

Creolization and Medieval Latin Europe

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This paper argues for the utility of the concept of creolization in relation to Latin Europe during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. It further suggests that it offers possibilities for exploring other medieval societies, including making global comparisons. The paper draws on linguistics, early modern Atlantic history, and Roman archaeology, to offer an ideal type of medieval creolization. Creolization in this instance is understood to involve social and cultural processes, not merely linguistic phenomenon. In this sense, creolization mixes “superstrate” and “substrate” practices, acknowledging disparities of power and allowing for the dispersal of agency. This avoids problems inherent in notions of Europeanization, especially teleology, and a dichotomy between active core and passive periphery. Creolization offers a frame for asking why in specific circumstances some “superstrate” practices were adopted, but not others, and why we see such a variety of polities and cultures around Latin Europe in this period, with the self-conscious cultivation of distinctiveness, alongside the adaptation of common “superstrate” practices. These insights are applied to brief sketches from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries of Scottish politics and Polish salt mining. Discussion is then extended to non-Latin European cases and possibilities for global comparisons.

Keywords: creolization, Europeanization

Medieval historians have paid little attention to creolization, so this paper argues that it can be a useful concept for medieval historians. It is thus a methodological suggestion, rather than presenting any new empirical material. My discussion begins with a review of the notion of Europeanization, familiar in the recent historiography of medieval Latin Europe. It then reviews various notions of creolization and offers an ideal type for medieval creolization. Two case studies for creolization in Latin Europe during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries are then sketched, before some suggestions about possibilities for creolization beyond Latin Europe and in global comparisons.

Europeanization

Robert Bartlett was not the first scholar to use the term “Europeanization” with reference to the Middle Ages, as he acknowledges, but *The Making of Europe*, published in 1993, and in particular the chapter “The Europeanization of Europe”, brought it fully-formed into me

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dievalists' thinking.¹ Numerous scholars have employed the term since then – including in Bartlett's 2016 *Festschrift*² – and plenty more have implicitly adopted the notion, without spelling it out. Since the publication of *The Making of Europe*, historians have provided further empirical grounding for Europeanization and more granular understanding of the trends which Bartlett identified with such scholarship and verve. In particular, it has informed the historiographies of medieval Scandinavia, central and eastern Europe.

In broad terms, Europeanization can be understood as a dual process, centred chronologically on the long twelfth century, entailing *homogenization* and *expansion*. Homogenization involved the formulation of a common repertoire of social and cultural practices across Latin Europe. This is especially notable among elites and their auxiliaries, but was not confined to them. Some of these practices were already well established by 1100, such as writing in Latin and issuing coins. Others were still developing during the twelfth century, or become more clearly attested in the surviving evidence: these include such familiar developments as urban communes, crusading, castle building, chivalric literature, and international religious orders. Thus homogenization encompasses a series of other themes in medieval historiography, such as chivalry, ecclesiastical reform, and commercialization.

Turning to expansion: this involved the transplantation of common practices outwards from a “core zone” – which Bartlett identifies as running “from, say, Rome to Maastricht” and as being Roman and French in inspiration.³ Expansion advanced in every direction: to Iceland and the outer British Isles, around Scandinavia, down through central Europe, and then back along the Mediterranean from Outremer to Spain. This was often a result of conquest and migration from core to periphery, but the movement of people was not essential. It could also involve the adaptation of “core” practices by “native” elites from peripheral areas. Bartlett deploys case studies from Scotland and Mecklenburg; other scholars have explored examples from Wales, central Europe, and Scandinavia. In his contribution to Bartlett's *Festschrift*, Sverre Bagge has referred to “self-Europeanization” in relation to Scandinavian rulers adopting elements from the repertoire of the Latin European “core”.⁴

The dual phenomena of homogenization and expansion were not always distinct. For instance, the military orders of the Templars and Hospitallars were first formed early in the twelfth century, in the kingdom of Jerusalem – a polity created by the First Crusade (1096-1099), the most potent example of Latin European expansion. The two orders, and others like them, then become ubiquitous across Latin Europe, as part of an increasingly homogeneous series of ecclesiastical institutions. However, it is worthwhile to keep homogenization and expansion separate in our thinking.

For the purposes of this argument, I emphasize two particular features of twelfth-century Europeanization. The first is that expansion resulted in a variety of polities, rather than the aggrandizement of a single state. From Iceland to Hungary to Sicily to Jerusalem, peripheral polities came to cultivate their distinctiveness, rather than being subsumed into broader

1 Bartlett, *Making of Europe*, esp. 310-334.

2 Hudson and Crumplin (eds.), *The Making of Europe*

3 Bartlett, *Heartland and border*, 26.

4 Bagge, *Europeanization of Scandinavia*, 74.

political structures and/or cultural identities. This is seen, for instance, in the flowering of twelfth-century history writing for specific “peripheral” peoples by Gallus Anonymus for the Poles, Cosmas of Prague for the Czechs, and Saxo Grammaticus for the Danes.⁵ The polities that emerged in newly “Europeanized” Europe derived their legitimacy in part from celebrating the particular, the organic, and even the “barbaric” in their origin stories.

Potentially unifying identities for Latin Europe were entertained in the twelfth century, but did not ultimately gain favour. There was the learned myth of common descent from the Trojans.⁶ More popularly, the term “Frank” came to be widely used, and not only as a catch-all for western Europeans in the eastern Mediterranean. Bartlett picks up on the striking observation that the O’Briens of Munster described themselves as the Franks of Ireland.⁷ But neither Frankish nor Trojan identities prevailed, nor did terms such as Latin or Christian or European or anything else. The lack of a single polity, and a single identity, strengthens the sense that Europeanization resulted in a heterogenous homogenization.

