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## TEXTUAL EVIDENCE ON THE NATURE OF EARLY BARBADIAN SPEECH, 1676-1835

John R. Rickford and Jerome S. Handler  
*Stanford University* *Southern Illinois University*

On the evidence of textual attestations from 1676-1835, early Barbadian English is shown to have exhibited many more nonstandard features than is generally recognized. Such features, which are commonly, if not exclusively, found in pidgins and creoles, include vowel epenthesis, paragoge and initial s-deletion processes, creole tense-modality-aspect marking, copula absence, the use of invariant *no* as a preverbal negative and as an emphatic positive marker, the occurrence of *one* as indefinite article, and a variety of morphologically unmarked pronominal forms.

The texts consist of samples of African and Afro-Barbadian speech from historical sources, including ones which linguists have not previously considered. The textual samples are examined century by century, accompanied by a detailed account of the contemporary sociohistorical setting, and interpreted in terms of known and inferred Caribbean patterns of sociolinguistic variation, both in the present and in the past. It is concluded that while early Barbadian speech comprised a range of varieties, creole-like varieties were undoubtedly a part of that range.

### 1. Introduction

How creole-like is present day Barbadian English? How creole-like was Barbadian speech in earlier times? Both issues have been a matter of controversy for over a dozen years, at least since Cassidy (1980:14) suggested that "present day Barbadian English preserves what can hardly be explained otherwise than as a creole residue," and Hancock (1980:22) countered with equal conviction that by 1700, "as now, it was a local metropolitan, rather than creolized, variety of English that was spoken by both Blacks and Whites on the Island."



One limitation of the 1980 Cassidy/Hancock exchange on this issue was the virtual absence, on both sides, of actual linguistic evidence, in the form of present-day samples of Barbadian speech or writing, or in the form of texts from earlier periods. Modern *synchronic* evidence for Barbadian Creole has since been provided by a number of investigators, including Burrowes (1983), Morrow (1984), Roy (1984), Rickford & Blake (1990), and Rickford (1992). All of these authors conclude that modern Bajan includes more creole elements than is generally acknowledged, although it is not as consistently basilectal as Jamaican or Guyanese. *Diachronic* linguistic evidence, in the form of textual samples from earlier periods, has also been considered by Niles (1980), Morrow (1984), Cassidy (1986), Fields (1992), and Roberts (1992). However, four of these five works — along with the research by Roy (1984) — are unpublished; thus the published information on the current and former creole status of Bajan remains quite limited. Moreover, the diachronic texts considered by researchers prior to the 1992 meeting of the Society for Caribbean Linguistics in Barbados, although quite useful, are derived from a limited number of sources which only cover about half a century of Barbadian history — from the 1770s to 1840 (Dickson 1789, Alexander 1833, Bayley 1832, Wentworth 1834, Easel 1840, Madden 1835, Maryat 1834, Orderson 1842).<sup>1</sup>

The present paper attempts to provide a more comprehensive overview of Barbadian English during the period of slavery, by considering texts from 150 years of the island's history (beginning in the late 17th century), and by analyzing texts which have not previously been considered by linguists.<sup>2</sup> Some texts discussed in this paper are from primary sources which have generally not been known, much less examined, by creolists. These texts were transcribed from sources Handler examined while compiling bibliographic guides for the study of early Barbados history (Handler 1971, 1991) and during his long-range study of slave life on the island (Handler *nd*).

Another way in which this paper will attempt to improve on earlier diachronic studies of Barbadian speech is by providing fuller sociohistorical contextualization and sociolinguistic interpretation for the texts themselves. Attestations of creole or slave speech from earlier centuries always need to be interpreted with caution. As several researchers (Rickford 1987:81–2, Lalla & D'Costa 1990:45–9, Fields 1992:3) have noted, contemporary writers were often White outsiders who might have misheard or misinterpreted what was said, or who might have been limited in their ability to represent what was heard in writing. In order to minimize potential problems of reliability and

validity, we have followed the guidelines outlined in Rickford (1986:160–2). These guidelines include:

1. One should provide contextual information about the authors and documents under study — for example, an author's nationality, length of residence in a territory, conditions under which speech was recorded, and whether the text was revised by an editor or publisher.
2. One should adopt Labov's (1972a:72) principle of accountability: occurrences of a feature are reported against the total set of contexts in which it might have occurred and with reference to information about its sociolinguistic context.
3. One should consider the regularities of current usage in the same or similar varieties — including patterns of sociolinguistic variation therein — so as to interpret the patterns attested from earlier times. (See Labov's 1972a:275 Uniformitarian Principle.)

Because of space limitations, it would be impractical to consider each of these guidelines for every text we analyze, but their relevance will be noted as they become salient in the interpretation of particular texts.

Finally, we should note that while evidence of component processes like simplification, admixture (African influence), and divergence from other English dialects is relevant to the determination of prior creolization in a language (Rickford 1977:194–9) — and will be addressed by us where relevant — the primary criterion we consider is the one most frequently used in creole studies: whether the language exhibits features similar to those found in other, well-established creoles (Rickford 1977:198).

## 2. *The 17th Century*

The 17th century is perhaps the most central period in debates about the genesis of Bajan, but it is also the period for which the least direct evidence is available. The problem is not restricted to Barbados. The historical samples of Guyanese texts analyzed in Rickford (1987), and of Jamaican texts in D'Costa & Lalla (1989) begin in the 18th century; as Hancock (1987:282) has observed more generally, "actual connected texts in the Anglophone Creoles have not been located which date from before the early 1700s."<sup>3</sup> Although we have, in fact, three pre-1700 texts from Barbados (two from 1676 and one from 1683), these are of questionable reliability (see below), and Hancock's point remains valid. Nothing has been located, for example, from the earliest quarter century



of Barbadian colonization and settlement — the period from 1627 to about 1650. During the last decade of this period, the island began experiencing its transformation from relatively small-scale production of tobacco and cotton, largely, but not entirely, dependent on the labor of free and indentured Whites, to the large-scale production of sugar under the plantation system with its increasing dependence on African slaves. At this early period, Whites in Barbados, many of them probably “speaking nautical or regional British-based varieties of English” (Hancock 1980:22), significantly outnumbered African slaves.

