THE CHOTA VALLEY:
Afro-Hispanic Language in Highland Ecuador*

John M. Lipski
University of Houston

The African influence on Latin American Spanish is undisputed, and yet the field of Afro-Hispanic linguistics is hampered by the lack of widespread Hispanic creole dialects, or even areas of widespread Afro-Hispanic language usage. A few tiny dialect pockets continue to exist, however, such as the palenquero dialect of Palenque de San Basilio in northern Colombia,¹ and the special dialect of the negros congos of Panama’s Caribbean coast;² until the first decades of the twentieth century, a partially creolized Bozal Spanish (spoken by African slaves who had learned Spanish as a second language, and only imperfectly) was still to be found in Cuba as well as vestigially in Puerto Rico and perhaps the Dominican Republic.³ Given the geographical inaccessibility of many areas of Latin America containing large African populations, it is possible that additional traces of vestigial Afro-Hispanic language may still be found or may have recently disappeared.

Afro-Hispanic dialectology naturally impinges on general creole studies. The considerable structural similarity among known Afro-Iberian dialects has often led researchers to postulate that during colonial times, most African slaves brought to Latin America spoke some variety of creolized Portuguese, learned in the Portuguese slaving stations in Africa or on board ship during the middle passage. Some researchers believe that this creole language (which may also have been responsible for creole formation in other regions of the world) continued to be spoken at least by some second-generation Africans in Latin America, thus shaping their usage of Spanish.⁴ Some of the opposing, nonmonogenetic theories admit the influence of creole Portuguese on the formation of at least some creole dialects but postulate independent developments in other areas. Finally, a third kind of theory appeals to language universals in creole formation, with the implication that structurally

*This note is based on research carried out in Ecuador in 1984. Thanks are due to the Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana in Quito, to Don Julio Estupiñán Tello, President of the Casa de la Cultura in Esmeraldas, to Licenciado Alfonso Cazar, Director of Student Affairs at the Universidad Nacional del Ecuador, and to Nelson “Clay” Bolaños, world champion boxer from the Chota Valley.

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similar creole languages in geographically separated areas came into existence through the application of universal cognitive processes.\(^5\)

While Colombian Palenquero, Papiamentu, and what is known of nineteenth-century Caribbean Bozal Spanish appear to support some version of the monogenetic theory, the Panamanian congo data do not fit this theory, nor do the vestigial creole examples found in the Dominican Republic, and possibly on the island of Trinidad.\(^6\) This non-congruence in turn suggests that alternative hypotheses may also be valid for at least some instances of Afro-Iberian linguistic contact because although the monogenetic hypothesis is usually cited as a unique theory of creole formation, it is in reality the extreme point on a continuum of possible models.

It is nearly impossible to separate putative African linguistic influence on Latin American Spanish from general demographics of Spanish colonization and slavery. Although during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries African slaves were found in nearly all parts of Latin America, including highland regions now totally devoid of African traits, many of these early groups were eradicated through high mortality rates and inevitable dilution with indigenous races.\(^7\) The end result is that the only significant Afro-Iberian populations are found in those areas where slavery and large-scale plantation agriculture continued well into the nineteenth century; these areas include the island republics of Latin America and the coastal areas of Central and South America. At the same time, nearly all of the nonlexical linguistic characteristics that have been variously attributed to African influence (generally involving reduction and loss of syllable-final consonants as well as certain syntactic modifications) occur precisely in the same coastal regions where the linguistic influence of the Andalusian and Canary Island dialects was strongest.\(^8\) Because these dialects share many of the same characteristics that have been suggested as Africanisms within Latin American Spanish, it is difficult to separate the variables of Spanish dialect base and African demographic influence in the absence of control situations in which one of the key variables may be at least partially separated out. One possible configuration is found in the Valle del Chota, in northern highland Ecuador, where a relatively isolated population of African origin exists surrounded by a Spanish dialect zone not exhibiting the coastal and Andalusian traits just mentioned. A study of the history of the black Choteños and a brief discussion of the features of their speech hinting at earlier partially creolized language will be offered as a small contribution to the theories of Afro-Iberian language and Spanish dialectal diversification.

