



On the Construction ta + Infinitive in Caribbean Bozal Spanish

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The relative scarcity of creole Spanish dialects, as compared to dialects of creole French, Portuguese, English, and Dutch currently spoken throughout the world, has led to increased scrutiny of those few pockets of creolized Afro-Hispanic language still remaining, and of literary attestations of earlier stages of Spanish creole. Repeated reference to *bozal* Spanish (Spanish spoken imperfectly by slaves born in Africa), and the scores of literary imitations of Africanized Spanish, from the Golden Age to the present, indicate that black slaves and freedmen often spoke Spanish with characteristics not shared by European Spanish speakers, characteristics which evidence similarities with creole Portuguese as spoken throughout Africa and Asia.¹ The points of convergence among the various creole Portuguese dialects, and between those dialects and the principal Afro-Hispanic dialects spoken or recently disappeared in Latin America (Colombian *palenquero*,² Papiamentu, and 19th-c. Cuban and Puerto Rican *bozal* Spanish³) have led many investigators (e.g., Naro 1978, Sanders 1982, Pike 1967) to postulate that most slaves introduced into Spanish America already spoke a rudimentary creole Portuguese, acquired in the Portuguese *feitórias* or slaving stations in Africa, or on shipboard during the middle passage, and that such Afro-Hispanic dialects as *palenquero* and Caribbean *bozal* Spanish are but partial relexifications of such creole Portuguese. Moreover, considerable evidence exists that during the 15th and 16th centuries, creole or pidgin Portuguese was a true lingua franca for much of West Africa and many coastal areas in Asia, from India to Hong Kong and Batavia, and that even those slaves brought from Africa to Portugal

1. A partial list of studies which advance these claims, in various fashions: Granda (1968, 1978), Alvarez Nazario (1974), Valkhoff (1966), Taylor (1971, 1977), Whinnom (1965), Hancock (1975), Voorhoeve (1973), and Megenny (1984).
2. Bickerton and Escalante (1970), Escalante (1954), Ochoa Franco (1945), Granda (1978), Friedemann and Patiño Roselli (1983), Friedemann and Cross (1979).
3. For information on recent attestations of *bozal* Spanish in the Caribbean region, see Granda (1968, 1978), Otheguy (1975), Yacou (1977), Wagner (1966: 158-61). Opposing points of view are offered by López Morales (1971: 62-71, 1980, 1983).

and later to Spain already spoke some form of this “reconnaissance language” (Naro 1978). Among the structural features most frequently cited in favor of the common origin of Afro-Hispanic dialects are their unique verbal syntax and morphology, which often exhibits verbal constructions in the form of an uninflected infinitive stem (generally without the final /r/) preceded by a temporal/aspectual particle, usually *ta*, which is invariable for person and number (Granda 1978: 414–40, 481–91; Whinnom 1965; Taylor 1971).

Examples from Caribbean *bozal* Spanish include:

de tó eso que yo tá nombrá (Cabrera 1983: 229). ‘Of all of this that I am naming’
 é mimo dicí tu tá olé (Cabrera 1983: 77). ‘He himself says that you smell (it)’
 ¿Po qué tú no ta queré mi? Mi corzaó ta sufril mucho; Yo tá murí (Alvarez
 Nazario 1974: 192-93). ‘Why don’t you like me? My heart is suffering; I
 am dying’

como que yo ta cucha⁴ ‘Since I am listening’
 ta pujá mi (Suárez y Romero 1947: 69). ‘He pushes me’
 ahorita ta bení pacá⁵ ‘Now he is coming here’
 yo ta yorá poque Calota ya ta morí (Morales 1976: 190). ‘I am crying because
 Carlota has died’
 son deuda que uté tá creá con tierra (Cabrera 1970: 263). ‘They are obligations
 that you create with the earth’
 mí tá sabé que tú no tá queré a la negra Yeye⁶ ‘I know that you don’t like black
 Yeye’

From *palenquero* (Friedemann and Patiño Roselli 1983: 195):

¿i kómo bo ta ablá ese ma palabra ke ni yo á polé ablá? ‘¿Cómo estás hablando
 esas palabras que ni yo puedo hablar?’

From Papiamentu (Goilo 1953):

mi ta kome. ‘I eat’

Cape Verde:

bô ta flâ; el tá kantá? ‘you speak,’ ‘he/she sings’

São Tomé (Valkhoff 1966: 105):

e ta ka flâ ‘he was speaking’

Guiné (Wilson 1962: 21):

i ta bin ‘he comes’

Saramacca (Taylor 1977):

a ta kulé ‘he runs’

Ceylon Portuguese (Coelho 1963; Smith 1979: 207):

ki ki ta papiá ‘what (they) are talking about’

Malacca “Papia Kristang” (Hancock 1973: 26):

méstri-di-skola ta les ‘the school teacher is reading’

Chabacano (Philippine creole Spanish):

mga gente ta puedé entendé todo ‘The people can understand everything’⁸

4. From the Cuban Poet Manuel Cabrera Paz (1824–72), cited by Albornoz and Rodríguez (1980: 78–79).

5. From the poet Ignacio Villa (b. 1902), cited by Morales (1976: 189–90).

6. From Alba (1958–152). However, this sensationalistic pulp novel is full of inconsistencies and exaggerations, as well as inaccurate formations, such as the supposed “creole” copulative verb *ta sé*, from *ser*, which does not occur in any Afro-Iberian creole dialect.

