

## Spanish-based creoles in the Caribbean

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### Introduction

The Caribbean Basin is home to many creole languages, lexically related to French, English, and—now only vestigially—Dutch. Surrounded by Spanish-speaking nations, and with Portuguese-speaking Brazil not far to the south, the Caribbean contains only a single creole language derived from a (highly debated) combination of Spanish and Portuguese, namely Papiamentu, spoken on the Netherlands Antilles islands of Curaçao and Aruba. If the geographical confines of the designation ‘Caribbean’ are pushed a bit, the creole language Palenquero, spoken in the Afro-Colombian village Palenque de San Basilio, near the port of Cartagena de Indias, also qualifies as a Spanish-related creole, again with a hotly contested Portuguese component. There are also a number of small Afro-Hispanic enclaves scattered throughout the Caribbean where ritual language, songs, and oral traditions suggest at least some partial restructuring of Spanish in small areas. Finally, there exists a controversial but compelling research paradigm which asserts that Spanish as spoken by African slaves and their immediate descendents may have creolized in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Caribbean—particularly in Cuba—and that this putative creole language may have subsequently merged with local varieties of Spanish, leaving a faint but detectable imprint on general Caribbean Spanish. A key component of the inquiry into Spanish-related contact varieties is the recurring claim that all such languages derive from earlier Portuguese-based pidgins and creoles, formed somewhere in West Africa<sup>1</sup> and carried to the Americas by slaves transshipped from African holding stations,

and by ships' crews and slave traders. This chapter will survey the principal claims and sources of information for each of the aforementioned languages.

### The scarcity of Spanish-related creoles and the case of Chocó Spanish

The scarcity of Spanish-related creoles throughout the world, especially in comparison to the robust number of Portuguese-related creoles currently or formerly spoken in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and—possibly—the Caribbean, is the subject of considerable debate among linguists. Unmistakably Spanish-related creoles are found only in the Philippines (where the individual varieties are known collectively as Chabacano), and in the Caribbean, in the form of Papiamentu and Palenquero. The latter two languages contain elements that point to a Portuguese contribution, if not actual origin in a pidginized Portuguese. In the most comprehensive and most controversial proposal regarding the relative scarcity of Spanish-related creoles, McWhorter (1995, 2000) has suggested that Spanish-based creoles did not form in Latin America because most if not all Atlantic creoles formed in slaving stations on the West African coast. Most slaving stations were controlled by the Portuguese and later French and English during the formative period of Atlantic creoles; Spain was excluded from a legal West African presence through the provisions of the Tordesillas Treaty. McWhorter bases his assertions on ideological (e.g. the notion that slaves must necessarily employ linguistic resistance as a consequence of black identity), linguistic, and demographic considerations. One debatable component of McWhorter's linguistic argumentation is the notion that 'plantations themselves did not pidginize input to slaves' and therefore that '... on Spanish plantations, there were not two targets—the local standard and the creole—but just one, the local standard. Therefore, Spanish slaves simply acquired a second-language Spanish, and passed this on to subsequent generations' (p. 203). This is hair-splitting at best, since Africans' documented approximations to Spanish in the Americas (cf. Lipski 1986a, 1986c,

1992b, 1995, 1998c) often contained all the traits normally ascribed to pidgins. If by lack of pidginization McWhorter means that fluent Spanish speakers never deliberately modified their language when speaking to African-born *bozales* (the term used to refer to halting second-language speakers of Spanish), this may also not be accurate, given well-documented imitations of Afro-Hispanic pidgin throughout Latin America (a broad survey is found in Lipski 2002), including documents written by Africans or their immediate descendants in what appears to be an expanded pidgin, with the beginnings of consistent morphology and syntax.<sup>2</sup>

Equally problematic is the notion that 'the prevalence of creole competence was due to the creole becoming established as the linguistic expression of black identity, as blacks came to interact more exclusively with one another than with whites.' The idea itself is neither objectionable nor implausible (McWhorter rightly points to vernacular African-American English as a contemporary example), but leaves unanswered the question of why creoles did not develop in areas of Spanish America in which blacks remained an isolated majority population for long periods of time, such as the Chocó region of northwestern Colombia, and the Chota Valley of highland Ecuador. McWhorter answers the challenge by affirming that only pidgins imported from Africa developed into creoles in the Americas, and that plantations were not conducive to pidginization of Spanish or other European languages. The reasoning is circular, however, since the only 'evidence' is the fact that creoles did not develop in Spanish American plantations (if indeed they did not). There is nothing inherent in the plantation or post-plantation environment which is qualitatively different than the trading post and castle slave venues described by M, and no a priori reason why blacks on a plantation should not adopt an L<sub>2</sub> variety of Spanish as an ethnolinguistic solidarity marker (assuming that one can defensibly differentiate pidgins and rudimentary L<sub>2</sub> approximations). For example, Laurence (1974) and others have

pointed to the high demographic ratio of white native Spanish speakers to black slaves in Spanish American colonies, in contrast to French and English colonies in which creole languages developed.

In the Colombian Chocó, an area cited by McWhorter in defense of his claims, Africans greatly outnumbered Europeans for several centuries in this isolated region. This would seem an ideal candidate for creole formation, but contemporary Chocó Spanish shows only the signs of geographical and sociolinguistic marginality, and is grammatically identical to other varieties of Spanish.<sup>3</sup> However, McWhorter's bleak description of the inaccessibility of Spanish to African slaves in the Chocó leaves open the question of how ANY native variety of Spanish penetrated this region. The fact that even the most uneducated and geographically isolated *chocoano* speaks grammatically standard Spanish (modulo the features typical of rural illiterate speakers worldwide) reveals that earlier barriers to access of full Spanish were completely penetrated, which does not exclude the possibility that prior to acquiring standard Spanish Chocó residents spoke some kind of Spanish-related creole. The evidence on prior creolization of Chocó Spanish is ambiguous at best, since there is no written attestation of earlier speech, and the contemporary dialects exhibit only a handful of what can only with considerable optimism be regarded as post-creole leftovers, and which are more plausibly the consequences of prolonged isolation from normative influences. Foremost among non-canonical structures is double negation with preposed and postposed *no* (e.g. *no lo se no* 'I don't know'). In the Chocó the second *no* is pronounced without pause or intonational break which might signal emphasis or afterthought; identical double negation is found in vernacular Brazilian Portuguese, where the African presence (particularly from the Portuguese-held Congo and Angola regions) was heavy throughout colonial history, and where a possible restructuring or semicreolization has been suggested (e.g. Holm 1987; also Schwegler 1985-7, 1996b). Double negation identical to that

