their current speech patterns in the New World, nor that everything attested in their speech is a copy of white speech. In fact, they would have contributed as much as any other non-native group learning English then, particularly with as much eagerness as they allegedly had to acquire English (see Wood 1974: 173). However, there is perhaps a lot more that is correct in Krapp's (1924)⁶ position than many students of New World creoles have been willing to acknowledge. But so far the Afrogenetic theory in the strong version hypothesized by Turner or Alleyne needs better justification than has been provided to date, and the English side of the problem is less than adequately examined. More on this below.

It should be particularly relevant at this point to consider Hancock's (1980) hypothesis of the development of Gullah in relation to the Barbadian origin of the first slaves brought to South Carolina. According to him (see also Wood 1974: 175–76), the first slaves were a minority in the new colony. Having had direct exposure to the English of their overseers and/or masters (through more frequent interactions), they spoke as well as the latter.⁷ The situation changed when, in the eighteenth century, more slaves were imported straight from Africa and Blacks became the overwhelming majority on many plantations⁸ and when the newly imported slaves then outnumbered the older ones

imported from the Caribbean. Many of the new slaves knew neither English nor pidgin English before arriving in the New World. Some had their first exposure to it only aboard the ships that transported them, in the form of what Hancock calls "nautical pidgin English." According to the literature, exposure to even the eighteenth-century colonial English was then becoming more and more indirect and the new slaves learned their new language from the older slaves. Thus, according to the proponents of the linguistic Afrogenetic theory, more and more African substrate elements found their way into Gullah and the rest of the Atlantic creoles.

It is of course disputable that the linguistic Afrogenetic theory which assumes an African grammar underlying the systems of Atlantic creoles provides the only explanation to their developments and their current structures. There would have been room for African linguistic influence on these new contact languages even if other alternatives to this version of Afrogenesis were assumed. For instance, Hancock's (1980) geographic version of Afrogenesis, according to which the Senegambia region was the cradle of a putative Guinea Coast Creole English (from which those known today have putatively developed), leaves plenty of room for influences from both African languages and sixteenth/seventeenth-century English as well as for universal determinism. Within this framework, even the Africans who spoke the agglutinative Bantu (rather than the isolating Kwa) languages could theoretically have contributed, not only the lexical items identified by Turner and used by his followers to support the substrate theory, but also some grammatical selections (structures or morphemes) within the constraints of some putative universal principles.⁹

It is common knowledge that no Bantu contributions of the grammatical kind have been identified to date in Atlantic creoles. Besides, even Bantu-based creoles such as Kikongo-Kituba and Lingala have also opted for a partly-isolating system (particularly with regard to time reference; see also Nida & Fehdereau 1970). Being the result of the contact of agglutinative systems among themselves, there was really no obvious reason for them to change in favor of this partly-analytic system (e.g., with regard to clitic pronouns which are now generally replaced by free pronouns). On the other hand, most, if not all, of the so-called creole languages around the world share a lot in being particularly isolating (differing essentially in degree). In addition, those related to English or any other European language share a lot also in their particular selection of lexical items and grammatical morphemes. Thus, it is very likely that, provided it is constrained by, for example,

the nature of similarities among the languages that are/were in contact with the dominant language, Bickerton's universalist theory (1981, 1984) would have had something (though not everything) to do with the development of Gullah, other Atlantic creoles, and those others around the world.¹⁰

All the above scenarios are of course still subject to further re-examination. At present it is just important to realize that Afro-genesis and universalist theory are not necessarily mutually exclusive (see Mufwene 1984a), and some of the things I have to say below hold regardless of what particular view one has on the genesis of Atlantic creoles. Whichever this genesis is, and wherever this took place (coast of Africa or New World), Cassidy (1980, 1983) seems to identify two significant stages in the development of Gullah into either its current form or that analyzed by Turner. The first is a pidgin or proto-pidgin stage regarding which it is now difficult to tell which selections are unequivocally African. (Cassidy includes among the morphemes he considers as African selections the verb/preposition *de* used for durative constructions, for locative copula, and for marking pseudo-cleft constructions; the complementizer *se*; and the verb *nyam*. Their suggested etymologies are rather disputable even though there is room for the corroborating role of African languages as suggested by Givón 1979; see also Frajzyngier 1985 about *se*, and Mufwene 1985 about *de*).