Although Ecuador is not one of the Latin American areas normally associated with large African populations, the Afro-Ecuadorian component may account for as much as 25 percent of the national to-

\[\text{156}\]
The majority of the black and mulatto population is concentrated in the northwest sector, principally in the province of Esmeraldas, where over 80 percent of the residents are of African descent. The origin of Ecuador's black population is surrounded by some controversy: although black Ecuadorans evidently arrived from the north, their dates of arrival and region of origin have yet to be determined satisfactorily.

One theory, as yet unproved, maintains that the first permanent black residents arrived on the Ecuadoran coast as the result of a shipwreck at the end of the sixteenth century and another in 1600, although it is known that the first blacks arrived in Ecuador between 1533 and 1536. Subsequently, the Jesuits imported large numbers of black slaves to work on plantations along the coast and in the central highlands. The Jesuits' example was followed by other planters and landowners, given that indigenous labor was scarce in certain areas and rebellious in many others. Early in the nineteenth century, the wars of colonial liberation brought contingents of black soldiers to Ecuador from Colombia, and when slaves were manumitted in Ecuador in 1852, many of these black subjects remained in the province of Esmeraldas. Yet another group of black citizens arrived in the late nineteenth century, when between four and five thousand Jamaican laborers were brought in to work on plantations and construction projects—the last significant migration of Afro-Americans to Ecuador.

Other scholars have maintained that the black population of Esmeraldas resulted from the immigration of laborers from plantations in the central highlands. This theory, however, is difficult to reconcile with the historical and demographic facts of colonial and postcolonial Ecuador. It also leaves unanswered the question of the ultimate origin of highland blacks in Ecuador.

In the highlands, the predominant racial type is the indigenous or mestizo configuration, with black or mulatto residents being rare. The one exception is found in the valley of the Chota River and its environs, in the north-central provinces of Imbabura and Carchi. Formerly known as Coangue, this valley is a tropical lowland surrounded by Andean uplands, and its population is almost entirely black with some mulattoes, in contrast to the exclusively indigenous and mestizo population of neighboring areas. The Chota Valley consists of some ten or fifteen small villages whose variable total population probably does not exceed fifteen thousand. From an economic point of view, the Chota or Salinas region is marginalized: nearly all arable land is held by a few large landowners, the land is arid and virtually worthless without irrigation, and most residents practice only the most basic subsistence-level agriculture. The readily available exit routes out of the valley (which is bisected by the Pan American Highway) have resulted in a high rate of emigration by Choteños leaving to work or study in
Ibarra and Quito. A much smaller number emigrate to the coastal towns.

The origin of this black population in highland Ecuador is surrounded by uncertainty. Some investigators have suggested that Choteños are descended from freed or escaped slaves from the coastal province of Esmeraldas, but it appears that most blacks in the provinces of Imbabura and Carchi are descendants of slaves held by the Jesuits on their highland plantations (and also, according to some evidence, in slave-breeding centers). Until the middle of the eighteenth century, Jesuit wealth was considerable in Ecuador, including a number of sugar plantations in Carchi and Imbabura. Many of these estates still exist, as do the settlements that arose around them, and when the Jesuits were expelled from Ecuador in 1767, most of the slaves simply changed masters as these lands were taken over by Ecuadoran owners. These slaves and freedmen formed the population nuclei of the Chota Valley. It has even been claimed that much of the black population of Esmeraldas derives from Choteños who emigrated to the coast, but this assertion remains to be demonstrated conclusively. In the Chota Valley, oral traditions refer only to the fact that the first black residents arrived from other unspecified lands, while in Esmeraldas no collective awareness exists of any immigration from the highlands to the coast.