7. Coelho (1963: 20); Morais-Barbosa (1975).

8. These examples come from my own materials on Philippine creole Spanish (Chabacano), collected with the aid of a Fulbright Fellowship in the summer of 1985. Major studies of this group of dialects include Whinnom (1956), Forman (1972), Frake (1971), and Riego

In addition, each of these dialects has other particles, used instead of or in addition to *ta* to express aspectual and temporal vars., and in many cases the *NP ta V_{inf}* construction alternates with a conjugated verb form, an isolated uninflected infinitive, or another serial verb construction.

While the continued study of comparative Afro-Iberian creoles is of considerable interest, the present article focuses on the origin and development of the construction *ta* + *V_{inf}* in *bozal* Spanish of the Caribbean area, since the appearance of this var. in Cuban and Puerto Rican *bozal* Spanish, in Papiamentu, and in the creole dialect of Palenque de San Basilio, Colombia, has been used as evidence that most African slaves brought to Spanish America already spoke, and perhaps continued speaking in larger social nuclei, a creole Spanish which derived ultimately from creole Portuguese, and that the creole Spanish of widely separated areas of Latin America was originally very similar (Granda 1978: 362–423, 481–518; Megenney 1984; cf. also López Morales 1980, 1983).

Before examining the specifics of creole verbal structures, it is necessary to turn back to the earliest attestations of *bozal* or creole Spanish and Portuguese, which appear in literary documents of the 16th and 17th centuries, generally in the form of humorous imitations of African slaves or servants, cast as fools and buffoons, but occasionally in more serious representations. A careful comparison of these attestations⁹ will convince even the most skeptical that many of the deviant forms in *bozal* Spanish are derived from Portuguese, including such transparently Portuguese forms as *vai/bai*, *muysto*, *conhece*, and the regular change of /l/ to /r/ in syllable-internal position: *branco*, *escravo*. The remaining forms, less easily classifiable, represent a wide range of morphological and syntactic distortions.

Significantly, there is no indication of the use of *ta* or similar aspectual particles in Spanish OR Portuguese literature of this time, although available evidence indicates that several creole Portuguese dialects were formed or coalesced during the 16th and 17th centuries, including those of Annobon, São Tomé and Príncipe, Cape Verde and, in America, Papiamentu, Palenquero, and Saramaccan. Verbal modifications in Golden Age Spanish and Portuguese texts fall into two categories: use of isolated uninflected infinitives, at times accompanied by other phonetic deformations, and substitution of incorrect conjugated forms, also with phonetic and morphological deformations. The first literary attestation of Afro-Portuguese speech, from 1455, employs only uninflected infinitives: “a min rrey de negro estar Serra Lyoa” ‘I am the king of the blacks, from Sierra Leone.’¹⁰ This strategy is continued in examples

de Dios (1976, 1978). For similarities between Chabacano and Asian creole Portuguese, see Batalha (1960). Some early literary examples are found in López (1893: 34) and Retana (1921: 4).

9. Major studies include Naro (1978), Weber de Kurlat (1962), Chasca (1946), Granda (1969), Jason (1967), Castellano (1961), and Teyssier (1959).

10. The example, from the *Cançãoeiro Geral*, is analyzed by Teyssier (1959: 244).

from Lope de Vega,¹¹ Henrique da Mota (Leite de Vasconcellos 1933: 242), and Lope de Rueda,¹² while Gil Vicente¹³ and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Mansour 1973: 61) exemplify use of the third person singular for all verbal forms. For example, Gil Vicente writes “no sabe mi essa carreira” ‘I don’t know that race.’ Both the isolated infinitive and the reduction of verbal paradigms in favor of a single conjugated form are well-attested strategies in contact vernaculars, representing the use of minimally marked forms, and do not in themselves militate in favor of any common origin for verbal modification and simplification (cf. Lipski c). In addition to this almost random variation of verbal morphology found in Golden Age Spanish and Portuguese texts, one common denominator is found, the verb *sar*, formed by the fusion of *ser* and *estar*,¹⁴ used by Lope de Rueda, Góngora (1980: 153–54), Lope de Vega, Gil Vicente, and Henrique da Mota. Lope, for example, offers “samo tan recgocijara de ver lo sielo tan beyo” ‘we are so happy to see such pretty skies,’¹⁵ while Gil Vicente gives “a mi sá negro de crivão, agora sá vosso cão” ‘I am coal black, now I am your dog (slave).’¹⁶ Occurring also in this time period is the confusion of *ser* and *estar*:¹⁷ “Yo ser de Mandinga y estar negro taybo” ‘I am from Mandinga and am a good Negro.’ The verb *sentar* (var. *santar*) was used occasionally in the sense of *ser/estar*, perhaps reflecting the original meaning of STARE; for example, Chiado (1970: 552) writes “Prtugá sentá diabo” ‘Portugal (the Portuguese) is the devil.’ The verb *sendá/sentá* occurs in Colombian *palenquero* (Friedemann and Patiño Roselli 1983: 131–32), suggesting that it was in wider use in Afro-Iberian dialects beginning with the late 16th century.

