THE SPEECH OF THE NEGROS CONGOS OF PANAMA: AN AFRO-HISPANIC DIALECT

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The Afro-Colonial residents of Panama's Caribbean coast celebrate elaborate rituals during Carnival season, the congo games, which reenact aspects of life in colonial Panama. Part of this ceremony is the hablar congo, a special speech mode used principally during the games, and used occasionally at other times. This paper describes the linguistic structures of the congo dialect, and suggests the likelihood that it is an indirect derivative of earlier Afro-Hispanic creole Spanish, supplemented by elements of distortion and exaggeration. The principal creole structures of congo speech do not coincide with those found in other major Afro-Iberian creoles, which leads to the suggestion that a wider range of earlier creole Spanish dialects probably existed in the Spanish American colonies.

1. Hispanic-African contacts in Latin America are as frequent as they are misunderstood, and few would deny the all-pervasive African influence on the Spanish of the Caribbean region. Scrutiny of documents from earlier centuries and extending well into the present century indicates that African slaves in Spanish America frequently spoke distinctly Africanized dialects of Spanish, ranging from slightly defective Spanish to what appear to have been true creoles (Alvarez Nazario 1959, 1974; Granda 1978). Except for literary attestations, which often involve exaggeration and idealization, few direct vestiges of such Afro-Hispanic language remain to be studied, and thus the reconstruction of earlier stages of Spanish usage by African subjects is fraught with uncertainty. Combining the case of the most carefully studied Afro-Hispanic dialect, the palenquero dialect of Colombia (Escalante 1954, Bickerton and Escalante 1970) with Papiamentu, and recently reported Cuban and Puerto Rican creole Spanish, several investigators have revived the single-origin creolist hypothesis, which points to a fifteenth and sixteenth century creole Portuguese as underlying the majority of Atlantic creoles and even some in the Pacific region.1 The similarities are striking, and raise the interesting question of whether bozal (Africanized) Spanish ever really existed at all, or whether African slaves and laborers passed directly from creole Portuguese to a gradually perfected Spanish (Naro 1978;...

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Granda 1968, 1978:386-440). What is needed is the discovery of other pockets of Afro-Hispanic language, providing additional data that permit a more accurate assessment of the existence of non-Portuguese Hispanic creoles. The present article will report on one such dialect pocket, the speech of the congos, an Afro-colonial population found on the Atlantic coast of Panama. A careful scrutiny of the speech of the congos promises to be of significance for general Afro-American studies.

2. The negros congos are a well-known folkloric phenomenon in contemporary Panama, for each year during Carnival season, the predominantly Afro-American population of the Caribbean Coast, the costa abajo (to the west of Colón) and the costa arriba (from Portobelo to Santa Isabel) celebrates an elaborate ritual of dancing, singing, mock battles and other events which bear directly or indirectly on the history of African slaves in colonial Panama. The anthropological aspects of the congo ritual have been well studied (Beliz 1959, Zárate 1962, Smith 1975, P. Drolet 1980, Chevillé and Chevillé 1977), although considerable controversy continues to surround the exact interpretation of the events portrayed in the ritual, since some see in these events the reenactment of specific historical events, while others attach a more symbolic significance. Of importance to Hispanic dialectology is the fact that the principal actors of the congo groups in each town utilize a special style of speech during the Carnival games, the hablar congo, a ritual or play language derived from Spanish, which is all but unintelligible to the non-initiated. It should be noted that during ordinary speech, the Spanish spoken by these Panamanians is indistinguishable from that of other rural residents of that nation (Robe 1960; Alvarado de Ricord 1971; Cedergren 1973, 1978), and there exists no distinctly identifiable dialect among the descendants of African slaves, in contrast, for example, to the accent which remains among many Afro-Antilleans, descendants of West Indian laborers contracted to build the Panama Canal, who in addition to West Indian English, speak a recognizably different form of Spanish. The congo speech is not a variant of regional Spanish, but is rather a special type of in-group slang learned by young aspirants to congo

2Granda (1978:32, 323, 382) suggests, based on reports that reached him, that a creolised Spanish is spoken in the area of Palenque, Panama. However, such a dialect does not exist, nor does any memory of such a dialect exist among even the oldest residents. The original settlement, founded by slaves, has long ceased to exist, and its remnants have recently been excavated by archeologists (R. Drolet 1980). The current town of Palenque, some 10 km from the original town, speaks regional Panamanian Spanish and most residents have considerable knowledge of congo speech, but use no creole dialect in daily communication.

3This accent is a natural consequence of the native creole English background of such speakers, and may also be found among other Afro-Antilleans along the Caribbean coast of Central America, from Guatemala to Panama. It must be noted, however, that in the costa arriba region of Panama no Afro-Antilleans were ever settled, and there is no identifiable English influence on either regional Spanish or congo speech. There is some slight evidence that suggests creole French origins for a few items, apparently transferred during the 19th century.

groups, usually by imitation of family members or other recognized virtuosos. Community participation in the congo ritual ranges from a small segment of the population, in Colón and even in Portobelo (the largest settlement on the costa arriba and the closest to the transisthmus highway) to nearly 100% participation in the small towns of the costa arriba. This study will report on field work done on congo speech of the costa arriba, specifically, in the towns of Portobelo, Cacique, Nombre de Dios, Viento Frío and Palenque, during December of 1983 and Carnival season in January and February of 1984. Studies of the congo speech of the costa abajo carried out by Joly (1981) indicate a considerable differentiation between two areas, perhaps due to the influence of creole English and/or the importation of Colombian speakers of palenquero in the costa abajo; the materials that Professor Joly graciously furnished me are convincing proof that whatever the anthropological similarities between the congos of the two regions, linguistically the two dialects share little in common, except for the element of burlesque and exaggeration.