The second stage is what may be described as a post-creole formation stage, characterized by the kind of Africanisms that Turner investigated, which contribute virtually nothing to the grammatical stock of the language. Thus, according to Cassidy, it is understandable why the statistical proportion of Kongo lexical selections (proper and common nouns) is not matched by that of grammatical ones (see note 2). The higher proportion of putatively West African morphemes in the grammatical stock of Gullah can be explained by two alternative hypotheses: either Gullah/Atlantic Anglo-creoles started in the Gold Coast and Southern Nigeria, or the Africans from these particular regions contributed more than any other group to its/their development(s) in the New World. Cassidy's hypothesis seems to agree with Hair's explanation (1965) about the presence of many words of putative Sierra Leonean origin in Gullah (based, of course, on Turner 1949): some of the most important forts/factories from the 1790s to the late 1840s were around Freetown.

Within either version of Afrogenesis (Hancock's 1980 geographic version, or Alleyne's 1980 substrate version), Cassidy's hypothesis that the lexical Africanisms which retained Turner's attention may be only

subsequent to the initial formation of the Atlantic creoles makes some sense if we pay attention to both the phonetic shapes of the lexical items Turner analyzed and again to the circumstances of the beginning of the South Carolina colony in the second half of the seventeenth century. As pointed out by Wood (1974), the first colonists and their slaves came from Barbados, the colonists spoke some varieties of rural British English, and the slaves were a minority and thus received plenty of direct exposure to the speech of their masters or overseers with whom they must have had more personal contacts. Thus, even though second language acquisition is generally less perfect than the speech of native speakers, it can be assumed that, in a number of respects, the speech of the slaves in the beginnings of the South Carolina colony was similar to, and based on, that of the British colonists. It is plausible to assume that, though the grammar changed later on as there were more and more Africans coming straight from Africa and more and more non-British Europeans settling in the colony (all of them allegedly eager to acquire the current acrolect), the phonetic system of Gullah and other Atlantic creoles may have selected a lot from colonial English of the time, unless one stubbornly believes in the now-discredited putative racial conditioning of linguistic features.

There is one general question that has usually been overlooked in reviews and reconsiderations of *Africanisms*. Assuming a linguistic Afrogenesis, like Turner's own hypothesis or Alleyne's, why would speakers of the African languages have modified the phonetic forms of the names in their own putative substratum? (Or would it be more accurate, by the way, to speak of African substrata and thereby shake more the foundation of the substrate theory?). Some of the most interesting questions arise from the fates of labio-velar and prenasalized stops in Gullah. In word-initial position these have generally been reduced to simple stops; and since it is nowhere indicated whether or not in other positions they correspond to velar plus labial stops or nasal-plus-stop sequences, it is not clear what they have actually become here.¹¹ The following list illustrates the changes:

Mende:	gbakali	Gullah:	bakali
	gbalema		balema
Yoruba:	gbewo		bewa
	arukpe		arupe
	asikpa		asipa
Kongo:	mbadi		badi
	mbangu		bangu
	mfinda		finda

Bobangi:	mbando	bando
Mende:	ndivale	diβale
	ndopo	dopo

From a different perspective, a question can also be raised of why [gb]/[kp], for example, would have been preserved in some but not in other words in non-initial position. Did this have anything to do with the African multilingual composition of the slave population? Why did this factor not have a similar effect on the rest of the language? Or does this situation suggest, instead (and in agreement with Cassidy's analysis), that Turner's Africanisms are loans adopted after the creole formation stage of Gullah? It is argued below that the latter interpretation of facts seems to be the more likely.

Turner gives little evidence indicating that English words were generally affected by the selection of these African sounds into the phonology of Gullah. The only cases where English lexical selections appear to have been affected (regardless of whether the sounds are original selections or intrusions) are with regard to the alternation of [β] with [w] and [v] discussed below, and maybe also the alternation of [φ] with [f]. In any case, these constitute a minority not strong enough to support the strong version of the substrate theory, and the case of [f]/[φ] alternation is at the very least a weak one if considered as a regular phenomenon. In the Gullah texts published in *Africanisms* there is no single case where [fə] 'for', one of the most common morphemes, is reported to be pronounced [φə]. The words *if*, *from*, *lef* 'leave' and *feed* are always represented with [f] but not [φ].¹² The suspicion that the prenasalized and labio-velar stops intruded only at a later stage into the original Gullah phonological system, that they did this essentially only with the African "loan words" they occur in, and that they are not part of its core phonological inventory (just as is the case with the sound [ʒ] of *beige* in English) is hereby increased.