All the recently cited examples are based on use of a one-word verb, usually without inflection. As for the lack of aspectual particles in *bozal* Spanish and Portuguese of this time, Alvarez Nazario (1974: 120) speculates that

“no aparecen en estas documentaciones españolas evidencias de las antes aludidas marcas aspectuales (ya bien porque en época tan temprana de su historia no las hubiera fijado aun el criollo afroportugués que le sirve de base inmediata al hablar guineo español, o bien porque de existir ya, su rara ídole estructural vista desde el ángulo del castellano y antes del portugués las hubiera mantenido fuera de las posibilidades de captación imitativa por parte de los escritores de entonces que retratan el lenguaje del negro) . . .”

11. In *El santo negro Rosambuco*, in Lope de Vega (1964, 10: 145f.).

12. In the *Comedia llamada Eufemia* and the *Comedia de los engañados*, in Lope de Rueda (1908, 1: 77–82, 179–85).

13. From *O clérigo da Beira*, in Vicente (1907: 354f.).

14. Cf. Naro (1978: 331), Alvarez Nazario (1974: 121). In the earliest Portuguese literary documents, the forms *são* and *sam* (for *sou*) were also used by (white) speakers in Portugal. See Chiado (1970: 37).

15. From *Madre de la mejor*, in Lope de Vega (1964, 8: 203).

16. From *O clérigo da Beira*, p. 353.

17. Cf. Alvarez Nazario (1974: 121). The first citation is from Lope de Vega’s *El santo negro Rosambuco*, (1964, 10: 145); the second, from Rodrigo de Reinoso, quoted by Naro (1978: 342).

This latter possibility, while potentially accurate, is rendered less likely by the fact that these same writers captured such subtleties as the use of *amí* for *yo* (a form which continues to be used in Cape Verde, São Tomé and Annobon), the use of the verb *sar*, and the occasional use of personal pronouns for possessives. Greater weight is given to the first proposal by the fact that the most conservative of the extant Portuguese creoles, the dialects of São Tomé/Príncipe and particularly of Annobon, make use of the verbal particle *sa* instead of *ta* to mark aspect.¹⁸ Naro (1978: 342) suggests that *ta* from *está* arose in a 16th-c. Portuguese “reconnaissance language,” eventually giving rise to the type of construction *mim ta falar*, but the lack of conclusive evidence in early Spanish and Portuguese literature and in the conservative dialects of the Gulf of Guinea may require this date to be moved forward somewhat.

Literary representatives of *bozal* speech, so popular in Golden Age poetry and drama, made a late appearance in Latin America, and, except for a few fragmentary comments and attestations, the *lenguaje bozal* does not occur in Spanish American written documents until the beginning of the 19th century, although folkloric remnants of songs and rhymes survive from the 18th; while the fragments transcribed by Sor Juana stand as 17th-c. evidence (cf. Lipski 1985b). However, the verbal construction *NP ta V_{inf}* does not appear in Latin American literary representations until the middle of the 19th century, and then only in the works of Cuban and Puerto Rican writers exemplified by the citations on p. 10. Attestations of “black” Spanish in the Caribbean prior to this time, or from other Latin American nations, exhibit other phonetic, morphological, syntactic, and lexical deformations similar to those of the Golden Age texts, but give no evidence of the use of the verbal construction under study. Examples come from Peru (López Albújar 1966: 38), Uruguay (Pereda Valdés 1965: 135–36), Argentina (Ballagas 1946: 50–51), Ecuador (Chávez Franco 1930: 524–29, Lipski b), Venezuela (Sojo 1967: 318), Mexico (Mendoza 1956: 1102) and Haitians in the Dominican Republic (Morales 1976: 142, Torres Morales 1969). It should be noted that Haitian creole has an aspectual system similar to that found in Portuguese-based creoles, including temporal/aspectual markers which behave similar to *ta* in *bozal* Spanish, and yet neither *ta* nor other particles appear in representations of Haitian pidgin Spanish.

Current nuclei of Afro-Hispanic populations exhibit linguistic characteristics similar to those found in earlier centuries, in which verb forms may be modified or exchanged, syntactic structures may be simplified, and gender may be unstable, *but, with the exception of Palenquero, no other Afro-Hispanic dialect pocket maintains TA or similar verbal particles*. Present-day Afro-Hispanic speech is found in the Dominican Republic (González and Benavides 1982), Equatorial Guinea (Lipski 1984, 1985), Ecuador (Lipski b), and Panama

18. Cf. Valkhoff (1975: 21f.); Barrera (1957: 44); Paula Brito (1963: 365).

(Lipski a, July 1981). In all of these Afro-Hispanic linguistic manifestations, literary, folkloric, and actually occurring, the verbal particle *ta* is conspicuous by its absence, despite the existence of other characteristics found in Spanish and Portuguese creole and vestigial dialects (Lipski c), such as elimination of prepositions, articles and conjunctions, and general instability of verbal and nominal agreement.

In partial summary, currently available evidence indicates that verbal constructions of the type *NP ta V_{inf}* were confined to Cuban and Puerto Rican *bozal* Spanish, and probably made their appearance towards the end of the 18th century. In Cuba, it is conceivable that a few speakers continue to use these forms at the present time, and it is certain that until a few decades ago it was possible to find such speakers;¹⁹ in Puerto Rico, perhaps as much as a century has gone by since living speakers of such *bozal* language existed.

