The African lexical contribution to 
Ndyuka, Saramaccan, and other creoles 
Implications for how creoles develop

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1. Introduction

There are at least four kinds of questions that we can ask about substrate lexical contributions to various creoles; the answers illuminate different areas of the whole complex of creolization. These questions are general to creoles anywhere. The same questions can be asked about pidgins, shedding light on specific pidgins and on pidginization generally, but the data are much sparser — partly because of less available documentation for pidgins, and inherently because pidgins usually have fewer lexemes than do creoles.

Although the same questions about substrate (or other) lexical contributions can be asked with regard to any creole or group of creoles, the answers found in one case cannot be simply applied to other creoles without taking into account the often very different sociohistorical circumstances giving rise to the various creoles in question, as Mufwene (2001), for example, so rightly insists. Even within the Atlantic Creoles of the New World, for example, the European/African population ratios within a few decades of European settlement — to take just one factor relevant to the degree of Africans' exposure to a putative European target language — were very different in Haiti and in Suriname. Likewise within the creoles of the western Indian Ocean the ecological differences are well known (e.g., Chaudenson 1992, 2001). Below I offer answers to the four kinds of questions, answers based primarily on creoles of Suriname, but with conjectures on the degree to which they should also hold for creoles elsewhere under given ecological conditions.

1. In what semantic domains are substrate lexemes most numerous — either actually outnumbering superstrate lexemes in a given domain, or constituting a higher proportion of the lexemes in one domain than in some other domains? To the extent that the answers are the same regardless of which creoles we look at (and that is in fact quite a large extent), these common answers may or may not be the same as those for language contact situations in general. If they are, then they provide additional data for understanding contact-induced language change, particularly in relation to the various areas of material, social, and cognitive culture. If they are not, then they provide data specifically with regard to whatever it is that makes creolization different from other types of contact-induced language change. To the extent that the answers vary from one creole, or group of creoles, to
another, these differing answers provide data about the specific sociological, interlinguistic situation of each group. For example, the answers may be generally the same for “plantation creoles”, while the answers for another set of creoles may differ from those, but be the same within that second group.

2. Within a given semantic domain (e.g., kinship, numerals, animal names, body-part names, human communication), which lexemes tend to come from substrate sources, and which from superstrate? Here again the commonalities and differences in the answers from one group of creoles to another help us sort out questions about specific creoles, or about creolization in general. (In addition, although we will not pursue such implications here, the answers may also improve our understanding of cognitive processes related to second language acquisition, child language acquisition and the relation between language and culture.)

3. Comparing form classes (parts of speech) within a language, are the substrate items evenly distributed, or do they tend to predominate in, for example, nouns, while entirely absent among adpositions? Here again the answers help us understand contact-induced language change and the other areas mentioned in 2.

4. Of all the substrate lexemes within a given domain in a particular creole, which ones come from which substrate (e.g., which items are clearly Kwa, which are Bantu; or within Kwa, which are Fongbe and which are Twi)? (The parallel question can be asked about superstrate items, not focused on in this volume; see Huttar 1994 and 2003.) In cases where we do not know from other sources (e.g., slave trade records) which speakers became part of the creole-speaking society first, answers here can help us figure that out. In cases where we do know which speakers entered the society before which other speakers, answers can help us figure out what sorts of lexemes are likely to stabilize first in a creole — e.g., are part of creole genesis—and which can be successfully introduced by latecomers to an evolving creole-speaking society. This is especially true if the answers are similar for different kinds of creoles.

For the purposes of simplification, I have ignored adstrate lexemes in the above. But they too can be approached in terms of the same kinds of questions, shedding light on the same kinds of general issues or on the history of specific creole societies. For example, the presence in Ndyuka of a number of animal names apparently derived from the Tupi-Guarani language Wayampi indicates contact with that language at some time in Ndyuka history, an inference confirmed by extralinguistic historical accounts (Huttar 1989; cf van Donselaar 1994: 47). I deal briefly with some adstrate items in Ndyuka below.

