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Towards Conceptualizing Creolization and Creoleness

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Abstract

"Creolization" has often been terminologically equated with "hybridization", "syncretization" and other terms referring to processes of mixture. As well, what and who was labeled (a) »creole« has largely been determined by ideological preferences and emic labeling rather than by scientific reasoning. I argue for a more concise understanding and use of the "C-Word"[3]. Examining the social and historical context of creolization and tracing the etymology of "creole" and its meanings through times shows that creolization may have meant "lots of different things at different times" (Stewart 2007: 5) but has nevertheless been distinct in that it involved indigenization and – to varying degrees – ethnicization of a more or less diverse and, in large parts, foreign population. Thus, historical creolization has not been a process aimed at overcoming ethnic identities and boundaries in favor of local varieties of cultural mixture and identification but one aimed at their (re-)construction under new – and often awkward – conditions. Taking into account creolization's – and creole terminology's – historical semantics helps unfold the latter's heuristic potentials for a more systematic and comparative analysis, conceptualization and differentiation of contemporary processes of interaction and mixture. By connecting the historical semantics with socio-linguistic approaches to distinguish between creole and pidgin variants of language, historical creolization's major contemporary "outcome" – pidginization of culture and identity – comes to light, a process prevalent particularly in postcolonial societies.

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[3] "C-Word": reference to Palmié's article "The 'C-Word' Again: From Colonial to Postcolonial Semantics", In: Charles Stewart (ed.). 2007. Creolization. History, ethnography, theory. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

Getting the Terms Right: etymology versus ideology

Discourses on the etymology and meaning of the term "creole"[4] and its correlates "creolization" and "creoleness" will vary according to the social, historical and cultural context and according to which group is engaging with these terms.[5] The criteria range from origin and phenotype ("race") to cultural features and are as dependent upon worldviews as is the etymology of the ethnonyms of various creole groups and the criteria and reasons brought forth to demonstrate their creoleness. These ambivalent and contradictory discourses on the relevant terminology, ethnonyms, and etymologies carried out in the public sphere as well as in various academic disciplines indicate the social relevance of creoleness particularly for many postcolonial societies. They are also an expression of the ambivalence often associated with creoleness, in most cases due to the attending colonial history as part of which historical creolization took place.

Using recent examples of various "scientific" etymologies for the term "creole", Chaudenson reveals the basic ideologies they are based on and explains that – in contrast to the "old" etymology, which traces the term back to the Spanish *criollo* (see below) – they do not hold up to academic scrutiny: "Recent lexicographic attempts (…) illustrate perfectly how often extreme ideological fantasies can divert serious thinking, even in debates that are reputedly scientific. (…) In reality, the facts about the word creole are now well known, even though experts can still discuss some details on its etymology" (Chaudenson 2001: 1; 3). It seems that some of these alleged etymologists try to accumulate "evidence" concerning the original usage of the "creole" *word* in order to substantiate the origin of the first "creole" *person* – the "Ur-Creole", as it were. Thus, some have come up with a "white" and others with a "black" etymology in order to document that the Ur-Creoles were either white or black.[6]

In order to reveal and tap the full heuristic potential of the creole terminology, the term itself must be liberated from its ideological baggage – not least by historically contextualizing the emergence and development of the term to the best of our knowledge. I will therefore begin my terminological endeavor in search of a more specific comprehension of the "C-Word" by "etymologizing" and contextualizing its semantics in historical perspective. I will then make use of interdisciplinary approaches that combine anthropological and socio-linguistic insights, thereby trying to differentiate between historical processes of creolization on the one hand and some of their contemporary "outcomes" on the other.

Contextualizing Etymology

The Portuguese *crioulo* is considered the oldest term for a "creole"; however, the first documented use of the term is the Spanish *criollo*, which refers to Spaniards who were born in the "New World", in contradistinction to the European-born *peninsulares* (Stephens 1983: 28–39).[7] *Crioulo* (and also *criollo*) can be traced to the verb *criar* (to raise, nourish, create) as well as the noun *cria*

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[4] These discourses also refer to local variants of this term, like *Créole, Crioullo, Kreo* etc.
[5] Cf. Stewart 2007; see also Knight 1997: "As such the term [Creole] has constantly undergone changes in usage reflecting the changes in culture and society through the ages" (p. 273).
[6] Examples of this ideologically-based etymology can be found in Chaudenson 2001: 2–4.
[7] Cf. Stephens 1999; Hoffmann 2003: 3–4. The first documented use of the term was in a letter by García de Castro from Peru on April 2, 1567: "(…) que esta tierra esté llena de criollos que son estos que acá an nacido, y como nunca an conocido al rrey ni esperan concello" / "(…) this land is full of Creoles, which are those who have been born here and (…) do not know the king and have no hope of ever knowing him", quoted in Stein 1982: 162.

(infant, baby, person without a family), both of which stem from the Latin *crear* (to create).[8] The endings *-oulo* or *-olo* mark the word as a diminutive, which implies that it was originally used to refer to children born in exile and was only later expanded to also refer to adults (Arrom 1951: 175).