Population figures for the early years in Barbados cannot be precise and are surrounded by considerable ambiguities and inconsistencies, but several contemporary estimates for the mid-1640s (none for the 1630s gives the number of Africans, although they were in Barbados from the earliest years of settlement) indicate that Whites far outnumbered Blacks. By 1643 and 1645, for example, contemporary sources placed the number of “Negro slaves” from about 5,680 to 6,400, while the White population is given as about 18,600 and 18,300 “effective men,” that is, males eligible for militia service (Handler & Shelby 1973, Scott 1668). Since no figures are available for White women and children, one can only guess at the total number of Whites on the island, but it surely exceeded the number of males reported for militia purposes (cf. Harlow 1926:45, 338; Dunn 1972:55).

Whatever the actual figures, scholars, using no more than a few primary sources, have long maintained that prior to the “sugar revolution” Whites greatly outnumbered Blacks. Given this ratio, Hancock (1980:27) suggests that the first Africans

would have learned English from them [the native English-speaking population] without creolizing it, like any minority immigrant group anywhere.

Even Cassidy (1982), in a shift from his 1980 position, agrees that it is unlikely that a developed creole existed in Barbados during this early period, since the precondition that the slaves form actual communities of their own would not have been generally satisfied.<sup>4</sup> However, he does not agree (1982:6) that they would have learned fluent “metropolitan English” either, pointing to Ligon’s (1657:54) observation that the Africans he encountered in 1647–1650 did not speak English well enough to explain their games to him.<sup>5</sup>

The next significant period in early Barbadian history is from around 1650, with the beginnings of the sugar revolution well underway, to around 1700. During this period, both plantation sugar production and slavery be-

came firmly established, and the island reached the zenith of its prosperity. By the 1670s, Barbados was England’s wealthiest and most populous colony in the Americas. While the sugar revolution was transforming the Barbadian landscape as well as the island’s social order, the population ratios also changed and the number of Africans significantly increased.

By the time he left Barbados in 1650, Ligon (1657:46) concluded that Blacks were “more than double the numbers of the Christians.” The actual figures he presents are greatly exaggerated, but he does draw attention to the dramatic rise in the Black population which accompanied the sugar revolution. African imports exceeded 2,000 per annum through the 1650s and early 1670s, and were well over 3,000 per annum by the end of the century (Handler & Lange 1978:22–3). Despite high mortality rates, as the years progressed Blacks came to constitute a larger percentage of the Barbadian population. For seven years between 1668 and 1696, for which there are population data, Blacks averaged about 65%, if not more, of the total.<sup>6</sup> In 1679–1680, for example, when Barbados was a major and wealthy sugar producer, the island’s census reported 38,746 Blacks and over 21,000 Whites (Public Record Office 1679/80; Atkins 1680a). In 1684, another count yielded a Black population of 46,602 and a White one of close to 20,000 (British Library 1684). Although the figures reported for Blacks were probably on the low side, by this period Barbados was a quintessential slave society.

For Cassidy (1982:11–2), the flourishing plantation-slave system in this period (characterized by “communities of slaves living together, and a new generation being produced — with the loss of African languages and English of whatever kind being the language of general communication”) would have been ideal for creole formation. Hancock (1980:22, 1987:269), however, hypothesizing that the componential matrix of dialects at the time of formation of each creole shapes its essential character, argues that the predominance of White settlers and English dialects during Barbados’ earliest colonization would already have established the island’s basic variety of English as metropolitan rather than creole.

Against this backdrop of opposing opinions, the three late 17th century samples will now be considered. We do not regard them as authentic, but since they are the only known samples of 17th century Bajan, we consider them worthy of discussion, if only to justify the conclusion that they are unreliable as evidence of contemporary Barbadian speech.

The first two samples are from an anonymously authored pamphlet, *Great Newes from the Barbadoes. Or, a true and faithful account of the grand*



*conspiracy of the Negroes against the English* (Anon 1676; cf. Handler 1971:10). The author had visited Barbados, but provides only a secondhand account of an aborted slave plot in 1675 (Handler 1982, Beckles 1987:37). In the first text, the author comments (p. 6) upon an anonymous Black man who is "much quoted by the White Barbadians" for having allegedly said:

- (1) The Devel was in the English-man, that he makes every thing work; he makes the Negro work, the Horse work, the Ass work, the Wood work, the Water work, and the Winde work.

Recounted in the second text is an incident in which Tony, a slave who is about to be burned alive for his role in the conspiracy, is mocked by spectators: "Tony, sirrah, we shall see you fry bravely by and by." To this he is said (pp. 12-3) to have replied, before fearlessly urging the executioner to proceed:

- (2) If you roast me today, you cannot roast me tomorrow: (All those negroes having an opinion that after their death they go into their own country.)

The third text is included in an anonymously authored excerpt from a letter sent from Barbados to England in 1683; this item details events relating to rumors of a slave conspiracy in 1683. In November, 1683, the Whites in Bridgetown became alarmed over what later proved to be false rumors of a slave revolt in the leeward parts of the island (Handler 1982:19-20, Beckles 1987:41). A letter (produced in *Extract of a Letter* 1683) was circulated which allegedly had been written by one of the slave leaders of this rumored conspiracy.