The second element of Europeanization worth noting for this argument is that its effects in each region or locality were dictated by negotiation between the practices of core and periphery, rather than a straightforward expansion of the core into new areas. Bartlett himself notes this in his discussions of Mecklenburg and Scotland.⁸ Other examples abound. For instance, in Wales, the military might of Anglo-Norman lords was in part dependent on their adaptation of local tactics, especially light cavalry, which was better suited to the difficult terrain than their heavy cavalry, developed in less hilly regions.⁹ In twelfth-century northern Syria, relations between Latin rulers and their eastern Christian subjects have been characterized by the term “rough tolerance”.¹⁰ This involved Latin Frankish rulers and clerics recognizing a degree of diversity in Christian expression that never existed in the “core” of Latin Europe. These examples could be multiplied many times. In each case, the specific contours of Europeanization were created by interchange between periphery and centre, rather than by the former simply emulating the latter.

This sketch of Europeanization is intended to be fairly uncontroversial. I do not wish to challenge the broad picture here, nor to question the contribution made by *The Making of Europe*. But creolization can be useful in refining our understanding of these processes.

Creolization

Creolization has been addressed in a vast range of scholarship, in disciplines including linguistics, literature, anthropology, and archaeology, yet it remains “generally under-theorized”.¹¹ What follows does not attempt to provide any sort of survey, but to review elements that might be useful for medieval creolization. This has four parts: first, creolization as a

5 See, for example, the studies in Garipzanov (ed.), *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity*.

6 Waswo, *Our ancestors, the Trojans*.

7 Bartlett, *Making of Europe*, 103-105.

8 Bartlett, *Making of Europe*, 97-102, 214-215, 316-319.

9 Suppe, *Military Institutions on the Welsh Marches*.

10 MacEvitt, *Crusades and the Christian World of the East*, 21-26. MacEvitt briefly considers the term “creole”; at 2, 21. He does not employ it, because he understands it as characterized by benevolent tolerance. ‘Creolization’ does not have such connotations in this argument.

11 Palmié, *Creolization and Its Discontents*, 435. On the important distinctions between Anglophone and Francophone uses of the term, Price, *Créolisation*

strictly linguistic term; secondly, creolization in modern Caribbean and Atlantic history; thirdly, creolization as used by archaeologists of the western Roman Empire. This culminates, fourthly, in the outline of an ideal type of medieval creolization.

Caution has been expressed about deploying the terminology of creolization outside the Atlantic and Caribbean regions in which it was first deployed.¹² This stems from two concerns. First is that the creolization could be applied ubiquitously and thus lose its analytical potency. Second is frustration with the casual use of “creolization” to refer to cultural interchange in a sanitized and depoliticized manner, especially when this implicitly downplays the violence and forced displacement of plantation slavery.¹³ The nature of the dehumanization entailed by Atlantic slavery’s pursuit of economic rewards has even been presented as making creolization unique.¹⁴ It is worth engaging with these points, but it does not follow that we should refrain in principle from seeking to “export” notions of creolization beyond the modern Atlantic and Caribbean. Analytical terms coined in one case are in principle available to be tested in different contexts, even if they prove inadequate. The analytical repertoire available to historians would be diminished if we could only deploy concepts generated from first principles (should any really exist), rather than from specific cases. Notions such as “apartheid”, “feudal”, and “diaspora” were first formulated in relation to particular instances, but have since been found useful elsewhere. The crucial question is whether a given conceptual export works in practice, rather than whether the principle of “exporting” is valid.

Linguistic Creolization

Creolization has a series of technical meanings in linguistics. What follows is a sketch of the basic elements, designed to inform the subsequent arguments,¹⁵ although the field seems rather contested among specialists.¹⁶ The term “creole” developed initially with reference to early modern South America, but has been “exported”, and is now deployed by scholars working on a range of languages, chronologically and geographically. Linguists no longer entertain the initial scholarly notion of creoles as aberrant, inadequate attempts to mimic prestigious European literary languages.

In linguistics, a creole is a new language – a linguistic system that is related to, but distinct from, multiple source languages, in phonology, morphology, and syntax, as well as vocabulary. The new language is based on contact between two or more distinct languages. These source languages include a *superstrate* (spoken by speakers with more power), and one or more *substrates* (whose speakers are socially subordinate). It is the mixture of superstrate and substrate(s), together with innovations internal to the creole, that make it a distinct language. Thus a creole involves linguistic contact, but specifically in the context of social hierarchy.¹⁷ The processes of creole formation are not clearly understood. This is in part because

12 Chivallon, *Créolisation universelle ou singulière?*; Palmié, *Creolization and Its Discontents*; Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*.

13 Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 188–96. Palmié, *Model in the Muddle*, 194.

14 Chivallon, *Créolisation universelle ou singulière?*, 63.

15 Holm, *Introduction*; Baker and Mühlhäusler, *Creole linguistics*; Jourdan, *Pidgins and creoles*.

16 Thomason, *Pidgins/Creoles*, 43.

17 Note that linguistic forms based on contact without associated hierarchies of power are a different phenomenon, not relevant to this discussion. Holm, *Introduction*, 6.

it happens orally and usually among socially marginal people: by the time creoles enter the written record, they are long established, and many have not been adequately recorded. But it is also because agency in linguistic creolization is inherently dispersed.

Creoles can, in theory, be distinguished from pidgins.¹⁸ A pidgin is no one's first language, but rather a system of communications with a limited practical utility in specific aspects of human activity. Pidgins draw on material from two or more languages to enable mutual understanding. Like a creole, one of the source languages (the superstrate) is associated with more power. Pidgins sometimes develop into creoles, and it may be that most or all creoles begin as pidgins, although there is no consensus on this point among linguists. It so happens that the earliest written evidence for a pidgin comes from our period: in 1068 the Spanish Muslim geographer al-Bakri retailed complaints that people from what is now central Mauritania had mutilated Arabic, and he reproduces a passage of the language use that he and his informant deplored.¹⁹ Its modern editors judge that it displays Arabic and Berber features.