In the rest of this paper I use data from Ndyuka, the main creole of eastern Suriname, compared where appropriate with Saramaccan and other creoles, to illustrate how answers to the above questions shed light on creolization — the processes by which creole languages arise and develop. Some of the conclusions I reach below are claims about creolization, while others are somewhat speculative, intended as suggestive of lines of research worth following.

2. Which domains?
In what semantic domains are substrate lexemes most numerous — either actually outnumbering superstrate lexemes in a given domain, or constituting a higher proportion of the lexemes in one domain than in some other domains?
Ideally, answering this question well requires (1) clear definition of various semantic domains; (2) a complete inventory of all the terms in each domain in all creoles. Instead, we usually proceed with a sample of commonly-accepted though mostly undefined domains, and with as complete a sample of terms within those domains as is available, for however many creoles they happen to be available for.

We can also proceed a priori, speculating about the domains that are likely to reflect more substrate influence. But these speculations can only be a guide to the inductive, empirical job of actually looking at various domains in each of many creoles. Such a priori principles have frequently been proposed, usually with in fact some basis in empirical experience with one or more creoles, often supplemented by speculation about what life on plantations (or other setting), and in particular the interaction there among various categories of slaves, overseers, and masters “must have been like”. Examples include Alleyne’s (1971) “private” domains; Hazaël-Massieux’s (1993: 118) “cooking, ethno-medicine, sorcery, religion, dance, and individual and private activities over which the masters had very little control”; and Aub-Buscher’s (1989) religion, cuisine, pastimes, customs, and intimate/taboo domains. Chaudenson (2001), within the framework of an essentially superstratist account of the development of at least francophone creoles, goes beyond much work of this sort in suggesting a reason why music, cuisine, and some other domains are more likely to show substrate lexical influence: these are domains, or “cultural systems”, in which language plays a less crucial role; therefore, reasons Chaudenson, the vocabulary of these domains would be under less pressure from attempts to approximate the superstrate, so would show more substrate influence. Huttar’s (1985: 46-47) more extensive set of assumptions and inferences from them is perhaps the most detailed attempt available, so is repeated in full here to illustrate this a priori approach.

For this study I have assumed the following about Suriname plantation slaves:

1. Some activities important to them, though carried out fairly openly, were not discussed in much detail with their white overseers and masters, simply because the latter were not interested – e.g., drumming and dancing.1

2. Some activities important to them were more deliberately kept hidden from white surveillance, and hence seldom if ever spoken about with whites – e.g., medicine preparation and sorcery.

3. Items and activities of European but not African culture came into the slaves’ experience only through contact with the whites (or with other slaves who had encountered them through contact with whites) and their languages – e.g., sugar cultivation and European articles of clothing.

4. Many areas of plantation life were not culture specific, but common to all – e.g., common human activities such as eating, sleeping, and sex, and major features of the natural environment such as common birds, water, and sky. In these areas a high proportion of lexical items were taken into the developing creoles from the languages of the masters.

5. Nevertheless, even in the sorts of areas mentioned in (4), the more specific meanings were more likely to be labeled by the slaves by some non-European form (see R

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1 See Yorke 2000: 129-30: “Unknown to the slave-masters, some slaves (mainly those who worked in the fields) would steal away in the bush to worship. There, in song and dance, they would express their stubborn will to live — not as mere hewers of wood and drawers of water but as full human beings”.
Price 1976: 36n). For example, generic fisi ‘fish’ < fish, foa (Sranan foara) ‘bird’ < fowl, bon ‘tree’ < Dutch boom, and udu ‘tree’ < wood all show clear European origins, while a large number of specific flora and fauna names do not.

(6) Items of the natural environment encountered not on the plantations but only later in the interior had little chance of being labeled by European forms, except by compounding or other semantic expansion of already adopted forms (see Hancock 1980).

(7) Activities and items learned from Amerindians, whether on the plantations or after escape, were frequently labeled by Amerindian (chiefly Cariban) forms – e.g., fish poisons and implements used in the processing of cassava.

These assumptions have led me to assume as a practical guide a division of domains as follows:

\textit{European etyma likely}: aspects of everyday plantation life known by both slaves and masters and spoken about between the two groups; generic terms for items of the natural environment of the plantations; and items of European cultural origin.

