

## Culture



**Sarah Grey Thomason and Terrence Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1988. xi, 411 pp.**

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institutions upon the communities and the domestic groups' reproductive mechanisms, this study bears several methodological insights, the illustrative value of which largely bypasses the realm of maritime socio-anthropological investigations.

3. In a context of an increasing state intervention in fisheries, the book represents a significant contribution to the re-examination of the "common property" issues. It explores the various definitions of the concept, making a sharp distinction between communal and common property and argues about the inadequacy of the later when dealing with the problem of access to fish. The authors make a strong argument about the necessity of converting the "tragedy of the commons" into a "tragedy of the mismanaged State property."
4. The way the analysis is organized, both at a general and individual level, allows the reader to see fishing as a social production process, and not only as an acquisitive or extractive activity. Too many studies in maritime social sciences have neglected the analytical importance of processing and marketing activities when dealing with the reproduction of fishing in a regional context. In addition, several individual contributions directly address issues related to the organizational and ideological aspects of fishing, entering into the role of the labour unions and bureaucracies.
5. Besides using an historical framework that pinpoints how the industry is characterized by a certain "structural continuity" (for instance, the absence of an earlier domestic production system compared to what prevailed on the Atlantic Coast), this study is among the few, in my view, to show the relevance of the notion of social division of labour. By doing so, the authors are able to illustrate in a very adequate way the vulnerability of fishing. They provide convincing arguments to counterbalance official and political discourses linked to the producers' lack of management capacities and of awareness for environmental deterioration. It is, rather, the State's mismanagement of the activities related to the exploitation of other natural resources in the coastal zones that is responsible for the situation. The conduct of fishing is not only affected by internal constraints but also by the presence and negative effects of the waste disposals derived from

other capitalist branches of production, namely forest and agricultural industries.

These remarks show that this study, at the ethnographic and methodological level, will remain a landmark for social scientists interested by the evolution of regional fishing economies within a context of an increased state intervention and economic competition.

In this regard, it would have been interesting to have a few additional pages, either in the introduction or the conclusion, for systematizing the overall analytical weight and/or limits of a Political Economy framework within the present-day theoretical approaches in the socio-anthropology of fishing. This would have not only enhanced the illustrative potential of the study for students aiming at a better understanding of the social components of fishing, but would have also provided bureaucrats and other decisional agents with a more comprehensive view of the practical constraints attached to the use of formalist devices.

Finally, and this is probably a very egocentric statement, I would have liked a few more general and comparative references to the situation prevailing on the Atlantic Coast. To sum up, I consider this book as a significant contribution to maritime social sciences in Canada. I hope it will be followed by similar efforts by researchers in other regions.

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Sarah Grey THOMASON and Terrence Kaufman, *Language Contact, Creolization and Genetic Linguistics*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1988. xi, 411pp.

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Before even opening this book, we are primed for it by a quote on the dust jacket from no less a sociolinguist and creolist than Gillian Sankoff, "This is truly a landmark study." So it is. Not for beginners, this comprehensive study of language change (a) reviews the range of historical linguistic assumptions about how languages change and why, and (b) then begs to differ with all of the previous approaches and offers a new perspective on the role of "interference" (contact with other languages) in the course of language development over time.

Historical linguistics has come a long way since Max Muller claimed in 1871 that there is no such thing as a mixed language. This followed the old neo-grammarians axiom that language change progressed according to exceptionless sound laws and

all languages were the descendents of a single parent tongue. The other extreme in this argument emerged only 13 years later, in 1884, with Schuchardt's counterclaim that all languages are mixed (and thus every node on a language family tree should have at least two parents). A century later the argument is still going on.

But Thomason and Kaufman don't just choose a point in the continuum between Yes-languages-ARE-mixed and No-languages-AREN'T-mixed and argue for it with data. They do a very enabling thing. (As reviewer, I get to make a claim, too. Here it is: The social science contributions which are the most enabling are those that increasingly more narrowly define the issues under study.) The truly enabling contribution of this study is that the authors define with great precision the assumptions underlying the metaphors of genetic linguistics and distinguish kinds and degrees of contact-induced language change. In so doing, they provide a framework of distinctions that allows us to argue about languages rather than language...to consider the history of particular languages and groups of related languages, rather than simply to look for evidence to support a theoretical position on language change. That is an accomplishment. And, when one considers the hundred and twenty plus pages of case studies (from Afrikaans to Zulu by way of a few recondite Quileute examples from my own work, the reviewer notes modestly), there is little doubt that Sankoff was right. This is a landmark. It's good historical and socio-linguistics; it's good social science.

If you are looking for an introduction to the arguments about how to distinguish inherited similari-

ties in languages from similarities that result from contact, go back and read Weinreich's *Languages in Contact* (1953) or Darnell and Sherzer ("Areal Linguistic Studies in North America: A Historical Perspective, *IJAL*, 37:20-28, 1971). Actually, it's *not* impossible for the linguistically uninitiated to profit from this study. And, in the tradition of "Show me the good parts" guides to literature, here are the highlights:

- a) history of the concept of linguistic genetic relationship including the basis for the assumptions of systematic correspondences in all parts of the languages being compared or reconstructed (pp. 1-9).
- b) proposed constraints on contact-induced change; "borrowing" distinguished from substratum interference; and trashing competing attempts to establish implicational universals regarding language change (pp. 13-34).
- c) a predictive theory of linguistic interference, based on the claim that it is the sociolinguistic history of the speakers rather than the structure of their language that is the primary determinant of the outcome of language change (pp 35-199, followed by a summary and case studies).

It is the claim to "predictive" adequacy which is most arresting about the authors' proposed formulation. In the social sciences we usually recognize that analysts who see 20/20 in hindsight are legally blind when it comes to prediction. Thomason and Kaufman argue that their formulation allows us to both explain and predict contact-induced language change. I'm inclined to think they may be right.