John Hines has argued that from the ninth century onwards, Scandinavian English developed as a creole.²⁰ Whether or not this is persuasive linguistically, his argument is suggestive for our purposes. He posits two stages for Norse linguistic impact on English. In the ninth century, with Scandinavians in the ascendant politically and militarily, practical terms entered the spoken language of Old English, especially in eastern England and in vocabulary concerned with land management and seafaring. Hines sees this as stemming from quotidian realities, in which subordinate Old English speakers needed to communicate with their new lords. In the second stage, from the tenth century onwards, the political situation was reversed with the rise of the Wessex dynasty, which gradually extended its political and military authority across England. In this period, Hines identifies a thoughtful and self-conscious inclusion of Scandinavian terms in Old English written texts as a sign of cultural distinctiveness, "a veritable indulgence in the use of a large and varied vocabulary".²¹ He draws a parallel with material culture, such as the creation of Gosforth Cross in a Cumbrian churchyard: a Christian object decorated in Scandinavian style with scenes from Norse mythology. Hines concludes that Scandinavian English can be classified as a creole. I draw from his argument a general distinction between "pragmatic" creolization (as seen in his ninth-century material) and "programmatically" creolization (from the tenth century). The former involves adjustments in response to practical everyday demands, while the latter entails a cultural self-fashioning that self-consciously draws on multiple sources. Naturally, pragmatic and programmatically creolization are not mutually exclusive and are best thought of as two poles of a spectrum.

The pragmatic/programmatically distinction is not identical to that between low status and high status, or between oral and written, although it might look like that. Crucially for our argument, the distinction can be applied beyond the linguistic sphere, and I will return to it later. Here I will merely note a parallel between the "programmatically" tenth-century texts

18 This over-simplifies the linguistic debate, but serves the present purpose. Jourdan, *Pidgins and creoles*.

19 Holm, *Introduction*, 15; Thomason and Elgibali, *Before the Lingua Franca*.

20 Hines, *Scandinavian English*.

21 Hines, *Scandinavian English*, 414.

identified by Hines and the so-called “synthetic” creolization championed by certain twentieth-century Caribbean intellectuals as part of the political and cultural project of newly-independent Caribbean states.²²

There may have been many pidgins on the peripheries of twelfth-century Latin Europe to which we have little or no access in surviving sources.²³ Whether there were any fully-fledged creoles is another matter. The term has been invoked in discussions of Yiddish and of the later medieval Mediterranean maritime *Lingua Franca*, but in both cases it seems not to be especially helpful.²⁴ There is a well-known argument that Middle English was a creole, with Old English as the substrate and French as the superstrate.²⁵ Specialists have not found this persuasive, on historical or linguistic grounds, although the debate has rumbled on.²⁶ But the argument of this paper does not depend on the existence of medieval creole languages. My discussion focuses on creolization as a process, rather than “creole” as a destination, and it is not exclusively (or even mainly) in relation to language. Beyond the specifics of linguistics, “creolization” can refer to processes in all parts of society and culture, including material culture.

The key features that I take from linguistic creolization are (1) that it involves mixing distinct languages; (2) that this happens in a hierarchical social context, with superstrate and substrate source languages; (3) agency is dispersed. Finally, (4) this can be nuanced by a distinction between “pragmatic” and “programmatically” creolization.

Atlantic Creolization

I now turn to the historical context of the Caribbean and Atlantic world, from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries. The term “creole” comes from a Portuguese word, which originally referred to African slaves born in the New World, then extended to include Europeans born in the New World, too. From here the range of meanings multiplied in a profusion too bewildering to catalogue.²⁷ Creolization generated numerous different social and cultural practices, in the Americas, the Caribbean, and some areas of Africa’s Atlantic coast.

Perhaps the most famous articulation of creolization comes from Simón Bolívar, when he declared, “We are not Europeans; we are not Indians; we are but a mixed species of aborigines and Spaniards. Americans by birth and Europeans by law [...] Thus our position is most extraordinary and complicated.”²⁸ For Bolívar, creolization culminated in his own class of wealthy Spanish American creoles, well educated in the European tradition and able to establish enduring states. His was a project of “programmatically creolization”. Equally, the product of creolization was the small-scale communities of escaped African slaves and their descendants, established across the Caribbean region from the sixteenth century onwards. These

22 This is critiqued in Bolland, *Creolisation and Creole societies*.

23 Cataloguing such possibilities is beyond the parameters of this paper, but a sense of the range of scenarios for linguistic contact is provided by several studies. Thomason and Elgibali, ‘Before the *Lingua Franca*’ suggest that pre-modern pidgins are likely to have been common; Broch and Jahr, *Russenorsk*, focuses on the modern period, but also considers evidence for earlier linguistic contacts in northern Scandinavia, drawing on Russian, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, and Lapp; Mostert, *Linguistics of contact*; Kowaleski, *French of England*.

24 Wexler, *Jewish interlinguistics*, 135-136; Whinnom, *Context and Origins of Lingua Franca*; Nolan, *Lingua Franca*.

25 Bailey and Maroldt, *French lineage of English*.

26 Watts, *Language Myths*, 83-113.

27 Allen, *Creole: The problem of definition*; Palmié, *Creolization and its discontents*

28 Simon Bolívar, quoted in Simon, *Simón Bolívar’s Republican Imperialism*, 303.

Cimarrón or Maroon communities resisted slavery and colonial authority. They were informed by their own immediate experiences, as well as memories of African practices. They also adopted and adapted European superstrate practices such as Christianity and the use of firearms, and sometimes interacted with Native Americans.²⁹ Some were defeated militarily, while others were eventually incorporated into colonial structures, following negotiations which were themselves testament to the range of creolized political possibilities. While creolization had a distinct end point in the project of a figure such as Bolívar, process should be distinguished from destination. Kamau Brathwaite's rich and stimulating study *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* argues that Jamaican creolization during this period was limited in the political sphere by local circumstances and the British colonial regime.³⁰ Jamaica did not take the route of Haiti, but creolization shaped both societies.