Distinctions were subsequently made between slaves born in Africa and those born in a given colony. The latter were called "Creoles", "Criollos" or "Crioulos", while the former were referred to as "New Africans", "Saltwater Negroes" or "Wild Negroes". Descendants of "mixed" black and white parents were also called creoles, as were eventually all non-indigenous people. The term thus originally distinguished between those who were born in the country of their heritage and those born in the colonies. The term was used equally to refer to blacks and whites, while the given context or additional terms ("White Creole", "Black Creole", etc.) made it clear which "kind" of creole was meant. The term "creole" thus originally had the function of classifying people and groups with reference to their indigeneity or exogeneity: "By claiming a 'creole identity', people from colonized lands stress their difference from the original colonists and their descendants in the Old Country (…)" (Hoffmann 2003: 5).

Slave exile and early colonial societies are classic examples of historical creolization. A few groups among the slaves and other settler populations were able to preserve their heritage and identity due to the size of the group or their relative proximity to their original culture and thus created diaspora communities in exile. Some individuals were integrated into the ruling colonial society or into local populations – mostly through marriage and religious conversion. However, because they were usually far away from their homeland and their people the large majority of slaves were forced to re-orient themselves in a foreign and repressive environment, and they were forced to develop new alliances transcending ethnic and regional origins. Over time they created new social and cultural forms that integrated characteristics of their various heritages with the dominant colonial culture as well as the local culture.[9] The manner in which the various character- istics were integrated depended upon the size of the groups involved in the process, their (relative) social and physical proximity to the colonial masters, and, if applicable, to local groups.

Due to the ongoing mixing of the various immigrant groups, the distinction between "indigenous" and "exogenous" persons and groups became increasingly obsolete and gradually all people who descended from relations between (former) slaves on the one hand and between mem- bers of different heritages and skin colors on the other were characterized as "creole" (cf. Stewart 2007). Even the European settlers, who were first called "creole", mixed with each other as well as with people of mixed and indigenous heritage. This led to a more pronounced social hierarchy of creole individuals and groups based on the criterion of skin color.

Creolization occurred among oppressed and dominant groups, including the slaves in America, the European settlers in Louisiana and South Africa, the freed slaves in West Africa, the slaves and servants in colonial Indonesia (Grijns and Nas 2000; Knörr 2007). Creolization does not require a social environment in which large segments of the population have been subjugated. However, the conditions were particularly suited for creolization in slave and colonial societies: a large part of the population was living far from their original home and in a foreign society characterized by dominance and subjugation. Therefore, there was a high demand for social solidarity, cultural orientation, and a common language and identity. On the one hand, there was a need to make oneself feel at home in a situation of forced exile and on the other a need to preserve an identity

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[8] Cf. Houaiss (2001) Dicionário Houaiss da Lingua Portuguesa. Cf. Spitzer 2003: 59.
[9] The role played by indigenous groups and persons who participated in the process of creolization has often been overlooked.

and culture, which could be related to one's origins and be used to distance oneself from those who were responsible for the fate of being enslaved, displaced and oppressed.

Indigenization and (Neo-)ethnogenesis as Criteria for Creolization

In the process of creolization, heterogeneous heritages are the foundation for forming a new – quasi neo-integrated – common culture. In addition, a new common identity is forged that increasingly replaces the various identities of origins (Patterson 1982). Thus, on the one hand new "culture" is developed in the course of creolization – in the sense of cultural forms and content (lifestyles, music, religion, etc.). On the other hand the individuals and groups participating in creolization undergo a process of ethnicization and indigenization. They gradually develop a new collective identity – the ethnic intensity of which may vary depending on the local social conditions – which is referred to more and more in terms of common roots *and* a (new) common home (*Heimat*), both of which are increasingly associated with cultural, historical and local particularities.

In the process of (neo-)ethnogenesis via creolization, a specific common (local, cultural, historical) heritage – the foremost criterion for the manifestation of "older", more "established" ethnic identities – is also significant in constituting ethnic identity. Unlike most "older" ethnic groups, creole groups – relatively "young" ethnic groups – do not (yet) (re-)construct their heritage as homogeneous (as possible), but rather as (specifically) heterogeneous (cf. Haller 2002).

Creolization is only one possible path for the interaction between people of heterogeneous heritages. A prerequisite for creolization is a situation which involves (and enhances) processes of ethnicization. This is often the case when – in the context of forced or voluntary migration – identities based on the original heritage lose their significance for the above-mentioned reasons and integration into the dominant population group or majority society is not possible. Further, the tendency toward (neo-)ethnogenesis and re-ethnicizing seems to be more pronounced when ethnic identity had been an important social factor in the society of origin, and when the exile society is characterized by ethnic structuring and classification (Knörr 1995, 2007). Regardless of the various meanings of "creole" and to whom the term has been applied over the years in reference to various groups, a historical perspective shows that the process of creolization was always linked with indigenization and ethnicization. These two processes are of vital importance in the distinction of cultural creolization from other processes of cultural mixing.[10] Thus, creolization does not mean the dissolution and overcoming of ethnic, national, or other boundaries in a continual process of creative intermingling – as has often been propagated in the context of postmodern models of dissolving boundaries and specifically by the proponents and adherents of the "Caribbean School" of *Créolité* (see below). It is true that old boundaries are dissolved in the process of creolization – due to their loss of meaning in a new social and local context. This dissolution of boundaries is accompanied, however, by the recontextualization of culture and identity, over the course of which new cultural and identitarian connections are forged and, correspondingly, new boundaries are created which are suited to enable orientation in the new (social) environment. Thus, creolization as a process involving indigenization and (neo-)ethnogenesis implies – to varying degrees – the essentialization of identities, insofar as the emerging creole identity is increasingly not only linked with specific cultural characteristics but also with ancestry and heritage. The latter may be hetero-

