Book Reviews

Jean Le Dû et Guylaine Brun-Trigaud

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Lexical description of French-based creoles in America, which has advanced remarkably in the last decades, has made another considerable step forward with the publication of the *Atlas linguistique des Petites Antilles* by Jean Le Dû and Guylaine Brun-Trigaud (ALPA). After Dominique Fattier’s *Atlas linguistique d’Haïti* (ALH, 1998), this is the second linguistic atlas for the region and the fourth for a French-based creole, the first one being the *Atlas linguistique et ethnographique de la Réunion* (ALRé, Carayol, Chaudenson and Barat 1984–1995).1 Compared to its forerunners, the ALPA is more modest in size: the data were elicited by means of a questionnaire of 466 items and are presented in two volumes with 414 maps and 232 lists, whereas the questionnaire for the three volumes of ALRé comprised more than 4,000 items, set out on 845 maps with extensive lists of additional data (“notices”) in the margin. The six volumes of ALH contain 1,752 maps based on a questionnaire of 2,227 items, the remaining answers being presented in text format or entries in the commentaries in volumes I and II. The limited scope of ALPA is largely compensated by the outstanding quality of its documentation. In my view the number of maps is perfectly sufficient to achieve the specific aims of a linguistic atlas, which will be discussed below. The fieldwork was done under the guidance of Robert Damoiseau by students of the University of Antilles-Guyane, who also transcribed the tapes. A network of 47 points covers the islands of Saint-Martin, Saint-Barthélémy, Guadeloupe (16 points, including the adjacent islands of La Désirade, Les Saintes and Marie-Galante), Dominica (8 points), Martinique (12 points), St. Lucia (8 points), and Trinidad. The original plan to explore French

Guiana as well could not be realized, but Jo-Anne Ferreira has been able to interview two speakers of Karipuna French Creole residing in the town of Oiapoque (point 48) on the Brazilian bank of the river Oiapock, which forms the border between French Guiana and Brazil. In order to avoid misunderstandings, it should be noted that Oiapoque is not a “ville créolophone” (p. 17): the two informants come from Kumarumã in the state of Amapá, a village which is in fact “créolophone” (see below).

The questionnaire (vol. I, pp. 331–335) was set up by Jean Le Dû. It is ordered according to semantic domains: nature, weather, plants, fruits, domestic / wild animals, time, space, quantity, human body, clothing, qualities, family, house, food and drink, occupations, social relations, beliefs. It consists of basic vocabulary, including names of realities typical of the Antillean environment, as well as simple sentences permitting easy comparison (“facilitant la comparaison”) and providing data for grammatical analyses, e.g. q. 181 “prends un peu de riz”, q. 153: “maintenant, je vais au marché”, q. 209 “il est tombé dans la rivière”, q. 55 “au paravant, on râpait le manioc”, q. 466 “le curé dit que tout le monde ira au cimetière”, q. 429 “si je gagnais à la loterie, j’achèterais une belle moto”. A few “open questions” invited speakers to provide names of “different kinds of beans” (542), “names of known shells” (150), “human phenotypes” and “types of hair” (378–404). The data elicited by these questions were presented in the form of wordlists. The authors stress that the ALPA is conceived as a mainly linguistic atlas (“un atlas principalement linguistique”) and that ethnographic research like that undertaken for the ALRÉ was beyond their means. However, the ethnographic aspect was not neglected, the wordlists 378–404 of ALPA (“human phenotypes and types of hair”) compare well with the maps 419–424 of ALRÉ, and the information on obeah, magicians, seance leaders, soothsayers, evil spirits, etc. provided on maps 589–596 is not inferior to that found on the corresponding maps of ALRÉ (e.g. 515 “Un sorcier”, 516 “Un devin”, 518 “Ensorceler”, 520 “Âmes mauvaises”, 521 “Parole de mauvaise augure”).

The enquête was conducted from 2000 to 2007 with 92 informants, 60 men and 32 women; the oldest persons were born in 1904 and 1905 respectively, 14 in the 1920s, 21 in the 1930s, 19 in the 1960s and 10 in the 1970s (see the list in vol. I, pp. 24–28). There was one principal informant in each locality; some were assisted by members of their family or neighbours. Some informants were

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2 Numbers refer to maps or wordlists.


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