Alongside political developments, Atlantic creolization also entailed quotidian processes in social, cultural, and material life. Brathwaite discusses the varied practical and cultural impulses that shaped the domestic architecture of Jamaica's plantation elite.³¹ The archaeologist Anne Yentsch has used material from eighteenth-century Annapolis (Maryland) to study *inter alia* how slave women were able to exercise agency in "food creolization".³² The way in which slaves produced and prepared food, creating their own *mélange* of different ingredients and techniques, negotiated between African and European traditions, within the violent and all-pervasive political economy of slavery. Parallel to this, colonoware pottery was produced by non-Europeans in parts of the early modern Caribbean and North America. It has received extensive attention from archaeologists because of its combination of European forms with African and Native American techniques and decorative motifs.³³ David Wheat has used ecclesiastical records to trace how African slaves and their children in seventeenth-century Havana had some agency to reshape the long-established Catholic practice of godparenthood around their own social situation.³⁴ These studies all provide insights into questions of daily life which encapsulate a whole social experience. They also illustrate an important strength of the concept of creolization: an interest in the dispersal of agency. "By insisting on the fact that the common people – slaves, peasants, freedpeople and labourers – were active agents in the historical process, the creolisation thesis has made a major contribution to Caribbean historiography."³⁵

Atlantic creolization led to multiple outcomes. In all cases creolization combined elements of superstrate and substrate, in the context of asymmetrical power. (There were often multiple substrates, drawing on the practices of different African and Native American societies: the terms substrate and superstrate are analytical tools that need not correspond to neat dichotomies in the evidence.³⁶ Atlantic creolization created a series of distinct social, cultural,

29 Campbell, *Maroons of Jamaica*; Landers, Cimarrón and citizen.

30 Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society*, 306-309.

31 Brathwaite, *Development of Creole Society*, 122-126.

32 Yentsch, *Chesapeake Family*, 149-167, 196-215. Compare the creolization of Roman foodways: Hawkes, *Beyond Romanisation*.

33 Cobb and DePratter, *Multisited research on colonowares*.

34 Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 237-244.

35 Bolland, *Creolisation and Creole societies*, 3.

36 Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 20-67.

and linguistic configurations, ranging from Louisiana to the Caribbean, Spanish and Portuguese America, and back across the Atlantic to polities such as the kingdom of Kongo and the Republic of Liberia. The range of creolization indicates that this is a concept that is useful for framing questions, rather than attempting to predict outcomes.

The effects of Atlantic creolization were also felt in metropolitan Europe. The most important argument for this comes in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.³⁷ In a chapter tellingly entitled "Creole pioneers", he argues that it was South American revolutionaries against Spain who first articulated the political and cultural impulses of modern nationalism that would be exported back to Europe and elsewhere with such effect. There is no need to rehearse this well-known thesis, beyond observing that here the process of mutual interaction which is central to creolization plays out on a larger scale: not merely *within* colonial societies, but *between* these societies and metropolitan centres. I will return to the general point that creolization can be felt in the core as well as the periphery.

Roman Creolization

Following linguistics and Atlantic history, the third element in this account of creolization comes from Roman archaeology. Several scholars of the Roman Empire have engaged with the concept of creolization in both case studies and synthetic analysis.³⁸ Jane Webster does so especially engagingly in her 2001 article "Creolizing the Roman Provinces". She argues that the material culture of the western provinces of the Roman Empire can usefully be understood as creolized.³⁹ She advances the notion of "creolization" in contrast to the term "Romanization". Romanization has been used since the nineteenth century to describe the impact of Roman social and cultural practices on the provinces of the empire, beyond the mere fact of military conquest. For Webster and other scholars, the notion of Romanization is problematic: it implicitly (or sometimes explicitly) valorizes Roman practices at the expense of non-Roman, and it assumes that *romanitas* was necessarily more effective and attractive.⁴⁰ This limits the agency of Roman provincials: they are cast by Romanization as passive recipients of a package created elsewhere. In Webster's words "Romanization [...] does not conceive of a two-way exchange of ideas: rather, it presupposes a linear transfer of ideas from the center to the province."⁴¹ In practice, material culture in the western empire was usually a mixture of "Roman" and "native" elements. This need not be understood as "incomplete" or "failed" Romanization, by provincials who somehow lacked the knowledge or resources to become more fully Roman. Furthermore, the presence of "Roman" elements in provincial assemblages need not entail that identical items were used, or understood, in the same way in Britain or Gaul as they were in Italy.

So, for Webster, Romanization should be jettisoned in favour of "creolization". The creolization of material culture involves the blending of Roman and non-Roman elements, but in a starkly hierarchical political context. As she puts it: "while creole culture is an amalgam

37 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 49-58.

38 Witt, "Creolization" and agency; Hawkes, *Beyond Romanisation*; Carr, *Creolising the body*; Haeussler and Webster, *Creolage*; Le Roux, *La romanisation en question*.

39 Webster, *Creolizing*.

40 Webster, *Creolizing*; Barrett, *Romanization*; Haeussler and Webster, *Creolage*. In contrast, Le Roux, *La romanisation en question*, sees more utility for Romanization.