- (3) Brothers,  
Our design is discovered but not be [sic] disheartened, let us begin the next Sunday about midnight. Do not let us mind the [illegible word] or companies for I understand some of our brothers are in hold, and if we do not begin, we shall all be brought in trouble, and withall lose our lives, if not then sometime next week, for we will have it, for we have done for our brothers here methink long the time, for we have most of all countries on our side, therefore be not afraid.

At first glance the preceding texts seem to support Hancock's position, since they contain no trace of creole. However, their authenticity as samples

of slave speech can be seriously questioned. We certainly cannot verify the reliability of the anonymous author who produced the first two texts; he was not an eyewitness to either of the speech events he reports, and he says nothing about how and from whom he obtained the putative quotations. With respect to the authenticity of the document itself, the first text appears to be just the kind of apocryphal story which Whites liked to exchange for their own amusement, conveniently reinforcing one or another stereotype about the character of the slaves (cf. Rickford 1987:88). Even if the "quoted" utterances were really made by a specific slave, it is unlikely that they were uttered exactly as represented above. The past tense form (*was*) and the inflected third present form (*makes*) were probably added by Whites or the author himself in telling the story. It is almost certain that the slave did not use the postconsonantal final *d* (*and*) and the interdental fricatives (*the, thing*) which occur in this text. Such standard English features are not characteristic of the West African languages which formed the substrata for English-based contact varieties in the Caribbean, nor of the contact varieties themselves (Turner 1974:245, Alleyne 1980:44ff, Lalla & D'Costa 1990:53-5). Even today these features are rare or non-occurrent in vernacular Barbadian and other Caribbean English speech — the English interdental fricatives usually being realized as stops (*de, ting*), and the postconsonantal final *d*'s as zero (*an*).

Our reservations about the first text apply equally to the second text, which occurs in the same source. Tony's speech is represented as containing intact postconsonantal *r*'s (*roast*) and tense pronominal vowels (*you*, as against lax or reduced *yuh*), but these features are relatively rare, even in modern Caribbean speech (cf. Allsopp 1958:II.45, Rickford 1979:217, 261).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, there is no suggestion in the text that the author was making any effort to replicate the form of Tony's speech, as distinct from its content, or how he obtained the information on what allegedly happened and what Tony allegedly said.

The third text may have been written by members of the White plantocracy to reinforce their perceived need for additional vigilance, or to justify calls for increased security and strengthening the militia during a period when White fears of slave insurrection were not uncommon (Handler 1982; also Handler 1984). This text is suspect on linguistic grounds (e.g., the unlikelyhood of forms like *methinks*) and on historical/textual grounds. With respect to the latter, contemporary White authorities admitted they lacked evidence



for a planned uprising, and the Barbadian resident in whose letter the text occurs, dismisses — in the letter itself — both the rumors of a planned revolt and the authenticity of the text; he is emphatic that “the authors of those papers” were not slaves but Whites who were “endeavoring to discourage the people by putting fear in their hearts.”

But even if we disregard all the evidence to the contrary, and accept these three texts at face value, as valid indicators of how *some* Blacks spoke or wrote in late 17th century Barbados, there would be no justification for assuming that they were representative of all or even most of the island's contemporary Black population. By the last half of the 17th century, internal divisions were emerging within the slave community (Beckles 1987:40); there were divisions between the African-born and creoles, domestic slaves and field hands, artisans and nonartisans, urban and rural, and so forth. If samples 1–3 are valid representations of segments of the linguistic repertoire of some contemporary Blacks, it is most likely that they reflected highly acculturated individuals who were not African born and who were not typical of the mass of plantation slaves. Certainly, phonologically standard speech (as in texts 1 and 2), literacy, and the high-flown literary register of the third text (*withall, not be disheartened*) would not have been widespread among Blacks (or among Whites, for that matter).

Some years ago, Alleyne (1971) observed that social differentiation and linguistic variation are likely to have been characteristic of Caribbean slave communities almost from their inception. But the point bears reemphasis with respect to Barbados, and to debates about the nature of its language in earlier periods. Such language is unlikely to have been any ONE variety at any earlier time, as some scholars seem to be suggesting. Given the heterogeneous background of the island's White population (composed of, for example, English, Scots, and Irish with their own internal regional and class differences) as well as the heterogeneity of the African-born population, and given the differences in length of residence and social networks among the island's inhabitants, it is as unlikely during the 17th century, as it is now, that EVERYONE spoke the same way (whether metropolitan or creole). Given the way earlier debates on Barbadian Creole have been framed, the crucial question then becomes: Was there *some* local creole speech in earlier times? Or was it *all* metropolitan, all acrolectal or standard? We believe that, contrary to the unreliable evidence of texts 1–3, Barbadian speech in earlier centuries constituted a continuum rather than a point, somewhat like one of the stages (4.1 to 4.4) in the model of table 1, or perhaps like stage 5 in the

Table 1. A Model of Quantitative Shifts in the Percentages of Speakers Using Each Lect during Decreolization

Stages	Basilect	Lower Mesolect	Mid Mesolect	Upper Mesolect	Acrolect
Stage 4.1	33%	27%	40%	27%	27%
Stage 4.2	33%	33%	47%	33%	33%
Stage 4.3	13%	40%	40%	40%	47%
Stage 4.4	7%	47%	40%	47%	47%

Source: Rickford 1983:300. (Percentages in each row total more than 100% because of the assumption that each speaker is not confined to a single lect, but may control two lects or more.)