found in Brazil is also present in the L<sub>2</sub> Portuguese spoken in urban Angola (Schwegler 1991a, 1996b; Ruíz García 1999). In the Chocó, an extra-Hispanic basis for double negation is quite plausible, particularly given the proximity of the Palenque de San Basilio and the earlier existence of other escaped slave communities in Colombia, in which creolized language similar to Palenquero may have developed. Slaves who escaped from Cartagena or the mining camps in Antioquia often followed the course of rivers and ended up in the Chocó. Schwegler (1996b, 1999b, 2000) has demonstrated the heavy Kikongo imprint on Palenquero, and Kikongo employs double negation (*ke ... ko*) in a fashion syntactically similar to Chocó and—variably—Palenquero (cf. also Schwegler 1991a, 1991b, 1996b; Granda 1977). Like Chocó Spanish and Palenquero and unlike, e.g. French and most other Romance languages with double negation, the second negator in kiKongo (*ko*) occurs phrase-finally, allowing for intervening objects and adjuncts (Bentley 1887:607). Schwegler (1996a, 1996b), Granda (1978), Megenny (1990a, 1993), and others explicitly relate postposed negation in Palenquero (and peripherally, double negation in Chocó and vernacular Dominican Spanish) to the Portuguese-related creoles found in the Gulf of Guinea, in West Africa: the two creoles of São Tomé (Sãotomense and Angolar), and of Príncipe and Annobón. These creoles bear historical and structural similarities with Palenquero (e.g. plural subject pronouns, postposed possessives, and many lexical items), and given the documented presence of early São Tomé Portuguese creole in nearby Cartagena, observed as early as 1627 by the priest Alonso de Sandoval, Schwegler and Granda, among others, have postulated that Palenquero derives from an earlier pidgin or creole that was either identical to or at least very similar to Sãotomense. Double negation is found in all of the Gulf of Guinea creoles except for Príncipe.

In the balance the Chocó evidence is inconclusive. None of the non-standard features points unequivocally to a prior creole, and the pathways by which all the region's residents acquired a complete non-creole dialect of Spanish remain to be elucidated.

Papiamentu: a Spanish-related creole?

Papiamentu, spoken on Curaçao, Aruba, and Bonaire, contains a large percentage of lexical items (as high as 60%) which cannot be identified as pertaining exclusively to Spanish or Portuguese (e.g. *frio* 'cold,' 'head,' *langu* 'long,' *boka* 'mouth'), but could have come from either language (Baird 1975; Birmingham 1970, 1976; DeBose 1975). A considerable number of items comes unmistakably from Spanish (e.g. *bieu* 'old,' *hasi* 'do, make,' *mucho* 'much,' *traha* 'work'), and some point to Portuguese (e.g. *bai* 'go,' *trase* 'bring,' *nasementu* 'birth' *papia* 'speak'). Some Dutch and more recently English items round out the Papiamentu lexicon.<sup>4</sup> Grammatically, Papiamentu fits unremarkably into the pantheon of Atlantic creoles, in having a preverbal particle system (Andersen 1990, Maurer 1986, 1987) combined with invariant verb stems (usually derived from the Portuguese/Spanish infinitive, but sometimes from the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular present indicative form or even the imperative), predominant SVO word order, predicate clefting constructions, subject pronouns undifferentiated for gender, identical pronouns used for subjects and objects, non-inverted WH questions, constructions of the sort 'for + PRONOUN + INFINITIVE,' and so forth. Unlike other Romance-related creoles, Papiamentu has an analytic passive construction, derived from Dutch and presumably a relatively modern accretion. Pluralization is accomplished by affixing the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural pronoun *nan* (of as yet undetermined etymology) to nouns under certain circumstances (Dijkhoff 1983).

Theories on the origin and formation of Papiamentu cluster around three possibilities. First, Papiamentu may be the relexification of a Afro-Portuguese proto-creole which also

underlies other Atlantic creoles; van Wijk (1958), Granda (1974), and Megenney (1984a, 1985a) and most vehemently Martinus (1996) express some support for this view, which was adumbrated in early work such as Lenz (1928) and Navarro Tomás (1953). Another view is that Papiamentu was originally a Portuguese-based creole, formed on Curaçao through the infusion of Portuguese-speaking Sephardic Jews from northwestern Brazil, when this region was recaptured from the Dutch by the Portuguese in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Goodman 1987a, 1987b). Finally, another school of thought considers Papiamentu to be in essence a Spanish-related creole, whose Portuguese elements were introduced by Sephardic Jews and Portuguese slave-traders (e.g. Ferrol 1983, Rona 1971, 1976, Maduro 1966 in a somewhat different fashion). Munteanu (1996) is the most elaborate account which attributes Papiamentu to Spanish origins. Typologically Papiamentu bears some resemblance to Cape Verdean Crioulo, particularly in the verbal system, but there are enough significant differences as to render inconclusive the ongoing search for a definitive genealogy for Papiamentu

The source(s) of the Portuguese elements in Papiamentu may never be determined with certainty, but for more than three centuries Papiamentu has been in close contact with Spanish, and is for all intents and purposes now a Spanish-based creole. Many residents of Aruba and a smaller number on Curaçao are fluent in Spanish, and Papiamentu has become increasingly Hispanized over the years (Wood 1972). Along the Venezuelan coast, Papiamentu-speaking communities have existed for centuries, first as maroon settlements and later when residents of nearby Aruba settled on the mainland. Papiamentu songs and language fragments can be found in coastal Venezuela to this day, and the full impact of this language on regional varieties of Venezuelan Spanish has yet to be determined. At one point there were significant Papiamentu-speaking communities in Cuba and Puerto Rico, whose language was often mistaken for the

`broken Spanish' spoken by African-born *bozal* slaves who were laboriously acquiring Spanish.<sup>5</sup> This matter will be revisited below, since it bears crucially on the possible creolization of Afro-Caribbean Spanish.