41 Webster, *Creolizing*, 210.

of different traits, creolization processes take place in the context of asymmetric power.”⁴² She uses as a case study some elements of religion in Roman Gaul, especially the cult of the horse-goddess Epona.⁴³ Objects depicting Epona draw on both “Roman” and “Gaulish” motifs, but they should be understood as encapsulating the distinct social situation of provincial culture and society, which was something different from its sources. Very similar conclusions have been drawn in a more recent discussion of stone altars dedicated to various gods in southern Gaul.⁴⁴

One element of Webster’s argument can be amplified. She focuses on creolization at the bottom of Roman provincial society and presents it as a way to approach non-elite experience.⁴⁵ Yet it seems to me that creolization could happen at all points in the social hierarchy. This included not only the mass of the population, but also (and perhaps especially) high status Britons and Gauls who successfully negotiated the demands of operating within Roman provincial elites.⁴⁶

There are clear parallels between Webster’s critique of “Romanization” and potential reservations about “Europeanization”. Both assume a high status package, implicitly superior to alternatives on the peripheries, and both envisage this package being exported outwards, more or less comprehensively. Both concepts can limit our understanding of agency and mutual interaction, due to the unhelpful contrast between active core and passive periphery. However, there are limits to these parallels. Unlike Webster’s call to excise Romanization entirely, I do not think that “Europeanization” needs to be dropped from our analytical vocabulary. It does serve to characterize some processes of homogenization, although it is less useful in addressing interactions between the practices of “core” and “periphery”.

An Ideal Type

Our account of creolization so far has focused on three elements in turn: linguistics, modern Atlantic history, and the western Roman Empire. This is inevitably an idiosyncratic selection, rather than a comprehensive overview, because it is directed towards a specific argument. In both the modern Atlantic region and the western Roman Empire, we can see a contrast between “core” and “periphery”. “Core” or “superstrate” societies possessed significantly greater opportunities for capital accumulation, urbanization, exchange, division of labour, literacy, military capacity, and so on, and can be juxtaposed with societies where these features were much more limited, or even absent. In both cases, there is the danger that these contrasts can serve to draw distinctions that are too vivid, especially when societies come into contact over several generations. They can also be imbued with cultural and moral judgements: dichotomies of Romans against “barbarians” and Europeans against “natives” have often emphasized alterity. Tangible differences *were* present in these contexts, but are perhaps best thought of as differences in practices, rather than between essentialized populations.⁴⁷

42 Webster, *Creolizing*, 218

43 Webster, *Creolizing*, 219-223.

44 Haeussler and Webster, *Creolage*.

45 Webster, *Creolizing*, 210, 223.

46 Black, *Villa-Owners*; Goudineau, *Gaul*. See also Gosciniy and Uderzo, *Le Combat des chefs*.

47 This is illustrated by the participation of black, Spanish-speaking Catholic soldiers among sixteenth-century conquistadores, as “agents of colonialism”. Some were born in Iberia, and free: more had been enslaved in Africa, but became free due to their military activity. Restall, *Black conquistadors, 171-196*, 199.

I now present an ideal type of medieval creolization. Like all ideal types, this is a heuristic exercise, rather than an attempt to describe any specific circumstances. Using an ideal type avoids the dangers inherent in taking one particular case as typical.

The term “creolization” characterizes the development of social and cultural practices. Thus, creolization need not result in a particular end-point, such as the creation of a creole language, or a creole population, however defined. I adapt “practices” from W. G. Runciman’s use of the term, as “functionally-defined units of reciprocal action”.⁴⁸ He restricts this to “social” action, controlling access to social rewards, but I also include cultural activities. In cases of creolization, practices draw on a mixture between distinct superstrates and substrates. The precise nature of the mixture in any given case derives from dispersed agency, rather than unidirectional imposition. But this agency is not free-wheeling; it operates within the possibilities of asymmetrical power. By *distinct* superstrates and substrates, I mean that they are not on a finely gradated continuum. (If a marginally more astute – or luckier – ruler conquers the similar next-door polity ruled by his cousin, then the new political configuration in itself is unlikely to generate creolization.) Superstrate and substrate practices are classified as such by their practical implications in specific circumstances. It may be that particular superstrate practices are tangibly more potent in a specific environment (for instance a technique in transport or agriculture), but this need not be the case: they may be superstrate simply by virtue of their association with a dominant group (for instance the Spanish language in colonial Peru). The distinction between superstrate and substrate need not indicate a simple binary: the practices of multiple substrates and (more often) superstrates could contribute to specific instances of creolization. These processes can be characterized as more pragmatic, or more self-consciously programmatic.⁴⁹ Processes of creolization can occur on different scales, involving whole societies, or being restricted to particular groups within a wider society. They can also entail the impact of creolization on superstrate societies.

In medieval creolization, superstrate practices are associated with “agro-literate societies”, to use Ernest Gellner’s term.⁵⁰ These encompass a bundle of attributes such as literacy, sedentary agriculture, towns, commerce, and division of labour. In terms of their economies, agro-literate societies were feudal (or tributary) in their mode of production.⁵¹ (“Agro-literate” is a much less extensively theorized category than modes of production, but I prefer it in this instance, because it encompasses a wider range of practices and does not assume an analytical priority for economics.) Substrate practices in medieval creolization could also be agro-literate, but they might lack some or all of the agro-literate repertoire.

Latin Europe in the Long Twelfth Century

What might this discussion mean for Latin Europe in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries? (Note that this period is used out of convenience: it is a clearly-demarcated chronological range, with a critical mass of useful sources, and matches the focus of Bartlett’s “Europeanization”. It is not my intention to argue that processes of creolization began in the twelfth century, or are unique to it. Indeed, part of this article’s purpose is to argue that creolization offers possibilities for approaching and comparing different historical contexts.)

48 Runciman, *Treatise on Social Theory*, vol. 2, 40-42. See also Wickham, *Systactic structures*.

49 This borrows from John Hines’ argument about Scandinavian English, above.

50 Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 8-18; Hall, *Varieties of state experience*; Hann, *Long live Eurasian civ!*; Moore, *Birth of Europe*.