When slavery was abolished in Ecuador in 1852, the Choteños continued working on the large landholdings that form the economic backbone of the region. Although it is possible that subsequent migrations may have brought black residents from the coast, the majority of the Choteños share a history of more than 250 years of residence in the central highlands. It is not impossible that black Choteños had subsequent contact with coastal speech modes, but given the isolation of the Chota Valley, the poor communication with the coast, and the overwhelming linguistic influence of the surrounding highland dialects, this population may be the only significant black settlement in Spanish America without close and recent ties to the life and language of the coastal lowlands.

Although Ecuador is rarely mentioned in the context of creole Spanish, some indirect evidence suggests that in previous centuries a creole or Bozal Spanish may have been spoken among certain groups of Afro-Ecuadorans, particularly those living in isolated communities or cimarrón societies of fugitives. In Esmeraldas, where most of Ecuador's black population is concentrated, the local Spanish dialect is by no means creolized, although it is decidedly popular, featuring the Costeño phonetic characteristics found throughout Latin America. Some researchers have claimed that in the jungle villages in the interior of the province, a "special" Spanish dialect is still spoken or was spoken until not long ago. More recently, I have been able to verify personally that
the "special" dialects are merely popular variants of Spanish and contain no creole traits.

The Spanish dialect of the Chota Valley has never been the object of serious linguistic investigation, although some indirect testimony suggests that in the past this dialect may have exhibited creole or at least highly nonstandard tendencies when compared with the other dialect zones of Ecuador. During the course of my investigations, I interviewed Chota residents who were more than ninety years old. They indicated that neither their parents nor their grandparents had spoken any language other than the popular regional dialects of Spanish. This finding does not preclude the prior existence of partially Africanized Spanish in the Chota region, as will be discussed shortly, but it does set back the dates for the gradual decreolization that would have given rise to the present popular, but noncreolized, Chotoño Spanish, and it casts a large measure of doubt on casual observations by Ecuadorians and foreigners with regard to the "deformed" and "unintelligible" speech of blacks.

To evaluate the possible African or creole component of Chotoño speech, it is first necessary to describe briefly the dialectal divisions of Ecuadorian Spanish. In broad terms, Ecuadorian Spanish may be divided into five or six zones according to phonological criteria, although considerable variation is found within each category. The groupings are as follows: (1) the coastal zone (Esmeraldas, Guayas, Los Ríos, and Manabí); (2) the north highlands (Carchi); (3) the central highlands (from Imbabura to Chimborazo); (4) the provinces of Cañar and Azuay; (5) the province of Loja; and (6) the Amazon region.

In the province of Imbabura and the southern portion of Carchi, including the Chota Valley, the linguistic characteristics belong to the third category, with the only major deviations found among indigenous subjects who are not fluent in Spanish. The dialect of black Chotoños in general shares the features of the third group. To construct a quantitative presentation of the Chota dialect and to demonstrate the importance of this linguistic area for more general historical and linguistic theories, data were collected in Ecuador in 1984.

The first aspect of the Chota dialect to be examined is the behavior of the phoneme /s/, which may be realized as a sibilant [s] or [z], an aspiration [h], or may be elided completely [ʃ]. Table 1 presents quantitative data on the realization of /s/ among the dialect zones described above, in the following positions: word-internal preconsonantal (este); word-final preconsonantal (es mió); phrase-final (vivíamos); word-final before stressed vowel (los otros); word-final before unstressed vowel (los amigos). Variation between [s] and [z] is not tabulated because it is not relevant to the present remarks.