It has sometimes been suggested²⁰ that in Portuguese-based creoles, expressions of the type *ta flâ* 'is speaking' come from the (Peninsular) Portuguese construction *estar a falar* 'to be speaking', or, by using a bit more imagination,²¹ from the true progressive construction *estar falando*. The reduction of forms of *estar* to *sta* or *ta* is documented from the earliest stages of Spanish and Portuguese, but the construction *estar a V_{inf}* is a more recent development in Peninsular Portuguese, not surfacing in written attestations until the 19th century, and still very rarely found in Brazilian Portuguese.²² It is likely, given the dates of the first literary attestations of the *estar a V_{inf}* constructions in European Portuguese, that they were already in use in popular speech at least from the beginning of the 19th century, if not earlier, always in alternation with the gerund construction. Since a number of Peninsular Portuguese phonetic features were transferred to Brazil when the Portuguese court temporarily moved to that country in 1808, it is probable that a construction as noteworthy as the contemporary Portuguese *estar a + V_{inf}* would have been transferred to Brazilian dialects, particularly if it were a form used by high-prestige speakers of the Lisbon area (Lipski 1975, 1976).

19. Cf. Alzola (1965), Bachiller y Morales (1883), Montori (1916), and Pichardo (1836); for interpretations cf. Granda (1978), Alvarez Nazario (1974), Otheguy (1975), and López Morales (1980).

20. E.g., by Lopes da Silva (1957: 139), Valkhoff (1966: 107), Lenz (1928: 120), Birmingham (1970: 143).

21. Otheguy (1975) considers this possibility, although he does not adopt it. In Cabrera (1983: 128) we find the vars. "ta buca' palo," and "ta buca'n palo" 'he is looking for a tree', suggesting that, at least in this example, an awareness of the progressive construction may have influenced the evolution of the *bozal* verb form.

22. The progressive construction with the gerund continues to appear in Peninsular Portuguese until well into the 20th century, whereas the construction with *estar + INFINITIVE* does not make its appearance in literary texts until towards the middle of the 19th century. Such writers as Eça de Queiroz used both types of constructions indiscriminately, but the Peninsular constructions have made little headway in Brazil, or, apparently, even in Portuguese-speaking areas of Africa. Cf. the following sources: Leite de Vasconcellos (1970: 121); Silveira Bueno (1958: 320); Said Ali (1966: 359); Ribeiro (1900: 291); Moisés (1969 *passim*.); Pereira Tavares (1961 *passim*); Chaves de Melo (1975: 142–43).

Since the *NP ta V_{inf}* constructions in creole Portuguese have been ascribed to a 16th-c. lingua franca (Naro 1978: 342), it is unlikely that this construction has been influenced by the structurally similar progressive construction in European Portuguese, and it is equally unlikely that the European construction is in any way related to the syntactic reduction found in the creole dialects. The general absence of the progressive constructions with *V_{inf}* in Brazil, not only in the standard dialects but also in such popular speech modes as *caipira* and earlier Brazilian *bozal* Portuguese,²³ casts a further measure of doubt on the possibility of an interrelationship between two structurally similar verbal constructions.

The use of *ta* as a particle in the earliest Portuguese-based lingua franca is as yet undemonstrated, and many early attestations of what we know as *lingua franca* indicate a strongly Italian base: “Mi star bono, comme ti star?”, “mi pudir servir per ti per qualche cosa?” ‘I am fine, how are you? Can I help you with something?’²⁴ The linguistic strategies exemplified by such fragments are based on the use of object pronoun plus uninflected infinitive, a strategy which also appears in the earliest *bozal* Spanish and Portuguese fragments. The most conservative Portuguese-based creoles, those of Annobon and São Tomé and Príncipe, use particles like *sa* and *ska*, perhaps derived from *sar/essar* or similar blended forms, whereas the *criol* of Guinea Bissau prefers *na* for the progressive and uses *ta* for the future.²⁵ As has been noticed, Cape Verde creole, the moribund Indian Ocean and Asian Portuguese creoles, and Philippine creole Spanish do use the particle *ta*; it is tempting to trace all of these instances of *ta* back to Portuguese *está/estar*, while accepting that the semantic value of *ta* has been modified in each of the creoles, perhaps through substratum influences.²⁶ However, the one feature shared by the verbal systems of all Spanish- and Portuguese-based creoles (and of most other creole languages) is the predominance of verbal aspect over tense, and the use of generally preverbal or immediately postverbal aspectual particles (usually a consonant + /a/) in combination with an inflected infinitive stem. A large number of African languages spoken on the Guinea coast, in the Gulf of Guinea, and in the Angola/Congo region, as well as some languages of east Africa, similarly signal verbal aspect, quite frequently with monosyllabic particles consisting of a consonant plus /a/.²⁷ Many particles in creole French dialects of Haiti, Louisiana, Trinidad, and elsewhere have been variously at-

23. Coelho (1963: 38–43) gives some interesting examples of Brazilian *bozal* songs from the 18th and 19th centuries. For the *caipira* dialect, cf. Amaral (1955) and Rodrigues (1974).

24. This example is given by Coelho (1963: 89), as collected by Prince Lucien Bonaparte. For more data on the nature and evolution of lingua franca or Sabir, cf. Whinnom (1977), Hadel (1969), and Collier (1976).

25. Cf. Wilson (1962: 21–24), Scantamburlo (1981: 52–55).

26. Cf. Valkhoff (1966: 105), Morais-Barbosa (1975: 146), Taylor (1977: 160), for an idea of the diversity of particles similar to and/or related to *ta* in a number of creole languages.