\textit{Amerindian etyma likely}: items of material culture borrowed from Indians, either directly or through Indian wares bought by plantation owners (Neumann 1967: 73) and specific terms for some items of the natural environment of the interior.

\textit{African etyma likely}: items of social, religious, and material culture “retained” from Africa or developing within the nascent black societies; specific terms for some items of the natural environment of the plantations and of the interior; and aspects of everyday life that slaves wished to keep at least partly secret from Europeans.

Now, how does Ndyuka line up with these guesses about lexemes with non-European sources? Since the focus of this volume is the African contribution, I look only briefly here at the Amerindian (adstrate) question: we find that of 48 lexemes of probable Amerindian origin listed in Shanks \textit{et al.} 2000, 21 refer to animals and 17 to plants, 6 to artifacts, 2 to food and drink, and 1 each to disease and to a state (stinginess). All of this fits the above supposition regarding Amerindian etyma (which admittedly makes no attempt to distinguish which items of the natural environment of the interior are likely to come from of Amerindian sources, and which from African sources).

Looking more closely at one sample substrate (African) lexemes in Ndyuka, the forms given in Huttar 1985, we find the following distribution: 31 animals, 17 plants, 6 natural inanimate objects, 12 body parts, 12 bodily actions and conditions, 30 artifacts, 5 foods, and 33 “other” lexemes.\footnote{Similar results are obtained from a rough count of the Ndyuka items in Parkvall’s (1999) \textit{Afrolex} 1.15 (omitting some that are probably not African in origin, and counting some twice that belong clearly to two of the following domains): 37 animals, 20 plants, 8 natural inanimate objects, 16 body parts, 12 bodily actions and conditions, 26 artifacts, 5 foods. What is collected under “other” in Huttar 1985 comes down to the following in Afrolex 1.15: 17 religious terms, 7 musical terms, 9 ideophones, 9 action verbs, 3 position verbs, 2 verbs of speaking, 5 property terms (“adjectives”), 4 functors, 4 terms for socially defined places and actions, 5 terms for kin and other categories of persons, and 1 each for mental state, speech genre, abstract noun, and adverb.} Again, this result fits the above supposition about African etyma. But notice how incomplete this information is: while it does tell us, for example, that there are 31 substrate lexemes among animal names, it does not include anything about how many other (superstrate and adstrate) animal names there are. Do the substrate items account for 1%, 10%, 50%, or some other proportion of the total? And

\footnote{On Amerindian contributions to the lexicon of another creole of Suriname, Sranan, see van Donselaar 1994.}
what is the basis for the domains used, and for assigning a particular lexeme to a particular domain (e.g., should ‘honey’, assigned to the domain of ‘foods’, be assigned instead to the domain of ‘natural inanimate objects’, or should ‘wing’ be part of the domain of ‘animals’ rather than of ‘body parts’?). Some expected domains are absent, such as ‘religion’; yet several of the items listed, especially in the domain of ‘artifacts’, are part of Ndyuka religious life: *apintiu* ‘message drum’, *awidjá* ‘medicine man’s wand’, *kandú* ‘charm against theft’, *kenti* ‘house where oracle made of cloth is stored’, *kôndi* ‘bent stick; statue’, and *obía* ‘charm, medicine’ (see note 2). Ideally, one should use a scheme of semantic domains independently established for other purposes by noncreolists, such as the one in Louw & Nida 1989.

Is the distribution that I found of African-derived items across domains partly or largely because that’s where I looked? In other words, did my a priori assumptions determine what I found? Well, not entirely — if a particular domain doesn’t have any substrate lexemes, then I shouldn’t find any—provided, and this is an important caveat, I try hard to find superstrate etyma, don’t posit far-fetched connections (i.e., keep within accepted limits of phonological and semantic change), and realize the possibility of chance resemblance.