Table 2. A Qualitative Model of Decreolization, Depicting the Loss, over Time, of Basilectal and Mesolectal Varieties

Stages	Basilect	Lower Mesolect	Mid Mesolect	Upper Mesolect	Acrolect
Stage 5		X	X	X	X
Stage 6			X	X	X
Stage 7				X	X
Stage 8					X

Source: Rickford 1983:303

model of table 2. In fact, we find evidence for the coexistence of mesolectal (creole-like) varieties, alongside acrolectal (standard-like) ones, in the 18th as well as 19th centuries.

### 3. The Eighteenth Century

All of the available 18th century samples come from the last quarter of the century, but they seem quite authentic, and furnish convincing evidence that creole speech was extant on the island. By the late 18th century, the number of Africans imported annually was negligible (Handler & Lange 1978: 22–3), but the number of slaves, despite high mortality rates, had increased considerably since the latter half of the 17th century. Reasonably precise figures for all population segments (particularly slaves and freedmen,



i.e., free persons of color) during the last quarter of the 18th century are difficult to obtain; moreover, contemporary estimates or reported figures on slaves, in particular, are often based on tax returns to the treasurer's office and are almost certainly undercounts. Nonetheless, primary sources indicate that the Barbados slave population averaged around 70,000, perhaps even more, during this period, while the number of Whites (for whom figures seem to be more accurate) averaged around 17,000, roughly, 80% and 20%, respectively: the freedman population was minute — probably one percent or less for most of the period.<sup>8</sup> By the late 1780s, following a trend that had started in the previous century and which continued until emancipation in 1834, slaves inhabiting plantations or small farm units comprised about 88% of the total slave population. Most of these slaves lived in compact village settlements located close to the plantation yard and the owner or manager's house (Handler & Lange 1978:29–40; cf. Hignan 1984:50). According to Cassidy (1982), these are just the kinds of demographic and settlement patterns which would have produced and/or maintained creole-speaking communities.

The first two samples are from William Dickson, one of the most useful and intelligent observers of Barbadian society in the late 18th century. As the English secretary to Barbados' governor, Dickson arrived in Barbados in 1772 and lived there for about 13 years. He was unusually interested in, and sympathetic to, the enslaved, and advocated an end to the slave trade, albeit not immediate emancipation. Dickson became involved with some of Britain's leading abolitionists, and he ultimately produced two volumes which are well-known sources for understanding British West Indian and Barbadian slavery (Dickson 1789, 1814; cf. Handler 1971: 52–3, 66). For a person of his social position Dickson had relatively frequent contact with Barbadian slaves, talked to them, and attended their holiday celebrations quite extensively, even when he “did not know an individual present [and] . . . such meetings and such adventures would be looked upon, as very perilous indeed” (Dickson 1789: 94). In terms of his relatively extensive direct associations with Blacks, Dickson was somewhat like McTurk (1881) or Cruickshank (1916) in Guyana (cf. Rickford 1987:99ff, 112ff). His texts may be more creole-like than the 17th century ones quoted above because they represent more accurate and informed depictions of contemporary Black life.

The first text is linked with Dickson's experiences in Barbados, and his subsequent contacts with Granville Sharp who, by the 1770s and 1780s, was a prominent British abolitionist (Rice 1975: 212–4). This very rare and unusual

item, located in the Gloucester County Record Office in England, is the manuscript text and musical notation of “an African song or chant” which Dickson transmitted (verbally or in writing) to Sharp.<sup>9</sup> All that is known of how the item came into Sharp's possession is the notation on the manuscript itself (presumably in Sharp's handwriting): “taken down in notes by G.S. from the information of Dr. Wm. Dickson.” Aside from the dangers inherent in sound transcription, especially if sounds are largely alien to the transcriber, the musical training of Dickson is unknown, as are the conditions under which the transcription was made. For example, it is unknown if Dickson recorded the musical notation *in situ* in Barbados and later transmitted it in writing to Sharp, or if Sharp made the transcription from information Dickson recalled; furthermore, if based upon recall, it is not known if the information was communicated directly to Sharp verbally, and then transcribed by him, or communicated directly in writing. In any event, Dickson's anti-slavery position was undoubtedly the way he came in contact with Sharp. Since Dickson returned to England in 1785 or 1786 and Sharp died in 1814, the manuscript probably dates from within this period; the song itself, of course, would be of an earlier date.

The manuscript, partially reproduced in an earlier article on Barbadian slave music (Handler & Frisbie 1972: plate IIb; cf. Handler 1971:139–40), includes musical notation and remarkably specific notes on the language of the song, for example, “NB: *a* is sounded by them like the French *ai* or English *a*.” It also includes details about the way in which the song is normally performed, including its distinctive African call-and-response pattern “A Single Negro (while at Work with the rest of the Gang) leads the Song, and the others join in chorus at the end of every verse.” These details add to our impression of the text's authenticity (Handler & Frisbie 1972:23–6).

(4) Massa buy me he won't killa me

Oh — Massa buy me, he won't killa me

Oh, Massa buy me, he won't killa me

Oh 'for he kill me, he ship me regulaw.