### Palenquero

The Afro-Iberian creole language known as Palenquero by linguists and as *lengua* `(the) language' by its speakers, survives in the village of Palenque de San Basilio, to the south of Cartagena, Colombia. Palenquero appears to be the sole survivor of a once broader gamut of Spanish-related creole languages which arose in maroon communities throughout the Spanish Caribbean (Meggenney 1984a, 1985b, 1986; Schwegler 1996a; Patiño Rosselli 1999; Friedemann and Patiño 1983). Palenquero contains many unique features, as well as sharing similarities with other creole languages; its closest apparent relatives are the Portuguese-related creoles spoken on São Tomé and Príncipe and Annobón: these similarities include plural subject pronouns, syntax of negation, postposed possessives, pluralization. Palenquero forms plurals by prefixing *ma*, presumably a generalized Bantu pluralizer. Possessive constructions place the possessor in postnominal position: *casa suto* `house 1 pl. = our house.' Like Papiamentu, the Palenquero verb system is based on preverbal particles plus largely invariant verb stems, but some verb stems also inflect, particularly to signal the imperfect; in the introduction of some ostensibly conjugated verbs, Palenquero resembles Cape Verdean Crioulo. Whereas Papiamentu may well have been formed in situ, it is almost certain that Palenquero arrived in Palenque de San Basilio at least partially formed, modeled on the already emergent São Tomé Portuguese creole, if not actually identical to the latter language. Meggenney (1986) affirms that Palenquero has undergone subsequent decreolization in the direction of Spanish. Schwegler (1996a) provides the most complete treatment of Palenquero origins, and disputes this notion, affirming that

except for the last generations of semi-fluent Palenquero speakers, who routinely mix Spanish into their use of *lengua* (Morton 1999, Schwegler and Morton 2002), Palenquero has remained substantially constant over some three centuries. If this is the case, then Palenquero must always have been a strongly hybrid Spanish/Portuguese-related creole, much like Papiamentu.

Palenquero-Spanish bilingualism has existed for at least two centuries, and the two languages have mutually influenced one another to the point where Palenquero functions as a Spanish creole, despite its complex origins.

#### Afro-Caribbean *bozal* Spanish

The putative Spanish creole which has received the most attention is at the same time the least likely candidate for a true creole language. This is the “*bozal* Afro-Caribbean Spanish” a cover term encompassing a full gamut of second-language approximations to Spanish as used by African slaves (and perhaps their immediate descendents), particularly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and extending into the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Bozal* language (the term refers to Africans who spoke Ibero-Romance languages with difficulty) first arose in the Iberian Peninsula late in the 15th century; the earliest attestations come from Portugal. *Bozal* Spanish makes its written appearance in Spain early in the 16th century, and continues through the middle of the 18th century, being especially prominent in Renaissance plays and poetry, where many of Spain’s most renowned playwrights and poets incorporated literary imitations of Africans’ halting Spanish. Some of these parodies were linguistically more accurate than others, as judged by the appearance of similar forms in attested Spanish- and Portuguese-related creoles still in existence. Although a few common denominators not attributable to imperfect acquisition of Spanish crop up from time to time in these texts (e.g. the use of *sa* as invariant copula, and some prenasalized consonants), most of the texts reveal merely a scattering of errors typical of second-

language learners of Spanish. These include lapses of subject-verb and noun adjective agreement, improper use of articles and prepositions, and avoidance or misuse of clitic pronouns. In Latin America, *bozal* Spanish makes its first appearance in poems and songs written towards the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; the language attributed to Africans in these texts is in no way different from the documents produced in Spain. The first documents demonstrate the existence of *bozal* Spanish in the highland mining areas of Peru, Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia and Guatemala. Few documents representing Afro-Hispanic speech remain from 18<sup>th</sup> century Latin America; Cuba and Mexico are among the regions so represented (cf. Megenney 1985b, Lipski 1995). Beginning at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but reaching its peak during the 1830's and 1840's, the last big surge of slave trading, spurred by the sugar plantation boom and by increased urbanization of many coastal regions (cf. Eltis et al. 1999), resulted in an outpouring of Afro-Hispanic literary representations. The geographical distribution of extant texts mirrors the profile of the African slave trade in Latin America. The 19th century texts come principally from three regions: Cuba (with a couple from Puerto Rico), coastal Peru (Lipski 1994b), and the Buenos Aires/Montevideo region. In all cases the purported *bozal* language differs qualitatively from the earlier Spanish and Latin American texts, in the incorporation of more regional Latin American Spanish phonetic and morphological traits, and a departure from the formulaic expressions and crude puns found in the earlier literature.

In the aggregate, most *bozal* Spanish specimens from 19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America reflect only non-native usage by speakers of a wide variety of African languages. However, a subset of Afro-Cuban *bozal* imitations (together with a handful of Puerto Rican texts) has given rise to two controversial proposals. The first is that Afro-Hispanic language in the Caribbean and possibly elsewhere coalesced into a stable creole, not only in the reduced confines of slave barracks and

maroon communities, but encompassing a much broader geographical area and cross-section of the speech community. A corollary is the claim that this creole had its origins in an even earlier Afro-Portuguese pidgin or creole, formed in West Africa and surviving in the contemporary creoles of Cape Verde, São Tomé and Annobón, as well as in Papiamentu and Palenquero (Megenney 1984a, 1984b, 1985a; Granda 1968, 1971; Schwegler 1999a). The second proposal is that this earlier Afro-Hispanic creole may have permanently affected the evolution of ALL Caribbean Spanish, not only contributing vocabulary items, but also touching syntax and phonology (e.g. Perl 1982, 1985, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c). Such vernacular Caribbean Spanish linguistic features as relatively high use of overt subject pronouns, non-inverted questions of the sort ¿*Qué tú quieres?* ‘What do you want?’, ‘personal’ infinitive constructions such as *para yo tener una idea* ‘in order for me to have an idea’ and even total loss of word-final /s/ and loss of word-final /r/ have at times been attributed to Afro-Hispanic linguistic encounters, whether or not an intermediate creole Spanish stage is postulated (Megenney 1989b, Granda 1968, Otheguy 1973 summarized in Lipski 1986c).

