

Akan substrate influence on three Western Caribbean Creoles revisited



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1. Introduction



- object of this study: potential substrate influence of Akan languages on San Andrés (SA), Providence (PR), and Nicaraguan Creole (NK)
- allegedly the most important single substrate of Jamaican Creole English (Alleyne 1986: 313; Patrick 2007 : 127) as well as the smaller Western Caribbean English-lexifier creoles (Parkvall 2000: 123, 150) including SA, PR and NK

Historical background San Andrés and Providence

- 1627-1631: English Puritans arrive in San Andrés and Providence from the Bermudas, Barbados and other Caribbean islands as well as directly from England
- 1631: the *Seaflower* brings English and Scottish settlers and the first African slaves to the archipelago.
- 1632: San Andrés is abandoned
- 1641: Providence is captured by the Spanish
- the “British” and their slaves have to leave but especially those who went to the Miskito Coast may have returned
- until then, trade with the Miskito Coast
- 1730s: the foundations of the present-day population are laid
- settlement to a large extent through Jamaica
- SA and PR are basically off-shoots of Jamaican

Historical background c'td

- 1630s: settlement of the Miskito Coast by the English
- NK may be considered the oldest English-derived variety in the New World (Holm 1978: 5, 1983: 95)
- 1780 exodus of 2000 settlers and their slaves to Belize
- by 1810: colonisation of the Corn Islands from Providence and San Andrés
- early 19th century: colonisation of Pearl Lagoon and Bocas del Toro (Panamá) from Providence and San Andrés
- turn of the 20th century: significant numbers of San Andresans—as well as Jamaicans, Cayman Islanders and Blacks from the Southern US—are recruited to work on the Miskito Coast
- the genetic relationships between the creole varieties in question have become obscured

2. Previous work

- Holm (1978) investigates the influence of a number of sub- and adstrate languages on Nicaraguan Creole as compared to the other English-lexifier creoles of the region.
- Dittman (1992) briefly discusses cases of possible substrate influence on San Andrés Creole English.
- Bartens (2003) and Bartens and Farquharson (fc.) discuss possible lexical Africanisms in Western Caribbean Creole Englishes.
- Focusing on but Akuapem Twi as described by Christaller (1875; 1888), Bartens (2011) examines thirty phonological, morphosyntactic, and lexical features included in the final version of the APiCS questionnaire.



Scope of this study

- a subset (13) of the 30 APICS features examined in Bartens (2011) were selected
- inclusion of other varieties of Akan besides Akuapem Twi as described by Christaller (1875; 1888)
- criterion for the selection of the features examined in this study: in most cases likely (converging) substrate influence
 - e.g. reduplication left out
- other features like the complementizer *se* were left for future studies

Compound interrogatives (APiCS 19)

- bimorphemic interrogatives consisting of a general interrogative particle and a noun are at times interpreted as a case of substrate influence in Atlantic creoles
- they also occur in creoles outside the Atlantic region
 - convergence?
 - semantic transparency?
- present in Akan
- only found in SA among the creoles
- exs. (1) – (6)



Nominal plural marking and associative plurals (APiCS 24)

- many Atlantic creoles form the nominal plural by (usually) postposing the 3PL pronoun
- also associative plural
- only SA forms general plurals with *dem*
- associative plural in SA, PR and NK
- the Akan influence is responsible only for the associative plural
 - Gbe? etc.
- exs. (7) – (14)



Generic noun phrases in subject function (APiCS 30)

- Bickerton (1981: 56): creole article use reflects the [$\pm$ specific] rather than [$\pm$ definite] opposition
 - presupposed NPs receive the definite, existentially asserted NPs the indefinite article
 - a generic reading may be expressed by means of bare nouns
 - this is the NK, PR and Akan pattern
- SA complies to neither the English nor the Akan pattern
- note that generic bare nouns may be pluralized in Akan
- exs. (15) – (20)

Pronominal and adnominal demonstratives (APiCS 32)

- Akan and SA, PR and NK: two-way contrast
- Akan and SA and NK: emphatic forms
 - SA *disya* N and *dat de* N
 - NK *disya* N and *dat N de*
 - Akuapem Twi – *ára*
 - Fante – *(n)ára* (also generalization)
- exs. (21) – (28)