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[10] See also Eriksen (1999), who refers to the Creoles of Mauritius as an "ethnic category" (12) and adds: "a [creole] person (…) identifies him- or herself as someone (…) belonging to a new society founded on the premise of mixing" (13).

geneous and mixed; but they are not random and thus neither flexible in all directions nor free of boundaries.[11]

The confusion about what and who should be understood as "creole" today is also related to the fact that creole terminology – stripped of its social and historical context – is used indiscriminately to refer to everything that is mixed and somehow "in-between". Given the rather undifferentiated use of the term to describe contemporary social and cultural processes – often used interchangeably with hybridization, syncretization, transnationalism,[12] etc. – some resistance has developed to use the term to refer to anything but the historical context of slave exile. Sidney Mintz comments:

> "But the term 'creolization' (…) had been historically and geographically specific. It stood for centuries of culture-building, rather than culture mixing or culture blending, by those who became Caribbean people. They were not becoming transnational; they were creating forms by which to live, even while they were being cruelly tested physically and mentally."
> (Mintz 1998: 119)

It is clearly a mistake to use "creolization" interchangeably with "transnationalism" (or with "syncretization", "hybridization" etc., for that matter). Nonetheless, this very valid critique of the arbitrary use of the term does not provide (good) reason to do away with the heuristic potential of creole terminology for describing contemporary processes – a potential which will unfold when we look more carefully at the history of creolization instead of restricting the usage of the term "creolization" or "creole" to a specific historical situation. Looking at the history of creolization and at the (different) context(s) within which the term "creole" emerged will allow us to conceptualize creolization and creoleness more clearly, thereby differentiating it from other processes of "mixing." It will enable us to better distinguish between different processes of social and cultural interaction, integration and mixing, which seems all the more important given that these processes are not only becoming more and more common in our increasingly – and ever more complexly – globalized world, they are also becoming more and more differentiated. We need to make use of the creole terminology because of its potential for a more systematic and comparative analysis, conceptualization and differentiation of contemporary varieties of social and cultural interaction.[13]

Historical processes of creolization show that there is more to creolization than the mixing of people and cultures. Creolization is a process in which ethnically diverse people become indigenized and develop a new collective identity bearing (varying degrees of) ethnic reference. Creolization is not a never-ending process of integration and incorporation that forever produces alterity, as suggested by Balutansky and Sourieau (1998: 1): "Creolization is thus defined as a syncretic process of transverse dynamism that endlessly reworks and transforms the cultural patterns of varied social and historical experiences and identities".[14] Creolization as such is a finite process that is

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[11] Cf. Eriksen (2007: 174): "Creole essentialism is far from unknown in Mauritius. Occasionally, Creoles will claim that they are the only *vrais Mauriciens*, real Mauritians, since they are the only group who, as it were, emerged from the Mauritian soil."

[12] *Syncretization* refers to the mixing of belief systems or religions that are otherwise unrelated (for example, voodoo). *Hybridization* is originally derived from botany and zoology and denotes a process whereby humans "implant" certain characteristics of one plant into another with the goal of creating a plant with mixed characteristics. The plant itself has no active role in steering this process. I find the use of the term "hybridization" inappropriate for characterizing the active process of cultural change. Further, the model of "hybridization" also implies a "pre-hybridization purity", which is a fiction as regards the social and cultural world (Friedman 1994). *Transnationalism* refers to the dynamics of socially-bound ties across national borders (for example transnational networks). Cf. Eriksen 2003; Khan 2001.

[13] Cf. Eriksen (2007: 167): "It is not sufficient to point out that mixing does take place; it is necessary to distinguish between different forms of mixing."

[14] Cf. Matsuda (2001: 6), who describes creolization as "open ended" and also as "eclectic, flexible, and mobile".

completed when a new group identity has been constituted, which makes reference to heritage and ethnicity. Diversity of origins is often a constitutive part of creole identity once the process of creolization has been completed; yet this does not mean that groups, that emerged from creolization, are open to everyone for eternity regardless of their ethnic origin and cultural background. Creole groups vary in the intensity of their ethnic identity and the flexibility of ethnic boundaries just as much as non-creole groups.[15] There are, however, particularities in the social and identitarian ways of handling ethnic inclusion and exclusion which accompany creoleness – as the "postcreole outcome" of creolization. This will be further addressed later. For now it is important to recognize that a) creolization must be distinguished from other processes of mixing and that b) creolization as a *process* must be distinguished from creoleness as a *quality* resulting from creolization.