In order for the second proposal to have validity, the first proposal—that Afro-Hispanic language coalesced into a stable creole in the Spanish Caribbean—must first be substantiated. A number of linguistic features appearing in Afro-Cuban *bozal* texts have been variously put forward as evidence of prior creolization, but few cannot be explained away by the simpler alternative of imperfect second language acquisition under conditions of extreme duress. These features include apparently exaggerated use of overt subject pronouns (which can often be eliminated in Spanish), elimination of common prepositions, occasional loss of the complementizer *que*, and (very infrequent) loss of the copula. Other traits at times attributed to prior creolization are in fact regional Caribbean traits found among all ethnic groups: non-

inverted questions of the sort *¿Qué tú quieres?* 'What do you want?', occasional use of the second-person subject pronoun *vos* (still found vestigially in parts of Cuba), and preposed *más* 'more' in the combinations *más nada* 'nothing else,' *más nunca* 'never again,' and *más nadie* 'nobody else.' Even discarding all of the aforementioned features as extraneous to the issue of the prior creolization of Spanish in the Caribbean, there remains a residue of combinations which resist explanation as simply the product of imperfect acquisition or regional variation. The most consistent and ultimately convincing case involves the verbal system, where the emergence of an innovative paradigm involving tense/mood/aspect particles followed by an invariant verb stem (normally derived from the Spanish infinitive) are found in some texts. The majority of *bozal* texts, including those from the Caribbean, show only the typical range of subject-verb agreement errors found among novice speakers of Spanish. The third person singular form was particularly attractive as a candidate for invariant verb, much as occurs in vestigial and second-language Spanish of other regions, and to a certain extent in vernacular Brazilian Portuguese (Lipski 1993, 2000 for specific references for the following examples):

*yo empeña mi ropa* 'I pawned my clothes' (Fernando Ortiz, *Los bailes y el teatro de los negros en el folklore de Cuba*)

*Yo alebanta sojo* 'I raised my eyes' (Miguel Cabrera Paz (Cuba, 19th c.), fragment of poem)

*Yo sabe lavá, planchá, jasé dulce y cosiná* 'I know how to wash, iron, prepare sweets, and cook' (Anon. Cuban *villancico*)

Also found with some frequency was the bare infinitive used as invariant verb, a strategy sometimes used by second-language learners of Spanish:

La vieja Asunción nunca *jablá* `Old Asunción never speaks' (Armanda Ruíz García, *Más allá de la nada*)

yo también me *calentá* ... y cuando *cuchá* campana, yo me va pa la Tamisa `I'm warming up too ... and when I hear the bell, I'm going to Artemisa' (Miguel Cabrera Paz)

No, señó, yo no *matá* ninguno, yo *sentá* atrás quitrín pa yegá prisa, prisa, na panadería `No sir, I didn't kill anyone; I was sitting in the back of the carriage to get to the bakery fast' (Ildefonso Estrada y Zenea, *El quitrín*)

Na dotó, né *comé* lo chicharró caliente, *bebé* de l'agua fría, y to la noche *pasá* de lo catre a lo tíbó ... `The doctor ate the hot pork rinds, he drank cold water, and spent all night at the bedside' (Lydia Cabrera *Francisco y Francisca*)

ya yo no sé si lon gato *matá* la jutía o si la jutía *matá* lon gato ... `I don't know if the cat killed the *yautía* or if the *yautía* killed the cat' (Lydia Cabrera, *El monte*)

Yo *llevá* ya mucho tiempo comiendo con mano, y *queré* dame guto comé con tenedó y cuchillo lo mimo que gente rica, porque viejo no *queré* morí sin meté pinchacito tenedó dentro carne sabroso `I've been eating with my hands for a long time, and I want to have the pleasure of eating with a fork and knife just like the rich people, because this old man doesn't want to die without sticking his fork into some tasty meat' (Ismael Consuegra Guzmán, `Yo *queré* meté pinchacito tenedó dentro carne sabroso').

More interestingly, what appears to be an emerging three-particle system plus invariant verb stem can be observed in many texts (Ziegler 1981):

*ta* + VERB STEM = imperfective/progressive

*ya* + VERB STEM = perfective/past

*va* + VERB STEM = future/irrealis

If in fact such a three-particle system ever existed in such a consistent fashion, this would make *bozal* Spanish an obvious soul-mate of such indisputably Ibero-Romance-related creoles as Papiamentu, Philippine Creole Spanish (Chabacano), Macau creole Portuguese, Malaccan Papia Kristang and other Asian Portuguese creoles, Cape Verdean and Guinea-Bissau creole Portuguese, and with some modifications the Portuguese-related creoles of the Gulf of Guinea (São Tomé, Príncipe, Angolar, Annobón) and Palenquero, all of which employ a basic TMA particle system plus (generally) invariant verb stem.

Interpreting the possible creole status of some of these putative particles is complicated by the fact that in most spontaneously developed second-language varieties of Spanish, as well as in emergent Spanish child language, gravitation toward the third person singular form as invariant verb is common. This phenomenon, combined with the normal Spanish periphrastic future in *ir a* + INFINITIVE would naturally produce combinations such as *yo va (a) veni(r)* 'I am going to come,' *tú va (a) come(r)* 'you are going to eat,' etc. Some Cuban *bozal* examples which illustrate preverbal *va* (ambiguous as to whether it is an invariant particle or part of a Spanish periphrastic future construction) are:

*yo va a contá a ti una cosa* 'I'm going to tell you something' (Miguel Barnet, *Autobiografía de un cimarrón*)

*¿y nélle lo muchachito va pendé su Paña de nuté?* 'And those boys are going to depend on that Spain of yours?' (Martín Morúa Delgado, *La familia Unzúazu*)

*¿Qué yo te va a dicí ...?* 'What can I say to you?' (Ignacio Benítez del Cristo, *Los novios catedráticos*)

*Así yo no va murí* 'I'm not going to die like that' (Lydia Cabrera, *Ayapa: cuentos de jicotea*)

Ese otro yo me lo *va* yéun ... Yo *va* sabé si su boca no jabla mentira ... 'I'm not going to swallow [eat] that other one ... I'm going to find out if his mouth tells lies' (Lydia Cabrera, *El monte*)

Cuanto yo *va* vini de filósofo bautizamiento ... 'How many philosophical baptisms will I have seen ...' (Francisco Fernández, *El bautizo*)

yo *va* etá divrití nese casa 'I'm going to have a good time in that house' (Manuel Mellado y Montaña, *La casa de Taita Andrés*)

Yo *va* matá mi materiá 'I'm going to finish off my material' (Luis Felipe Rodríguez, *Ciénaga*)

At the same time, the preverbal adverb *ya* 'already, now' can either precede (most common in contemporary Spanish) or follow the subject pronoun; in the latter case in combination with the gravitation toward the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular verb (which except for position of stress and certain irregular verbs is essentially the same as the infinitive minus final /r/) would also naturally yield combinations such as *yo ya come*, *nosotros ya trabaja*, etc. Some Cuban *bozal* examples are:<sup>6</sup>

