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SRI LANKA CREOLE PORTUGUESE PHONOLOGY

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The dialect of Indo-Portuguese still spoken by a few communities in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) is the subject of this study. Data were gathered in 1973-4 during ten months' field research in Batticaloa, a provincial town on the east coast in a predominantly Tamil-speaking region of the island. Standard elicitation procedures were used in assembling a corpus for analysis.

This work is divided into three chapters, dealing with the external history of Sri Lanka Portuguese, the phonology of Batticaloa Portuguese, and the influence of the indigenous languages of Sri Lanka on the creole.

Chapter I is an account of the history of Indo-Portuguese in Sri Lanka based on published sources. The Portuguese came to Sri Lanka in 1515 and a variety of Indo-Portuguese soon gained wide currency. A creole community became established before the end of the century. During the first half of the seventeenth century the Portuguese were gradually ousted from the island by the Dutch, who continued to use the already well established pidgin/creole Portuguese as a

lingua franca. The language even became the mother tongue of the Dutch born in Sri Lanka. At the end of the eighteenth century Great Britain took over the island from the Netherlands. Although the creole continued in use as a lingua franca until the middle of the nineteenth century it eventually gave way to English and became limited to the creole community (the so-called 'Burghers'). The chapter ends with a brief description of the Burgher community of Batticaloa.

Chapter II presents a description of the phonology of Batticaloa Portuguese in a generative framework. Following a summary of the underlying phonological inventory, the phonetic distribution, and syllable structure, sections dealing with vowel length and stress, vowel quality, and consonants introduce the rules which relate underlying and surface forms.

Chapter III investigates the indigenous influence on Batticaloa Portuguese. In order to demonstrate how pervasive this influence is, some syntactic and morphological evidence is presented before phonology is dealt with. The morpho-syntactic traits examined are word order, postpositions, linking (or 'conjunctive') past participles, quotative constructions and case morphology. In phonology the areas investigated are the development of contrastive vowel length, the loss of vowel nasalization, the reduction in the number of palatals, as well as the development of various consonant and vowel allophones. A final section

deals with the implications of these data for the status of phonological change in generative theory. The standard notion that phonological change is grammar change, rather than sound change is shown to be incapable of capturing the fact that cross language influence has been at work in many of the phonological developments in Batticaloa Portuguese. In such cases the locus of influence has been the phonetic level. These facts argue in favor of a concept of phonological change as a complex phenomenon in which neither grammar nor phonetics predominates.