27. Cf. Taylor (1977: 160), Mendonça (1933), Nunes da Silva (1958), Raimundo (1933: 58–68), Welmers (1973) for an idea of the scope of these languages and the high degree of possibly fortuitous similarity among the aspectual particles.

tributed to African roots, generally from the Bantu group.²⁸ In a situation of prolonged contact between a Portuguese pidgin and one or more African languages sharing similar aspectual systems, it is likely that the use of the simple infinitive would eventually be supplemented by a set of easily learned and frequently used monosyllabic particles, whose individual characteristics would vary from region to region. In many Afro-Hispanic chants and songs which combine African, Spanish, and onomatopoeic elements, it is possible to find combinations which take the superficial form *NP ta V_{inf}*, and which may possibly have served as further models upon which the *bozal* verb forms could be constructed: “Mi mare mío ta kumbí kumbá”; “ahí tá cosa mbrumá tá kuna makando munango” (Cabrera 1979: 135). Similarity with the already existent *ta* (reduced from *estar/está*)²⁹ would reinforce the use of this particle, but the employment of such forms as *sa* (São Tomé, Annobon), *da* (Saramacca of Surinam) *na* (Guinea Bissau, early Saramacca of Surinam [cf. Taylor 1977: 160]), and *ska* (Cape Verde) indicates that the pressure exerted by *ta* (< *está*) was counteracted by other forces not directly derivable from Portuguese etyma. It is not necessary to postulate the influence of a single African language on the pidgin in order to account for particular aspectual particles, since the great structural similarity of large groups of West African languages suffices to facilitate the evolution of an aspect-dominated verbal system in newly evolving creoles, and permits the widespread use of semi-creolized African *lingue franche* (Taylor 1971, Hancock 1975).

Returning to the case of *ta* in Caribbean *bozal* Spanish, two special cases must be studied, Papiamentu and Colombian *palenquero*, both of which use variants of *ta* plus verbal infinitive (lacking final /r/) in their verbal systems. The structural similarities between the two languages are so significant as to suggest a common origin of at least certain major features, an argument extended by Granda (1978: 481–518), Otheguy (1975), and Megenney (1984) to the suggestion that virtually all Spanish American *bozales* and their immediate descendants originally spoke similar dialects. Papiamentu began its drift away from Spanish following Dutch takeover of Curaçao in 1633–34, since some of the black slaves presumably already spoke Spanish in addition to the postulated Portuguese creole (Van Wijk 1958). It is supposed that Papiamentu arose as a distinct language as early as the end of the 17th century, although given the considerable demographic flux characterizing Curaçao and neighboring islands in the 17th and 18th centuries, involving Dutch, Spanish, French, and English, as well as Sephardic Jews arrived from Brazil and the constant penetration of Spanish from neighboring Venezuela, it will probably never be possible to date more than approximately the origins of

28. Cf. Comhaire-Sylvain (1936), Goodman (1964: 85), Broussard (1942), Valdman (1977). For Black English, cf. Dillard (1972: 121), Cassidy (1961), Alleyne (1981: 12–13), Rickford (1977).

29. *Estar* also co-occurs with adjectives, as in the following examples from Cabrera (1979: 91, 201): “yo llorá” ‘I am crying’; “Abrahán que etá morí ya” ‘Abraham who has already died’; “ahora que yo etá peleá contigo” ‘now that I’m fighting with you’.

Papiamentu as a distinctly identifiable dialect (Van Wijk 1958; Navarro Tomás 1971; Birmingham 1970; Hesseling 1933; Wood 1972a, 1972b; Granda 1974). It has even been suggested that in the 17th century, black slaves in Curaçao learned to speak a creole Portuguese from contact with Portuguese-speaking Jews, and that the hypothesis of previously learned African creole Portuguese is unnecessary (Le Page 1977, Birmingham 1970, Hartog 1968: 158). Still, it is unlikely that the aspectual system of Papiamentu is attributable to any of the superstratum or adstratum influences that affected Curaçao, since neither Spanish nor Dutch as spoken in the Caribbean have or had such a system. It therefore must stem from earlier creoles spoken by black slaves held by the Spanish and later by the Dutch.

The case of *palenquero* is more difficult, since it represents a linguistically anomalous situation, reflecting the effects of prolonged isolation of a culturally and linguistically rather homogeneous group, similar to what occurred with various Bush Negro societies of Surinam. According to historical documents, the original settlement of Palenque de San Basilio was formed in 1599 when one Domingo Bioho (King Benkos), a slave leader, led a rebellion of some 30 followers, who escaped from Cartagena and founded a fortified site to the south (Escalante 1954, 1979; Arrazola 1970). Bioho himself was apparently from an area that is currently part of Guinea Bissau, although the majority of his followers were from the Congo/Angola region (Granda 1978: 441–66). If the entire *palenquero* dialect had derived from the language spoken by these 30 individuals, most of whom spoke related African languages, a more truly African-based creole might have resulted, but subsequent slave insurrections in 1619 and 1696 brought additional members to the community, while the definitive pacification of the *cimarrones* by missionaries in 1713–17 brought sustained contact with (then) contemporary Spanish usage. Already in 1771, we have testimony that *palenqueros* spoke some version of popular Colombian Spanish, in addition to their own creole dialect (Escalante 1954: 229–30), which had to be taught to young residents; 200 years later only a relatively small proportion of the native *palenqueros* speak this creole language exclusively, and even fewer have learned it as a first language. Current *palenqueros* report that young community members are increasingly reluctant to learn this special dialect, and it may disappear after one or two more generations. From at least the middle of the 18th century, then, *palenqueros* spoke Spanish and maintained contact with other Colombians, although they chose to remain in their own village, and for at least the past century *palenqueros* have increasingly emigrated to other areas of Colombia, to Venezuela, and to Panama in search of economic stability. Whereas we have evidence that from the earliest time the residents of Palenque de San Basilio spoke a special dialect, in addition to Spanish, there is no indication as to precise grammatical format of the former dialect; and the successive overlays of intruding linguistic influences and the collective fading of the memory of forms originally used nearly 400 years ago makes it risky to venture hypotheses