Among the towns of the costa arriba there is also considerable variation, which is contained within the general limits to be described below, and consequently congo practitioners from different towns can communicate adequately with one another. The ritual language has a particular significance within the congo games, since it excludes non-participants or non-initiates and enables the expert congo to dazzle and ensnare onlookers with elaborate verbal manipulations, all of which result in the levying of fines which are paid off in rum or food (P. Drolet 1980). Naturally, outsiders are not normally initiated into the congo rituals, although anyone may observe them as a simple spectator, and previous studies done on the congo groups have encountered difficulties in gaining the confidence of the coastal residents. The present study was no exception, but I am happy to report that the inherent generosity and pride of the costeros quickly overcame the fear of ridicule and exploitation by unscrupulous outsiders, and it was possible to obtain many hours of excellent tape-recorded materials, which include monologues in congo dialect, structured dialogues between congos and the interviewer, dialogues between two or more congos, and completely spontaneous interactions between congos and members of their respective communities.

Before commenting on the linguistic details of congo speech, it is necessary to consider the controversy surrounding the origin of this speech mode. According to the oral tradition existing among the Afro-colonial population of Panama, the congo speech is a carryover from the days of the negro bozal, that is, a reproduction of the partially creolized Spanish of earlier centuries. That this is not entirely accurate becomes evident upon considering the high degree of deliberate distortion and exaggeration which characterizes contemporary congo speech, and yet, given the clearly traceable Afro-colonial roots of the
congo ritual as a whole, this oral tradition may not be discarded out of hand. No evidence exists of the use of congo dialect as a ritual language until at least the middle of the last century, that is, following the abolition of slavery in Panama, when the lifestyle of the slave society disappeared and Panamanian Afro-colonials became more integrated into the life of the new republic. The congo ritual in its present form is an attempt to recapture the spirit of the colonial days, replaying the more colorful aspects of Afro-Panamanian history while making light of the element of suffering and tragedy which invariably accompanied such societies. Previous to this time, it was evidently not necessary to artificially reconstruct a special Afro-Hispanic speech mode, since there was still direct awareness of earlier partially Africanized patterns, at least in the more isolated regions of the coast.

That the congo dialect has not been invented totally in the post-abolition period is indicated by the fact that forms of this dialect exist in widely scattered and mutually isolated villages all along the length of Panama's Caribbean coast, as well as some towns in the interior (Tejeira Jaén 1974), and evidence exists that up until the last 50 years or so, even larger segments of the Panamanian population participated in the congo ceremonies (Franceschi 1960, P. Drolet 1980, Zárate 1962). The variation that exists is the result of geographical isolation, the limited possibility for social transmission of the congo dialect and the lack of widespread public diffusion of this speech mode outside of the confines of each individual town.

Although it is beyond reasonable doubt that the original source for congo speech is the earlier bozal speech of Afro-Panamanians, the direct awareness of this form of speech has faded into the indistinct past, with the result that current attempts at reproducing the speech of negros bozales contain a large element of stereotype, exaggeration and distortion, even when there is no conscious attempt at burlesque. An examination of the texts in the appendix will reveal that the original Afro-Hispanic structures have been affected by successive overlays of drift and modification, in addition to serving as the basis for deliberate distortion of contemporary Spanish, with the result that the Afro-Hispanic roots must be searched for with considerable care.

3. Upon being questioned on the particulars of the congo dialect, most Panamanians, both in the costa arriba and in other areas, assert that the congos speak Spanish al 'revés', that is, inverting the semantic value of individual words, and this does occur, as will be seen. Nonetheless, the most striking characteristic when first hearing congo speech of the costa arriba is the massive phonetic modification, together with the considerable syntactic and morphological transformations, all of which combine to produce a speech mode which, while clearly Hispanic in origin, is confusing if not unintelligible to the non-initiated. The principal phonetic modifications include the following:

(a) Neutralization of intervocalic and phrase-initial /r/, /l/, /r/ and /d/, in favor of [d]: carretera [katedeta], color [kod6], etc. This is the most unusual change, not paralleled in any major Hispanic dialect, although neutralization of /d/ and /r/ is common in some areas of significant Afro-Hispanic presence (Granda 1977, Montes Giraldo 1974, Tejeira 1964), whereas /r/ and /l/ have been neutralized in palenguero (Escalante 1954, Bickerton and Escalante 1970, Arrazola 1970, Ochoa Franco 1945, Friedemann and Patiño 1983), the Spanish of Equatorial Guinea (González Echegaray 1959; Castillo Barrill 1969; Lipski 1984, 1985a; Granda 1984, 1985b), and in bozal speech of earlier centuries (Chasca 1946, Alvarez Nazario 1974, Granda 1978). Intervocalic /l/ and /r/ were occasionally neutralized in bozal speech, but a widespread neutralization is not normally found in contemporary Spanish dialects, although I have had informal reports of such behavior in some areas of the Colombian Chocó region, and in the Poro or dialect of the Dominican Republic, where /d/ may also be included. In congo speech, although /l/, /r/, /r/ and /d/ are normally neutralized to [d] in intervocalic and phrase-initial position, the distinctions among these phonemes are partially maintained in the phonologically weak implosive positions, in apparent contradiction of natural phonetic tendencies. For example, arma and alma may be phonologically distinguished in congo speech, although as in all popular Panamanian Spanish dialects, there is also a potential for neutralization of /l/ and /r/. The result is a variable realization of syllable-final liquids, which are sometimes distinguished and sometimes neutralized, in contrast to intervocalic positions, where neutralization is the rule in congo speech. In phrase-final position, /l/ is normally maintained as [l], while /r/ normally disappears from verbal infinitives and often in such words as mujer, where, however, an [r] (but never [l]) occasionally appears. Similarly, word-final /d/ usually disappears, but may occasionally be realized as [d] in congo dialect. In syllable-initial postconsonantal position, /l/ alternates with /r/, as in popular Panamanian Spanish (alrededor), but [d] never occurs in this position. This points to the intervocalic neutralization of /d/, /l/, /r/ and /d/ as a partial reconstruction of earlier periods, when these phonemes fell victim to processes of neutralization in various positions, using the phonetically most prominent contexts (intervocalic and phrase-initial) in congo speech to reintroduce a deformation which at one time must have affected all positions. Significantly, in the congo dialect of the costa abajo this four-way neutralization does not take place (Joly 1981), although /r/ and /l/ may be neutralized in intervocalic position, nor is this massive neutralization found in the rich song tradition of

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This phenomenon is not confined to Panama, but occurs throughout much of North and South America, as for example, in Brazil (Megenney 1978, Mendonça 1933), Trinidad, Cuba, Jamaica, and many other areas.
the congos, which is characterized by archaic popular Spanish, evidently highly influenced by the Hispanic element of Panamanian society, but which evidences none of the linguistic distortion found in congo dialect.

(b) Change of syllabic internal /l/ to /r/, common in many Portuguese dialects, occurs occasionally in congo, although not with the regularity of other creole dialects: cravo (clavo), diabria (diablo), cumprimiento (cumplimiento), orado (claro), jubriá (hablar), habria (habla), prohibíe (problema). More frequent is the addition of a epenthetic /r/, normally added after a syllable-initial consonant: brachinche (bochiche), crambio (cambio), brombita (bomba), grasto (gasto), priapa (pipa), momriendo (momento), chocotira (chiquito), triempio (tiempo), detracamiento (destacamento, tri [ti]).

In the congo dialects farther to the east (Nombre de Dios, Palenque, Miramar, etc.) an epenthetic semivocalic /i/ is also added, sometimes in conjunction with the /r/: priapria (papa), diabria (diablo), llevariam (llevaramos), criocrio (coco), conobriá (carnaval), triago (trago), ecoprieta (escopeta), priagá (pagar), cufrir (café). There is no evidence that links these epenthetic consonants with earlier periods of bozal speech; rather, they form part of the deliberate distortion of Spanish that forms the humorous backdrop of contemporary congo speech.

(c) /b/, /d/, and /g/ are uniformly pronounced as occlusives, even in intervocalic position, in contrast with regional Panamanian Spanish, in which the normal occlusive-fricative alternation occurs. This occlusive pronunciation is also found in other Afro-Hispanic manifestations, such as San Basilio de Palenque, Equatorial Guinea and Papiamento.

(d) All regional variants of congo dialect are characterized by an extreme vocalic instability, and the principal deformation of Spanish words often consists of maintaining the consonantal skeleton while freely modifying the vowels. At times, a type of vocalic harmony seems to be at work (Joly 1981), but in most cases the changes give no evidence of systematic modification, although for given speakers and/or towns, some words have received nearly constant pronunciations. One of the principal manifestations of this vocalic instability is the nearly total neutralization of grammatical gender, and verbal tense and mood. Earlier bozal speech often manifested such instability (Chasca 1946, Weber de Kurlat 1962, Álvarez Nazario 1974), although not in such an extravagant form as is found in congo speech. Gender is unstable or unsignalled even in modern Afro-Hispanic dialects. Examples from congo speech include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>zucría</th>
<th>azicar</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pequitria</td>
<td>poquito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ahoda mima</td>
<td>abera mismo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sagenta</td>
<td>sargento</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(e) The normal phonetic rhythm of Spanish, characterized by enlace, vowel fusion, and other tendencies which obliterates the phonetic signalling of word boundaries, is partially suspended in congo speech, where individual words are normally pronounced in a more staccato fashion. This is indicated by the non-systematization of /l/, /r/, /s/, and /d/ in word-final preconsonantal position: el hombre is more commonly [el-om-bre] than [ed-om-bre] and is never *[e-dom-bre].

4. Morphological modifications include sporadic improvisations on the ordinary morphology of Spanish, particularly in proper names. In the present investigation, the fact that the investigator was polaco gave rise to the following improvised forms in the various towns where the research was carried out: podaco, puducu, podonense, podones, podonísipoda, podonino, podonita, etc. Panamá is also pringamá, pringón, priamá, etc. Another characteristic morphological feature of congo speech is the random neutralization of verbal and nominal desinences, the almost random switching of person, gender, number, mood, and tense endings, as in the following examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sobre</th>
<th>sé</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tú sabes</td>
<td>yo estoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tú tienes</td>
<td>yo no quiero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nosotros sabemos</td>
<td>un árbole que tiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>para que tú tengas</td>
<td>aquí lo tienes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 It is possible that the use of conjugated verb forms points to the 'invented' nature of congo speech. However, similar examples of misuse of conjugated verb forms in Afro-Hispanic speech have been reported for many other regions, not only in bozal speech of previous centuries, but in the contemporary Dominican Republic (González and Benavides 1985), Equatorial Guinea (Lipski 1985a), the Chota Valley of Ecuador (Lipski 1986b), vestigial Cuban bozal Spanish (Alzola 1980), etc. (Lipski 1985c).
5. In the syntactic dimension, congo speech is characterized by a somewhat reduced syntax vis-a-vis regional popular Spanish, particularly as regards elaborate dependent clauses. In addition, a severe reduction of prepositional usage occurs, most frequently affecting de and a, but at times involving other prepositions:

- yo te venia buho
- 'Yo te venia a buscar'
- qué permiso tás podaqui
- '¿Con qué permiso estás por aquí?'
- madedu bronzo
- 'Madera de bronce (lámina de zinc)'
- qué vamos se
- '¿Qué vamos a hacer?'
- un botella fuda
- 'Una botella de fuda (ron)'
- caja sodiya
- 'Una caja de agua de chorillo = ron'
- cocopraya
- 'coco de playa (cocodrilo)'
- vamo praya
- 'vamos a la playa'

Use of ser and estar is normally effected in accordance with general Spanish norms, although occasionally ser may disappear. Importantly, there is no large-scale reduction of verb forms to a variant of ser/estar plus a form of the infinitive, as in other Spanish/Portuguese creoles. Despite the freely shifting morphological patterns, fully conjugated verb forms are the rule, with the exception of the following cases:

- pa onde tás di
- '¿Adónde fuiste?'
- cómo tás te maba
- '¿Cómo te llamas?'
- po qué cadetedas tás llegá
- '¿Por qué carretera llegaste?'

Occasionally a copulative verb may be eliminated:

- tú comunita
- 'tú eres comunista'  
- esas bota cubano
- 'esas botas son cubanas'

For the congo speech of the costa abajo, Joly (1981) has signalled the frequent use of the particle mi prefixed to verbs, but this never occurs in the dialects of the costa arriba:

- turaviá no mi frato
- 'todavía nos falta'
- muncanga cuando ti so la ocha
- 'mañana cuando sean las ocha'

The existence of this particle in the costa abajo may be due to the presence of Colombian speakers of palenquero, but after having listened to the materials collected by Prof. Joly, I believe that this mi is an extension of the use of mi as a subject pronoun in a few common syntagms of the costa abajo: mi sabó (yo sé), mi teno (yo tengo),.6

In the costa arriba, use of subject pronouns is normally in accordance with universal Spanish norms, although very infrequently mi may be used instead of yo. To a greater extent than in the rest of Panama, the declarative order is maintained in questions with pronominal subject: ¿Qué tás quieres?

6. Judging from the comments of congos and other Panamanians, the essence of congo speech consists of semantic inversion, putting meanings 'al reves.' Franceschi (1960) says 'los congos dicen si cuando es no y lo contrario a su vez... la jerga que hablan, cortando las palabras y haciéndose difíciles de entender por el mismo hecho de decir las cosas al revés.' The precise origin of this practice is not clear, but it appears to be connected with the double meaning of al revés, both 'backwards' and 'inside out', since during colonial times, black slaves during Carnival often put on their masters' clothing, wearing them in-side out as a form of mockery. This practice is continued among the congos, as well as 'shaking feet' instead of shaking hands, and other inversions of social customs. In congo speech, virtuosity consists of introducing as many semantic inversions as possible, either by employing words with an opposite meaning, or as a less desirable alternative, by using negative words to counteract semantic content:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vivi</th>
<th>muerto</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>llene</td>
<td>vacio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>endedezá</td>
<td>enrevesar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cementedio</td>
<td>iglesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>padose</td>
<td>sentarse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di</td>
<td>venir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>macha</td>
<td>esposa</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The syntax of negation is at odds with normal Spanish usage, since the percentage of negative elements is higher, and no appears in contexts where normal Spanish would not indicate such usage:

- a donde tás no quedo di
- '¿Adónde quieres ir?
- que é do que tás no quedo
- ¿Qué es lo que quieres?

Sometimes the semantic displacement does not result in total inversion, but rather in a simple shifting of meaning, as indicated in the following cases:

- negramachá
- negro/congo
- bronzo
- zinc
- agua sodiya
- ron
- mujediego
- mujer

6. Joly (1981) has suggested that the particle mi comes from palenquero, although no such particle appears in the latter dialect. The suggestion was that the use of aspectual particles in palen-
As seen in the appendix, much congo speech is not meant to be coherent conversation, but rather a show of verbal expertise designed to dazzle and confuse onlookers and result in benefits for the speaker. Congo speakers do engage in dialogues among themselves, but most of the interactions are in the form of monologues, or of speeches directed to non-congo-speaking participants in the ceremony, who answer in Spanish. Since the ceremony is accompanied by a consumption of phenomenal amounts of alcoholic beverages, it is possible that the assertion by most congós that they cannot speak the dialect unless they are sudao means that congo speech is merely a drunken deformation and improvisation (P. Drolet 1980). That this is not true is evidenced by the fact that my best materials were collected when the informants were entirely sober, and increasing drunkenness merely reduced phonetic precision and led to repetition of stereotyped phrases and a loss of improvisational skills. Alcohol clearly smooths the way for the freeing of the spirit exemplified by Carnaval, but congo speech has nothing essentially to do with the linguistic modifications associated with drunkenness.