51 Wickham, *How did the feudal economy work?.*; Haldon, *State and the Tributary Mode*.

In the British Isles and some regions of Germany, “core” polities extended their authority more or less directly into new peripheral regions. But most creolization took place *within* polities with “native” rulers. (In this context, it is worth noting that, while Atlantic creolization began with the extension of European polities, it ultimately resulted in the creation of new states in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and West Africa.) I will sketch two instances of creolization, concerning Poland and Scotland.

My first sketch is of the Polish salt industry during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. I was alerted to this topic by Piotr Górecki’s contribution to Bartlett’s *Festschrift*.⁵² From the twelfth century, Germans (and Walloons and others from western European regions) migrated to work in the Polish salt industry. The control exercised by rulers over much of this production means that it is relatively well recorded in surviving documents. Górecki draws attention to highly suggestive linguistic elements in evidence from the cathedral community of Krakow and elsewhere.⁵³ These texts were written in Latin, but include technical vocabulary in Polish and German. He notes that the German relates specifically to mining, as opposed to other methods of salt production, which are described using Polish terms. The key evidence is the word *sacht* (modern German *Schacht*), for mineshaft.⁵⁴ Thus it seems that Germans brought a new set of salt mining skills to Poland, for which the necessary vocabulary did not exist in Polish.

This might appear to be a straightforward instance of “core” practices moving into a periphery: Germans introduced salt mining techniques previously unknown to “peripheral” Poles. This finds parallels in German miners moving into other areas of eastern Europe and the Balkans during the thirteenth century.⁵⁵ But the situation was more nuanced than this. Germans may have had greater skills in certain salt mining operations, but it was Polish rulers who benefitted financially from the salt trade. This seems due in part to distinctive elements of the Polish economy in this era, in which rulers organized and profited from non-agricultural economic resources, involving specialist sites and division of labour.⁵⁶ Górecki characterizes this as “entrepreneurial” rulership. Thomas Bisson judges that “the system of local production and supply [...] was a distinctive feature of the early Slavic polity”.⁵⁷ These rulers were self-consciously Polish, sponsoring the Polish church and the beginnings of a Polish historiographical tradition.⁵⁸ They did not become German culturally, nor were they subordinate to German political authority. Yet at the same time, they increasingly adopted the repertoire of lordship and administration from the European “core”. This included the pragmatic literacy that produced the written Latin documents which provide our evidence

52 Górecki, Duke as entrepreneur.

53 Górecki, Duke as entrepreneur, 114-116.

54 Górecki, Duke as entrepreneur, 115, citing *Kodeks dyplomatyczny katedry krakowskiej*, o. 80 (1278), ed. Piekosinski, 106-107; *Kodeks dyplomatyczny Małopolski*, vol. 3, no. 786 (1365), ed. Piekosinski, 191-192.

55 Batizi, Mining; Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans*, 199-200.

56 Górecki, Duke as entrepreneur, 101-109. Although the evidence for eastern European “service settlements” is problematized by Curta, *The archaeology*.

57 Bisson, Princely nobility, 107.

58 Dalewski, Chosen people; Żmudzki, Polans.

inter alia for the salt industry.⁵⁹ Polish rulers often assigned benefits from the salt trade to favoured ecclesiastical institutions.⁶⁰ Clerics in Poland included German monks, who were part of new international monastic orders:⁶¹ the Cistercian house at Wągrowiec, for example, founded in 1142, continued to recruit from the Rhineland until the fifteenth century.⁶² And “Gallus Anonymus”, the founder of Poland’s tradition of Latin history-writing, patronized by the Piast dynasty, originated somewhere in western Europe.⁶³ Thus, when we begin to unravel evidence for the salt industry, we see agency dispersed amongst rulers, clerics, and salt-workers, employing practices of diverse origin and communicating in Latin, Polish, and German. Creolization works more effectively than Europeanization to characterize this situation. (The mixture of Polish and German terms additionally suggests to me the possibility that a pidgin developed in the Polish salt industry, allowing Poles, Germans and others to work alongside each other, but it is difficult to see how this could be recovered from our evidence, and in any case we have already established that creolization does not require a linguistic component.) In the operations and records of the salt industry, we glimpse a pragmatic creolization, while the cultural policies of Polish rulers and their ecclesiastical auxiliaries include programmatic creolization.

My second sketch comes from Scotland. Twelfth and thirteenth-century Scotland has been variously described by recent historians as modernized, feudalized, Normanized, Anglicized, Anglo-Normanized, and Europeanized.⁶⁴ All of these terms imply a unidirectional process by which Scotland became more like the rest of Latin Europe. From the reign of King David I (1124-1153) onwards, Scotland did indeed see the introduction of features of the European “core”, such as towns, coinage, international monastic orders, and knighthood.⁶⁵ This also involved a complex linguistic story, involving Gaelic, English, French, Latin, Norse, and perhaps even Welsh.⁶⁶ As one thirteenth-century chronicler famously put it, “more recent kings of Scots profess themselves to be rather Frenchmen, both in race and in manners, language and culture.”⁶⁷

Alongside this sense of top-down “Europeanization” in Scotland, more granular studies – especially those not focused on royal power – give the impression of much greater complexity, in which the very range of social and cultural options formed an arena for the exercise of agency, especially by regional elites.⁶⁸ There were indeed repeated military confrontations between Scottish kings based in the south-east and lords from the north and west. But there

59 On pragmatic literacy in Poland, see Adamska, *Memory*.

60 Górecki, *Duke as entrepreneur*, 117-118;

61 Lekai, *Medieval Cistercian abbeys*; Bartlett, *Making of Europe*, 255-60; Górecki, *Duke as entrepreneur*, 96-98.

62 Jamroziak, *Cistercian Order*, 272.

63 Dalewski, *Chosen people*, 146-148.

64 All these terms are used in the items cited in this section.

65 Barrow, *David I*; Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*; Bartlett, *Making of Europe*; Oram, *David I*; Oram, *Domination and Lordship*; Taylor, *Shape of the State*.