as to the essential identity of *palenquero* as spoken in recent decades with that spoken immediately after the founding of Palenque at the end of the 16th century. It is entirely possible, given the small number of speakers who integrated the original group of escaped slaves, and even considering subsequent refugees who arrived during the 17th century, that *palenquero* is an extension of the earliest Cape Verde or Gulf of Guinea creole, since 16th-c. Portuguese slavers continued to draw heavily upon this region for slaves brought to the Americas. Granda's linguistic investigations indicate a higher proportion of etymologies indicative of the Congo/Angola region, and yet as far as the verbal aspectual system is concerned, *palenquero* is more similar to Cape Verde creole and the creole of Guinea Bissau than to the dialects of São Tomé/Príncipe and Annobon, more directly descended from contact between maritime Portuguese and the languages of the Angola/Congo region.

Returning to the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, where verbal constructions of the form *NP ta V_{inf}* characterized *bozal* speech of the late 18th and 19th centuries, we note again that this trait was by no means associated with all such speakers. The principal trait of *bozal* Spanish continued to be phonetic and morphological instability and deformations, which, even though they might have been common to all popular strata, were traditionally attributed to blacks (and sometimes to the indigenous population) in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Latin America.³⁰ Many literary descriptions of the popular Spanish spoken by Caribbean blacks during the period make no mention of *NP ta V_{inf}* constructions, but merely contain phonetic deformations and occasional substitutions of conjugated verb forms. The sources begin with 18th century Cuban *Cantos de cabildo* (Albornoz and Rodríguez 1980: 55–57), where only popular Cuban pronunciation is evident, including the frequent erosion of *está* to *ta*: “palo ta duro / jacha no cotta / palo ta brabbo” ‘the tree is hard, the axe does not cut, the tree is angry.’ Other negative examples come from the Cuban writers Hernández Catá (Morales 1976: 159), Tallet (ibid.: 172–73), Ramos (1963: 114), and the most famous Afro-Cuban novel, Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés*, which contains examples like: “Yo no tiene dinero” ‘I have no money,’ “lo quitan la reló y la dinere” ‘they take his watch and money’ (Villaverde 1979: 124f.). All these examples come from authors with personal knowledge of the speech of black slaves and servants who spoke Spanish imperfectly, and even discounting the elements of exaggeration and stereotyping, the inconsistent appearance of the particle *ta* is significant, especially if we consider that in North American literature of the same time period, authors were accurately representing the highly non-standard verbal system of black American English.

The facts surrounding the appearance and use of *NP ta V_{inf}* constructions in Caribbean *bozal* Spanish are thus quite complex:

30. Cf. Montori (1916: 113); Alzola (1965: 365–67); Révah (1959: 276–77). Bachiller y Morales (1883: 99) notes the similarity between 19th-c. Cuban *bozal* Spanish and Golden Age literary representations of *bozal* language.

1. The construction *NP ta V_{inf}* is not attested in Spanish-speaking areas until the end of the 18th century.
2. This same type of verbal construction is found in Portuguese-based creoles in Africa, and in *palenquero* and Papiamentu, both presumably Portuguese-derived creoles formed during the 17th century.
3. Literary attestations of “black” Spanish and Portuguese, both in Europe and in the New World, and dating from the 15th century, contain many examples demonstrating both the unstable nature of the verbal systems and the heavy creole Portuguese influence, without revealing evidence of the construction with *ta*.
4. Although some form of *bozal* Spanish has been found in most areas of Spanish America, only in the Caribbean region is the *NP ta V_{inf}* construction attested. Even in this area this pattern alternates with the use of an uninflected infinitive (with or without final /r/) without *ta*, and with incorrectly conjugated paradigmatic variants, as well as with correctly formed verbs.

Laurence (1974) postulated that *bozal* Spanish in the 19th-c. Caribbean was not a true creole, but rather a short-lived pidgin formed through the massive importation of slaves during the late 18th century and the 19th century, when the sugar plantation boom hit the Cuban and Puerto Rican economy (Mintz 1971, Allsopp 1977). Certainly the linguistic features found in most examples of *bozal* speech from this period more readily fit the pidgin category, especially considering that “a feature of all contact vernaculars is their instability . . . there are few rules of contact-vernacular grammar which admit of no exceptions” (Whinnom 1956: 77). Laurence points out the non-creolized nature of Trinidad Spanish, which was cut off from large Spanish-speaking communities at the end of the 18th century.³¹ The materials for the Dominican Republic (González and Benavides 1982) and Ecuador (Chávez Franco 1930; Lipski b) support this conclusion. How, then, does one explain the sudden introduction and equally rapid disappearance of the *NP ta V_{inf}* construction in Caribbean *bozal* Spanish of the 19th century?

