

Dravidianisms in the Malabar Indo-Portuguese creoles

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In the Malabar (SW India), the first Asian region settled by the Portuguese in the early 16th century, Indo-Portuguese developed in close contact with Malayalam. Having been given as extinct (e.g. Smith 1995), the Indo-Portuguese creoles of the Malabar are currently being documented and described, despite the scarcity of remaining speakers (Cardoso 2006). Data collected in the form of interviews and elicitation in Vypeen (Cochin/Kochi) and Cannanore/Kannur adds to – and to a large extent calls into question – previous records from the late 19th-century (Schuchardt 1882; 1889a), to provide insights into the oldest of all Eurasian creoles. In linguistic terms, one of the most striking facts unearthed by recent research is the extent to which it has converged towards Dravidian structures. In this, Malabar Indo-Portuguese is akin to the better known Sri Lanka Portuguese (see e.g. Smith 1977; 1979) and Sri Lanka Malay (see e.g. Aboh & Ansaldo 2007), which had until now been interpreted as unique in this respect. In this talk, I will explore some clear Dravidianisms in the domains of word order and case-marking, and discuss their diachronic significance.

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