66 Barrow, *Lost Gàidhealtachd*; Edmonds and Taylor, *Languages and names*; Broun, *Welsh identity*.

67 Barnwell *Chronicle*, s.a. 1212, in: *Scottish Annals*, 330, n. 6, ed. Anderson. This is often referred to in modern scholarship, including Bartlett, *Making of Europe*, 127, and McDonald, *Old and new*, 23.

68 See, for instance, the case studies in Stringer (ed.), *Essays on the Nobility*; Boardman and Ross (eds.) *Exercise of Power*; Stringer, *Periphery and core*.

were also possibilities for more pacific and complex interactions, as seen, for instance, in the career of Ferchar Maccintsacairt, a “native” Gaelic lord in early thirteenth-century northern Scotland, who was also a useful royal ally.⁶⁹ It was the very ambiguities of his political and cultural environment that allowed him to establish an important regional lineage. Another example of seeking to benefit from ambiguity comes from the cathedral community of Glasgow. They made a creative attempt to style themselves as successors to the church of the British kingdom of Strathclyde – very consciously neither English nor Scottish (nor Irish or Norse or French, for that matter).⁷⁰ Although this particular project did not flourish in the long term, it was a learned attempt at programmatic creolization, for the benefit of a particular ecclesiastical community. These two examples demonstrate a range of possibilities for agency in Scotland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Alice Taylor’s fine monograph on Scotland in this era demonstrates in detail how the growing intensity of Scottish royal power was based on a nuanced response to particular local circumstances and entailed considerable diversity between localities.⁷¹ Kings adapted their practices to the contours of local societies, rather than flattening them out. We seem to be some way here from a simple image of “core” practices being actively imposed on a passive periphery. As Taylor comments, “a core–periphery explanatory framework can only take us so far in understanding changes in power structures.”⁷² Susan Reynolds seems to make a similar point in her article on land-ownership in Scotland. While considering both “native” and “feudal” practices, she observes, “Abandoning a simple contrast between feudal culture on the one hand and native or Celtic culture on the other might help to focus attention on the problem of identifying cultural differences and changes.”⁷³ Thus creolization can be a way to approach the messy to-and-fro of developments in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scotland, in a way that acknowledges the dispersal of agency, but also the potency of superstrate practices, associated in large part with kingship.

We now move south from Scotland to the Mediterranean. Creolization is probably not a useful way to approach interactions between Latin Europe and whole societies in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. Despite a vivid sense of religious and cultural distinctions between Muslims, Greeks, and Latins, differences in coercive capacity and material resources were not so great. Societies on all shores of the Mediterranean shared such fundamental practices as urban life, coinage, and the use of writing in law and administration. Muslim polities and the Byzantine Empire tended to be richer, more literate, and more urban, than Latin Europe, but these were differences of degree rather than kind, and Latin entities were at times more militarily potent. The Mediterranean was at the western end of a range of agro-literate polities that stretched across Eurasia all the way to China and Japan. In this sense, Latin, Greek, and Arabic polities had more in common with each other than with their less wealthy and powerful neighbours. Thus, at the level of whole societies, creolization works to the north and east of Latin Europe, but not the south. Twelfth-century phenomena such

69 McDonald, *Old and new*.

70 Broun, *Welsh identity*, 140–145.

71 Taylor, *Shape of the State*.

72 Taylor, *Shape of the State* 446–449, at 449.

73 Reynolds, *Fiefs and vassals*, 192.

as the cultivating of Greek and Arabic forms by Sicilian kings, or adopting Frankish chivalric tastes at the Byzantine court, need not be taken as instances of creolization. They did involve cultural negotiation, but not disparities of power and dispersal of agency. However, creolization could happen *within* specific societies in the Mediterranean. In particular, creolization seems to be a useful way to characterize Jewish and Muslim populations under Latin Christian rule. Both cases present stark contrasts in coercive power, and ongoing processes of social and cultural negotiation in which agency was dispersed.⁷⁴

Beyond Latin Europe

Creolization offers possibilities for work on medieval societies beyond Latin Europe. Unlike Europeanization, creolization need not be tied to a specific geography, or a particular historical narrative, so may be useful in exploring a variety of contexts, including offering a frame for comparison.

I have already mentioned the evidence for an Arabic pidgin in the eleventh-century western Sahara. In this case, linguistic developments ran parallel to social and cultural change.⁷⁵ The literary language of Arabic spread to the western Sahara as part of a series of superstrate practices which also included Muslim religion and long-distance commerce.⁷⁶ These trends found political and military expression in the Almoravid regime, founded in the mid-eleventh century.⁷⁷ The Almoravids can be understood as both a product and an engine of creolization. They were Sanhaja Berbers, who from the mid-eleventh century extended their rule over sedentary and nomad populations, in north-western Africa and Iberia. Their initial military prowess derived from practices of pastoral nomadism and warfare, and Berber tribal formations, but their ideological justification was Islamic, originating among a group who had returned from the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca. The Almoravids came to use such familiar superstrate practices of Muslim polities as founding towns, literate administration, Islamic jurisprudence, and acknowledging the Abbasid caliph.

Some possibilities for creolization in understanding Almoravid society are encapsulated in the practice of men veiling their faces, including during prayers in mosques.⁷⁸ This appears to have inspired a certain disdain among sections of the urban population of twelfth-century Muslim Spain, who regarded male veiling as unsophisticated and even sinful. Yet it was the Berbers who were militarily and politically dominant in this society. Some Spanish Muslims emulated the custom, perhaps especially those who shared the Almoravids' Berber language and identity. In addition, certain Spanish scholars sought to justify veiling in Muslim terms, without adopting it themselves. This combination of cultural and social negotiation, dispersed agency, and political hierarchy seems a promising case to be explored in relation to creolization.

