

Chapter 1. Introduction

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Pages 1–3 of

Afro-Peruvian Spanish: Spanish slavery and the legacy of Spanish Creoles

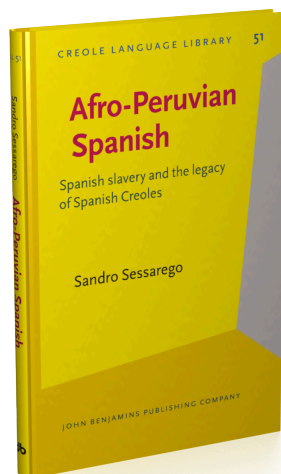
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Introduction

1.1 General introduction

The origin and evolution of the Afro-Hispanic dialects spoken in the Americas (Barlovento Spanish, Yungueño Spanish, Chota Valley Spanish, etc.) have long been at the center of linguistic debate and, at present, full light has yet to be shed on the topic. It is still unclear why we do not find Spanish creole languages in certain regions of Spanish America, while we can find such contact varieties in similar former colonies, which were ruled by the British, the French or the Dutch (McWhorter 2000; Lipski 2005; Schwegler 2010).

This book focuses on one such Afro-Hispanic variety, the Afro-Peruvian dialect spoken in rural areas of the province of Chinchá, Department of Ica, coastal Peru, more precisely in the villages of San Regis, San José, El Guayabo and El Carmen (see Figure 1.1). This dialect is spoken by a few hundred people, elderly Chinchanos, descendants of the slaves taken to this region during the seventeenth century to work on plantations.

This investigation has been carried out with the belief that creole studies will benefit from an interdisciplinary approach that combines linguistic, socio-historical, judicial, and anthropological insights. The need for a multidisciplinary perspective is particularly evident in the case of Afro-Peruvian Spanish (APS). While this dialect does not show the radical morphological reductions and substrate influence commonly found in creole languages, its importance in the study of transatlantic creole genesis has long been acknowledged by experts in the field (e.g. Lipski 1994a; McWhorter 2000). In fact, given the presence of sugarcane plantations at the time of the colony, as well as the extensive use of a black workforce on them, it may surprise that no significant traces of a creole language in the region are found today.

After a thorough analysis of the socio-historical background of Chinchano Spanish and an inspection of its main linguistic features, this book offers a new hypothesis to provide a fresh view on the long-lasting Spanish creole debate. In particular, this proposal focuses on a variety of legal aspects that made African slavery under Spanish rule different from that exercised by other colonial powers.

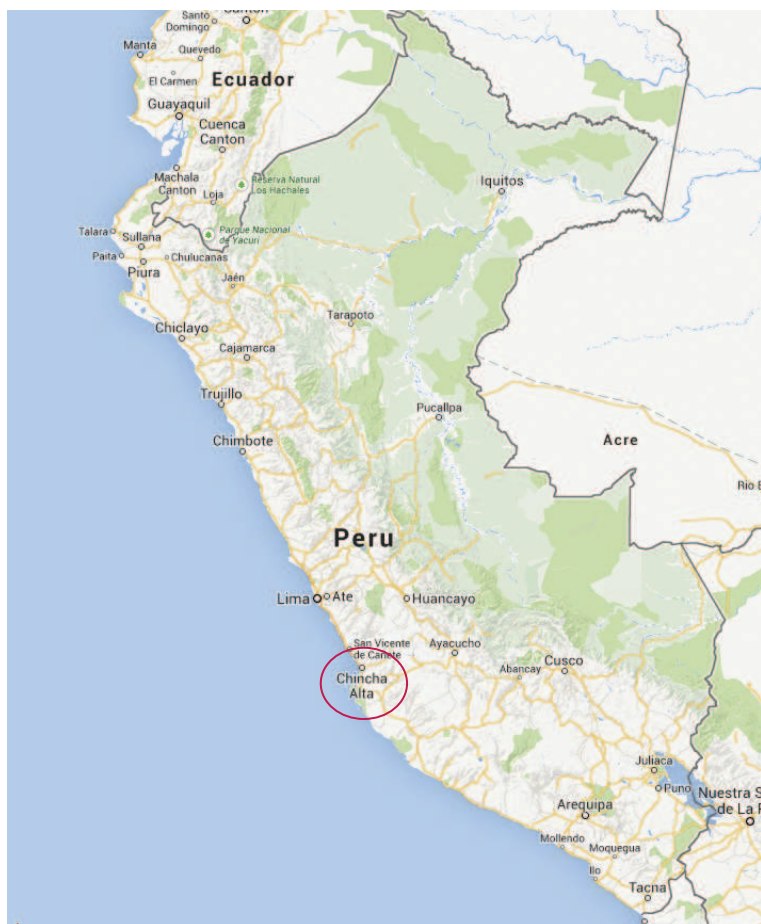


Figure 1.1 Overhead view of Chíncha, Peru
(adopted from: <<https://www.google.com/maps/@-10.9603117,-75.8046736,6z>>)

1.2 Objectives of this study

This study has three main objectives. The first is to provide a socio-historical account of black slavery in Peru to unveil the origins of APS and to understand where to place this language in the Afro-Hispanic linguistic universe. The second objective is to describe APS grammar by focusing on its phonetics and phonology, morpho-syntax, and lexicon. The book then examines the Spanish creole debate from a comparative perspective and propose a new hypothesis to account for the current paucity of Spanish-based creoles in the Americas.

1.3 Data collection

The fieldwork for this study was carried out from November 2012 to January 2013 in the rural villages of El Guayabo, San José, San Regis and El Carmen, located in the Province of Chincha, Department of Ica, Peru. Some sixty informants participated in this study. In collecting the data, I tried to select speakers belonging to different generations and with a variety of social and educational backgrounds. This heterogeneous sample of Chinchanos allowed me to understand that only the eldest and least educated informants could speak a dialect that presents several significant differences from standard coastal Peruvian Spanish. Even though several informants did not speak the traditional vernacular on a regular basis, almost everybody appeared to have some familiarity with it; thus they could corroborate with their grammatical intuitions the spontaneous data collected when speaking with the eldest members of the community.

In their daily informal interactions, grandparents would address younger people using remarkably traditional phonological and morpho-syntactic patterns. However, even in those circumstances, younger speakers would usually reply in the local standard. This apparent rejection of the traditional variety by the younger generations occurs in a sociolinguistic context in which the traditional Chinchano dialect is avoided in favor of a more prestigious Spanish variety. This suggests that, in one or two generations, APS is likely to be lost.

1.4 Organization of the volume

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to the study by presenting its goals, methodology and structural outline. Chapter 2 introduces the main hypotheses that have been proposed to account for the relative paucity of Spanish creoles in the Americas. Chapter 3 provides an account of present-day APS grammar by focusing on its phonetics and phonology, morpho-syntax, and lexicon. Chapter 4 offers an analysis of the status of APS based on its grammatical features. It proposes that APS, as well as many other black dialects of the Americas, may be depicted as *the result of L1 acquisition (nativization) of advanced L2 grammars*. Chapter 5 presents an analysis of black slavery in Peru. Chapter 6 addresses the persistent puzzle concerning the genesis and evolution of Afro-Hispanic contact varieties. It provides a comparative legal analysis of Spanish, English, French, Dutch and Portuguese colonies overseas to shed light on the paucity of Spanish creoles in the Americas. Finally, Chapter 7 consists of the concluding remarks.