Chorus: a a a a a a a a a a a a

'For I live with a bad Man oh la —

'for I live with a bad Man Obudda-bo

'For I live with a bad Man oh la —

'for I would go to the River side Regulaw

Chorus: a a a a a a a a O



In the contemporary notes to this song, the writer (Dickson ?) states that "*For* is an abbreviation of *Before*, meaning — 'Before I would live, or rather than live'." In linguistic terms, this is an example of aphesis, the loss of initial unstressed syllables; this feature occurs in several nonstandard English dialects, but it is particularly characteristic of English-based Pidgins and Creoles and of African American Vernacular English (Vaughn-Cooke 1986:125).<sup>10</sup>

Going beyond the issue of the meaning of this text, we can observe that the enclitic vowel in *killa* 'kill' is a common feature of early pidgin-creole texts (Rickford 1987:87, 89), as is the absence of an irrealis marker (*go*, *sa*, *will*, or *would*) in the main clause of "for he kill me, he Ø ship me regulaw," a feature which is attested also in Pinckard's contemporary texts from Guyana (Rickford 1987:86).<sup>11</sup> Another nonstandard feature of this text which is common in Caribbean Creole varieties (Bickerton 1975, Rickford 1987) is the use of a morphologically unmarked nonstative verb stem (*buy*) to signal anteriority or past tense ('bought').<sup>12</sup> Compared with these creole features, and in the light of our remarks on texts 1 and 2 above, the voiced interdental fricative in *with* (instead of *wid*) and the postconsonantal *t* in *won't* seem out of place. These standard English intrusions in an otherwise pidgin-creole text suggest that the writer, for whatever reason, did not represent every phonological detail of the slaves' speech.<sup>13</sup>

The second set of textual samples is from Dickson's well-known *Letters on Slavery* (1789). They include the following (page numbers are from the 1789 volume, and all glosses in parentheses are Dickson's):

- (5) That man must be callous, indeed, who can remain an indifferent spectator of a meeting of two poor Africans, who may have been dragged from the same district of their dear native land. On such occasions, . . . I have affected to enquire into the cause of their emotion, and have generally been answered by another question, expressive of extreme astonishment, that I should be ignorant of it: "Kai! we no countrymen, Massa?" (Glossed in original as 'Strange! Are not we countrymen, Sir?'). p. 75
- (6) On the estate of a certain humane and respectable person, I remember an old African man, from his form of benediction, which was, "God in a' top, God in a' bottom bless you Massa." p. 156
- (7) In the same family there was an ancient African matron who, . . . when she got up in the morning, used to trace a circle around her,

on the floor, with her finger, at the same time, muttering something. On my asking her the meaning of this ceremony, she replied, "Da [Ø] for God" ('That is for God.'). "How, Mamma," said I, "does God live in Africa?" "Kai! Massa," said she, "God no all about" ('Strange! Sir, is not God every where?'). p. 156

- (8) On Sundays and holidays it is common to see many hundreds of negroes and mulattoes dancing and making merry . . . If a well dressed white man wishes to enter the circle, the cry is, "Tand á by, let Massa come forward!" when they immediately make way for him, respectfully bowing or court'ying as he passes, often with a "God bless you Massa," and sometimes whispering loud enough for him to hear it, "Da good Backra" ('That is good white man'). p. 93

The accuracy of Dickson's glosses is good evidence that he was a reliable recorder/interpreter of Black speech. Together, his samples attest a number of features which are characteristic of Caribbean English-based Creoles, including:

- (a) African lexical items like *kai*, which Cassidy & LePage (1980:259) list as *ki*, *kie* and define as "an exclamation of surprise, amusement, satisfaction, etc.," and for which Turner (1974:196) lists Yoruba, Fon, Hausa, and Twi as possible sources. Similar to this is *backra*, meaning 'white man', which has sources in Ibo and Efik *mbakara* 'white man', literally 'the who governs or surrounds' (Turner 1974:191). Both of these lexical items, especially *backra*, occur in 18th and 19th century creole texts from the Caribbean, including Guyana, St. Vincent, Trinidad, and Jamaica (Rickford 1987:85, 89, Lalla & D'Costa 1990:114, 117, 145, and Cassidy & LePage 1980:259).
- (b) The use of preverbal *no* as a rhetorical marker, presupposing an emphatic positive response (*we no countrymen* = 'Are we not countrymen?' or 'We are countrymen!'). For evidence and analysis of this feature in other Caribbean Creoles, see Bailey 1966:93–4, Christie 1979, and Rickford 1987:123, 219.
- (c) Absence of the copula (e.g., *is*, *are*), or as it is sometimes alternatively stated, bare predication, as in *Da Ø for God* and *Da Ø good Backra*. The latter example is particularly striking because it involves a predicate nominal, the environment in which copula absence is most marked, both in the Caribbean Creoles and African American Vernacular English (Labov 1972b:91–2, Bickerton 1973, Baugh 1980, Holm 1984:298, 301, Rickford & Blake 1990:267, Rickford 1992:191–3, Winford 1992a:34–7).



- (d) The realization of English interdental fricatives as stops (da 'that') — in contrast to the texts cited earlier.
- (e) Deletion of *s* in syllable-initial *st* clusters, as in *Tand á by*. As Alleyne (1980:45) notes, this deletion rule was more general in the earliest Afro-American varieties, applying to all English initial sibilant + stop clusters (*st, sk, sp*).
- (f) Vowel insertion (epenthesis and paragoge), as in *countérymen* and *Tand á*, a process which is even more common in the Suriname Creoles (Alleyne 1980:62–9, Hancock 1987:278), and one which is commonly interpreted as resulting from the adjustment of English and other European language forms to West African CV syllable structure (Alleyne 1980:62 ff, Sabino 1990).

The next 18th century sample is from an anonymous work written by a colonial official stationed in Dominica. Although his *Sketches and Recollections of the West Indies* was not published until 1828, the author had visited Barbados a few times in the late 1790s and early 1800s (Anon 1828, Handler 1971:82). The following sample is from his account of a stroll through Bridgetown during a one-day visit in the late 1790s. Despite the brevity of the author's visit, his prior familiarity with Caribbean speech, in Dominica and elsewhere, may have made him a more reliable recorder of Barbadian speech than if he had been totally unfamiliar with the West Indies.