That the African names in Gullah were adopted more like foreign words or loan words, rather than as part of the original selections of the system, is also suggested by phonetic changes such as the lowering or centralization of [ɔ] to [a], the strengthening of [iV] to [iyV], the changes of [φ, γ] to [f, g] and the merger of [w, v] into [β] in the African lexical selections.¹³ The following list illustrates the changes:

Ewe:	dɔφe	Gullah:	dafe
	dɔφi		dofi
	dɔγli		dogli

	aveka	aβeka
	avinu	aβinu
Kimbundu:	avulu	aβulu
Kongo:	biola	biyala
	emia	emiya
Fante:	esia	esiya

The fact that English words such as *very* and *well* (often pronounced [βeɪɹ] and [βeɪl]) have been affected by the adoption or selection of [β] in Gullah is certainly relevant here. But Turner's Afrogenetic thesis is at the same time weakened by the fact that the change has affected African words too (in a way that even the commonly invoked decreolization trend cannot account for). Turner claims that the sound comes from Ewe, among other African languages. The words *aveka* and *avinu* suggest that Ewe must have held a contrast between [v] and [β]. That these words have allegedly had a different fate suggests that some other trend in conflict with the putative substrate determinism must have been in operation too. A weaker and more adequate interpretation of these phonological facts may be that during the formation of Gullah there was a re-interpretation of the phonological system of the seventeenth/eighteenth-century English, and during this process some elements of African languages found their way into the new language in a way that was not solely determined by the phonologies of the source languages.

Afrogeneticists could argue against the above hypothesis, countering that it is also possible that these sounds were part of the original phonological system of Gullah, and the variations discussed here reflect the natural participation of these African words into general phonological changes that Gullah may have been undergoing. This is indeed a possibility, which would have been more plausible if changes other than the merger of [w] and [v] into [β] could be supported by English lexical selections. But Turner gives none, and none have been reported so far by other field linguists. If the African substratum were that significant in the phonology of Gullah, these peculiarities would certainly be more widespread in its lexicon, and the same variations attested in the words of African origin would certainly be common among words of English origin.

On the other hand, again with the exception of the relatively widespread use of [β], the restriction of prenasalized and labio-velar consonants to only a subset of African lexical items may very plausibly be interpreted as a sign that these sounds are recent intrusions. The absence of a homogeneous pattern of phonological retentions within

this lexical stock may well reflect the efforts of the native community to accept them as African words in their foreign pronunciations (perhaps with the help of indentured laborers imported in the nineteenth century). By the same token, they may also reflect their failure to pronounce all of the new African words correctly. Note, incidentally, that according to Puckett (1937), the African names were most common among freed slaves. It may be surmised that indentured laborers arriving from Africa after the abolition of the slave trade must have reinforced the trend.

The conclusion that the African proper names in Gullah do not support much the attempt to prove its linguistic Afrogenesis is not implausible if we take a step outside the creole systems and consider one colonial phenomenon in Africa. Here many European common nouns and proper names have been borrowed by speakers of African languages. For instance, among the Pende of Zaire many people bear names such as *Dikitele*, *Sikitele*, *Gido*, and *Leta* which may be traced back to the French words *directeur*, *secteur*/*secrétaire* 'sector-/secretary', *guidon* 'handlebar' and *l'état* 'the state', respectively. Many nouns for objects are also what Bloomfield (1933) identifies as "cultural borrowings" and have been integrated to the point of behaving like other lexical items of the native stock. For instance, in Lingala, *mutuka* 'automobile' (from the English '*motor-car*') has been re-analyzed as *mú-tuka* with its plural as *mí-tuka*, being thus assigned to nominal class 3/4, like *mó-tó*/*mí-tó* 'head'.¹⁴ Likewise, the French word *diplôme* 'diploma' has been re-analyzed as *di-polóme* or *li-polóme* in the singular, forming its plural as *ma-polóme* on the pattern of the count nouns of class 5/6. As far as we can now tell, these borrowings have been adjusted to the phonetic shapes of words of Bantu stock in these languages and have effected no grammatical changes in the borrowing languages.