Towards an Analytic-comparative Conceptualization of Creoleness

The criteria used to define creole culture and identity in a given society reflect certain social classifications practiced in that society and yield insight into its ideologies concerning heritage, race and culture. To this day, opinions diverge even on the "classic" regions of historical creolization and on who should be considered a ("real") creole and why. In Louisiana, for example, some would characterize only white people of European descent as real creole, while others understand mixing as a characteristic trait of creole culture and identity. However – taking both emic and etic[16] criteria into consideration – there are creoles, who are more or less white, and creoles, who are more or less black, and thus statements concerning the connection between skin color and creoleness merely reveal ideological associations tied to skin color in a given society.[17] For example, being white is (however mistakenly) not usually associated with ethnic and cultural mixing.[18] The implicit model of "pureness versus mixture" links white skin with "pureness" and dark skin with "mixture" – despite the fact that skin color itself says nothing about ethnic and cultural "purity" or "mixture". A person with white skin may be just as ethnically and culturally mixed as a person with dark skin. "Race" is thus brought into the equation as an ideological criterion to assert the existence of different "classes" of creoles (and other groups) or to distinguish creoleness from other identities. If the goal is to find ideology-free criteria for creoleness, "race" and "skin color" are inappropriate.[19] The common reference to the fact that the word "creole" originally meant the opposite of mixture often serves to assert that the "original" creoles – allegedly white – did not mix with blacks. The attempt, here, is to dissociate (white) creoleness from the connotations of the word today as "mixed". In fact, however, the "Belles Creoles" – no matter how white and beautiful – are the product of mixing among different immigrant groups who became increasingly indigenized, engaged in cultural exchange amongst themselves and with their (new) environment, and ultimate-

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[15] See Eriksen (2007) on creole groups in Mauritius; Knörr on the Creoles of Sierra Leone (1995) and the Betawi in Indonesia (2007).

[16] "An emic model is one which explains the ideology or behaviour of members of a culture according to indigenous definitions. An etic model is one which is based on criteria from outside a particular culture. Etic models are held to be universal; emic models are culture-specific" (Barnard 1996: 180). Cf. Headland et al.1990.

[17] See Tregle (1992) on the "Belles Creoles" who choose to distinguish themselves as "pure" and "white": Tregle speaks here of a "creole mythology" based on the glorification of cultural and political accomplishments in the past. See also Brasseaux (1990) on the roots of creole culture and identity in Louisiana.

[18] Friederici (1947: 220), for example, declares that creoles are "the children of pure-blooded European parents born in America". Cf. Stephens 1983; 1999.

[19] On the relationship between race, heritage, birth place and culture as criteria for creoleness, see Henry and Bankston 1998. Cf. Hoffmann (2003) on the race connotations associated with "creole" and on the relationship between creolization and national identity in Haiti.

ly developed a new culture and a common identity that increasingly diverged from their "original" identities.[20] Similarly, European and African culture mutually influenced one another in colonial society regardless of the existing hierarchies and boundaries. A number of sources describe in particular the influence of African culture on European (colonial) culture – thereby also decrying the situation as "creole decadence" (Herskovits 1958; Brathwaite 1971; Mintz and Price 1992).

For a scholarly definition of the term "creole", the decisive question is not who mixed with whom during the process of creolization. It is also irrelevant whether a group has a name – an ethnonym – that makes phonetic reference to creoleness (for example Creole, Créole, Krio) or not (for example Betawi, Martiniquais). In order to engage in comparative research on creoleness one has to keep in mind that what is recognized as creole from an etic perspective does not need to be recognized or labeled as such from an emic perspective. "In order to pursue such research, one must be prepared to consider situations as involving creolization even when the people concerned do not use the terms 'creole' or 'creolization'" (Stewart 2007: 13).[21] Conversely, we must also be prepared to describe groups as *non*-creole despite the fact that they may have an ethnonym that suggests creoleness.

Thus, the *process* of creolization must be distinguished from creolization as a *concept* with which we can analyze and understand such a process. Just as we determine a language to be creole based on (socio-)linguistic criteria and not based on whether it carries the label "creole", we must also use (socio-)cultural criteria in order to determine whether a group is creole – and not based on whether its name goes something like "creole". (By way of comparison: One is suffering from malaria regardless of whether the illness is called malaria or something else – symptoms included).

The discussions in the public sphere as well as among scholars about the names of creole groups are of interest, insofar as they provide insight into the ambivalences associated with creole identities. As regards efforts to determine whether a group is creole or not, however, its name is irrelevant. This is true for example of the long debate over the labeling of the creole population in Freetown (Sierra Leone) as either "Creole" or "Krio" (Knörr 1995, 2007; Wyse 1979; Skinner and Harrel-Bond 1977).[22] This debate could be put to rest given that both terms are correct: "Creole" designates the group (the Krio) as creole in reference to the historical context of its ethnogenesis and the ensuing creoleness of its culture and identity, while "Krio" is simply the group's ethnonym which emerged in the process of its formation.

Creole Continuity versus "Postcreole Continuum"

Creolization and creoleness are thematized in various academic disciplines. Current research in the social and cultural sciences is interdisciplinary in nature and makes recourse in particular to the insights and approaches used in social anthropology, history, literature and linguistics. Social anthropology has looked particularly to the approaches and concepts developed in creole linguistics and attempts to apply them to cultural phenomena, that emerge in the context of cultural contact. One of the main protagonists of these anthropology-based creole studies is Ulf Hannerz. His approaches

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[20] See Berlin 1998: 105. He speaks here of the emergence of a new "nationality."

[21] Cf. Eriksen (2007: 173): "I propose a definition of cultural creolization, thus, which is faithful to its linguistic origins, but which does not restrict itself to societies where 'creole' is an emic term or where linguistic creolization has taken place."

