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Huellas etno-sociolingüísticas bozales y afrocubanas. By Luis Ortiz López. Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert Verlag, 1998; Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1998. Pp. 172, plus 2 appendices and bibliography. Softcover, US\$30, DM48. [To order electronically, contact bibrisb@ibero.rhein-main.com]

Reviewed by Ricardo Otheguy, *City University of New York*

Cuban Blacks who were born during the first two decades of the 20th century, and who have spent their long lives in the island's remote rural areas, constitute exceptional witnesses to the long history of contact between popular Spanish and African languages in the Caribbean. Reaching these Cuban seniors, recording samples of their present-day language and eliciting their reminiscences of the distant linguistic past are major accomplishments displayed in this slim volume with justifiable pride. Not satisfied with these empirical, analytical, and fieldwork achievements, Luis Ortiz López proposes a theoretical framework for the understanding of Cuban sociolinguistic history, an effort that, while meeting with a smaller measure of success, is nevertheless of great interest and importance.

Ortiz documents the variable (never categorical) presence of features that are relevant to the study of African remnants in Caribbean Spanish, such as: (a) unusual forms of the verb *estar* like *taba* (Span. *estaba*) and *tará* (Span.

estará); (b) infinitives with no final /r/; and (c) unusually frequent use of overt subject pronouns and of uninverted subject-verb order in questions.

Further, Ortiz documents: (d) paradigms where a single verb form corresponding to the standard's third person is used for all persons; (e) similarly limited inflections where single verb forms are used for present and past events, for past-background and past-foreground events, and for high-certainty and low-certainty events, thus distancing these informants from the more familiar forms of Cuban Spanish where indicative, subjunctive, present, preterit, and imperfect inflections are in consistent and productive use; (f) an absent or uninflected copula (usually *son*), including (g) the extension of this copula's semantic space to what in other usages would be expressed by *ser* and *estar*.

The speech of these Black Cuban seniors contains also: (h) uninflected demonstrative pronouns (usually *eso*); (i) single-form adjectives lacking singular-plural or masculine-feminine contrasts; (j) a third person singular feminine pronoun *elle*; (k) sentential and prepositional complements with no overt prepositions or complementizers; and (l) sentences with what Schwegler (1991) has called double negation.

It is hard to overestimate the value of documenting these features in the speech of Cubans still alive at the close of the 20th century. Features (a)–(c), and perhaps (k), are found in many areas of Peninsular and Latin American Spanish, and thus their genesis does not appear to be solely traceable to Africa. However, the rest of the items appear to call for an explanation centering around the languages brought from Africa by relatives whom these subjects remember from their childhood as speaking very strange and mixed-up forms of Spanish.

An African connection, yes, but of exactly what kind? Ortiz's answer to this question is much less developed than one might have wished. Ortiz rejects the proposal advanced by several of us long ago (Otheguy, 1973; Granda, 1968; Stewart, 1962) that these features are the faint, fading echoes of what once was a 19th-century Cuban creole, possibly first formed in coastal African entrepôts and now almost completely decreolized. Ortiz points out correctly that these old Cubans may simply have inherited and preserved not features of a creole but of an imperfectly learned Spanish. This position is supported by the informants' own recollection that their Cuban-born relatives spoke a lot better than their African-born ones (suggesting perhaps not a hardening creole in the Cuban-born generations, but a Spanish gradually shedding foreign

features). On the other hand, the parallel between the features found in these informants and in speakers of known creoles tends to weaken the second language position. Especially interesting in this regard is Ortiz's finding that, in religious rituals, the Spanish of these informants contains traits that cannot be attributed to second language learning, such as for example the telltale preverbal marker *ta*.

In any case, ultimately Ortiz rejects the second language explanation, proposing instead that the language of his informants' ancestors is best understood in terms of what Holm (1988) has called a *semicreole*. Surprisingly, Ortiz provides no discussion of the construct *semicreole* in his theoretical chapter and passes over it lightly in his conclusion, leaving readers somewhat in the dark as to the exact connection between the data and his major theoretical position.

For most of the book, Ortiz takes linguistic varieties as social and linguistic wholes (speaking, for example, of such entities as Cuban Spanish and Caribbean Spanish). This is entirely consistent with his standard definition of the construct *creole*, traditionally applied to whole linguistic varieties. But in moving to the *semicreole* position, Ortiz appears to be switching (again with no prior discussion in the theoretical chapter) to a consideration of disaggregated linguistic features and individual linguistic phenomena, some of which he will regard as creole items, some not. While this abandonment of the excessively reified notion of linguistic variety is welcome, it gives rise to a complex set of theoretical requirements that is not met here. The notion *creole* was conceived in reference to the linguistic competence of populations and does not transfer at all well to the study of individual traits. A clarification of theoretical positions will perhaps be forthcoming in Ortiz's future books, which we can be certain will match the great seriousness and scholarly rigor of this most valuable and significant work.

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A language of our own: The genesis of Michif, the mixed Cree-French language of the Canadian Métis. By Peter Bakker. (Oxford Studies in Anthropological Linguistics, No. 10. William Bright, series editor) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Pp. xx, 316. Hardcover, \$80. Paperback, \$45. [To order via e-mail, contact (in the USA) <http://www.oup-usa.org/>; elsewhere <http://www.oup.co.uk/>]

Reviewed by Richard A. Rhodes, *University of California, Berkeley*

This book, a lightly revised version of Bakker's 1992 University of Amsterdam doctoral dissertation, consists of 10 chapters addressing various aspects of Métchif, a theoretically interesting mixed language of the Canadian plains. Métchif (variously spelled) contains large amounts of both French and Plains Cree. Since the time Métchif first came to the attention of linguists in the 1960s, it has defied attempts at classification in traditional linguistic categories (e.g., Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). It presents challenges to both historical linguists and creolists. Having historical roots in two unrelated languages, it is neither clearly Romance nor clearly Algonquian. Because it retains the full (morpho)syntax of both its French noun phrases and its Cree verbs, it is neither pidgin nor creole.

In this book Bakker touches on all the important issues that Métchif raises for a theory of language contact, from a history of the Métis people through the basic facts of modern Métchif sociolinguistics, and from the details of the substrate languages through a sizable grammatical sketch. The first chapter serves as an introduction, first presenting a rationale for the

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