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Chapter 7. Concluding remarks

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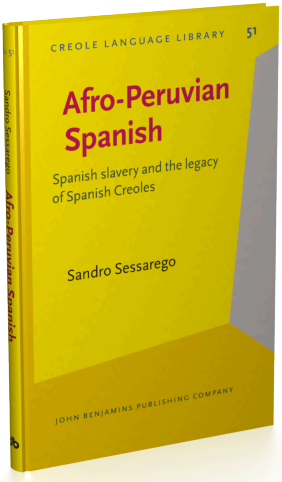

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Sandro Sessarego
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CHAPTER 7

Concluding remarks

The origins of the Afro-Hispanic dialects of the Americas are extremely intriguing, since it still has to be explained why we do not find creole languages in certain regions of Spanish America, where – at first glance – the socio-demographic conditions for creole languages to emerge appear to have been in place in colonial times.

Different hypotheses have tried to cast light on this issue. On one hand, the supporters of the Decreolization Hypothesis have suggested that a Spanish creole may have existed in several Latin American regions, and that it would have subsequently decreolized due to recent contact with more prestigious Spanish varieties (Granda 1968, 1970; Schwegler 1999, 2014; etc.). On the other hand, other scholars have indicated that – at least for the Caribbean region – the socioeconomic factors were not present in colonial times for the development of a Spanish-based creole, since the sugar boom hit the Spanish Caribbean only in the 19th century, when a Spanish dialect was already spoken by the vast majority of the free and enslaved populations (Mintz 1971; Laurence 1974; Lipski 1993; Chaudenson 2001; Clements 2009; etc.). More recently, McWhorter (2000) has proposed in his book, *The Missing Spanish Creoles*, the Afrogenesis Hypothesis, which claims that for coastal Peru and several other Mainland regions of Spanish America the conditions for the evolution of a creole language were perfectly in place and that if a Spanish creole did not emerge, it is because a Spanish pidgin was not spoken in Africa, so that it could not possibly be transplanted to the Americas and turned into a fully-fledged creole.

According to McWhorter, plantation creoles did not form because slaves had little or no access to the superstrate language (what he calls "the limited access model"); rather, the reason why creoles developed had to do with the fact that Africans decided to create new means of communication, different from the languages spoken by their masters, which came to represent a symbol of black identity for the slaves working in the fields. McWhorter (2000) argues that "the limited access model" has a main fault: it cannot explain why Spanish-based creoles are not spoken in Spanish America. In his view, in fact, "something broader was at work [in Spanish America] than just unconnected, local demographic constellations" (2000: 39).

McWhorter's proposal has been tested and criticized by several authors who worked on some of the Afro-Hispanic dialects he classified as "missing Spanish creoles" (cf. Díaz-Campos & Clements 2005, 2008 for Barlovento Spanish; Sessarego 2013a, c, 2014b for Chota Valley Spanish); nevertheless, his effort to provide a unified framework to account for creole genesis has generally been praised (cf. Schwegler 2002: 121; Lipski 2005: 286).

The current study has paid close attention to yet another Mainland Latin American region identified by McWhorter as the perfect breeding ground for a Spanish creole to develop, coastal Peru. The overall picture emerging from the available data seems to suggest that Afro-Peruvian Spanish (APS) was neither a creole which decreolized (contra the Decreolization Hypothesis) nor a 'missing Spanish creole' (contra the Afrogenesis Hypothesis). In fact, the main linguistic features detected for APS, which have also been traditionally reported for Afro-Hispanic vernaculars in relation to their potential creole origin (i.e. overuse of subject pronouns, invariant verb forms, lack of gender and number agreement across the DP, lack of subject-verb inversion in questions, presence of bare nouns), can be accounted for as cases of advanced second language acquisition strategies, which do not necessarily imply a previous (de)creolization stage.

On the other hand, the available socio-historical evidence encountered for this vernacular casts some serious doubts on colonial coastal Peru as the ideal environment for a creole language to develop. Indeed, a number of factors appear to have contributed to the non-creolization of Peruvian Spanish in the region. Data show that the logistic and economic restrictions on slave trading did not allow for the massive introduction of Africans into the colony. In particular, during the first colonial phase (1500–1650), slaves' introduction happened gradually, and blacks were usually *ladinos* proceeding from Spain or other settled colonies (Lockhart 1968). Even during the second phase (1650–1767) the importation of *bozales* in Peru did not achieve a massive volume. Moreover, the presence in the country of a large number of *criollo* slaves, combined with their systematic use on coastal sugarcane plantations (Flores Galindo 1984), certainly reduced the likelihood of a Spanish creole emerging in this area, in line with Mufwene's (1996) Founder Principle.

Not many planters had the economic resources to rely on a massive black labor force, the only organization that had the required financial means to do so was the Catholic Church, and in particular the Company of Jesus. Nevertheless, we observed that even in the biggest Jesuit haciendas the introduction of new slaves was neither abrupt nor massive (Cushner 1980), while the managerial techniques used by this religious organization to increase production and Christianize the enslaved workers were likely to have favored the acquisition of Spanish by the black captives (Macera 1966). These patterns also applied to the specific

plantations analyzed for the current study in Chincha, where the haciendas used to belong to the Company of Jesus before being confiscated by the *Temporalidades* council in 1767 and sold to private landowners.

The present work not only contributes to shedding light on the origins of APS, it also helps clarify the controversial puzzle concerning the genesis of Spanish creoles in the Americas in a broader sense. In order to provide a more concrete answer to the question raised by McWhorter on a "mysteriously absent creoles cluster under a single power" (2000: 39), the current study has focused on an aspect of the European colonial enterprise in the Americas that has never been closely analyzed in relation to the evolution of Afro-European contact varieties, the legal regulations of black slavery.

In fact, Spain not only diverged from other European powers in that it did not directly trade in African slaves, as highlighted by McWhorter (2000); rather, one additional peculiarity of the Spanish colonial enterprise is found in its legal regulation of black slavery. In particular, due to a concomitance of several historical facts (i.e. early reception of the Corpus Juris Civilis, pressure exerted by the Catholic Church on society, etc.), Spanish slaves in medieval times obtained legal personality, which implied that Spanish captives in the Americas had a variety of rights completely unknown to – or highly constrained for – the slaves living under other European rules. All these elements significantly affected the essence of Afro-European social dynamics in the different American colonies, and consequently the nature of the languages that developed from such divergent social contexts. These ideas form the core of the Legal Hypothesis of Creole Genesis, which ascribes a prime importance in the development of Afro-European languages in the Americas to the historical evolution of slavery, from the legal rules contained in the Roman Corpus Juris Civilis to the codes and regulations implemented in the different European colonies overseas.

This book has provided a linguistic and socio-historical account of APS to shed light on its nature and origin. At the same time, the current volume has departed from the analysis of this specific Afro-Hispanic dialect to offer a broader perspective on the status and evolution of Black Spanish varieties in the Americas. As far as the linguistic status of these vernaculars is concerned, it has been suggested that they may be classified as *advanced conventionalized second languages,* or L1 varieties that present crystallized aspects of advanced L2s. As for their genesis and evolution, this research was carried out with the belief that creole studies will benefit greatly from a more interdisciplinary approach, capable of combining linguistic, socio-historical, legal, and anthropological insights. This study is meant to represent an eclectic step in such a direction.