Much available information points indirectly to the influence of Papiamentu, a possibility not as shocking as it might seem if we consider the society of Curaçao during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. The Dutch maintained an *asiento* on Curaçao, from which slaves were reshipped to Spanish, French, and English possessions in the Caribbean. This *asiento* was revoked in 1713, but much clandestine traffic continued afterwards as well; moreover, the Dutch also used the island of St. Eustatius to continue transshipping of African slaves.³²

When the big demand for slaves occurred in Cuba and, to a lesser extent, in Puerto Rico, towards the end of the 18th century, the legally available sources were not adequate to supply all the needed manpower; so the Nether-

31. Cf. Thompson (1957); Moodie (1973, a). In 1984 I was able to travel to Trinidad and personally verify, with Prof. Moodie’s gracious assistance, the significant differences between Trinidad Spanish and Caribbean *bozal* Spanish. Some of these findings are reported in Lipski (c).

32. A composite of the following sources provides an adequate picture: Le Page (1968: 58–59); Hoetink (1958); Aimes (1967: 56); Gosslinga (1979: 184–86); Postma (1970, 1972, 1975); Emmer (1973); Brusse (1882); Simons (1868); Rawley (1981: 86–93).

lands Antilles, particularly the traditionally predominant slave port of Curaçao, were instrumental in making up the difference between the *bozales* arrived directly from Africa and the total needs of the Spanish American colonies. Slaves escaping during the not uncommon insurrections on Curaçao frequently made for the coast of nearby Venezuela (Acosta Saignes 1967: 265–83, Aguirre Beltrán 1971: 149). Most were captured, and the *cimarrón* communities thus formed, composed of escaped slaves of both Venezuelan and Curaçao origin, were soon Christianized and brought under the nominal control of the Venezuelan authorities (Brito Figueroa 1961, Liscano 1948: 74–75). There is no linguistic evidence of the persistence of creolized Spanish in this region, but at the same time, it would not be surprising to find attestations of *bozal* Spanish containing verbal constructions based on *ta* in 19th-c. Venezuela. A continued search of literary and folkloric documents, as well as study of the few remaining Afro-Venezuelan groups, may eventually turn up linguistic evidence to corroborate the historically demonstrable incursion of Curaçao slaves into Venezuela.³³

In Puerto Rico, a large number of blacks from Curaçao arrived at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century; they are even mentioned in some 19th-c. literary works.³⁴ Curaçao speech was described in the 18th century as *español arañado* or *degenerado*, and its use is well attested in Puerto Rico until well into the 20th century (Bachiller y Morales 1883: 103, Alvarez Nazario 1974: 146).

In Cuba also, the use of Papiamentu by Curaçao natives is attested for the 19th century (cf. Granda 1973, Valkhoff 1966, Hesseling 1933), particularly in the area of Santiago; and the time of arrival of these speakers coincides nearly exactly with the first attestations of the *NP ta V_{inf}* constructions in Cuban *bozal* Spanish.³⁵ Curaçao natives were also sent or freely immigrated to other Caribbean islands, including the Virgin Islands and some other French- and English-speaking territories, but there is no record of a sig-

33. Sylvia Moodie has uncovered a few cases of constructions like “él tá olvidá” ‘he forgets’ in Trinidad Spanish, which was strongly influenced by immigration from Venezuela in the 19th century. However, these examples are so few and so sporadic that they merely signal the need for a comprehensive linguistic survey of the Caribbean islands and adjacent mainland coastal areas in search of the last remaining vestiges of earlier partially creolized Spanish. Granda (1973) observes that a Venezuelan folk text published by Aretz de Ramón and Ramón y Rivera (1955: 72) appears to contain Papiamentu elements; although, as Granda himself admits, the process of oral transmission has deformed them almost beyond recognition, and accurate identification is impossible.

34. Cf. Alvarez Nazario (1974: 65, 1970, 1972), Díaz Soler (1981: 135), and Morales Carrión (1978: chap. 2). In a similar vein, it is known that creole French *patois*, introduced in the early 19th century, was widely spoken in many parts of Puerto Rico until well into the 20th century. I was recently able to hear recordings made in a remote rural region of Puerto Rico in which a few old informants (over 80 years of age) sang from memory some songs in *patois*, although they could not decipher the meaning.

35. Evidently, however, the use of Papiamentu was never widespread in Cuba, since Bachiller y Morales (1883: 102–3) notes that “en mi dilatada vida, ni oí hablar del papiamento, ni hubiera conocido su existencia a no haber salido de Cuba.” It should be recalled that this “dilatada vida” spanned the greater part of the 19th century.

nificant group of Papiamentu speakers establishing themselves in any other Spanish-speaking nation.