[22] Put simply, the term "Creole" is preferred by those Krio who would like to emphasize the colonial context in which their identity emerged and their perceived closeness to European culture, while those Krio who understand the local context of their ethnogenesis and the resulting indigenization as crucial prefer the term "Krio."

have been taken up and further developed in the works of Eriksen, Stewart and Knörr, among others.

Hannerz understands creolization as a process characterized by specific cultural circumstances – a colonial or postcolonial situation and (ethno-)cultural diversity – but which may take place anywhere (Hannerz 1987: 547–549). For a long time cultural characteristics occupied a central place in his approach,[23] while the cognitive-emotional level – i.e., concepts and meanings related to cultural characteristics – was rather neglected. Working from a concept derived from dependency theory, world systems theory and linguistic creole studies, he employed a center-periphery model of cultural characteristics as well as a continuum based on it (Hannerz 1989: 205–208; 1998: 65–78).

One consequence was that the cultural characteristics were only insufficiently examined from an emic perspective; the meanings they were ascribed in a given society remained largely obscured. The center-periphery model assumes a distribution continuum of the original traditional cultural characteristics of the "periphery" on the one hand and foreign ("Western", "modern") characteristics of the center on the other. Hannerz understands urban culture as the "semi-periphery," given that in the urban periphery the culture of the center is most widely disseminated.

Hannerz' model of cultural creolization reflects the in creole linguistics widespread position that the creolization of language is a process largely determined by European standard languages. Correspondingly, allegedly "modern" characteristics are considered part of the European contribution and the center culture, while purportedly "traditional" characteristics are understood as the native contribution and the periphery culture in colonial and/or postcolonial societies. "Center" and "periphery" are used as categories that merely reflect the perspective of the Western world – the postulated center – instead of critically questioning it (cf. Wallerstein 1974; Knörr 2002; 2007).

Although the model considers changes within the characteristics as such, it does not pay particular attention to the meanings they acquire in the society which incorporates and transforms them. These meanings can only be revealed by examining how the said characteristics are locally perceived, conceptualized and evaluated. Using the perspective of the center to position a characteristic on a continuum constructed from the perspective of the center will, on the other hand, not lead to any reliable insights concerning the respective characteristic's local meaning and position.

Following Hannerz's work on the creole continuum, the linguistic term "postcreole continuum" – i.e. the *linguistic* space between a standard and a creole language which remains after a creole language has become established – was taken up in debates in social anthropology and the cultural sciences. The postcreole continuum is correspondingly understood as the *cultural* space between a creole and a standard culture, within which creolization processes will take place even after the creole culture and identity have been established, and in which different variants of creole culture and identity may exist:

> "The notion of post-creole continuum (…) rejects absolute boundaries and instead highlights the existence of variations within a speech community. However, this 'post-creole continuum' corresponds quite well simply to the creolisation of culture, which does not lead to stable uniformity, but is on the contrary an ongoing process." (Eriksen 1999: 16)

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[23] This is also true of Chaudenson, a linguist who concentrated on studying the creolization of language but also used this as a basis for developing a general theory of creolization that refers to "cultural systems," which he understands as "domains" (cuisine, magic, medicine, etc.) within a culture, and which he analyzes in terms of their heterogeneous roots. He does not consider, however, identitarian aspects in the emergence and development of these cultural systems (Chaudenson 2001: 194ff.).

Correspondingly, a few years later Eriksen (2007) interpreted the fact, that in Mauritius people with an indeterminate heritage are (also) considered members of the creole group, to be proof of the existence of a postcreole continuum in Mauritius. My view is that this, too, represents creoleness as the result of historical creolization processes rather than a postcreole continuum situated somewhere in-between more clear-cut identities.

Creole groups emerged in the process of interaction and integration among different ethnic groups. Therefore, as far as accepting people of different ethnic backgrounds into their group is concerned, they often possess a high integrative potential even after the actual process of creolization has been completed. This kind of integration is (also) facilitated by the fact that members of indigenous groups had (already) become part of the creole group in the course of creolization (i.e. in early colonial times). As a consequence, historical ties have been forged between creole groups and other local groups, which may have an integrative effect beyond the actual process of creolization (Knörr 2007).

But the above does not necessarily mean that the intensity of ethnic identity is less pronounced or less stable than among non-creole groups. Looking at Mauritius, Eriksen (2007) states: "Creole culture is perceived as stable and fixed (…). At the same time, the creole ethnic category is more open to new recruits than other ethnic groups in the island". My own observations have shown, that creole groups are often particularly open toward including people of different ethnic belongings. Yet, at the same time, they often expect of the newcomers to give up their original identity entirely in return. This, however, does not hint at a postcreole continuum in the sense of producing "in-between" identity; rather, it hints at a creole continuity – creoleness, in other words – by means of which both the original ethnic identity as well as the "in-betweenness" and "difference" of the newcomer is replaced by the ethnic identity of the creole group in question. This does not preclude the existence of different (sub-)categories in creole groups, or the notion that the latter could be incorporated "retroactively" in a sense. Neither does it preclude that creolization processes can lead to varying degrees and intensities of ethnic identity.[24]

In societies, in which ethnic identity is an important factor in social identity, the ethnic "quality" of creole groups is often seen as ambiguous and somehow "less ethnic" due to their heterogeneous origins. This contributes to the phenomenon that creole groups will often expect and force the full (ethnic) conversion and incorporation of those who become part of their group. If the original heritage of a creole group is also categorized as exogenous, the group is often seen by other "true" natives as lacking in indigeneity, as not "really" native. This may in turn provide further grounds for the group's desire to ensure internal coherence and to manifest ethnic identity by making sure newcomers are fully incorporated (Knörr 1995; 2007). This dynamic between open boundaries and full incorporation demonstrates that this is a case of creole continuity in the sense that a new ethnic identity and a new home are being (re-)created (for those who are integrated into the already existing creole group) – rather than a postcreole continuum in the sense of a perpetual generation of in-betweenness.

