

Jeudi 12 juin 2014

**Programme Pidgins et Créoles en contact**

Fédération Typologie et Universaux Linguistiques

9h30 accueil (Isabelle Légise, Bettina Migge, Nicolas Quint)

10h00 Robert Borges (Radboud University, Pays-Bas) : *Kumanti in contact: creation of a ritual vernacular*

12h00 déjeuner sur place

14h00 Dominika Swolkien (Universidade do Mindelo, Cap Vert) : *Cape Verdean Creole of São Vicente: Diverse linguistic past and present*

Campus CNRS Paris-Villejuif, Salle 511, Bâtiment D, accès : <http://celia.cnrs.fr/Fr/Plan.htm>

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**Kumanti in contact: creation of a ritual vernacular**

Robert Borges  
Radboud University

The African roots of creole languages and cultures in Caribbean societies have intrigued scholars since the late 19th century. Both linguists and anthropologists have reported numerous West African retentions among descendants of enslaved Africans. In the case of Suriname, prevalence of African retentions is presumed to be particularly high among the Maroons in the rural interior in contrast to the coastal Creole population. Maroon cultures, in general, are viewed as having the highest prevalence of African retentions and in some cases are believed to be preserved 17th C West African culture systems (Herskovits & Herskovits 1934; Kahn 1939). Religious systems and accompanying ritual languages are often cited as evidence for this idea. Devonish (2005) even claims that Kromanti, a ritual language of Jamaican maroons, “is an Akan language”. Konadu (2010) asserts similar claims about Akan (linguistic and cultural) retentions elsewhere in the Caribbean and Americas – including Suriname. An opposing view is found in the work of anthropologists (Price 2001, van Velzen and van Wetering 2004), who argue that the Maroons have undergone numerous cultural and political innovations despite their (relative) isolation in the forests of Suriname and French Guiana.

This work focuses on a ritual language of the Ndyuka – Kumantitongo. Ritual languages are not used for everyday communication, rather, in particular religious/ ritual– contexts and are, in principle, secret. In addition to the works mentioned above, pop-culture tends to maintain the idea that ritual languages are West African varieties (where Kumanti ≈ Akan), and some Ndyuka consultants insist that they could communicate with (presumably Akan-speaking) Ghanians in Kumanti. Data collected in 2010 and 2011 shows that Kumanti is not Akan (or Gbe for that matter) in structure. Rather, it appears to be structurally parallel to the ordinary spoken Anglo creole of the Ndyuka, albeit with a highly mixed lexicon. After providing some general background on the Ndyuka and Kumanti, I will show on the basis of phonological, syntactic, pragmatic and semantic grounds, that the view Kumanti is an African retention is not tenable; it is at least as dynamic and innovative as the everyday creole – if not more so. I will then attempt to outline the linguistic and socio-cultural processes that enabled the intertwining that gave rise to the Kumanti language.

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## Cape Verdean Creole of São Vicente: Diverse linguistic past and present

Dominika Swolkien

Universidade do Mindelo, Cape Verde

Over the last fifteen years Cape Verdean Creole (CVC) has received a considerable attention within the area of creolistics and the number of fine-grained descriptions and analysis on CVC has been growing steadily (cf. Alexandre 2009, Baptista 2002 and 2010, Lang 2009 and 2013, Pratas 2004 and 2007, Quint 2000 and 2008). Indeed, one of the most challenging difficulties in investigating CVC lies in the fact that due to several socio-historic factors the language shows significant geographical and social variation. To date, the overwhelming majority of the contemporary publications have focused on the Sotavento varieties of CVC (i.e. Maio, Santiago, Fogo and Brava), particularly that of Santiago, while the Barlavento dialects (São Vicente, Santo Antão, São Nicolau, Sal, Boavista) have remained largely undocumented and unknown [despite some exceptions such as Cardoso 1989 (São Nicolau), Pereira (2000) and Swolkien 2013 (São Vicente)].

This presentation focuses on the Barlavento variety of CVC spoken on the island of São Vicente (CVSV) and its goal is twofold. Firstly, the sociohistorical scenario of the genesis of CVSV in the 1790's and its later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century development are briefly discussed in order to explore how the history of settlement involving diverse Creole and European populations, the continuing social and linguistic interaction between urban and rural Creole varieties and the contact with the lexifier in a diglossic context have affected the current phonological and morpho-syntactic make-up of the São Vicente variety.

Secondly, based on an extensive corpus collected during field work (2003-2006) and participant observation (2006-present) and amply illustrated with examples, the main features of CVSV phonology and morpho-syntax are presented with a particular focus on variation within CVSV and the challenges it raises for its description.

The data presented suggest that the contemporary structure of CVSV is a result of several processes: the profound language-contact induced partial-restructuring (Holm 2004) of the Sotavento grammar during the early formation of CVSV, the incorporation of features derived from other Barlavento varieties, especially that of Santo Antão due to dialect mixing, whereas some characteristics are indicative of a more recent movement towards the lexifier that has been traditionally labelled as decreolization (DeCamp 1971, Bickerton 1981). Finally, this paper underlines the importance of examining synchronic data in the light of social and historical factors (Mufwene 2000, Chaudenson 2003, Farclas et al. 2007, Siegel 2008) in order to understand complex language contact situations.

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