These data may be interpreted as follows. As regards pronuncia-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonetic Context</th>
<th>Chota</th>
<th>Esmeraldas</th>
<th>Carchi</th>
<th>Quito/ Ibarra</th>
<th>Azuay/ Carchar</th>
<th>Loja</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word-internal syllable-final /s/ (egle)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]^a</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[l]^b</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʃ]^c</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4,683)</td>
<td>(1,213)</td>
<td>(892)</td>
<td>(1,407)</td>
<td>(885)</td>
<td>(562)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-final preconsonantal /s/ (egre, tdi)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5,514)</td>
<td>(1,266)</td>
<td>(1,051)</td>
<td>(1,953)</td>
<td>(1,299)</td>
<td>(890)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase-final /s/ (vamoneg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[l]</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3,402)</td>
<td>(786)</td>
<td>(532)</td>
<td>(1,137)</td>
<td>(664)</td>
<td>(501)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Realization of /s/ in Ecuadoran Spanish, percentages by dialectal zone, 1984

The Chota dialect falls more nearly in line with the highland dialects in retaining the sibilant s, but the percentage of aspiration and loss (13 percent) is significantly higher than in other highland dialects, including nearby towns in Imbabura and Carchi. Substantially the same is true for word-final preconsonantal and prevocalic /s/, whose phonetic parameters are virtually identical to the previous case, and where the Chota dialect reduces /s/ to a greater degree than in other highland zones (19 percent as compared to 4 to 5 percent). The most significant discrepancies occur in phrase-final position, where the Chota dialect weakens or deletes /s/ to a notably greater degree than in neighboring highland dialects. These quantitative differences may not seem important, particularly when compared to the nearly categorical reduction of /s/ in the Esmeraldas region, but the black Chota dialect stands out clearly from its highland neighbors, where loss of /s/ is so rare as to immediately call attention to even a single case of loss of phrase-final /s/ (with the exception of the word...
TABLE 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonetic Context</th>
<th>Chota % (n)</th>
<th>Esmeraldas % (n)</th>
<th>Carchi % (n)</th>
<th>Quiloto % (n)</th>
<th>Azuay/Canar % (n)</th>
<th>Loja % (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word-final /s/ before stressed vowel (eg él)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(471)</td>
<td>(133)</td>
<td>(163)</td>
<td>(232)</td>
<td>(189)</td>
<td>(133)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-final /s/ before unstressed vowel (log amigos)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1,473)</td>
<td>(370)</td>
<td>(331)</td>
<td>(620)</td>
<td>(351)</td>
<td>(301)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The behavior of /sl/ in the Chota dialect is at odds with other Ecuadorian dialects of Spanish but is consistent with semicreolized or Africanized Spanish and Portuguese throughout the world. From the earliest attestations of “black Spanish” found in sixteenth-century literary documents, occasional loss of word-final /sl/ was predominantly confined to the verbal endings in -mos and in cases where the /sl/ was solely lexical. Data from currently spoken Afro-Hispanic dialects where /sl/ is not reduced in all phonetically weak contexts provide comparable configurations. Africanized Portuguese offers an identical panorama, for while no Portuguese dialect, past or present, reduces all instances of /sl/ to the extent found in many Spanish dialects, loss of lexical /sl/ was common in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literary representations of “black Portuguese,” occurs among current Portuguese-based creoles, and characterizes many popular Brazilian Portuguese dialects, where African influence is not to be excluded.

With respect to the pronunciation of /sl/, the Chota dialect differs slightly from neighboring highland dialects, suggesting the possible existence of earlier pronunciation patterns among the black highlanders. It is curious that most highland Ecuadorians who have come into contact with black Choteños have the general impression that these Afro-Ecuadorans speak with a Costeño accent, despite clear evidence to the contrary. From a purely linguistic point of view, highland Ecuadorans probably perceive, perhaps only subconsciously, the occasional loss of word-final /sl/ in the Chota dialect, a feature absent from other nearby highland dialects. Moreover, Choteños frequently aspirate implosive /sl/ in the word mismo, unlike neighboring highlanders, who pronounce the /sl/ strongly (usually as a [s]) and may reduce contiguous unstressed vowels. The other reason for the popular opinion that Choteños speak with a coastal accent is racial stereotyping, given that the majority of black Ecuadorians are from the coastal province of Esmeraldas, whose phonetic characteristics are well known in the remainder of the country. Many Ecuadorians automatically associate a black face with the montuno (peasant) speech of the coastal provinces, an association reinforced by the writings of Nelson Estupiñán Bass and Adalberto Ortíz, in which the speech of black Esmeraldinos is featured. On meeting a black Choteño, Ecuadorians are apparently so influenced by the racial features that they “hear” the coastal dialect to a much greater extent than is objectively present, refusing to except the idea that a black Ecuadorian could speak with a highland accent. In fact, the Chota dialect has even absorbed popular highland Ecuadorian syntactic formations, including some typical of Quechua-Spanish bilinguals, which suggests the further penetration of contemporary highland (nonblack) Spanish among the Choteños.