Creoleness persists as the result of creolization when it makes sense socially – which is the case in many ethnically heterogeneous postcolonial societies due to their integrative potentials. Creoleness may also become less important or even completely irrelevant if – for example – the processes of (neo-)ethnogenesis and indigenization have been completed to an extent where the original

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[24] In Guinea-Bissau, for example, there are different categories of creole identity, some of which overlap and some of which are compatible with other non-creole identities (see Trajano Filho 1998). Christoph Kohl's current work on creole identity and interethnic relations in Guinea-Bissau promises more insights in this regard.

heterogeneity and exogenesis of the creole group fall into oblivion. The once extraordinary *creole* group may then mutate into just another rather ordinary *ethnic* group. Creoleness may also lose its social importance when heterogeneous origins are the norm in a given society and creoles largely among themselves. Creolization is indigenization plus ethnicization, and creoleness often characterizes comparatively "young" ethnic groups – which neither excludes the possibility, that one can grow old with it, nor that it can take on a new life if the context and situation so necessitate.

Creoleness versus "Créolité"

Créolité originally developed as a discourse among writers, artists and academics in the Francophone Caribbean and in the Caribbean diaspora in North America and Europe. A few of its most important representatives are Jean Barnabé, Edouard Glissant and Derek Walcott. Its protagonists were engaged in a debate about their own cultural identity, conceptualized initially in close conjunction with the terms *Antillanité* und *Négritude*.[25] *Négritude* was seen as the collective identity of the entire African diaspora, shaped by the common experience of oppression and forced exile. As a spiritual and political liberation ideology, *Négritude* was intended to revive this group's African roots and encourage the rejection of an identification with the culture of the (former) colonial master. Soon, however, the exclusive reference to an African heritage came under critique, and calls were made ever increasingly to emphasize the unique mix of the Caribbean population – their *Créolité* or *Antillanité*[26] – and to highlight their independent cultural forms, which developed in mutual exchange among the colonized and – to varying degrees – based on their interaction with the respective colonial masters. *Créolité* is thereby not just understood as a specific mixed culture, but also as a model for a world culture in times of globalization. This discourse was exalted in the 1989 publication *Éloge de la créolité* (Bernabé et al. 1989). Purity, monolingualism and universality were repudiated in favor of contact and diversity. Mixing is seen as deliverance from exclusionary discourses of ancestry. This understanding of creolization implies the conviction – developed in conjunction with postcolonial discourses – that mutual cultural exchange has led to ethnic, racial and national categories and ties becoming less and less important, as they are gradually replaced by identification with a place and its specific cultural representations. Creolization is understood as a movement countering globalization, which is associated with cultural homogenization and standardization from "above" and the suppression of cultural diversity (Glissant 2000).[27]

This normative understanding of creolization and *Créolité* as a kind of identitarian nirvana results not so much from an analysis of social processes and dynamics as from postcolonial wishful thinking: "Their 'model of' is thus already a 'model for' an idealized *Créolité* ready to be recommended to the world" (Stewart 2007: 17).

The protagonists of *Créolité* do not distinguish between cultural forms on the one hand and the relationship of a given population to these forms on the other. They assume – falsely – that new cultural forms and contents, now mixed and local instead of ethnic and national, result in new identities that are also mixed and local rather than ethnic and national. They neglect the specific context in which creole group identity develops, as well as the historical context in which the term

[25] See Pausch 1996. A leading representative of this literary genre is Aimé Césaire; Maryse Condé has also engaged with the genre in many of her publications.
[26] *Créolité* is the umbrella term, *Antillanité* is the local – Antillean – variant.
[27] Glissant in an interview with *Label France* in January 2000.

arose. They thus also misrecognize the heuristic potential of the term for understanding and analyzing postcolonial processes and dynamics in particular.[28]