*Ya* mi llegó la bují ... 'I arrived at the hut [*bohío*]' (Miguel Cabrera Paz)

yo ta yorá poque Calota *ya* ta morí 'I'm crying because Carlota died' (Ignacio Villa, "Calota ta morí")

*ya* yo jablá mimo hoy don Ciriaco ... *ya* yo cuchá a usté ... 'I talked to Don Ciriaco just today ... I heard you ...' (Ignacio Benítez del Cristo, *Los novios catedráticos*)

Señó acade, *ya* yo ve poquito menos 'Mister mayor, I saw a little bit less' (Antonio Berenguer y Sed, *Tradiciones villaclareñas*)

*ya* yo brubí 'I returned' (Cirilio Villaverde, *Excursión a Vuelta Abajo*)

*ya* yo no casa cunelle 'I didn't marry him' (Francisco Fernández, *Los negros catedráticos*)

*ya yo no pedí aguantá má un sofocació de ese* `I can't stand that suffocation' (Manuel Mellado y Montaña, *La casa de Taita Andrés*)

*¿ya sumercé vinió?* `Did your grace come?' (Cirilo Villaverde, *Cecilia Valdés*)

Only the construction *ta* + INVARIANT VERB cannot be naturally derived from quasi-universal second-language Spanish traits. It is true that *ta* frequently occurs as a reduction of the auxiliary form *está* `is, is located' in vernacular Spanish (and Portuguese), but in Spanish the auxiliary *estar* only combines with the gerund in *-ando/-iendo*, never with a finite verb or an infinitive.<sup>7</sup> The normal Spanish progressive construction combined with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular invariant verb would yield *yo (es)tá hablando* `I am speaking,' *nosotros (es)tá trabajando* `we are working,' etc. There is no obvious model, in general 2<sup>nd</sup> language Spanish, in vernacular Caribbean Spanish, or elsewhere in purported *bozal* texts, for the truncation of a gerund such as *hablando* `speaking' to *habla*.<sup>8</sup> Thus if constructions such as *yo ta hablá* `I talk/am talking' were in fact widely used in Afro-Caribbean *bozal* Spanish and not just confined to a few idiolects or occasions, then not only would this increase the likelihood that a creole verb structure existed, but also a non-Spanish source for this combination would be suggested (hence the Portuguese creole theories alluded to earlier). Some Afro-Cuban *bozal* Spanish examples are:

Horita *ta* bení pa cá `Now [she] is coming here' (Ignacio Villa, "Drumi, Mobila")

Como que yo *ta* cuchá la gente que habla tanto ... yo *ta* mirá gente mucho `Since I heard that the people were talking so much ... I watched the people a lot' (Manuel Cabrera Paz)

Primero *ta* llorá na má. `He's just crying, that's all' (María de Santa Cruz, *Historias campesinas*)

Sí, páe, yo *ta* robá un gaína jabá. `Yes father, I stole the speckled chicken' (Lydia Cabrera, *Francisco y Francisca*)

Cuando ojo *ta* llorá a narice toca su parte. 'When the eyes are crying, the nose does its part' (Lydia Cabrera, *Refranes de negros viejos*)

Ya branco *ta* debaratá cosa 'The white people are destroying everything' (Lydia Cabrera, *La sociedad secreta Abakuá*)

*Ta* juí, *ta* pujá mí, señó 'He fled, he pushed me, sir' (Anselmo Suárez y Romero, *Francisco*)

In addition, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Puerto Rican play *La juega de gallos o el negro bozal* by Ramón Caballero (ca. 1850) makes use of this construction:

¿Po que tú no *ta* queré a mí? 'Why don't you love me?'

Siempre *ta* regalá dinero a mí '[he] always gives me money'

In a few cases it might be possible to argue that spontaneous developments took place, e.g. where *ta* is clearly derived from *esta(r)* acting as either a locative verb or in combination with an adjective, or where erosion of gerund is involved:

Que to mi cuerpo me *etá* temblá 'My whole body is trembling' (Lydia Cabrera, *Reglas de congo*)

pavo real *ta* *bucán* palo 'the peacock is looking for [a] tree' (Lydia Cabrera, *El monte*)

yo *está* *cortá* un cañas 'I cut/am cutting [sugar] cane' (Ismael Consuegra Guzmán, "Yo *está* *cortá* un cañas").

In other cases, however, the verbs in question are habitual or durative, contexts where Spanish would not use any combination involving *estar*.

The preceding examples suggest that in some instances, phonetic erosion of a gerund or incorrectly used infinitive might be at the root of *ta* + INVARIANT VERB constructions, but deriving all reported cases in the *bozal* literature from these sources places an undue strain on

credibility. Among Afro-Cuban literary, folkloric, and anthropological texts, verbal combinations based on the particle *ta* are relatively infrequent, cluster in the works of a few authors, particularly Lydia Cabrera, and find no counterpart in the hundreds of Afro-Hispanic texts from Spain and other Latin American countries, spanning a time period of nearly five centuries. If Afro-Caribbean Spanish had indeed creolized for more than a brief moment in isolated plantations or maroon villages, one would expect a more consistent creole grammar to appear in literary depictions.

A more probable source for some instances of *ta* is Papiamentu, which was present in 19th century Cuba and Puerto Rico as thousands of sugar cane cutters were taken from other Caribbean islands during the sugar plantation boom. The Cuban sugar industry received a boost with the Haitian revolution which began in 1791, destroying the world's largest source of sugar production. The rapid increase in world sugar prices resulted in a frenzied conversion of all available land in Cuba to sugar cultivation. To meet the skyrocketing labor demands, Cubans began to import African slaves and nominally free workers on a scale never before seen in the Spanish Caribbean. By the first few decades of the 19th century, anti-slavery movements in Europe were strong, and slaving ships en route to the Americas were routinely intercepted and confiscated. The African slave trade could not provide sufficient workers to satisfy Cuban demands, and laborers from all over the Caribbean were sought. For nearly two centuries, the Dutch depot at Curaçao had supplied both authorized and clandestine slave traffic to Cuba and, on a much reduced scale, to Puerto Rico. The subsequent participation of Curaçao in the labor trade to Cuba added the already established creole language Papiamentu to the mix of languages present in Cuba. Both demographic and textual evidence suggests that of all the languages spoken in the 19th century Caribbean, Papiamentu made the greatest impact on Afro-Hispanic