In addition to the rather subtle phonetic and phonological di-
mension, the black Chota dialect manifests some syntactic divergence from other Ecuadoran dialects, particularly among the area's oldest or least-educated residents, whose speech patterns have been least influenced by non-Choteño Spanish. In the area of grammatical concordance, particularly between nouns and adjectives and between subjects and predicates, Chota Valley Spanish exhibits subtle, but noticeable, differences from other Ecuadoran dialects, where discrepancies of agreement rarely occur among monolingual Spanish speakers and fluent bilinguals. Examples gleaned from the Chota Valley include these usages: se trabajaban [-θ] en las haciendas vecina[-as], “people worked in the nearby plantations”; sobre la materia mismA[-a] de cada pueblo, “with the materials from each town”; era barato[-a]—la ropa, barato era, “clothes were cheap”; hay gente colombianA[-a], “there are people from Colombia.” Lack of concordance in verb phrases also occurs, as does loss of the reflexive pronoun se and occasional confusion of ser and estar: Chota [se] compone con [de], compone dos sequíos, se llaman pueblo, “The town called Chota is composed of two portions”; Estamos [somos] dieciséis comunidades, “We are seventeen communities [in all]”; últimamente la gente [se] está dedicando a la agricultura, “Lately, the people have turned to agriculture”; comienzan[-n] a colorearse las vistas, “their eyes start to get red”; se pone[-n] lo[-s] guagua medios[-θ] mal de cuerpo, se ponen amarillos, “the babies get very sick, they turn yellow.”

Errors of prepositional usage are also rather frequent, consisting of the elimination of certain common prepositions and the interchange of others: yo soy [de] abajo, “I'm from down the road”; depende [de] las posibilidades del padre, “It depends on the father's possibilities”; San Lorenzo que queda muy cerca con [de] la Concepción, “San Lorenzo, which is very near La Concepción.” Also found is the occasional elimination of articles, which is rarely heard in other Ecuadoran dialects among monolingual Spanish speakers: porque [el] próximo pueblo puede ser Salinas, “Because the next town could be Salinas”; material de aquí del[] lugar, “material from around here.”

Finally, there are some examples that, in terms of significant syntactic deviance, fall more in line with creolized Spanish from other areas of Latin America and from past centuries: con yerbas de campo curaban a nosotros [nos curaban], “They cured us with country herbs”; a poca costumbre se la tiene cuando mucha [muuy] fuerte está la fiebre, “It’s difficult when the fever is very high”; casi lo más lo más lo tocan guitarra y bomba (la que más tocan son la guitarra y la bomba), “Mostly what they play are guitars and bombas.”

The above constructions, which occur relatively frequently in the Chota Valley dialect, are virtually unknown in their totality in other Ecuadoran Spanish dialects, although individual examples may at times be heard elsewhere. The use of these constructions in the Chota Valley
is not a function of illiteracy and typical nonstandard usage because
despite traditionally limited educational opportunities, most of the old-
est Choteños know how to read and write, and all listen to radio pro-
grams and have linguistic contact with educated speakers of the Quito
dialect. Examples like those cited are also found in the speech of youn-
ger residents, even those who have studied at the secondary and uni-
versity level, although in fewer instances than among the oldest
generation.