Another problem is the potential circularity of using the lexical evidence to make claims about retained items vs. developing items. Such claims remain unfalsifiable unless we have some way to determine, independent of the lexical data, which concepts have been retained from African cultural experience and which ones were developed later as a particular creole was emerging. One sort of independent evidence for an item (i.e., a referent, not a lexeme) having been retained from Africa is its attestation in Africa (among a people who were at the right place at the right time for influence on the Creole in question) and not in Europe, such as the financial associations labeled *êsúsù* in Yoruba and *susu* in Trinidad Creole English (Warner-Lewis 1996: 243, n. 36).

Finally, note the virtually unavoidable bias resulting from my position as an outsider—a white outsider, at that—to the community. If African-derived terms do in fact show up especially in what Alleyne has called “private” domains, then almost by definition there will be a higher proportion of terms left unreported for those domains most carefully protected from knowledge by outsiders.

As one measure of the general validity of the above results for Ndyuka, consider Daeleman’s (1972) work, exemplary in its attention to phonological (including tone) and semantic detail, on Saramaccan lexemes of Kikongo origin. We’ll take all 161 items, regardless of their degree of certainty of being from Kikongo (or a similar language): 83 “very likely”, 54 “likely”, 18 “less likely”, and 6 “possible”. Daeleman classifies these 161 items as follows: “kinship, community life, magic, and similar” nouns: 18; “fauna” nouns: 29; “flora” nouns: 22; “household, utensils, provisions” nouns: 18; “body parts, state of body, state of mind, ornament, etc.” nouns (including some of what Huttar 1985 groups under “natural inanimate objects”): 22; “ideophones”: 29; “verbs”: 23.

Comparing the results in Daeleman 1972 and those in Huttar 1985 is not straightforward; Daeleman worked with dictionaries of Saramaccan (chiefly Donicie & Voorhoeve 1963), drawing on extensive firsthand experience with one African language, Kikongo (as well as published sources such as Laman 1936 and earlier works); Huttar drew on firsthand experience with Ndyuka, and consulted published works and other sources on around 15 African languages. It is thus perhaps not surprising that the results

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4 Not that outsiders can never gain access to the most secret domains — see, e.g., Bilby 2000, but rather that they can do so only with much more time and effort, including the development of nonsuperficial relationships, than is the case for other domains.
of the two studies are in some cases roughly similar, and in other cases quite different. For example, 29/161, or 18%, of Daeleman’s list are animal names; 31/147, or 21%, is the figure for Huttar’s list; for plants, we get 22/161, or 14%, for Daeleman, and 17/147, or 12%, for Huttar; on the other hand, for artifacts, we get 18/161, or only 11%, for Daeleman, and 30/147, or 20%, for Huttar; about 17/161, or only 11%, of Daeleman’s list correspond to Huttar’s “body parts” and “bodily actions and conditions” categories, for which we have 24/147, or 16%.

Despite the differences in detail between lists like those in Daeleman (1972) and Huttar (1985), we can probably safely conclude that more substrate lexemes are likely to be found in the semantic domains proposed in the above citation from Huttar (1985) than in other domains. Such a claim is falsifiable in principle, through careful studies of other creoles in places like Melanesia, Hawai’i, and the francophone Caribbean and Indian Ocean. Comparing the results of such studies with those for the Suriname Creoles discussed here could show a pervasive similarity, or could show significant differences. In the latter case, the next question would be whether these differences are attributable to different social histories of the societies in which the various creoles arose—Caribbean plantation societies vs. the socioeconomic arrangements in Melanesia, for example, or different patterns of European/African population ratios in different Caribbean colonies.

Washing household items on the Tapanahony River in southeastern Suriname
(Photograph: Louis Shanks)
3. Which lexemes within one domain?

Within a given semantic domain (e.g., kinship, numerals, animal names, body-part names, human communication, locomotion), which lexemes tend to come from substrate sources, and which from superstrate sources? One answer suggested by the Ndyuka lexicon, as reflected in (5) in §2 above, is that often very generic terms are from a superstrate, and specific terms from a substrate. For example, Ndyuka has generic terms meti ‘animal’ < English meat; foo ‘bird’ < English fowl; todo ‘frog, toad’ < English toad; fisi ‘fish’ < English fish (or possibly Dutch vis); and mila ‘ant’ < Dutch mier ‘ant’; but most of the lexemes for specific animals, birds, amphibians, fish, and ants are not from English or Dutch, except for most domesticated ones. But they are not all from substrate (African) sources; many are from adstrate (Amerindian) sources. Clearly substrate and adstrate must be distinguished if these lexical data are to give us an accurate understanding of the place that (speakers of ) African substrate languages played in the formation and development of Ndyuka. Nevertheless, if we attend merely to the distinction between superstrate and non-superstrate lexemes, then we still have a useful set of evidence to apply to other creoles, for which adstrate sources are missing or negligible.