7. In addition to the above elements, congo speech contains some words and expressions which may not be clearly traced to Spanish:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>congo</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>judumingu</td>
<td>juduminingue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foda</td>
<td>rum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mojongo/mojobrio</td>
<td>woman/wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joprión</td>
<td>banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jota</td>
<td>to drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potohá</td>
<td>to leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chochobrió</td>
<td>to drink (chupar?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mucuna</td>
<td>congo dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dumia</td>
<td>to eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jopio</td>
<td>to smoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bostonilla</td>
<td>cup/glass (vase?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cudia/jutia pacá</td>
<td>come here (acudir?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de fuché</td>
<td>rich/luxurious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sopodin/chopodin</td>
<td>small boat or other vehicle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Joly (1981) believes that judumingu is a deformation of hormiga, but the latter word appears freely in congo speech in unmodified form. It is possible that some of the unidentified words are of African origin, although a consultation with a number of speakers of West African languages has not revealed any definitive etymologies, despite suggestive possibilities. Mere phonetic similarity is not sufficient, given the enormous linguistic diversity of African languages and the lack of accurate documentation on the origin of Panama's black residents (Granda 1978:185-215), and given the fact that African lexical elements are not as frequent in Panama as in neighboring Colombia (Megenney 1976, 1982; Granda 1978; Castillo Mathieu 1982), mere speculations as to the origin of congo words is a nonproductive enterprise.9

8. Whereas the precise origins of Panama's congo speech are still surrounded by uncertainty and historical obscurity, the basic similarities with Afro-Hispanic or bozal speech of other areas are beyond question. The clearest cases include the following:

(a) Reduction of grammatical gender, resulting in partial or total neutralization of masculine and feminine forms. Both congo speech and most attestations of earlier Afro-Hispanic speech contain considerable instability, which effectively blurs and frequently neutralizes grammatical gender, without completely dismantling the morphological system.

(b) Reduction of prepositional usage, under the influence of standard Panamanian Spanish, is moving away from the massive reductions of bozal speech, but enough cases remain to suggest earlier periods in which use of prepositions deviated significantly from other Spanish dialects.

(c) Congo speech has not eliminated verbal inflection, but the instability of person, number, tense, and mood morphemes and even verbal stems leads to the systematic breakdown of morphological differentiation, hinting at the possibility for a total elimination of verbal inflection, as has occurred in some creole Portuguese dialects (Granda 1978, Morais Barbosa 1967, Scantamburlo 1981, Valkhoff 1966).

(d) The elimination of /r/ in favor of the single tap [r] as well as neutralizing the latter with /d/ is common to many Afro-Hispanic dialects, although inclusion of /t/ in this neutralization is not frequent.

(e) Partial neutralization of syllable-internal /l/ and /r/ is less frequent in congo speech than in Portuguese creoles, but is considerably more frequent than would be due to random variation (Salvador 1978).

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8Atz (1977:260) cites juruminga in an Afro-Venezuelan dance, while Alegria (1954:74) gives a similar form in a song from the highly Africanized Spanish of Loiza Aldea, Puerto Rico. The phonetic similarity among these forms may not be fortuitous, although Sojo (1943:29-30) derives the related arremingui from arremangarse 'arremangarse para bailar, sin duda.' Curiously, Cabrera (1970, 1979) cites the use of juruminga as 'hormiga' in Cuban congo speech.

9Granda (1973, 1978:463) presents evidence that the lengua congo used in Cuba was really a form of KiKongo, but in Panama this is clearly not the case, and none of the congo words have indisputable KiKongo etymologies. I personally verified this in numerous conversations with native speakers of KiKongo, both in West Africa and in the United States, none of whom could recognize any of the Panamanian congo words.
9. As significant as the similarities between congo speech and Afro-Hispanic dialects attested elsewhere, are the differences which separate the congo dialect from the Afro-Iberian creoles represented by palenquero, Papiamentu, Cuban and Puerto Rican bozal Spanish, and the Portuguese creoles:

(a) Non-attestation of the second-person pronoun vos, despite the fact that voseo is common in much of rural interior Panama.

(b) General preservation of the distinction between ser and estar, and lack of reduction of verbs to a non-conjugated form plus an aspectual particle, of the form NP to VInf.

(c) Lack of neutralization of pronominal case, and maintenance of subject and object pronouns, as well as non-use of subject pronouns as possessive morphemes.

(d) Partial maintenance of nominal pluralization. The congo dialect partially neutralizes nominal morphology through the instability and interchange of ending, but when signalled, plural marking always involves the addition of /s/, and never, for example, a subject pronoun.