74 Powell, *Muslims under Latin Rule*; Marcus, Jewish-Christian symbiosis; Sapir Abulafia, *Christian Jewish Relations*. Sapir Abulafia's concept of 'service' offers possible affinities with creolization. It is suggestive that one early meaning of "creole" in Portuguese related to domestic servants.

75 Thomason and Elgibali, *Before the Lingua Franca*, 322-323, 341.

76 Brett, *Islam and trade*; Brett, *Islamisation of Morocco*.

77 Bennisson, *Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 24-54.

78 Hopley, *Nomadic populations*, 234-239. This study does not refer to creolization.

The society of early medieval Rus' was shaped in part by its relationship with Byzantium.⁷⁹ Some scholars have characterized it with reference to a "Byzantine commonwealth" of polities around the Balkans and Black Sea, where Greek social and cultural practices made themselves felt, not least in the form of Orthodox Christianity. Yet the notion of a "Byzantine commonwealth" has been critiqued on various grounds.⁸⁰ For the Rus' (and others), Byzantine practices were not simply exported to passive recipients: they also allowed opportunity for dispersed agency. Creolization may be a useful way to approach many Rus' social and cultural practices. This relates not only to the Greek superstrate, but the complex interplay of Slavic, Scandinavian, and Finno-Uralic practices. To take just one example, Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard comment on Rus' princely and ecclesiastical culture that "By the end of the [eleventh] century *translatio* was increasingly giving way to *traditio*, as the Scandinavian, Byzantine and Slav strands fused into a less declamatory, more confident and self-sustaining synthesis."⁸¹ This can be seen in the *Primary Chronicle*, compiled in the 1110s, which retells the history of the Rus' in the context of intellectual traditions (biblical, classical, imperial, chronological, and hagiographic) derived from Byzantium.⁸² Tellingly, this is composed in Old Church Slavonic, rather than Greek (or indeed a Scandinavian or Finno-Uralic language). It seems to have been produced by authors who did not read Greek, in contrast to the burgeoning twelfth-century historiography on the peripheries of Latin Europe, written in Latin.⁸³ This was just one instance of developments that can be framed by creolization. And, yet again, we can also glimpse possibilities for creole influence on a metropolis. From the ninth century onwards, Rus' warriors were recruited to the Varangian unit of the Byzantine army, stationed in Constantinople.

I judge that the processes shaping Rus' and Almoravid societies offer useful comparators to (Latin) "Europeanizing" polities such as Scotland and Poland. Creolization offers a framework in which to compare these instances of superstrate agro-literate practices interacting with substrate practices. These examples could be multiplied over time and space across agro-literate Eurasia and Africa. They might include, for instance, the twelfth-century Qara Khitai in central Asia,⁸⁴ and the tenth-century Volga Bulgars – depicted so vividly by Ibn Fadlān.⁸⁵ The Kingdom of Kongo is also worthy of note in this context: it was part of the early modern Atlantic world of slavery and maritime commerce, but also offers parallels to polities on the periphery of medieval Latin Europe, especially after its rulers adopted Christianity from the Portuguese in the fifteenth century.⁸⁶ The sketches provided in this essay might indicate that medieval creolization was primarily an opportunity for local "native" elites to intensify their own power by adapting superstrate practices. Systematic empirical work would be required to test this possibility. But creolization need not be confined to political

79 Raffensperger, *The place of Rus'*.

80 Raffensperger, *Revisiting the idea*.

81 Franklin and Shepard, *Emergence of Rus*, 315.

82 Tolochko, *Christian chronology*.

83 Tolochko, *Christian chronology*, 213.

84 Biran, *Empire of the Qara Khitai*. For example "The non-Islamicization of the Qara Khitai", at 196-201.

85 Ibn Fadlān, *Ibn Fadlān and the Land of Darkness*, trans. Lund and Stones.

86 Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*; Bostoen and Brinkman (eds.), *Kongo Kingdom*.

questions: Polish mining and Almoravid veiling suggests how other social and cultural practices could also be creolized, and scholarship on the Roman Empire and the modern Atlantic indicates further possible research questions.

Conclusions

In relation to Latin Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, creolization offers an alternative to the limitations of “Europeanization”. In terms of the distinction between “homogenization” and “expansion” which I outlined above, “Europeanization” may be useful for the former, but “creolization” is much more promising for the latter. It moves beyond the dangers of a dichotomy between active core and passive periphery, by acknowledging possibilities for agency everywhere. Creolization also offers a frame for asking why in specific circumstances some “superstrate” practices were adopted, but not others, and why we see such a variety of polities and cultures around Latin Europe, alongside their commonalities. Creolization does not make any assumptions about what particular practices will prevail in any given historical context: it thus offers some protection against the teleology of “why Europe won” – to use Chris Wickham’s formulation⁸⁷ – a danger that is not always avoided by Bartlett. As it is a process rather than a destination, creolization can also operate at the level of specific communities, rather than whole societies.

Readers may judge that creolization is so “deeply embedded in situations of coerced transport, racial terror, and subaltern survival”,⁸⁸ that the term cannot usefully be exported beyond the modern Atlantic and Caribbean. Yet this paper argues that the notion of creolization offers a promising way to approach interactions between the practices of superstate and substrate in medieval Latin Europe, and in agro-literate polities and their neighbours further afield. Creolization leaves questions of agency and destination open. But this does not involve the free flow of creative impulses: crucially, it also acknowledges disparities of power. The notion of creolization cannot predict answers, but can frame questions and comparisons.⁸⁹ Only empirical work can demonstrate if this is helpful for our understanding of the medieval world, but creolization is worth exploring.

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87 Wickham, *Jiangnan style*, 121.

88 Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, 189.

89 On the advantage of modest conceptual claims, see Rigby, *Approaches*.

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