If this principle derived from the Ndyuka data — generic terms from superstrate, specific ones from substrate — is valid, then it should be corroborated by lexicons of other Creoles. For Tok Pisin, Mühlhäusler (1979: 197) reports a similar pattern; although his discussion, following Frake 1971, is in terms of unmarked vs. marked terms, most of the examples, including one dealing with verbs rather than nouns, fit the distinction of generic vs. specific terms (that is, strolling is a kind of going, a pigeon is a kind of bird, etc.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERIC</th>
<th>SPECIFIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>go</td>
<td>‘to go’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pisin</td>
<td>‘bird’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kokonas</td>
<td>‘coconut’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>win</td>
<td>‘wind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gras</td>
<td>‘hair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paip</td>
<td>‘pipe’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limlimbur</td>
<td>‘to stroll’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balus</td>
<td>‘pigeon’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kumul</td>
<td>‘bird of paradise’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tarangau</td>
<td>‘eagle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kulau</td>
<td>‘drinking nut’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bunim</td>
<td>‘north wind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taleo</td>
<td>‘northwest wind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rai</td>
<td>‘southeast trade wind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kori</td>
<td>‘receding hair’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baubau</td>
<td>‘native pipe’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But matters are not quite that simple. Frake (1971: 231) gives Zamboangueño as a clear counterexample: “One can easily find hierarchical series in which Spanish and Philippine forms alternate....Each successive contrast set in a taxonomy frequently has both Philippine and Spanish terms. Given this pattern, Philippine-derived forms cannot consistently mark subordinate relations....” As an example, consider the following, adapted from Frake’s (1971: 233) Table 4. I use Frake’s numbering system, but give only the English glosses, with Spanish-derived items labeled “S” and Philippine-derived ones labeled “P”:

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5 Note that I am not claiming “most basic” status for the “(most) basic” rank of genericness in a taxonomic hierarchy in the sense of, e.g., Berlin 1992: 70ff. For more on the relation between my use of basic here and its use in ethnosemantics, see Huttar 1994.

6 I omit from this list the pair of terms for ‘right’ and ‘left’, which fit Mühlhäusler’s unmarked/marked difference, but not the generic/specific one I am exploring here.
1. food
   1.1. main dish
       1.1.1 main dish (of rice)
       1.1.2 maize
   1.2. side dish
       1.2.1 meat
           1.2.1.1 chicken
               1.2.1.1.1 hen
               1.2.1.1.2 pullet
           1.2.1.2 pork
               1.2.1.2.1 uncastrated boar
               1.2.1.2.2 suckling pig
       1.2.2 vegetables
           1.2.2.1 string beans
           1.2.2.2 lima beans
       1.2.3 fish
           1.2.3.1 tuna
           1.2.3.2 mackerel

Frake mentions similar unexplainable distribution of S and P terms in other domains:
"Why a roof is Spanish and a wall Philippine, or why wind and thunder are Spanish, rain
and lightning Philippine, I cannot imagine" (231). One explanation worth exploring is
psychological, including not only perceptual but also cultural, salience (see Berlin 1992,
Huttar 1994). Be that as it may, in other domains Frake finds a pervasive pattern, reflected
in the following sets of paired meanings of adjectives,\(^7\) and of a few nouns (232):

