Pieter Muysken & Norval Smith (eds.)

Surviving the Middle Passage: The West Africa-Surinam Sprachbund. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015. x + 532 pp. (US\$140.00)

Creole genesis has occupied pride of place in research on creole languages, and both the creoles of Suriname and investigations into the survivals from African languages have figured prominently in these lively debates. So why another book? The contributors' original motivation was to rehabilitate the substrate hypothesis of creole genesis because they felt that it had received "an unnecessarily bad press" (p. 11), mostly due to problematic research practice. Three goals guided the research program that culminated in this volume. First, drawing on research from a variety of perspectives and agendas, the book aims to bring new evidence to existing controversies about cross-linguistic effects. Second, it explores alternatives to the classic relexification scenario. Third, in conceptualizing the creoles of Suriname and the Gbe languages of Benin as "a Trans-Atlantic area or Sprachbund" (p. 8), it contributes to current research about linguistic areas. The team posits that Africanisms were the result of adstratal, rather than substratal influence because the initial formation of creoles took place rapidly and was followed by a prolonged process of bilingualism.

The introduction provides brief summaries of issues that motivate the methodology driving the research. The first section asserts the controversial traditional historical linguistics position that only typologically marked features constitute proper evidence of substrate influence. The second, based on brief summaries of the role of language contact in sociolinguistics, language acquisition, and historical linguistics, argues in favor of triangulation of qualitative and quantitative linguistic data. The third, based on evidence from the Pacific,¹ posits that substrate influence took place during nativization of an extraterritorial contact language. The remaining sections outline the motivations, aims, structure, and findings of the volume, and discuss the notion of Sprachbund.

Part One then consists of four papers that discuss context and methodological issues. Exploring the early history of Suriname, Norval Smith argues that the creoles of Suriname are an ideal test case for researching cross-linguistic influence because of the early removal of English, extended absence of another socially dominant language, comparatively early onset of the planta-

1 See Sarah Roberts, "Nativization in the genesis of Hawaiian Creole," in John H. McWhorter (ed.), *Language Change and Language Contact in Pidgins and Creoles* (2000).

tion economy and marronage, and an abundance of early documents. Enoch Aboh and Smith point to the importance of Eastern Gbe based on the history of eastern Gbe-speaking populations, the geographical distribution of remnant eastern Gbe noun class prefixes, and the regional origin of three Gbe functional elements in Saamaka. Smith then revisits the Afro-genesis hypothesis and Pieter Muysken reviews the history of substrate approaches in creole genesis and critically assesses relexification accounts, concluding that bilingual convergence and pattern replication provide the most convincing explanations.

Part Two explores linguistic evidence for influence from African languages. Kofi Yakpo and Adrienne Bruyn show that Sranan locative constructions were modeled on a Niger-Congo substrate but also retain lexifier features and have undergone contact-induced and language-internal change. Comparing the semantics of Gbe and Sranantongo verbs from different semantic domains, James Essegbey highlights both the differential effects of substrate influence and the impact of superstrate influence. Margot van den Berg explores derivational morphology in early Sranantongo, Akan, and Gbe, and Aboh and Smith investigate reduplication in Gbe and the creoles. These two chapters find definite substrate effects but argue that both creativity and superstrate patterns also played a role. Smith explores substrate or adstrate influence in phonology, while Gbe influence in the left periphery is the subject of a chapter by Aboh. Both of these chapters assert the importance of African influences but show that it was not unitary or all encompassing. Tonjes Veenstra's chapter on clause-embedding verbs in Saamaka and Fon, in contrast, does not find strong evidence for substrate influence.

The book's concluding part argues, in line with current understandings of creole genesis, that while African influences are undeniably present in the creoles of Suriname, creoles are nevertheless "rather distinct, in structural terms, from their African roots, as they are from the European lexifiers" (p. 408). European and African sources essentially provided the semantic and structural models that enslaved Africans drew on when forging a new means of communication. The book ends with two chapters in which Smith summarizes current knowledge about the contributions of Kikongo and Gbe vocabulary to the Suriname creoles, including an annotated word list based on the published linguistic literature without, however, taking into account the wealth of data available in Richard Price's *Travels with Tooy: History, Memory and the African American Imagination* (2007). A complete project bibliography, a general bibliography and several indexes also feature at the end of this section. *Surviving the Middle Passage* is one of the most comprehensive investigations into the role of Africanisms in creole formation currently available and is set to provide

food for thought and spark renewed interest in this line of research for years to come.

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