Distributive numerals through reduplication (APiCS 34)

- attributed to substrate influence in the Atlantic creoles
- use mostly restricted to *wan wan* in SA, PR and NK
- clear Akan parallel
- exs. (29) – (31)



Existential clauses (APiCS 64, 78)

- the English expletive pronoun *there* does not exist in basilectal Western Caribbean creoles
- locative constructions of the type
 - *Tu moch hous iina Nort End.*
- *get*-constructions
- note that *get* (*gat*) means both 'to get' and 'to have' in addition to its use in existential clauses
- Akan: the locative copula is used for both existential and possessive structures
- exs. (32) – (38)

‘Headache’ (APiCS 66)

- ‘my head hurts me’
- Akan and SA
- no longer present in PR and NK
- note, however, that also Spanish feature almost the same construction
- exs. (39) – (44)



Comitative = NP conjunction (APiCS 71)

- the homonymy of the comitative and general NP conjunction in Atlantic creoles is generally attributed to the substrate (cf. Holm 1988: 206-207)
- Haitian *ak* even joins verbs
- among the creoles under survey, only the NK documented by Holm (1978) manifests the homonymy of the comitative with the general NP conjunction
- Akan
 - Asante and Akuapem Twi: *ne* expresses both comitative and general NP conjunction
 - Fante: differentiation
 - *na* for joining NPs, *n(y)e* for comitatives
 - Amfo (2010: 33, 36-39): the Akan comitative NP connective *n(y)e* has evolved from a comitative verb which in turn originally was a copula verb.
- General tendency towards differentiation?
- exs. (45) – (49)

Coming from and going to named places (APiCS 81, 82)

- the three creoles under survey here:
- 'coming from': by means of the preposition *faan*, *fram* < Engl. *from*
- 'going to': by $\emptyset$ in the basilect and *tu* in the acrolect.
- Akan uses serial verb constructions with *fi* 'to come' and *kɔ* 'to go' (Christaller 1875: 71, 74, 132).
- However, the meaning of both Akan *fi* and WCCE *faan*, *fram* has been extended from spatial to temporal contexts.
- While the same semantic shift has occurred in other languages as yet another instance of the grammaticalisation of spatial into temporal concepts (Heine & Kuteva 2002: 35), (converging) substrate influence seems possible in this specific case.

Serial verbs *come*, *go* (APiCS 84)

- The occurrence of serial verbs in the Atlantic creoles is attributable to substrate influence, especially from Kwa languages, although their degree of lexicalisation is lower than in the substrate languages (Holm 1988: 183-184; McWhorter 2004: 88-91).
- In SA, PR and NK, only *come* and *go* occur
- usually in first position, occasionally also in second
- clear parallels in Twi-Fante
- exs. (54) - (57)



Vocative marker (APiCS 107)

- post-posed vocative markers are considered a substrate carry-over from African languages
- only occur in SA, not PR or NK, and are increasingly rare
- forms recorded: *-yo*, *-oi*
- cf. Twi *-e*, Fante *-(u)o*
- also exclamative particle
- exs. (58) – (60)



‘Eye water’ (APiCS 111)

- widespread calque from West African languages into the Atlantic creoles (Holm 1978: Appendix s.v.)
- SA, PR and NK all have *ai waata* (and phonetic variants)
- so does Akan
- but: “It is very difficult to determine a single substrate source in the area of lexical semantics.” (Migge and Muysken 2007:9)
- ex. (73)

‘Hand, (lower) arm’ (APiCS 112)

- widespread in both the Atlantic creoles and their African substrate languages
- OED: ‘hand’ and ‘entire arm’ until 1750
- Holm (1978: 217): NK *han* ‘hand, lower arm’ must be a case of substrate transfer
- fieldwork of the 2000s reveals that *han* is ‘hand, entire arm’ in both SA and NK
- but: modern Twi-Fante has only partial overlap
- exs. (73) – (75)

Conclusions

- adding data from different varieties helps corroborate or correct the argumentation
 - e.g. plural formation
- comparative data may serve to reveal developments within the substrate, the creoles, or both
 - NP conjunctions?
- convergence