**Adjectives contrasting in magnitude and/or evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Philippine</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Philippine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>large</td>
<td>small</td>
<td>ripe</td>
<td>raw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tall</td>
<td>short</td>
<td>tame</td>
<td>wild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fast</td>
<td>slow</td>
<td>pretty</td>
<td>ugly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td>dirty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bright</td>
<td>dim</td>
<td>clear</td>
<td>turbid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tight</td>
<td>loose</td>
<td>straight</td>
<td>bent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharp</td>
<td>dull</td>
<td>bold</td>
<td>shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smooth</td>
<td>rough</td>
<td>modest</td>
<td>vain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tasty</td>
<td>tasteless</td>
<td>old</td>
<td>young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet</td>
<td>bitter</td>
<td>new</td>
<td>old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nouns contrasting in generation, age, or sex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Philippine</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Philippine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>old man/woman</td>
<td>child</td>
<td>mature leaf</td>
<td>young leaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grandfather/mother</td>
<td>grandchild</td>
<td>blossom</td>
<td>bud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>father/mother</td>
<td>son, daughter</td>
<td>bachelor</td>
<td>unmarried girl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frake (231-32) states that:

\(^7\)where a Philippine and a Spanish-derived form participate in a marked-unmarked
relation in the same contrast set, the Philippine form will designate the marked category:
it will signify lesser magnitude, shorter distance, worse evaluation, female sex, junior
generation, or plurality.

Perhaps Frake’s mention of “plurality” here has to do with forms not included in his table?

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\(^7\) Frake lists two pairs of words for ‘fast’ and ‘slow’, in both cases with the former Spanish-derived and the latter a Philippine form.
In Ndyuka, most “adjective” pairs of this sort have both members from a superstrate source. There is one pair with one member from English and one from Bantu, and it fits the pattern shown by Frake above: *kiin* ‘clean’ < Eng. *clean* vs. *tyobo* ‘dirty’ < Kikongo *tsobo* or a cognate thereof.

That more specific terms are more likely to derive from a substrate than are more generic ones, and that, more generally, more marked terms are more likely to derive from a substrate than are less marked ones, are both instances of a more inclusive principle developed elsewhere (Huttar 1994 and 2003), in terms of a continuum of “basicness”: the more basic a lexeme, the more likely it is to become stabilized earlier in developing pidgin or creole, and the more likely it is to derive from a superstrate rather than substrate source. “Basic” here is similar to the notion, rarely defined except by way of example, of “basic vocabulary” widely used in historical linguistics. It is also related to, but not identical with, the use of “basic” in ethnosemantic studies of taxonomic hierarchies such as flora and fauna. The works just mentioned operationalize “more basic” for domains of kinship, color, body parts, flora, and fauna, while noting that the notion cannot be operationalized completely because it is to a significant extent defined by culture-specific factors (see fn 5 above).
4. Which form classes?

Comparing form classes (parts of speech) within a language, are the substrate items evenly distributed, or do they tend to predominate in, for example, nouns, while entirely absent among adpositions?

One obvious answer has to do with ideophones. Wherever they fit in the form classes of a particular creole (in Ndyuka they are best regarded as adverbs; see Huttar & Huttar 1994: 595-98), they are at most a very minor form class in the European superstrate languages. Their reference in the latter is almost entirely restricted to sounds, whereas in the creoles and in the relevant African languages ideophones refer to a wide range of qualities of objects and actions. Thus with the exception of a few ideophones referring to animal calls (e.g., Ndyuka kokoyiokoo for the crowing of a cock; cf Portuguese cocorico), creole ideophones appear to be all of African origin. Such a claim can be made fairly confidently on the basis of the phonology of ideophones (a supposition bolstered by, but not based on, their parallel function in creoles and African languages), in spite of the fact that specific African etyma have been suggested for very few of them. Daeleman (1972: 15-17) lists 29 ideophones in Saramaccan with likely sources in Kikongo (or some similar Bantu language).

But even with ideophones, caution is needed. Wittmann (2002), for example, points out how some of the ideophones in Haitian Creole presented in Bartens (2000) as African in origin can be attributed instead to the superstrate, French. His clearest examples, however, are all ideophones referring to sounds, rather than to other qualities of events or objects.