- (9) We had, several times, attempted to question the Negroes passing, and to obtain information relative to different objects of our curiosity, but were able to comprehend little of their answers, as *their broken English requires some time to be perfectly understood*. Some of their observations, however, we could not misunderstand: 'Ah! dem Buckra\* [\*White people; author's footnote] no savey noting, dem just come in a England!'. . . 'Ah! look dem Buckra, in a church-yard; dem get fever in de hot son — dem soon come in a church yard — dem go dead'. (pp. 25–6; emphasis added)

Clearly the language encountered by the author was not "metropolitan English," but something less familiar, more nonstandard, and more difficult for an outsider to understand. The sample he recorded illustrates several elements which are common in the Caribbean English-based Creoles:

- (a) The use of *dem* as a demonstrative adjective in *dem Buckra*, 'Those White people' (Alleyne 1980:100–1, Rickford 1986:44–5, 1990:151–2, Muf-

wene 1986:44–5). This feature also occurs in British dialects, usually as *them*, although apparently often as *dem*, with an initial stop, in Ireland (see Wright 1905:83; *them* II.7, Niles 1980:30–48, LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985:41).

(b) *No* as invariant preverbal negator in *dem Buckra no savey noting*.

(c) Double negation (verbal and in the indefinite) in the same sentence, although this was again "of general use in the provincial dialects of English in the 17th and 18th centuries" (Niles 1980:128).

(d) *Dem* as third person plural subject pronoun in *dem just come in a England!* There are a few attestations of this feature in Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* (1905: 6:83, *them* II.2), and one in Niles (1980:115), but it appears to have been much less common in British dialects than in Caribbean Creoles.

(e) Unmarked nonstative verb, *come*, used as a past or perfect marker in the same sentence.<sup>14</sup>

(f) The alternation of *go* and zero as future/irrealis markers, in *dem go dead* and *dem Ø soon come in a church yard* (compare the zero irrealis in text 4 above).

Our final 18th century text samples are from two fascinating manuscript narratives (located in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University; Handler 1991: 58) related by elderly African women slaves in Barbados to John Ford, the transcriber, in 1799. Ford was probably White, but we cannot be certain if he was locally born. These accounts are supposed to be literal transcriptions of the slave dialect, but there is no indication of the conditions under which the narratives were related and the transcriptions made. If they are legitimate, they offer interesting and rare materials for the study of Barbadian Creole. Their relative length<sup>15</sup> — in contrast with earlier texts — allows them to show some of the variability we would expect in everyday speech.

The first sample below is an extract from the extended narrative of an "Old African female slave named Sibell"; the second is from the narrative of an "Old female Slave named Ashy of the Fantee Tribe":

- (10) But veddy few of dem bin of my country and my budder in law sell me to de BACK-erah! people. . . . My Budder in law took up de gun and de powder which he sell me for and wanted to get 'way from me, but me hold he and cry and he stop wid me till me hold tongue and den he run away from me. De sailors keep me in dere long time and bring two, tree ebbery day 'till de long house bin full. Dere bin many Black people dere veddy bad man, dey talk all kind of



country and tell we all dat we going to a good massa yonder yonder yonder, where we would workee, workee picka-nee-nee<sup>2</sup>, and messy messy<sup>3</sup> grandee and no funn funn<sup>4</sup>." [Notes in the original manuscript: <sup>1</sup>Back erah people — white people; <sup>2</sup>pick a nee nee — little; <sup>3</sup>messy messy — eat eat; <sup>4</sup>no funn funn — no whipping."]

- (11) Ah! Massuh dis country here dat you call Barbados, um! no good, um no good Massah. When we want rain in my country we all take de Black caps and put on our head... Den we see one big Blackee man *de same dat you call God* come down and take de man and de sheep 'way — and we hear de sheep cry bah, bah, bah, a grandee way off, but we no see he, and 'fore we get home de rain fall so muchee dat we no wantee rain for some time 'gain... And Massah if any of our Grandee people die, den all de head of his servants is cut off, and bury in de same place wid him, but if dey run away and stay long time, when dey come back dey no hurtee dem. [Note in the original manuscript: 'um no good — it is no good; emphasis in original.]

Leaving aside the creole phonology and lexicon, and concentrating on the grammar, what is most interesting about this text is not only the presence of creole features like anterior *bin* with stative predicates (*bin of my country*, *bin full*, *bin many Black people*),<sup>16</sup> and the numerous unmarked nonstative anterior or past forms (*sell*, *hold*, *cry*, *stop*, *run away*, *keep*, *bring*, *tell*), but the fact that these show some variation with corresponding standard forms (*took* and *wanted* in text 10; *was* in an earlier part of the narrative from which (10) is taken, e.g., *My Daddy was a great man*). The personal pronouns and plural forms in these texts show similar variation. Such variation is characteristic of everyday creole usage throughout the Caribbean, as has been shown by analyses of past marking in spontaneous contemporary recordings of Guyanese, Jamaican, Barbadian, and Trinidadian (Bickerton 1975:142–61, Patrick 1991, Winford 1992b, Roy 1992). Further study may resolve whether the variation in these Bodleian texts is similar to contemporary variation in its structure (and therefore more likely to have been present in the speech of these African women) or whether it is different from such variation (and perhaps more likely to represent the transcriber's inconsistencies or mishearings). One worrisome fact is that Sibell's pronominal possessives (e.g., *his*, *my*) are usually acrolectal or standard in the Bodleian text, while the corresponding subject and object forms are

creole, for example, *me hold he*. In earlier studies of Guyanese Creole (Allsopp 1958, Rickford 1979), the first and third singular masculine possessive pronouns are always the categories which typically show the *lowest* frequencies of acrolectal usage. Of course, this comparison assumes that pronominal variation is similarly structured in contemporary Bajan and Guyanese, and that the principles that govern these native Caribbean varieties today apply equally well to the nonnative varieties spoken by Sibell and Ashy two hundred years ago. The latter assumption corresponds to Labov's Uniformitarian Principle (1972:275), which is generally accepted, although without substantive proof. The former must await synchronic studies of pronominal variation in Barbadian, but there is no reason to believe that pronominal variation in Barbadian is structured any differently from variation in Guyanese, at least in terms of its internal or linguistic constraints.