10. It is significant that in Spanish literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, certain phonetic traits (generally loss of syllable-final consonants) as well as occasional morphological and syntactic modifications have been used as literary concomitants of the speech of blacks, not only by white authors but also by black writers (Lipski 1981). This stereotyping occurs even when such speech patterns are not exclusive to blacks in a given region, but characterize popular tendencies with no direct racial connection. Such writers as Nicolás Guillén, Candelario Obeso, Nicomedes Santa Cruz and others have added to the stereotype of the black speaker by putting into the mouths of such individuals tendencies reminiscent of the popular speech of their respective countries. It is therefore not surprising that the congo groups of Panama would similarly exaggerate and hit upon certain linguistic tendencies felt, rightly or wrongly, to characterize black Spanish, or more accurately, bozal speech of culturally unassimilated slaves of earlier centuries. These tendencies are often seen distorted in whites' mistaken notions of bozal speech, as in Cirilo Villaverde's Cecilia Valdés (López Morales 1966), and the distortion increases along with the distance, both chronological and cultural, from legitimate bozal-speaking communities. In Panama, due to the relatively early assimilation of Africans into Hispanic culture and the lack of massive importations of slaves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, distinctively Africanized Spanish dialects, as opposed to popular speech of black and white Panamanians alike, apparently disappeared at an earlier time in Panama than in many Caribbean regions, although awareness of the existence of such speech modes continued. The early assimilation of Africans into colonial Panamanian life is also evidenced by the nearly total lack of vestiges of African religious or magical traditions, as compared with Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, and northern Colombia, where African ritual elements often survive nearly intact. The congos of Panama have a rich song tradition, but as has been noted, these songs are sung in archaic popular Spanish and never in congo dialect, although some congo speakers occasionally improvise short songs and poems in the dialect. The music itself is culturally hybrid, combining African drumming and dancing with recognizably European melodic structures.

During Carnival, the Panamanian Afro-colonials exaggerate all aspects of their culture, even including their African heritage, blackening their faces with charcoal to become 'blackser', wearing tattered clothes and garish costumes meant to be humorous imitations of African ritual costumes, and indulging in alcoholic excesses not typical of the remainder of the year. As an integral component of these festivities, the imitation of Afro-Hispanic speech becomes ever more removed from the original linguistic reality, as no viable models remain to be imitated, and the element of game-playing and ritual supplants the oral transmission of historical information. Many older congos lament the rapid deterioration of congo speech (a similar lament is voiced by many palenquero speakers in Colombia) and my observations of the attempts by the youngest apprentice congo speakers revealed a much higher degree of simple verbal invention and distortion and a lessened regard for a legitimate transmission of earlier modalities. This cultural deterioration is speeded up by the commercialization of the congo ceremony in Portobelo, where luxury cruise ships frequently visit the town even outside of Carnival season and 'schedule' congo ceremonies for the (North American) tourists who come ashore for an hour or two to witness an 'authentic' event. In the remaining towns of the costa arriba, a significant proportion of the residents have emigrated to Colón or other cities in search of employment, and return with modified cultural profiles which affect the structure of the communities. In several areas, these returned emigrees (many of whom only return to visit during Carnival season) are precisely the ones who are the protagonists of the congo rituals, and introduce into the games and the ritual speech not only a more cosmopolitan sophistication, derived from contact with congos from other areas of Panama, but also a distinctly non-congo component which stems from the natural transculturation which occurs in the urban centers of
Panama. The rate of transculturation has rapidly increased in the last 20 years, with increased emigration from the costa arriba, and with the result that the congo dialect has already evolved far away from its originally legitimate Afro-Hispanic bases, which may be only partially reconstructed. Currently the congo dialect is spoken extensively only during the Carnival games, although at other times the costenios may use the dialect for semi-serious comments. Moreover, when Afro-colonial Panamanians visit Colón and Panama City, they may speak to one another in congo, so as not to be confused with the Afro-Antillean Panamanians, whom they feel to be culturally inferior.

11. The linguistic features mentioned in section 9 are among the ones most frequently cited in favor of the single-source hypothesis for Hispanic creoles (Granda 1968, 1976, 1978:424-440; Alleyne 1980; Taylor 1971; Whinnom 1965; Hancock 1975; Boretzky 1983), since they appear in the majority of Afro-Iberian dialects, as well as many other English-, French- and Dutch-based creoles of the Atlantic region. Panamanian congo speech gives little evidence of having possessed most of these features, which in turn leads to the conclusion that congo speech, while undoubtedly derived from an earlier Afro-Hispanic speech mode, is not derived from the proto-Portuguese creole postulated to have been widespread in Spanish America at the height of the slave trade. This bit of evidence does not invalidate the creole Portuguese theories of creolization, but simply highlights the likelihood that other local Afro-Hispanic speech forms coexisted in colonial Spanish America, and perhaps preempted pidgin Portuguese among Afro-colonials in some areas.

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APPENDIX 1: (FRAGMENT 1) PORTOBELLO, CONVERSATION BETWEEN JL AND TWO CONGOS, TRUMUYA (T) AND GRUYA (G)