language in Cuba and possibly also Puerto Rico (Granda 1973; Lipski 1993; Alvarez Nazario 1970, 1972, 1974; Vicente Rosalía 1992). The appearance of possibly Papiamentu elements in Afro-Cuban and Afro-Puerto Rican literature does not occur until the 1830's, and most elements appear in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, thus coinciding with the most intensive phase of the last wave of slave and free labor importation. Papiamentu is documented for Cuba by both residents and visitors. Papiamentu was rarely identified by Cubans themselves; those few who had ever heard the language referred to it as *español arañado* 'scratched-up Spanish.' Given white Cubans' negative attitudes towards the speech of Africans, it is unlikely that most observers had either the experience or the inclination to differentiate the pidgins spoken by African-born laborers from the well-established Afro-Iberian creole in use on Curaçao. Most educated (white) Cubans of the time period were familiar primarily with life in urban areas, particularly Havana, and were not aware of the speech of peons on remote sugar plantations.

Papiamentu is also attested for 19th century Puerto Rico, whence comes the only other attested example of *ta* + INVARIANT VERB constructions in Afro-Hispanic literature (Lipski 2001). According to Alvarez Nazario (1970), the language found in a 19<sup>th</sup> century Afro-Puerto Rican poem represents the vestiges of Papiamentu transplanted to Puerto Rico several generations prior to the attestation in question, and partially remodeled through contact with evolving *bozal* and *criollo* Spanish of Puerto Rico. The most significant aspect of this discovery, amply recognized by Alvarez Nazario, is the fact that the language of these *genti di Corsó* 'Curaçao people' was familiar enough to observers in early 19th century Puerto Rico as to require no special introduction or translation.

In Papiamentu, the preverbal particle *ta* is syntactically identical to the Afro-Hispanic *bozal* examples, although in many of the *bozal* literary texts the aspectual value—inasmuch as it

can be inferred—frequently differs from Papiamentu usage. The other preverbal particles of Papiamentu are the perfective *a*, past-imperfective *tabata*, and future/irrealis *lo*; the latter particles appears before subject pronouns, unlike the remaining particles, which occur in immediate preverbal position: *lo mi bai* ‘I will go.’ Papiamentu *a* is homophonous to the Spanish auxiliary verb *ha*, but also—in the rapid vernacular speech of Cuba and other dialects—with the auxiliary verb cum particle *va* and, in some phonetic contexts, is virtually indistinguishable from the adverb cum particle *ya*. Thus it may be that Papiamentu *a* slipped unnoticed into Afro-Cuban speech and was not recognized as such by the (white, Spanish-speaking) authors in which such speech is imitated. There are no clear instances of the Papiamentu particle *lo* in Afro-Cuban texts, but there are a number of instances where the nominally masculine singular Spanish direct object clitic *lo* appears mysteriously in pleonastic constructions in which no direct object is found, or doubling a displaced direct object in a completely non-Spanish fashion. Although behaving syntactically unlike Papiamentu *lo*, this pleonastic element is absent from nearly all Afro-Hispanic imitations from other Spanish-speaking regions:

¡brágame Dios la tragín que *lo* tiene la critiano! ‘My goodness what outfits these Christians have’ (Manuel Cabrera Paz)

Negrito má fotuná no *lo* salí lan Guinea bindita hora que branco me *lo* traé neta tierra.

‘An unfortunate black I didn’t leave Guinea, blessed be the moment when the white people brought me to this land’ (Creto Gangá, “Canto de Bodas” (José Crespo y Borgón, *Creto Gangá*)

Yo no *lo* perdí doce mil y quinientos pesos para quedalo con uno cheche perdió. ‘I didn’t lose 2500 pesos to end up with a loser’ (Fernández, *El negro cheche*)

¿Y a oté, qué *lo* va ni *lo* viene, oté va viví enella? `And you, who don't care one way or the other, are you going to live in it?' (Manuel Mellado y Montaña, *La casa de Taita Andrés*)

The chaotic and essentially unparsable combinations involving pleonastic *lo* may well represent Cuban authors' attempts at reproducing a verbal construction involving a particle rather than an object clitic. More to the point, however, is the fact that other indisputable Papiamentu elements crop up in Afro-Cuban texts, tending to cluster in the same works in which the particle *ta* occurs. Such features include (1) the use of *yijo/yija* (Spanish *hijo/hija*) `son/daughter,' corresponding to the invariant Papiamentu word *yiú*; (2) use of *awe* (Spanish *hoy*) for `today';<sup>9</sup> (3) use of *ahuora* (Spanish *ahora* plus an intrusive [w] not found in any other variety of Spanish) corresponding to Papiamentu *awor* `now'; (4) occasional use of *mi* instead of Spanish *yo* as subject pronoun `I'; (5) use of the invariant subject pronouns *elle/nelle/ne* (Spanish *él/ella/ellos/ellas*) corresponding to the Papiamentu invariant third person singular pronoun *ele*, with occasional positional variant *ne*; (6) use of (*a*)*visar* (Papiamentu *bisa*) as the generic verb meaning `say,' rather than the more specific `advise, warn' in Spanish; (7) use of the preposition (*a*)*rriba* (Papiamentu *riba*) to mean `on, concerning' in a general sense, in addition to the Spanish locative `above, on top of.' No one of these features is sufficient by itself to bolster the claim that Papiamentu was the source of at least some Afro-Cuban *bozal* examples suggestive of creolized Spanish, but taken together they provide an explanation of the juxtaposition of the majority of Afro-Hispanic (including Afro-Cuban) *bozal* examples in which no consistent creolization is evident, and a smaller group of texts which contain strong evidence of creole structures (Lipski 1986b, 1987, 1991, 1992a, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 1999d, 2000).