Creolization is distinct from other forms and processes of cultural mixing because it involves ethnicization and indigenization. Over the course of creolization old ethnic identities are done away with, but they are simultaneously replaced with a new ethnic identity. Creolization dissolves old boundaries, but it also produces new ones. Thus, not everything creole groups do counts (once and for all) as creolization. Even when groups of different heritages, which emerged through creolization, mix, this is only creolization if they replace their respective (creole) identities with a new, common – quasi "neo-creole" – identity. Ethnicization and indigenization are decisive criteria of creolization – regardless of whether the process of creolization occurs between "normal" (i.e. comparatively "old" and "established") ethnic groups or between creole (i.e. comparatively "young" and less "established") ethnic groups. The Caribbean is thus a good example of historical creolization, but not of contemporary creolization. The pan-Caribbean identity propagated by many followers of *Créolité* – which is said to increasingly replace the various ethnic and national identities with a local identity – largely obscures the social realities of the Caribbean. Neither an awareness of common (African) roots nor of the particular Caribbean mix have led Jamaicans, Trinidadians or Haitians to dispose of their ethnic and national identities and to identify themselves instead as Caribbean or Antillean. This fact is ignored by many *Créolité* proponents – including academics. Resistance to their model can provoke conflict, as was seen in the Frank Moya Pons "affair". Pons enraged members of the *Caribbean Studies Association* when he dared to assert that the various creole regions in the Antilles differ more from one another than from the various European countries, whose languages they had inherited (Hoffmann 2003). Although parts of the Caribbean population have developed a Caribbean identity that transcends their ethnic and national identities, it by no means replaces the various identifications associated with certain islands, nations and ethnic categories, but at most complements them.[29] Regardless of whether among creoles or not, neither the production of new cultural forms amidst cultural diversity nor the emergence of transethnic identifications can be considered creolization, if neither ethnicization nor indigenization is taking place in the process. Ethnic and national identities are at most relativized and transformed by new transethnic identifications in such cases, but they are not replaced by a new identity with ethnic reference.

In contrast to the pronounced ideological stance of the (Francophone) *Créolité* school, Anglophone scholars focus more on the context-specific social meanings and functions of the new cultural forms and contents emerging from the process of creolization for those participating in it (cf. Miller 1994: 154).[30] According to this approach, creolization allows an identitarian – but not heritage-based – reference system to arise through the linking of cultural characteristics from a variety of sources within a specific social context. Unlike among the adherents of the *Créolité* school, the potential for social integration inherent to creolization is emphasized more than the idea

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[28] Many studies have been carried out on culturally mixed forms, for example food, music, architecture, kinship systems, agriculture, clothing, religion, literature, etc. But these focus less on aspects of identity than on material representations of cultural mixing, that can be called "creole" due to this mixing.

[29] Jamaican, Haitian and Trinidadian identity, e.g., thus relate to one another in a paradigmatic way – one can usually be only one or the other – whereas they relate to Caribbean identity in a syntagmatic way, the latter existing in different – e.g. Jamaican, Haitian and Trinidadian – variations (cf. Schlee 2006).

[30] The established differences between the Anglophone and Francophone creolization discourses do not imply that all Francophone and all Anglophones representatives will argue as described here. On the one hand, these differences are often subtle and graduated, and on the other there are also representatives on both sides who have a position leaning toward the other side.

of overcoming the colonial legacy and dissolving ethnic and national identities in favor of local ones (Miller 1994; cf. Brathwaite 1974; Hannerz 1987).

The ideological bent of the *Créolité* school is averted in this approach, but the social and historical context of creolization and its terminology are equally disregarded – yet with a different result. While the *Créolité* school ignores the historical context and thereby lends to ideological constructions and social models, in the Anglophone approach, the same effectively prevents ideological constructions. As a result, the concept of creolization is cleared of ideology, yet it also loses substance instead of being further developed. Creolization is no longer understood as a societal process embedded in specific social and historical developments, nor is it studied or analyzed as such. Instead, the perspective is narrowed down to the level of cultural forms and to how individuals and groups relate to them. The heuristic potential of creole terminology is applied, at most, solely to the micro-level of social processes, but no longer to specific processes of ethnicization and indigenization within a comprehensive social context.

Creolization versus Pidginization

The following section will elucidate the difference between two of the most important processes in identity formation that take place (though not exclusively) in ethnically heterogeneous, postcolonial societies. Because these terms and their theoretical implications are not related to the culturally specific *content* of cultural processes and forms, they can serve as useful devices for comparative studies.

The starting point for distinguishing between cultural creolization and pidginization was a debate in creole linguistic about differentiating between creole and pidgin languages (or creole and pidgin *variants*) on the basis of (socio-)functional rather than linguistic differences. Linguistic differences may exist, but they do not constitute a criterion for distinguishing between the two.[31] According to Gilman, the decisive distinguishing criterion is "ethnic reference":

> "What is clearly true in Cameroon is that Pidgin is the language of reference for no ethnic group (...). In view of the confusion between the language of ethnic reference and the first-learned language, and of the fact that in multilingual environments there is often no real first language (...) it would be better to replace the traditional distinction between creolized and pidginized languages as in one case, the 'native language' of a group of people and in the other case, not. It would be better to recognize that Creoles, such as that of Sierra Leone, are languages of ethnic reference, while Pidgins, such as that of Cameroon, are not." (Gilman 1979: 274)[32]

Let us think back to the explications on historical creolization above and link them with Gilman's arguments. Linguistic creolization is a process in the course of which the characteristics of different languages develop into a new common language that has (neo-)ethnic reference for the speakers

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[31] Only approaches with theoretical and methodological relevance to the phenomena examined here will be addressed.
[32] See Gilman (1979: 274–276) for further explications. I would like to add that Krio, the creole language of Sierra Leone referred to here, has ethnic reference for the Krio themselves, while for other ethnic groups it is a Lingua Franca and often also a mother tongue, yet without having ethnic reference. In this sense, Krio has both a creole and a pidgin variant (see Knörr 1995).

and replaces the original ethnic languages and/or their ethnic references.[33] In contrast, linguistic pidginization also leads to a new common language, yet this process is not linked to the replacement of ethnic languages (as languages of ethnic reference).[34]

Accordingly (and in a – reasonably – simplified manner), cultural creolization can be conceptualized as a process taking place in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity that creates a new common culture with ethnic reference. On the one hand, new representations of a new common culture are produced and old, handed-down ones are recontextualized and transformed. On the other hand, the different original identities of those who are undergoing creolization are increasingly replaced by a new common ethnic identity. Creolization implies not only a mix of cultural characteristics but also the endowment of these characteristics with ethnic reference; the result being new cultural representations *plus* a new ethnic group and identity directly associated with them.