In the rest of the United States (the Gullah land left aside), foreign words have generally had a fate similar to the European names in Africa. For instance, what name the phonetic form [ʃi:n] stands for actually depends on the bearer or parents of the bearer, since it may be related to *Jean*, *Jeanne* or (*Eu*)*gène*, which have very different pronunciations in French ([ʒã], [ʒan] and [øʒen], respectively). Considering the changes undergone by the African names in Gullah, using them as evidence for its putative linguistic Afrogenesis must be supported by other kinds of evidence, essentially grammatical. Until this has been convincingly presented, it is doubtful that the African proper names in Gullah prove anything in support of the linguistic Afrogenetic hypo-

thesis, particularly if, as Cassidy observes (1983), 98 percent of the vocabulary of this American creole is of English origin and many of the grammatical morphemes may be traced back to colonial English (see also Mufwene 1985).

Again, it is in no way being denied here that there are some African contributions in Gullah. In fact, since [β] is not part of the English phonological system and is also relatively marked compared to [w] and [v], it would be rather far-fetched to deny the influence of African languages here. Also the fact that the African proper names in Gullah are Africanisms has not been disputed here. What has been re-examined is their significance as linguistic evidence for the putative linguistic Afrogenesis or the African substrate theory in its strongest sense. The best we can now tell is that they certainly represent cultural, non-linguistic, Africanisms, since in this regard the custom seems to have continued. As observed by Von Heinz Rogge (1965), the practice of naming children after the circumstances of their births or other ecological elements has continued. He cites from Mencken (1948) the following names which have been given to Geechee children: *Vaseline*, *Radio*, *Prohibition*, *Ginger*, *Pearl Harbor*, *Nasser* (p. 33).¹⁵ On the other hand, even here "Africanism" must be used rather cautiously. Many white "southern bells/peaches" are named or nicknamed *Peaches*, *Ginger*, or *Dixie* more in conformity with trends in the region than anything else. The same nicknames I have heard among Geechees such as *Skinney*, *Goldie*, or *Boot* are heard among Whites too. The father of one of our white secretaries was named *Woodrow Wilson* simply because he was born when Woodrow Wilson was president of the United States, just as a number of Geechee children were named *Nasser* because they were born at the time when Nasser was the strong man of Egypt. In the case of the Gullah community, the African influence can certainly not be denied by fiat. However, a question not to be ruled out in the case of English words used as proper names is that of whether the African influence is exclusive.

NOTES

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1. What is disputed here is not so much the hypothesis that there are some Africanisms in Gullah, but the stronger Afrogenetic claim that a putative "(West-)African grammar" (whatever this grammar is) underlies its linguistic system.

2. According to Hair, almost 30 percent of the nearly 3,500 proper names can be traced back to Yoruba (Nigeria) and 20 percent to Kongo (in the Congo, Zaire, and Angola region); however, 25 percent of the nearly 350 terms other than proper names can be traced back to Kongo but only 4 percent to Yoruba. On the other hand, almost all of the 85 terms attested in ritual texts can be traced back to Sierra Leone Mende (63) and Vai (21).

Interestingly, of the morphemes that Cassidy (1983) identifies as part of the grammar of the proto-pidgin ancestor of Gullah (and Atlantic English-related creoles) and to which he assigns a putative (though sometimes disputable) African etymology, none is Kongo. Of the ten items attested in the texts as Africanisms, only one may be Kongo, since it can also be related to Kimbundu (Zaire-Angola region).

3. After Gilman (1981), "selection" is used in this paper instead of the terms "borrowing" and "survival", which are more common in the Atlantic creole literature. "Borrowing" is inconsistent with the assumption that a pidgin/creole is a new language, which emerged from the contact of other languages. It could normally not borrow unless it paradoxically pre-existed its emergence. "Survival" biases the genesis issue in suggesting that a particular grammar has been supplanted by another, in which its remnants are attested. For more discussion see also Mufwene & Gilman (1985).