A small number of creole-like combinations in Afro-Caribbean *bozal* Spanish or vestigial Afro-Hispanic language enclaves can be attributed to the presence of Haitian Creole, especially in the Dominican Republic, but in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century also eastern Cuba (Lipski 1994a, Ortiz López 1999a, 1999b, 2001), and West Indian creole English (in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and possibly Cuba). Although the most creole-like features would appear only in the speech of first-generation Haitians acquiring Spanish, prolonged bilingualism across several generations was the norm in rural Cuba and the Dominican Republic, with Spanish frequently being the recessive language and therefore subject to continuing incursions from Haitian Creole. In the balance, there is little likelihood that Spanish ever creolized across a wide territorial expanse in the Caribbean, certain literary and folkloric texts notwithstanding. A much more reasonable basis route for creole-like characteristics of earlier Afro-Caribbean Spanish, as well as contemporary vernacular varieties, is the impact of established creole languages, which in one guise or another formed the linguistic backbone of the 19th century Caribbean. Regardless of the European language which provided their lexicon, these creoles already shared considerable similarity with one another, due both to universal aspects of creolization, and to commonly recurring patterns in key groups of West African and European languages. In the linguistic proving ground of 19th century Caribbean plantations, simply throwing Spanish together with any of the Caribbean creoles, or better yet with several, would yield strikingly similar results, which might be superficially indistinguishable from the effects of spontaneous creolization of Spanish. In other words, there is no evidence that Caribbean *bozal* Spanish was ever a stable creole—neither derived from Afro-Portuguese progenitors nor spontaneously arising in the Antilles—but rather a constantly replenished gamut of second-language approximations to Spanish. In a few instances creole-like features not likely to have

arisen from imperfect acquisition of Spanish have been cited, but given the facts accumulated to date, contact with Papiamentu and other already established creole languages introduced into the Spanish Caribbean during the 19<sup>th</sup> century is the most likely source.

#### Possibly post-creole Afro-Hispanic enclaves in the Caribbean

In several places in the Caribbean varieties of Spanish spoken in isolated speech communities contain features that hint at earlier Afro-Hispanic creoles, although in no case do the data fully support theories of a former pan-Caribbean creole Spanish.<sup>10</sup> The largest such group is the *negros congos*, found in scattered communities along the Caribbean coast of Panama, centering on the colonial ports of Portobelo and Nombre de Dios (Lipski 1989, 1997; Joly 1981). During the spring Carnival season and at other times Afro-Hispanic residents of these communities—whose daily speech is simply the local vernacular Spanish—employ a deformed variety of Spanish referred to as *hablar congo* ‘Congo talk’ and which contains, in addition to humorous distortions of Spanish words, a considerable number of African or pseudo-African lexical items grafted onto a Spanish grammatical system with Spanish functional categories. The *congo* dialect spoken only by Afro-colonial Panamanians, is in some way related to the linguistic situation which obtained among black slave and free groups in colonial Panama, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries, when slave trade through Portobelo was at its peak. Members of the community assert that *congo* speech is the direct descendent of the speech of the *negros bozales*, but the reality is much more complex. Nowadays, speaking *congo* involves a high degree of verbal improvization and prowess, based on the notion of saying things ‘backwards’ (Spanish *al revés*, which also means ‘upside down’ and ‘inside out’). According to Afro-Panamanian oral tradition, during the colonial period Spanish slaveowners would allow their African slaves some liberties during the Carnival season, allowing the slaves to wear castoff

finery, which the slaves put on backwards or inside out to indicate their inconformity with slavery. Contemporary *congo* speakers use semantic reversals, such as *vivi* (Spanish *vivo*) 'alive' to mean 'dead,' *entedo* (Sp. *entero*) 'whole' to mean 'broken,' etc. True *congo* adepts can put on dazzling improvizations, at times also introducing formulaic phonetic deformations into each word. Under the layer of verbal improvization and word play lies a rather systematic suspension of noun-adjective and subject-verb agreement in fashions which closely parallel literary or attested specimens of earlier *bozal* Spanish. Awareness of popular stereotypes of 'black' Spanish from other times and places is almost nonexistent in this region, given the traditionally low literacy rate and the lack of availability of literary or popular culture works which would facilitate propagation of ethnolinguistic stereotypes. Any similarities between *congo* dialect and early *bozal* Spanish must be due either to fortuitous similarities, highly unlikely in the case of specific evolutions, or of the transmission, distorted across time and through the jocularity of Carnival, of previous Afro-Hispanic language. Modern *congo* leftovers do not suggest a complete creolization of earlier Afro-Panamanian Spanish, but rather a series of second-language approximations which fell short of the systematic restructuring implicit in creolization.

Spanish is spoken vestigially on the Caribbean island of Trinidad, last occupied by Spain in 1797, and nominally English-speaking since that time. Most Spanish speakers in Trinidad are descendents of migrant laborers from eastern Venezuela, but a handful of Afro-Trinidadians speak varieties of Spanish that may possibly hark back to the days when *bozal* Spanish was spoken by African slaves on Trinidad (Lipski 1990). Moodie (1986, forthcoming) points to some features in the vestigial and largely non-fluent Spanish remaining in Trinidad and hints that these modern-day features may be the last surviving remnants of an earlier creole, but a careful examination of fluent and semi-fluent Trinidad Spanish suggests only linguistic drift in this

isolated speech community, and contact with creole English and creole French, the island's main languages for the past two centuries.

Coastal Afro-Venezuelan Spanish, which contains many highly non-standard speech traits, has been claimed (e.g. by Megenney 1985c, 1989a, 1990b, 1990c) to contain post-creole remnants suggestive of the period when *bozal* Spanish was spoken by African slaves.<sup>11</sup> Most of the features described by Megenney simply reflect illiteracy and isolation (cf. Megenney 1999), but remote Afro-Venezuelan communities do contain some additional speech traits which have yet to be fitted into the total perspective of Afro-Caribbean Spanish (e.g. Mosonyi et al. 1983). These mostly involve phonological modifications such as the three-way neutralization of /l/, /r/, and /d/, and onset cluster reduction (*pobre* > *pobe* 'poor'), but occasional lapses in subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement have also been detected.