This process is not as common in contemporary postcolonial societies as the process I call cultural pidginization. Similar to the use of the term in linguistics, cultural pidginization refers to a process over the course of which a common culture and identity are developed in a context of ethnic and cultural diversity – but in contrast to creolization, this process does not involve ethnicization. No new ethnic group is formed, and original identities based on the heritages of its protagonists remain intact (Knörr 1995: 10–24; see also Hannerz 1987: 547–549; 1989: 205–208; 1998: 65–78).

It is this process of cultural pidginization – and not cultural creolization – that dominates in processes of contemporary identity formation (not only) in the postcolonial world. This is in part due to today's communication and transportation technologies, which make it easier to keep up social ties over long distances and time – in comparison, for example, to the eras of colonial or slave societies. In response to some of my work on this subject, Stewart has written: "In this idea we might recast Hannerz's world in creolization as a world in pidginization since Nigerians retain their indigenous culture and do not forget or lose it as they engage with global flows" (2006: 118).[35] This does not mean, however, that a part of the currently observed pidginization processes will not wind up as creolization in the long run. Whether or not creolization has taken place can only be determined, when the process is (largely) completed. Up to this point, creolization may look like pidginization. It generally takes longer for a new ethnic identity to form than it does to create new common cultural representations and transethnic identification.

Today it is above all the "pidgin factor" of creoleness as a "late consequence" of historical creolization, which is increasingly gaining social and political relevance and becoming more attractive as a form of identification in the postcolonial context of social and cultural heterogeneity. In the course of (historical) creolization, indigenous people as well as local cultural features were incorporated into the emerging creole group and culture.[36] Because elements of the given local, ethnic cultures constitute integrated parts of many local creole cultures in ethnically heterogeneous societies today, local populations can find parts of their own (ethnic) culture reflected in them and

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[33] The languages that serve as the basis for a new creole language may continue to exist. But they are usually no longer spoken by the group that is undergoing cultural and linguistic creolization and/or no longer serve them as languages of ethnic reference.

[34] Ethnic identity does not necessarily require the criterion of an ethnic language. One can be a Temne, for example, without speaking Temne. However, this often lessens the perceived authenticity of an ethnic identity. See Knörr 1995; see Schlee (2001) for the variation concerning the relationship between language and ethnicity.

[35] Cf. Knörr 1994a; 1994b; 1995; 2000; 2007.

[36] Often immigrants are former or freed slaves. This status generally leads to ambivalence toward the "free" natives, as the example of Batavia shows. One consequence of this is the reconstruction of ideologies based in the culture of heritage. See also Knörr 1995.

thus may feel both ethnically (with regard to their ethnic "share") as well as transethnically connected with the creole culture while maintaining their own respective ethnic identities. In addition to the more general knowledge of creole culture and identity having heterogeneous origins, it is thus also specific knowledge, concerning its ethnic "parts", which enables people of different ethnic belongings to identify with it, thereby creating an identitarian reference system, which makes use of and transcends ethnic identities and boundaries at the same time. This trans-ethnic connection can only hold up if creole culture and identity are not experienced as exclusive and excluding, but allows instead for selective identification. At the same time, creole culture and identity must remain recognizable as "specific" and "unique" in order to enable (selective) identification. In societies in which ethnic identity is an important factor in social identity and organization, this recognizability also demands a certain level of ethnic "quality" among the group.

To conclude, I would like to bring forth the following arguments appealing to those who understand creolization as a (postcolonial) process of dissolving (ethnic/national) boundaries. It is true that ethnic boundaries have been broken down in the context of historical creolization processes as a result of living in exile, given that old allegiances became largely obsolete in a new environment. But the dissolution of old identity boundaries was accompanied by a process of neo-ethnogenesis and indigenization. The process of creolization is thus not about getting rid of burdensome "puristic" ethnic and national identities, but about constructing a new common and authentic identity that can accommodate new social challenges. The significance of creoleness, particularly in postcolonial, ethnically heterogeneous societies, stems from the very fact that creolization involves ethnicization. The unique aspect of creolization is not that something dissolves, but that something new arises. The unique aspect of the result of (historical) creolization – (contemporary) creoleness – is that due to the combination of historical heterogeneity with historical indigenization and (neo-) ethnogenesis, it allows for both ethnic *and* transethnic identification within contemporary, ethnically heterogeneous societies. The social meaning of creoleness can be found in the fact, that the process of creolization which underlies it, is different from – and more than – hybridization and syncretization. Without ethnicization and indigenization, creoleness could not play such an important role in the processes of integration and differentiation, as it often does, particularly in postcolonial societies, where there is both a social requirement to preserve ethnic diversity and to strengthen transethnic (local, national) ties.

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