4. Cassidy's position is in slight conflict with Hancock's postulation (1980) of the Senegambia area as the cradle of the Guinea Coast Creole English, from which Atlantic English-related creoles have allegedly developed. But these locations (as opposed to those of Kongo and other Bantu languages) are close enough and many of their languages so similar structurally that for linguistic purposes the difference may not be so significant.

5. Pongweni points out that the "meanings" of Shona names (i.e., in the traditional, non-formal linguistic sense of "meaning") are often ambiguous and require the intervention of the individual name-bearer or his/her family for disambiguation. Also many of the names allegedly no longer have any descriptive value to their bearers or namers; e.g., the very name "Pongweni," which, insofar as he is concerned, says no more than that it was once borne by a remote ancestor of his.

6. This is in no way an endorsement of his stronger position in the following passage: The Negroes, indeed, in acquiring English have done their work so thoroughly that they have retained *not a trace of any native African speech*. Neither have they transferred *anything of importance* from their native tongues to the general language (1924: 190; emphases added).

However, there is something worth acknowledging as basically correct in the following passage, in which Krapp claims that Gullah, or black speech in general, has in part resulted from the kind of English spoken by the Whites with whom Blacks interacted most while learning the dominant language:

The Negro speaks English of the same kind and, class for class, of the same degree as the English of the most authentic descendants of the first settlers at Jamestown and Plymouth (ibid.).

A number of scholars have invoked black influence to account for current similarities between black and white non-standard speech (particularly in the South). In most cases the arguments have been based on the putative African substratum of the putative general creole origin of Afro-American speech. As the Afrogenetic theory is shaken or challenged, these arguments too lose strength.

7. I assume that for the generation of slaves born in Africa this observation is essentially from a morphosyntactic point of view and overlooks features such as accent, even though there must have been some skillful language learners who became fluent in all aspects of the variety to which were exposed. However, with the American-born slave population it is plausible that the observation would cover the phonetic aspect of the languages as well, as long as the original population ratio held, as it must have on small estates.

8. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Blacks generally outnumbered Whites at the ratio of about twenty black families to one white family; on some huge plantations they could be counted by hundreds and on some of the most remote islands these slaves had apparently no white overseers (Turner 1949, Wood 1974).

9. This is not necessarily the way this position is presented by Hancock himself, but rather represents an interpretation of how compatible his particular version of Afrogenesis is with the universalist hypothesis of the origin of these creoles (see also Mufwene 1984a).

10. It must be borne in mind that, as indicated in Givón 1979, where the preferred orientations of the universalist theory coincided with features of some African languages, these must have provided corroborating influence for speakers of such languages (see also Mufwene 1984a, 1985). The universalist position itself may be seen not in a deterministic way, as in Bickerton's work, but quite plausibly in terms of a limited number of options as proposed by Sankoff (1979).

11. Note also that, as pointed out by Swadesh (1951), Turner has failed in a number of cases to point out the phonemic status of some of the sounds attested in Gullah which have not been selected from the English phonemic system, e.g., whether [gb] and [kp] are only occasional variants or autonomous phonemes and to what extent they occur in English lexical selections.

12. In the case of changes putatively undergone by [w] and [v], there is reason to believe also that it has not been a universal phenomenon, even though [β] is commonly heard to date. In Turner's own texts the island named *Wadmalaw* is represented with [w] (as normally said by Gullah speakers), and common words such as *well*, *when* and *one* are almost always represented with [w]. Turner may of course have confused his symbols; but it is also possible that these are the variants he heard from those particular informants whose texts he published. The sequence [βerɪ βeɪ] 'very well' discussed below in the main text was recorded by myself in 1983.

13. Note that the substitution of [t,d] for [θ,ð] occurs also in some British and white American dialects/ideolects and need not be identified as African. Besides, [θ,ð] are rather marked compared to [t,d].

14. One point of relevance to this etymology is the fact that in Lingala the tone is on the first syllable (i.e., on the prefix), corresponding to the English primary stress on the first syllable.

15. This is happening in Africa too, as shown in Pongweni (1983).

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