Ignoring ideophones for the moment, we would expect from what is known about language contact generally (see, e.g., Field 2002) that substrate-derived lexemes, if they are indeed analogous to borrowed items in non-creole language contact contexts, would consist disproportionately of nouns. And this is indeed the case: aside from ideophones, lists of possible Africanisms in Atlantic Creoles tend to be made up mostly of nouns. Daeleman’s list for Saramaccan lexemes of Kikongo origin, for example, consists of 109 nouns, 29 ideophones, and 23 verbs. Of the 147 entries in Huttar 1985, at least 122, or 83\%, are “basically” nouns (with the usual caveats about multifunctionality). A quick look at a sample of 450 items in Afrolex 1.15 (Parkvall 1999) gives 306 nouns (68\%), 77 verbs (17\%), 43 “property” lexemes (adjectives/stative verbs, adverbs) (10\%), and 24 others (interjections, ideophones, functors, numerals) (5\%). These examples corroborate our expectation that was based on what is known about language contact generally. And it is also generally true that nouns constitute the largest form class in many languages, another reason that nouns would dominate in a list of substrate-derived lexemes. But it may also be that a great part of the imbalance in favor of nouns is an artifact of our research methods: probably most field linguists find it easier to elicit large numbers of nouns than of any other form class.\footnote{The first 5 items on each of the first 30 pages, the last pages, and 30 pages in the middle, ignoring several types of entries such as many labelled “possibly African” or as being from an esoteric religious language. I assigned part of speech by what seemed most likely according to the gloss given for the form in the creole(s), not in the source languages.}

\footnote{It is of some interest that crosslinguistic studies of child language acquisition indicate that in many cultures, there are many more nouns than verbs among children’s earliest lexemes (see, e.g., Gentner 1982). Although some counterexamples have been proposed (Japanese, Korean, and Tzeltal, for example), it appears that nouns are universally more numerous than verbs in children’s productive (as opposed to receptive) vocabulary (see Oshima-Takane et al. 1997; Guasti 2002: 80-81). Anthony Grant (personal communication, 2002) has pointed out to me that in Berbice Dutch, Eastern Ijo lexemes include more verbs than nouns (see Kouwenberg, this volume), and that in Chamic...}
5. Which substrates?
Of all the substrate lexemes within a given domain in a particular Creole, which ones come from which substrate?

The list in Huttar 1985 would allow us to make a three-way comparison between Bantu, Kwa, and other sources with regard to each domain represented. But the languages in the “other” category are all in the broad geographic area (from the Senegambia to Nigeria) that includes the Kwa area, with the slave populations from many of them being taken on board ship at the same holding areas as those speaking Kwa languages. Thus it is more useful to make a two-way comparison of Bantu (chiefly Kikongo) items from the Loango/Angola area on the one hand and items from languages of “Guinea” — i.e., all the other languages, including Kwa languages, on the other. I use the term “Kwa-plus” for the latter group below.

Since possible etyma are given from more than one language for some Ndyuka lexemes, the 147 items in the list actually include 187 etyma: 104 Bantu, 83 Kwa-plus. Of this total, more than two-thirds of the 65 terms for items in the natural environment (animals, plants, inanimate natural features) have Bantu etyma: 45, compared to only 20 for Kwa-plus. In other domains, the contribution is more balanced: 18 from Bantu, 17 from Kwa-plus for body parts and bodily actions and conditions; 22 from Bantu, 20 from Kwa-plus for artifacts and foods. (The very disparate “other” grouping has 22 Bantu items, and 30 Kwa-plus items.) Given the limitations of the Huttar 1985 list, we cannot infer a lot from the details of these figures. But they do raise two questions: (1) why in the domains related to the natural environment, does Bantu (Kikongo) clearly predominate over Kwa-plus, while the two general sources are more closely balanced in the other domains? and (2) why does the total number of Bantu items outnumber that of the Kwa-plus items, given that apparently more slaves were taken to Suriname from Guinea than from Loango/Angola during the period most relevant for the formation of Ndyuka?

With regard to the first question, I will only briefly speculate. It is not unlikely that the flora and fauna of the Suriname rainforest that became the Ndyuka heartland were more similar to those of the Bantu-speaking area than those of the savannas of the Slave Coast (Postma 1990: 59).