T: Pa donde tú tás di, que yo no te viste hahta ahoda
JL: Ya me había acostado.
T: Si, pedo yo dije que yo te venía buhco, y te dije aquí mineda fue pa con ehta, pedo dije no voy a sadime poque pueden darme un... un tido, yo te digo pédate que tengo mi compromiso contigo... bueno, aquí me midas, que quedes? Pongo en órbito, ahoda te acuedda que, ahoda somo loh dos... ¿sabo? Gruya, tú midahte? A ese poco de macha que había en ese dao?
G: Si, seguda
T: no ma en da yunta, y yunta
G: Pudo yunta
T: pedo, no hay que, quien ponga e vedodia, como no anda pidiendo y no hay quien dejare
G: nada
T: sodamente... Trumuya y Arenuzo, podeso yo traje mi... mi trumuya, poque tú sabo como soy, no, ahoda yo pehco son camadón co cobsyo... que si yo no como yuncna, pedo mida, pedo do mi ni cencia, presentá... mida aquí cuando e podoca... mida, e pudo compromiso que debe a... que si de deben a futonotá y do que de deben a... Fudotote a... Trumuya, ahoda mi compuñeda digade deja putte, se apa
decia aquí en ehte dao... tié de guiné... buscando a Gruya y buscando a...
G: aquí do tenga... ¿sabo? aquí tenga...
JL: ¿Estuvieron en la fiesta, la ceremonia?
G: pa ecendé uno puá
T: pa ecendé uno puá
G: tamo jodido pa cuando no padita edectrica
T: buena, no tiene nada dumía podai... ¿y tú no traíhte pada?
G: nada
tumpoca
T: tumpoca, ah, buena, pedo yo traje mi cuchulu
G: tumpoca
T: tú ya tete cuchulu tumpoca, ni bosonilla... entonces... bocado a Gruya, dame u pingadigui
G: preciado... pedo yo te voy... bocado a Gruya, dame u pingadigui... pedo yo te voi a jubia tú me vahi a ¡mída! Gruya, dame u pingadigui
G: aqui do tenga
T: Prétame un padita edectrica
G: buena, padi edectrica aquí... tamo jodido
T: pa ecendé uno puá
G: tamo jodido pa cuando no padita edectrica
T: buena, no tiene nada dumía pada... ¿y tú no traíhte pada?
G: nada
tumpoca
T: tumpoca, ah, buena, pedo yo traje mi cuchulu
G: tumpoca
T: tú ya tete cuchulu tumpoca, ni bosonilla... entonces... bocado a Gruya, dame u pingadigui
G: aqui do tenga
T: Prétame un padita edectrica
G: buena, padi edectrica aquí... tamo jodido
T: pa ecendé uno puá
G: tamo jodido pa cuando no padita edectrica
T: buena, no tiene nada dumía pada... ¿y tú no traíhte pada?
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G: aqui do tenga
T: Prétame un padita edectrica
G: buena, padi edectrica aquí... tamo jodido
T: pa ecendé uno puá
G: tamo jodido pa cuando no padita edectrica
T: buena, no tiene nada dumía pada... ¿y tú no traíhte pada?
G: nada
tumpoca
T: tumpoca, ah, buena, pedo yo traje mi cuchulu
G: tumpoca
T: tú ya tete cuchulu tumpoca, ni bosonilla... entonces... bocado a Gruya, dame u pingadigui
G: aqui do tenga
T: Prétame un padita edectrica
G: buena, padi edectrica aquí... tamo jodido
T: pa ecendé uno puá
G: tamo jodido pa cuando no padita edectrica
T: buena, no tiene nada dumía pada... ¿y tú no traíhte pada?
G: nada

JL: para donde ud, tu te preñue, y tu contéhtame
G: clado, predica pue
T: pedo ¿qué es do que tu quiede?
JL: sólo oir hablar en congo
T: ¿onde tu conseguitel ehto coyucua?
JL: allá
T: ¿anondó?
JL: En Estados Unidos
T: ¿son de fábrica, ah, yo mide de jopió, de jopión? ¿Tu taba en jopió?
APPENDIX 2: (FRAGMENT 2) PORTOBELO, MONOLOGUE BY TRUMUYA

¿Y tú qué haces ahí padre? Y si tu te pones entero. Te vas a ponir er cudo Maday, aquí pade cubuyete... y ahoda que vas a ayudá... si no hay ná que lloidal, y uhted qué hace en mi dancho, eh, uhted qué tan buceando, contrubanda, yo no vendo opta, aqui do que vendo so guín e' tie'da, y tumbiende de pado... Gúmequina, ve saca de tu y ponte dajo... pue si pide e cañadía dápido... dápido da un anuncia ahí que llegado e contrubandista... pue... munga, munga, fruto, fruto, domblin, pupaya, cadamedo, qué dicen ustedes, ya ethtama acuada, e pa da útima toda vía fatta prusúpia, vengan todo que sacú se ehsta cuando... Mayadí, qué hace tuct con ehto pedo ahí... que te do pinto... y si yo ya no pinto... tuto no de dah cadiao... ah pedo fue ya de cadamedo... Gúmequina... y cuando tú tía puhan Maiadi... un sodo cadiao... padece que e' cadinosa... pedo e pediadeda o que e que de falde... boy... que depadando adepa? oh, ah, no, no yo no dumiá avoya, yo dumia fue adepa, con mantequilla en e centra... seguido, cuuida, te vas a pone enteto... poque yo no te yo a dá mi goyina pa que haga sopo... ¿te llamadon? ¿Qué quedes? ¿Qué es que vamos a midá? Mucho huacu oya, midá cómo tá e gállinaza, qui este dano... Suki, vaya pa tu dancha que no te llamadon... putudonguito, bide misia... ¿te gusté? te lo iba a regalar... G: No tengo cuchillo ni vaso, entonces no vas a comer, bueno, cuando tú comes... G: Claro, nosotros tambiém somos de negros... munga, munga, fruto, fruto, domblin, pupaya, cadamedo, qué dicen ustedes, ya ethtama acuada, e pa da útima toda vía fatta prusúpia, vengan todo que sacú se ehsta cuando... Mayadí, qué hace tuct con ehto pedo ahí... que te do pinto... y si yo ya no pinto... tuto no de dah cadiao... ah pedo fue ya de cadamedo... Gúmequina... y cuando tú tía puhan Maiadi... un sodo cadiao... padece que e' cadinosa... pedo e pediadeda o que e que de falde... boy... que depadando adepa? oh, ah, no, no yo no dumiá avoya, yo dumia fue adepa, con mantequilla en e centra... seguido, cuuida, te vas a pone enteto... poque yo no te yo a dá mi goyina pa que haga sopo... ¿te llamadon? ¿Qué quedes? ¿Qué es que vamos a midá? Mucho huacu oya, midá cómo tá e gállinaza, qui este dano... Suki, vaya pa tu dancha que no te llamadon... putudonguito, bide misia... ¿te gusté? te lo iba a regalar...
J: No taba nimpia, y nosotro fue a tidaya ai dao fueda de... de dio que to lo pongas en el otro, Gumercinda, dime algo, para poderte escuchar bien.