In popular Esmeraldas Spanish, other syntactic deviations are
occasionally found, although usually in the lyrics of songs and chants,
and most probably represent the fossilized presence of earlier speech
modes. Combinations such as ochocientos[-as] balas, “eight hundred bul-
lets,” and niñas colegial[-es], “schoolgirls,” are found in the décimas of
Esmeraldas but rarely occur in the popular Spanish of this region. One
potentially significant feature of both the Esmeraldas dialect and the
Chota Valley usage is the extraordinary use of redundant subject
pronouns, also a feature in many other Afro-Hispanic dialects, past and
present. Frequent use of normally redundant subject pronouns is not a
direct indication of previous creolized language because such behavior
is also found in parts of Spain and areas of Latin America that evince no
strong African influence. It is perhaps not coincidental, however, that
within Ecuador both dialect zones characterized by Afro-Hispanic con-
tacts employ a key strategy found in Afro-Hispanic language elsewhere
in the world and that other native Spanish-speaking Ecuadorians do not
use this strategy as frequently.

An overall comparison between the grammatical characteristics
of Choteño Spanish and known Afro-Hispanic manifestations from
other regions and periods reveals certain structural similarities and
strategies suggesting that black highland Ecuadorian Spanish in its ear-
liest stages shared some of the features of Bozal or African Spanish of
other regions. Contemporary parallels are found in several locations:
first, some areas of the Dominican Republic, characterized by a signifi-
cant African linguistic influence; second, the Spanish of Equatorial
Guinea; third, Cuban Bozal Spanish, found until well into the
twentieth century; and fourth, the vestigial Spanish of Trinidad,
which may not point to true creolization but provides another clue for
Afro-Hispanic linguistics. Late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-cen-
tury folkloric documents give evidence of similar phenomena in the
partially Africanized Spanish of black Puerto Ricans and Peruvians.

In the cases cited above, which come from both popular literature and
real-life observations, the same strategies are evident: partial reduction
of verbal conjugation, particularly in favor of the least “marked” form—
the third person singular; reduction and elimination of many common
prepositions, particularly de and a; partial suspension of nominal con-
cordance of gender and number; avoidance of embedded structures; use of paraphrases with de or a instead of using clitic pronouns and possessive adjectives; and reduction of lexical or redundant word-final /sl/.

None of the linguistic features just mentioned are peculiar to the influence of a single African language, and most traits are symptomatic of imperfectly learned Spanish, fostered by the sociocultural and economic inferiority of Africans in Spanish America. This situation itself has been claimed as one factor in the evolution of creole dialects. In the majority of Afro-Hispanic populations, linguistic evolution in the direction of greater similarity with received (non-Africanized) Spanish has effectively erased traces of earlier, partially creolized language; and literary and folkloric attempts at preserving or recreating earlier linguistic forms, such as negrista literature and the Panamanian Congo dialect, are marred by an element of exaggeration, in Ṽnɔː̃ or satire that renders these forms less than adequate as attestations of earlier stages of Africanized Spanish. Dialect pockets such as the Chota Valley of Ecuador are important for the study of African-Spanish contacts because they provide tiny, partially obscured (but nonetheless valuable) windows into the past in zones where the crushing linguistic modernization of contemporary Latin America has left only vestiges of Afro-Hispanic speech modes. African natives who were brought to Latin America as well as their descendants for one or more generations undoubtedly spoke unique forms of Spanish, and the impact of these speech forms is only now being contemplated in its entirety. The black Choteños who have lived in highland Ecuador for 250 years are of great interest for historical, anthropological, and linguistic studies because even cultural assimilation has not totally obliterated the important African contributions of this group.