With regard to the second question, looking at Postma’s (1990) deductions from slave trade records, supplemented by Parkvall (2000) and Muñwene (2001, following Migge 1993), it seems quite certain that during the last three decades of the 17th century and the first three of the 18th, the slaves from Bantu-speaking areas constituted a major part of the imported slave population, but always significantly less than slaves from the Slave and/or Gold Coasts.10 — hence our question. But it is not only the number of slaves transported to Suriname from various regions that is relevant. Postma (1990: 108), commenting on the European planters’ dislike for “Loango” slaves, explains, “The main reason was because these slaves were prone to run away into the forest. Of one shipment in 1720, more than half of the slaves had fled into the wilderness within a short time.” It is clear from the context that slaves from the Bantu-speaking regions were more prone to run away than were slaves from Guinea. We can conclude that the proportion of Bantu-speaking slaves in the population forming the Maroon societies that ended up speaking Nduyka, Saramaccan, and the other creoles of Suriname’s interior was greater than the proportion of

languages, which are not considered to be creoles, more than half the known Mon-Khmer loans are verbs.

10 Postma deals mostly with the data for West Indies Company slavers. “Interlopers”, he indicates, almost always got their slaves from the Bantu-speaking area; but only a few of these brought their cargoes to Suriname (Postma 1990: 113, 82).
of Bantu-speaking slaves imported into Suriname. Thus the numerical dominance of Kwa-
plus speakers over Bantu speakers would have been less than what extrapolations from
slave shipment records alone would indicate.

For many animals and plants of the interior of Suriname, one would guess that the (ex-
slaves would have had little reason to refer to them while still living on plantations. Some other animals and plants may have already been encountered on the plantations
(and perhaps talked about), while other natural items such as ‘rainbow’, ‘fog, dust’, and
‘mud’ would almost certainly have been. That the latter sort of terms in Huttar 1985 are
almost exclusively from Bantu, rather than Kwa-plus, indicates that Bantu speakers
already in the earlier, pre-escape period were making a major contribution to the (future)
Ndyuka lexicon, perhaps greater than that of the Kwa-plus speakers.

The “Founder Principle” is used “to explain how structural features of creoles have
been predetermined to a large extent (though not exclusively!) by characteristics of the
vernaculars spoken by the populations that founded the colonies in which they
developed” (Mufwene 2001: 28-29). But features with little or no structural effects, such as
individual content lexemes, are not obviously subject to the same principle. It is to be
expected, then, that as the Maroons left the plantations and encountered a different
environment, new lexemes could be readily added to their language, regardless of what
stage of stabilization it may have already reached. With no more contact with Europeans
on the plantations, their new vocabulary would have come almost entirely either from
their African languages or from the languages of Amerindians with whom they had
contact after leaving the plantations.

6. Conclusion
For Ndyuka, a modern descendant of Suriname Plantation Creole, study of the African
contribution to the lexicon has yielded the following results, some of which are
corroborated by Ndyuka’s sister creole, Saramaccan:

1. Domains especially rich in African-derived lexemes are those where objects and
activities were least subject to interest, control, or access on the part of European (i.e.,
superstrate-speaking) members of the plantation societies.

2. Within a given domain, it is the less basic lexemes that are more likely to derive
from a substrate source. Broadly speaking, “less basic” means “less generic”.11

3. A significant majority of lexemes of African origin are nouns; almost all ideophones
are of African origin.

4. Bantu contribution to the Ndyuka lexicon appears to outnumber “Kwa-plus”
(languages of the Guinea Coast) contribution, especially in domains pertaining to the
natural environment. The quantitative influence of Bantu speakers on the Ndyuka lexicon
therefore appears to be stronger than sheer numbers of slaves from the two areas, as
inferred from slave trade records, would suggest.

Our cursory reference to creoles outside the New World showed result 2. of this list to
also be true of creoles that arose in a different sociohistorical setting than did Suriname
Plantation Creole. Careful examination of such creoles would almost certainly give results
similar to 1. and 3., while of course result 4. is specific to Suriname Plantation Creole.

11 “Less basic” has additional operationalizations for specific domains — see Huttar 1994 and 2003.
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