St Kitts and the Atlantic Creoles

The texts of Samuel Augustus Mathews in perspective

Edited by Philip Baker & Adrienne Bruyn

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Reviews

"Without question, this book is one of the most important contributions to the field of Caribbean linguistics to appear in quite some time." Jeffrey P Williams, Journal of Pidgin and Creole Studies 16:175.

"A remarkable - in fact, unprecedented - approach to the analysis of textual attestations from earlier centuries, drawing on the insights and expertise of a cross-section of scholars and relating the findings to some of the central theoretical and methodological issues of the day. The texts themselves are unusually rich, and offer considerable insight into the late 18th- and early 19th-century linguistic situation in St Kitts and the Caribbean." John Rickford, Stanford University.

"The editing of Mathews' St Kitts Creole texts is superb, and, together with the accompanying studies, this book constitutes a major forward step in the development of the new and rapidly expanding field of 'historical creolistics'. The volume as a whole is a perfect illustration of the values of studying early Creole texts. In a few years' time, this book might well turn out to have formed the starting point for an entirely new scenario of Caribbean Creole genesis." Jacques Arends, University of Amsterdam.

It was on the small island of St Kitts in the 1620s that both the English and the French established their first colonies in the Caribbean. And it was from St Kitts that both nations began to settle other islands in the region, while the Dutch colonization of nearby St Eustatius began in the 1630s. The St Kitts area is thus potentially the birthplace of the first English-, French- and Dutch-based Creole languages of the Caribbean. Despite this, the area has hitherto been largely ignored by Creolists.

The recent rediscovery of Samuel Augustus Mathews' writing in Kittitian English Creole, first published between 1793 and 1822, has provided Creolists with the opportunity of analyzing these texts and assessing their significance for the various theories which have been proposed to account for the striking similarities among the Atlantic English Creoles.

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