In summary, a study of the speech of black Choteños suggests an earlier stage when partially Africanized Spanish was generally spoken in the Chota Valley. This finding is significant in postulating the use of partially creolized Spanish away from the Caribbean “heartland,” where most such dialects are found. The finding is also of interest because the Choteños have always coexisted linguistically with non-African neighbors and were never part of a resistance movement or cimarrón society. The surviving remnants of their language follow general patterns of creole language behavior, although no traces of putative Portuguese creole have been found. These data are not sufficient to advance theoretical claims as to monogenetic or polygenetic origins of Hispanic creoles, but they underline the desirability of examining the speech of small, isolated Afro-Hispanic groups in the hope of obtaining further pieces of the dialectological puzzle still missing from the study of the major creole dialects.
NOTES


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10. For example, see Julio Estupiñán Tello, El negro en Esmeraldas (Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1967), 45-48; and Humberto Toscano Mateus, El español del Ecuador (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1953), 19-20. This theory is also repeated by Carlos Alberto Coba Andrade, Literatura popular afroecuatoriana (Otalora, Ecuador: Instituto Otavaleno de Antropología, 1980), 19-49.


17. Estupiñán Tello, El negro en Esmeraldas, 49.


19. For example, see Modesto Chávez Franco, Crónicas del Guayaquil antiguo (Guayaquil: Imprenta y Talleres Municipales, 1930), 504-29. He mentions the village of Palenque, in the province of Los Ríos to the northeast of Guayaquil, where a group of descendants of escaped slaves had settled and where a vestigially creolized Spanish may have existed in the nineteenth century. Chávez Franco cited examples from his childhood days but was unable to provide an exact translation for the highly deformed elements. Grande examines these materials and speculates on the possible survival of creolized Spanish in the Palenque area in Estudios lingüísticos, 321, 381-83.

20. Estupiñán Tello speaks of the settlements in the interior of Esmeraldas that had virtually no contact with the outside world until the Ibarra-San Lorenzo railroad link was constructed a few decades ago: “los negros vivían semidesnudos y hablaban su propio dialecto . . . así los encontré el ferrocarril Ibarra-San Lorenzo cuando por primera vez atravesó estas comarcas” (El negro en Esmeraldas, 71). In interviews with workers who had participated in the construction of the railroad and had visited some of the interior villages for the first time, it became apparent that no creolized Spanish existed in this area. Fieldwork among residents of the inter or settlements confirmed this assertion.

21. For example, Frederick Hassaurek traveled through Ecuador in 1861 and noted on witnessing a celebration among Chuténos: “I was unable to make out any of the

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verses, but my companions told me the songs were composed by the Negroes themselves, and in their own dialect. Like the Negroes of the United States, the Negroes of Spanish America have a dialect and pronunciation of their own. The same grotesque voices and almost unintelligible pronunciation, the same queer gestural and shaking of the body, the same shrewd simplicity and good humor...” See Hassaurek, *Four Years among Spanish-Americans* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1868), 194. It is evident that regardless of his qualifications as an explorer and anthropologist, Hassaurek was a questionable linguist who was strongly influenced by stereotypes and generalizations that were invalid for Hispanic American dialectology even in the nineteenth century. The fact that the Choteño’s songs were incomprehensible to the visitor (who apparently was not entirely fluent in Spanish) says nothing essential about the local Spanish dialect but rather exemplifies a natural phenomenon, the phonetic deformation of sung language and the stylistic discrepancies between daily speech patterns and the lyrics of popular songs.