T: Nicoda, Nicoda, yo no taba ni chucha y no tuve que i(me) a tidaya en edagua.

6que dices choricito? poniendo reseca esta cafe, una taza de que Tu no tronia, oye dia tu tiene, cacajudo yo ten go jusupelia, yo ten go cutada...

T: Pero note prusihte a... no fuite ai dio, note tirate como estan mira pada po da causa de otria con da, con...

J: 6que que hagas sopa, no tronia tu fueda de agua, sabiendo lo que reda cogihte podai mima... e padio, deja, pon ete i, estas preparando arepa? No, yo no como bollo, yo como arepa, con mantequilla en a ti Juan de Dio e diabro no tacando, nojotro noh fuimo a bocadita... que tu ehta... que te lo pino... tu no le das cariño, ah, pero ya fue para caramelo, Gumecinda, y cuando tó estás trabajando Mayadi, un solo cariño, parece que es carinosa ¿estás preparando arepa? No, yo no como bollo, yo como arepa, con mantequilla en el centro (a fuera), seguro, cuidado, te vas a morir, no te voy a dar mis gallinas para que hagas sopá, ¿que quieres, qué es lo que vamos a ver? Muchos huecos y hoyos, mira cómo están las gallinas, por este lado, Suki, vete de aquí que no te limaron, Putudunguito, dile a Mayadi, que me mande un pedazo de arepa... que me mande una taza de café, que la garganta me se está poniendo reseca ¿qué dices choricito? Mététele en el ojo, que yo y mi compañero no comemos choroiz, comemos arepa, que to lo pongas en el otro, Gumercinda, dime algo, para poderte escuchar bien, para poderte oir, bueno, ¿qué más quieres? habla tó ahora, ¿en qué te puedo ayudar? ¿pero tú no quieres? pregúntame algo para decirte, que te lo puedo decir, tó me traduces algo en Mucuna y yo te lo traduzco en inglés, o también en francés, español, italiano, hasta judío, claro, con tal que no me joden, por-que lo malo es que me joden... los cayucos están saliendo ahora para buscar agua para regalársela al pueblo, van para el río y para Joserico, ¿que le dicen ahora? oye, peladito, bajate que te vas a caer y te vas a morir... pela el ojo, ahora te estás riendo pero después vas a llorar, oye peladito, qué cara más fea, miras estas galli-nas por aquí, después voy a quitart esto y poner un salón de belleza, también pode-mos hacer frescos... ¿Qué dices? ustedes no han visto a Grulla, que tenía un com-promise con Trumuya y no ha llegado todavía, Trumuya sólo tiene que ocuparse de Espíritu, Putudunguito, ¿y el café? ¿Dónde está el café? Compañero, aquí viene de la tienda de Brun, Gumecinda, aquí viene Brun, tengo mantequilla, queso redon-do, queso judío, panadero, Mayadi, aquí tengo un clavo de aluminio, un pedazo de zinc, un clavo de aluminio y un pedazo de cine... Sobrina, leche, leche, a que le die-ron ¿qué es lo que van a dar? queda en tu culo, que no te quede en el ojo, ¿qué es otro con este espíritu? Mayadi, ¿no quieres otro machete? parece que viene de la punta de la loma, tiene que ponerle un serrucho... Facho, Facho, leche, leche, ya voy lechero, bueno chiquito y tú también, ¿eres corresponsal, periodista, aventurero? ve, búsquelas la comida a los animales, porque así no se puede, si tú comes ellos también quieren comer, rápido, dales de comer, bueno, te estaba explicando que... tomen, tomen yo creo que, cuando uno tiene apetito, con un compañero (los carros). Para Nombre de Dios. Bueno, suben por la carretera, pero no bajan, cuando bajan es por la mañana, es decir, suben al mediodía y luego suben a las cinco o las seis. Hoy, claro, porque van a llevar todos los pasajeros que dejaron en Co-lón, para regresar para allá. Así que tú puedes coger un carrizo como a las cuatro o las cinco, para Nombre de Dios. Mayadi, quiero otro pedazo de madera, tirame una taza de café... pero que esté bien caliente, claro, para dos, ¿tu quieres un ca-fe? Claro, él quiere un café, que somos dos. Bueno, vamos a tener que irnos de aquí porque la luna está pegando fuerte, ¿sabes lo que es la luna? ahí arriba dan-do, bueno, Fita espera-me, que estoy acomodándome.

APPENDIX 3: (FRAGMENT 3) CONVERSATION BETWEEN TIGRILLO (T), JUAN DE DIOS (J) AND JL AT NOMBRE DE DIOS

T: Que shi que ta dando vuetra que no ta dando vuetra ese e un TIGRILLO (T), JUAN DEDIOS (J) AND JL AT NOMBRE DEDIOS APPENDIX 3: (FRAGMENT 3) CONVERSATION BETWEEN
¿Qué es lo que está dando vueltas? es un casete, quiere decir que no es un tocadiscos, un componente, ¿qué quiere usted que le digamos ahora en esta conversación?