The structural similarities between Papiamentu and Palenquero, *bozal* Caribbean Spanish, and Portuguese creoles have been frequently mentioned, and constitute the basis for many monogenetic theories of creole formation. However, the direct influence of Papiamentu on Cuban and Puerto Rican Spanish, on those few occasions where it has even been contemplated, has usually been ruled out due to the lack of other comparable similarities in major structural details (Granda 1973 : 12). Nonetheless, it is not necessary to suppose that Cuban and Puerto Rican *bozales* would imitate all features of Papiamentu merely through coexistence with natives of Curaçao; they might, however, assimilate constructions that for whatever reason could be readily adapted to the locally spoken *bozal* Spanish. The verbal construction *NP ta V_{inf}* is a good candidate for adoption, since it permits a considerable verbal differentiation without increasing morphological complexity beyond that of the bare uninflected infinitive. In a certain sense, it represents an easier route than the chaotic mixture of incorrectly used verbal forms that characterized so much of *bozal* speech in the Caribbean and elsewhere.³⁶ The prior existence of *ta*, derived from *está/estar* in adjectival constructions (*el palo ta duro*), the existence of the infinitive stem minus /r/ in popular *bozal* Spanish beginning in the 16th century, and the already attested use of the uninflected infinitive stem in conjunction with subject pronouns, provide the basic materials for the incursion of the Papiamentu verbal system, which evidently never made more than partial progress among *bozal* speakers in Cuba and Puerto Rico.³⁷

Other features of Cuban and Puerto Rican *bozal* Spanish also find parallels in Papiamentu. For example, the use of *riba* as a preposition meaning ‘upon’ is exemplified in the works of Lydia Cabrera (1983 : 183, 1979 : 17–18):

ya pará rriba téngue ‘He climbed up the *tengue* (tree)’
pone cañón rriba alifante ‘(they) put a cannon on top of the elephant’
uté sienta rriba pelo ‘You sit on the (lady’s) hair.’

Papiamentu has sentences like “Kiko tin rriba mesa?” ‘What is on the table?’

The form *nan*, found in Papiamentu, is also attested in Puerto Rican

36. It is possible to formulate a theoretical syntactic analysis of the particle *ta* in order to demonstrate that such aspectual particles in a sense are universally “unmarked.” Cf. Muysken (1981) for an argument along these lines.

37. A more contemporary example representing the rapid spread of a structural innovation which in a sense represents a syntactic simplification is the construction in which relative forms are reduced, such as *yo quiero es viajar*, *lo conocí fue en la fiesta*, etc. These constructions, long attested as occasional popular vars. throughout South American Spanish and quite prevalent in Brazilian Portuguese (Reinhardt 1973; Kany 1951 : 256), have recently made tremendous headway in Panama (Lipski a) and in Venezuela, in the latter nation virtually taking by storm the middle and upper social classes of Caracas in less than 5 years (Sedano 1984). I have also discovered this construction in popular Ecuadoran Spanish. Armin Schwegler (personal communication) indicates that this construction is also frequent in *palenquero*.

bozal Spanish (Mason and Espinosa 1918: 361; Alvarez Nazario 1974: 197, 396–97):

vine aquí nan Puerto Rico . . . nan cañón hacía ¡pum! ‘I came here to Puerto Rico . . . the cannon went boom!’

In Cuban *bozal* Spanish, the var. form *lan* occurs (Bachiller y Morales 1883: 101, Cabrera 1976: 16):

Boma va a comese lan gaína. ‘Boma will eat the chickens’.
 come lo ñame y deja lan gallo. ‘Eat the yams and leave the chickens (roosters)’.³⁸
 Y durmi oté una semana, ma que lan tiempo se piere. ‘And you sleep for a week, although time is wasting’.
 Yo bota lan garafo. ‘I throw out the bottles’.

The use of *nan/lan* has been correlated with the pronoun *inem* in São Tomé creole and with *nam* in Annobon creole (Alvarez Nazario 1974: 184–85, Wagner 1966: 158), and as with the case of the particle *ta*, such short monosyllabic forms can be compared with similar elements in other African languages and creole dialects.

Cuban *bozal* Spanish provides occasional uses of *tener* with existential force, similar to Papiamentu (Cabrera 1969; cf. also Lipski c): “En botica tien de tó.” ‘There is everything in the store’. Also found is “Gato tá vini” ‘The cat is coming’, whose verb form is more reminiscent of Papiamentu *bini* than of Spanish *venir*. The form *awor* (*ahora*), found in Papiamentu, also appears occasionally in Cuban *bozal* Spanish (Birmingham 1970: 28–29), adding yet another similarity between the two that renders the possibility of fortuitous congruity even more unlikely.

The preceding remarks have indicated that as late as the 19th century, Caribbean *bozal* Spanish was not a homogeneous phenomenon, but rather was characterized by a considerable instability and variation more typical of recently acquired and effervescent pidgins than of a true widespread creole (Alleyne 1971). This does not undermine the creole nature of Papiamentu, *palenquero*, and other small nuclei of Afro-Hispanic language, but does cast doubt on the widespread existence of a uniform Spanish creole in the Caribbean area. The frequently-mentioned verbal constructions of the type *NP ta V_{inf}* are shown to be a relatively late and geographically limited incursion in Caribbean *bozal* Spanish, coming possibly from Papiamentu, or conceivably from an as yet unidentified infusion of creole speakers from another region (including those coming directly from Africa), and should not in themselves be used as a foundation stone for comprehensive theories of Spanish creolization.

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38. From Cabrera (1976: 14). In this case, the /n/ may represent a nasalized aspiration of /s/, since on the following page we find “puruga, jerejene, memoquiera m’etá comiendo y lon diablo m’etá llevando,” approximately ‘Ants and termites are eating me up all over and the devil is carrying me off’.

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