22. For previous sources, compare D. Lincoln Canfield, *Spanish Pronunciation in the Americas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 49–51; Toscano Mateus, *El español del Ecuador;* and Peter Boyd-Bowman, “Sobre la pronunciación del español en el Ecuador,” *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 7 (1953): 221–33. In general, the phonetic traits are as follows: syllable-final and word-final /s/ is retained except in (1); in (3) and (4) and sometimes in (2) and (5), word-final prevocalic /s/ (los amigos) is realized as [z]; the palatal lateral phoneme occurs in (2) and (5); is given a groov fricative pronunciation [z] in (3) and (4), and is pronounced as [y] in (1); the group /nt/ is pronounced roughly as [tʃ] in (3) and (4), where /nt/ is also given a groov fricative pronunciation, as is Implosive and phrase-final /l/ and syllable-final /l/ and /r/ may be neutralized in (1), where word-final /l/, particularly in verbal infinitives, may disappear. To this list of dialectal characteristics may be added the uniformly velar pronunciation of word-final /l/ before vowels and in phrase-final position (no bien, un amigo) in nearly all of Ecuador, although in the extreme northern province of Carchi, a certain alternation with alveolar [n] occurs. In the Amazon region, considerable idiolectal variation occurs due to the small number of native Spanish speakers, who come from various regions of the country.

23. Boyd-Bowman claims that the Chota dialect “pertenece lingüísticamente a la provincia negra de Esmeraldas” in “Pronunciación del español,” 233. This opinion is echoed by Thomas Weil in *Area Handbook for Ecuador* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973), 83. This source declares that on the Ecuadorian coast, a “black” subdialect exists alongside other varieties. My research disproves these remarks and offers possible reasons for the mistaken impressions. In particular, black highland Spanish normally retains the phoneme /s/ in all positions, being essentially the only “black” Latin American Spanish dialect to do so, a fact of considerable importance for theories of Latin American dialectology. Black Choteños also produce the assimilated variant [z] of /tʃ/, frequently assimilate syllable-final /l/, maintain the phonological opposition between /l/ and /r/ in all positions, velarize word-final /l/, give an alveolar articulation to the group /nt/, and frequently elide unstressed vowels in contact with /s/.

24. In the Chota Valley, ten black informants were used (seven men and three women) from the villages of El Chota, Cartucho, Salinas, and Juncal. Their ages ranged from twenty-seven to seventy-eight, and all were engaged in subsistence-level farming and rudimentary artisanal trades. Each informant provided approximately thirty minutes of taped material consisting of unstructured interviews in which a maximally informal style was sought. Data from the remaining dialect areas were also collected in situ, using a sample of five informants from each dialect region. Informants included men and women from twenty-eight to sixty-five years of age whose socioeconomic status was lower to lower-middle class in order to effect an adequate sociolinguistic comparison with the black Choteños.


26. For example, in the Spanish of Equatorial Guinea (the only Spanish-speaking area of black Africa), /l/ is normally retained in all positions, but word-final lexical /s/ falls with relative ease. Compare John Lipski, “The Spanish of Malabo, Equatorial Gu-

28. For example, although few Chotoes are fluent in Quechua, most utilize syntactic patterns based on the gerund and the verb estar that result from Quechua influence. An example is *dame comprando unas espermítas, "buy me some candles."* Chota Valley Spanish also makes use of the intensive verb *ser*; also found in other Latin American Spanish dialects, to a greater extent than is found elsewhere in Ecuador: *Pura el ojado, se nota es quando le sale así gramos, "You notice when the person with evil eye gets a rash."* Compare Charles Kany, *American Spanish Syntax,* 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 256.

29. Laura Hidalgo Alzamora, *Décimas esmeraldinas* (Quito: Banco Central del Ecuador, 1982), 159–60. In the Chota Valley and in some more marginal dialects of Esmeraldas, the second person singular is formed with *tos* plus verbs with stressed final syllable (for example, *tos hablas, "you speak," as opposed to *tis hablas, *el* habla, or other possible forms), a pattern that precludes explicitly stating the subject pronoun.

30. Ibid., 165.

31. González and Benavides, "¿Existen rasgos criollos?"

32. Lipski, *The Spanish of Equatorial Guinea,* chap. 3.


34. Lipski, "Creole Spanish and Vestigial Spanish"; and Sylvia Moodie, "Basiljectal Survivals" and "Morphophonemic Illformedness."