Most of the preceding 18th century texts have been from Africans, rather than creoles, that is, Barbadian or West Indian-born. By the late 18th century, as noted above, slave imports from Africa had dwindled considerably, and by the mid to late 1700s, the great majority of Barbadian slaves were creoles; this majority was probably close to 90% by the late 1780s (Handler & Lange 1978:29). Although the relatively "exotic" status of Africans may have led to their being quoted and described in various accounts, this does not mean that their speech was not similar to that of the locally born slaves.<sup>17</sup> In fact, as we have noted at several points in this paper, it is very similar to the speech of locally born, creole-speaking people elsewhere in the modern Caribbean. Even if it were not, 18th century African speech in Barbados would still represent one of the significant components of the local language situation, one with which those who believe that it was merely metropolitan or standard would have to contend. It was part of the creolizing mix of Barbadian language and culture, along with, for example, mortuary practices, music and dance, folk medicine, the magico-religious system of Obeah, and other elements of the African heritage which became creolized during the slave period, and which greatly influenced the direction of Barbadian folk culture in post-emancipation times (Handler, in press; Handler & Frisbie 1972; Handler & Jacoby 1993; Handler & Lange 1978:171–215; Beckles 1990: 52–4).



4. *The Nineteenth Century*

Many of the fundamental social, political, and economic institutions that were established during the 17th century continued to characterize Barbadian society through the 19th century (and until fairly recent times). Barbados remained a quintessential plantation-slave society, and although slave emancipation occurred in 1834–1838, the production of sugar under the plantation system continued to influence the island's social order for many years afterward (Handler & Lange 1978:41–2, Levy 1980:passim). During the pre-emancipation decades of the 19th century, from around 1817 to 1834, the slave population (for which much more accurate figures are available than for earlier years) ranged from around 77,500 to 83,100 (averaging almost 80,000); slaves constituted about 80% of the island's population during this period. The percentage of Whites (whose numbers averaged around 14,700) over the same period declined to around 15%, but the freedmen population grew, and by the early 1830s, it constituted about 5–6% of the total population (figures compiled from: *Parliamentary Papers* 1824, 1826, 1830, 1833a, 1833b, Public Record Office 1832).

Barbados' first detailed slave census in 1817 reported that about 93% were creoles, a very small number of whom had been born in neighboring (albeit unspecified) West Indian areas; only 7% were African-born (Handler & Lange 1978:29). Around this time Barbados had the smallest percentage of African-born slaves in the British West Indies. In Trinidad and Berbice, for example, Africans constituted over 50% of the slaves, while in Grenada, St. Vincent, Jamaica, and Tobago, they comprised between 32–40%; even in St. Kitts and Nevis, 15–16% of the slaves during this period had been born in Africa (percentages calculated from tables in Higman 1984:462–8).

Hancock (1980:23) has suggested the possibility that the creole features of contemporary Bajan were imported by "the thousands of Barbadians who, since the early 1800s, have been going to work for extended periods in other parts of the Caribbean where Creole is spoken."

Returning Barbadians may have influenced speech patterns on the island, but there was no significant migration of Black Barbadians to and from other Caribbean regions until *after* emancipation. Although precise figures are lacking, these migrations effectively started around 1839, when several hundred young males went to British Guiana. The migrations continued through the early 1840s, despite strenuous efforts by the Barbadian plantocracy to prevent emigration of the working class. Perhaps upwards of 3000 to 4000

Black Barbadians had migrated by the spring of 1842, largely to British Guiana, some to Trinidad; and one contemporary source estimated that "probably 300 to 400 had returned" (Richardson 1985:101–3, Roberts 1955, Levy 1980:80–5, 134–6). Even if returning Barbadians introduced creole speech from such places as British Guiana and Trinidad, it is unlikely that they would have had any significant impact on the Barbadian language situation; their numbers were simply insufficient.

Hancock (1980:23) also suggests that another possible source of creole features in Barbados is the "later African influence brought into the West Indies between 1841 and 1867, when over 36,000 Africans from the Sierra Leone area came in as a free labor force." However, there is no evidence that the Sierra Leone migration to which he refers had any impact on Barbados, as it did, for example, on Jamaica; moreover, there is no evidence that the thousands of Africans liberated from slave ships bound for Brazil or Cuba between 1834 and 1867 were sent to Barbados, as they were sent in large numbers to British Guiana, Jamaica, and Trinidad (Laurence 1971:13–5, Schuler 1980:5–10, 1990:108, Warner-Lewis 1991:14).

Overall, we believe the evidence for creole essentially being imported into Barbados in the 19th century is extremely slim; and since creole linguistic features were already well evident in Bajan prior to emancipation, the features present in our 19th century texts must be attributed to continuity from 18th century Bajan antecedents, such as those discussed above.<sup>18</sup>

One early 19th century text which shows such creole features is found in Richard Watson's defense of Methodist missionaries in the West Indies (Watson 1817; cf. Handler 1991:32–3). Watson had visited Barbados himself, and in his work (p. 17) he records a conversation held between Mr. Gilgrass, a former missionary to Barbados, and a Barbadian slave. Gilgrass describes an encounter he had in 1804 with an elderly woman who was sitting on a grave in the slave burial ground in Bridgetown.