## Conclusions

Spanish-related creoles are indeed scarce in the Caribbean, although perhaps not for the reasons adduced by McWhorter. Demographic conditions were rarely propitious for the formation and long-term survival of Spanish-based creoles (cf. Laurence 1974), although Spanish may have creolized briefly in maroon communities, and possibly in isolated slave barracks and remote mining regions. The fact is that nowadays even the most isolated Afro-Hispanic communities, such as the Colombian Chocó, some villages in extreme eastern Cuba, the Costa Arriba villages of northeastern Panama and some isolated coastal villages of Venezuela speak non-creole Spanish, sharing only the features of sociolinguistic marginality. Since these are the communities in which Spanish is most likely to have creolized in previous centuries, the search for post-creole leftovers must take place with a much more finely-grained approach than has usually been applied. It is useful to consider the observations of Schwegler

(2002) and Schwegler and Morton (2002) regarding the non-creole Spanish spoken in the Palenque de San Basilio. Spanish has been in contact with Palenquero for more than three centuries and contemporary speakers freely and fluently code-switch between the two languages, and yet Palenquero Spanish exhibits virtually no signs of contact with a creole language. If the existence of Palenquero were not known (and early visits by Colombian linguists to the village did not detect the presence of Palenquero, which was withheld from them by community members), or if Palenquero were to disappear (and current observations suggest that it will after at most two or three more generations), the local Spanish dialect would hold no telltale evidence. By extrapolation, it is conceivable that other creoles disappeared with leaving traces on neighboring Spanish dialects. Future research may indeed discover the fossil remains of still further Spanish-related creole languages, but as of now, few legitimately Spanish creoles have been documented for the Caribbean region. There remains both the potential for perpetual indeterminacy and a sense of adventure, since the Spanish Caribbean has yet to yield its many linguistic secrets.

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<sup>1</sup> Various regions of Africa have been suggested as the birthplace of a putative proto-Portuguese creole, with no consensus having emerged: for example McWhorter (2000) suggests the former Portuguese trading post at Elmina (modern Ghana), for which no local Portuguese-related creole has ever been documented; Naro (1978) postulates a broader gamut of Afro-Portuguese contacts along the African coast from the Senegambia at least to the Congo Basin; Megenny (1984a) and others stress similarities between Papiamentu and the Portuguese-based creoles of Cape Verde; Schwegler (1996a) stresses the similarities between Palenquero and the Portuguese-based creoles of the Gulf of Guinea, especially São Tomé, significant since as early as the first part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Spanish priest Alonso de Sandoval, living in Cartagena, commented that some arriving African slaves spoke what he referred to as the broken Portuguese of São Tomé (first brought to the attention of creolists by Granda 1970). Smith (1999) also favors the Gulf of Guinea as the original site of the proto-creole.

<sup>2</sup> . A noteworthy example is the 'Proclama que en un cabildo de negros congos de la ciudad de La Habana pronunció su presidente, Rey Monfundi Siliman' (ca. 1808). For Alvarez Nazario (1974:137), this document is the oldest specimen of Afro-Antillean Spanish, but the format of this pamphlet, giving a pidginized Spanish version 'en dialecto natural y propio de ellos' [in their own natural dialect] in one column and an *en face* translation into Spanish in a parallel column, casts some doubt on the authenticity of the examples, or at the very least of the authorship, since the text appears to have been written by a [white] native speaker of Spanish, rather than by a true Congo, whether *bozal* or Cuban-born.

<sup>3</sup> Although Schwegler (1996a) claims that the prevalent double negation stems from a previous Spanish-based creole, while Ruíz García (2000) has found some vestigial deviations from monolingual Spanish grammar which may be the fossil remains of a long-disappeared Chocó creole or semi-creole.

<sup>4</sup> Portuguese and Spanish have diverged somewhat since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century—presumably the time in which Papiamentu came into existence—but most of the principal phonetic developments which allow for unambiguously assigning certain Papiamentu words to either Spanish or Portuguese had already occurred

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Alvarez Nazario (1970, 1972), Granda (1973, 1974) for examples; Lipski (1998a, 1998c, 1999a) for additional interpretation. There are no data which suggest that significant numbers of Papiamentu speakers returned to Curaçao or Aruba, thus potentially contributing decreolizing elements to the language of those islands, but in truth the available documentation is so sketchy as to leave this matter undecided.

<sup>6</sup> It must be noted that even in purportedly *bozal* Spanish texts, *ya* most frequently appears before the subject pronoun or NP, thus retaining its status as a sentential adverb, and behaving much as Papiamentu *lo*.

<sup>7</sup> In contemporary European Portuguese (but not in Brazilian Portuguese) *estar a* combines with the infinitive to indicate progressive action; this combination generally arose during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although a tiny handful of earlier attestations may be found.

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, my personal observations—spanning more than thirty years—of second language learners' acquisition of Spanish in a wide variety of formal and informal contexts indicate no difficulty in acquiring both the form and at least the basic usage of the Spanish gerund. This in turn suggests that more than second language learners' difficulties with the gerund underlie Papiamentu and *bozal* Spanish verb stems.

<sup>9</sup> An identical form occurs in Palenquero, and is also remembered and used by some very elderly Afro-Cubans (Ortiz López 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Green (1997) discovered some unusual speech patterns reminiscent of possible creolization, among several Afro-Dominican Spanish speakers. In the village of Cambita, near San Cristóbal, Green discovered a few residents (mostly members of a single family) who spoke what appears to be a highly deviant post-creole Spanish. Green took this to be evidence of a former Afro-Hispanic creole language in this region. Other community members do not use this language, and describe the family's speech as *media lengua* 'broken speech,' a term also used in the Dominican Republic to refer to speech defects. The strategic situation of the Dominican Republic during the heyday of Afro-Hispanic pidgin, especially in the 19th century, makes the search for Afro-Dominican linguistic vestiges particularly attractive, and the Cambita data at first blush appear to confirm views that a creolized Spanish was once spoken widely by Afro-Hispanic groups throughout the Spanish Caribbean. Particularly striking in the speech of the family members under discussion is the use of what Green (1996, 1997, 1999) analyzed as a preverbal aspectual particle *a* + INFINITIVE, often used with preterite reference:

Y yo a salí. `I left'

sí, a siguí `yes, [she] went on'

No yo no a mendé e zapote no. `I don't sell zapotes'

Hay año a sadí buena. `Some years [the guavas] are good'

Si una gente I a morí y a tabajá mucho, cai agua. `If a hard-working person dies, it rains'

In August, 1998 Luis Ortiz López, Irene Pérez Guerra and I visited Cambita and interviewed some of the same informants studied by Green. Based not only on linguistic traits but also on observations of the speakers' behavior, we concluded that congenital developmental disorders underlie at least some of the 'creole' features, although it is by no means possible to dismiss Green's conclusions. Whether or not this very limited speech community will turn out to contain post-creole leftovers, the example is illustrative of the largely unexplored hinterlands of the Spanish Caribbean, where the speech of socially marginalized groups may contain the key to the reconstruction of earlier Afro-Hispanic language.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Alvarez (1991, 1993, 1999) for different suggestions on possible post-creole remnants in Venezuelan Spanish, not confined to isolated coastal enclaves.