- (12) I approached her and said, What are you doing? Massa, me feed dead. Who is buried there? Me sissa. (Sister, a name used in common for all females.) Can the dead eat? Yes, Sir. But are you not eating, not the dead? Yes, Massa, but dead eat too. Where do you expect to go after death? Me no know, but after a pause [she] said, To great Massa. What do you think Great Massa is like? He be one good Massa. Don't you know he is not a man? Massa, if he no man, what he then be? [punctuation as in original]



Although Watson clearly received the above information from Gilgrass, it is unknown if the latter communicated it directly to the former verbally or in writing. In either case, the nonstandard features in this text which link it to other Caribbean Creoles include:

(a) The use of morphologically unmarked *me* as subject and possessive pronoun (cf. Allsopp 1958: II.21-7, Cassidy & LePage 1980:298, Rickford 1979:342). Although pronominal case-marking in British dialects "differed from standard English in the freedom of usage and flexibility allowed" (Niles 1980:115), non-case-marked forms appear to have been less common in the Caribbean Creoles. The use of *me* for the nominative form appears to have been relatively rare, in contrast with the more common use of *me* for the possessive (Niles 1980:116).

(b) The presence of preverbal negative *no* as in *me no know*.

(c) The use of *one* as an indefinite article in *He be one good massa*. While there are some attestations of this usage in British dialects (Wright 1903:350, *one* II.5), it appears to be far more common in English Creoles (cf. Cassidy & LePage 1980:331, Bickerton 1981:23)

As might be expected from our earlier remarks about variability in Barbadian and other speech communities, not all 19th century Barbadian samples are in mesolectal creole. One common source of acrolectal, standard English usage is writing, particularly the poignant letters requesting manumission or written validation of free status from former owners (Handler 1974:29-65). These letters may have been written by the slaves themselves, by freedmen, or even by poor Whites who lived in proximity to the slaves. The following letter is dated 1807 and signed by Dolly Newton, although we cannot be certain that she herself actually wrote it.<sup>19</sup> She was a domestic slave at Newton plantation. The letter is addressed to the plantation owner in London (Newton 1807; cf. Handler 1971:158). Apart from a few misspellings (reproduced below) and omitted punctuation marks, the language is almost completely standard:

(13) Honoured Master

I take the liberty of conveying those Few lines to you hoping to find you, my young mastrs and Misses and Family well, and Requesting the kind favour of you to be so good as to take on you the trouble to have my manumission executed for me. As you will find by Mr Jacksons letter, my freind who has wrote to you on the

subject, as I chose it sent to you from all your Former Kindness to me and Family I would wish you to complete the business for your servant

Hon<sup>d</sup> Sir I remains

your Humble servant

Dolly Newton

Another vector for standard speech seems to have been Christianization, or at least speech in a religious register, especially if the addressee was a foreign missionary, as in the text reproduced below.<sup>20</sup> This sample is taken from the published accounts of the United Brethren or Moravians. Starting their missionary work among Barbadian slaves in 1765, by 1829-1830 they had over 600 slave congregants at their two mission stations; the earliest and largest of these stations was established at Sharon, in St. Thomas parish (Handler 1974:155). The following text is contained in an 1829 letter from John Taylor, the missionary at Sharon; at the time the letter was written he had been living in Barbados for at least one and a half years (Taylor 1829).

(14) When we speak individually with the baptized and communicant

members of our congregation, we are often greatly encouraged and edified by their declarations. A communicant Sister who came to us one dark and rainy night from a distance of four miles, said, "O Massa, I find nothing so sweet to my heart as the words I heard in church; no sugar cane is so sweet, no gold is so precious to me, as to hear of my saviour who died for me on the Cross.

The next two texts are from the writings of Barbadian-born Whites. Such persons would have been much more familiar with contemporary Black Bajan speech than English missionaries and government officials, and their textual samples show that in 19th century Barbados, creole was alive and well.

In a note to his lengthy poem extolling the virtues of Barbados, Chapman (1833; cf. Handler 1971:87) commented that Barbadians have the following saying about monkeys, generically referred to as *Jacks*:

(15) Jacko know for talk well enough; but he too cute for talk; 'spose he talk, massa buckra make he work.

The creole features of interest in this short text include:

(a) The use of *for* as infinitival complementizer in *for talk*. This feature, which is usually realized phonetically as [fo], and sometimes



spelled *fu* or *ful*, occurs throughout the Caribbean Creoles (e.g., Bickerton 1971, Washabaugh 1977, Byrne 1984, Cassidy & LePage 1980:176, Winford 1985, Rickford 1987:84).

- (b) Bare predication with adjectives, as stative verbs, without the help of a copula (*he Ø too cute*).
- (c) The unmarked third singular present (*Jacko know Ø for talk*).

The second text is from a work by J. W. Orderson.<sup>21</sup> Born in Barbados in the 1760s, he became editor of the *Barbados Mercury*, and spent several intermittent years in England before dying in Barbados in 1847 (Handler 1971:68 and passim). *Creoleana*, his 1842 novel set in Barbadian society toward the end of the 18th century, is well known; in fact, it is the primary source used by Cassidy (1986). Far less well known, and until recently unused by students of Barbadian and West Indian history, is Orderson's play, *The Fair Barbadian and Faithful Black* (1835). First performed in Barbados in 1832, the play's setting is Barbados of that period. Although billed as a comedy, the play presents the political views of its author on questions of emancipation and the relationship between masters and slaves (Handler 1991:41–2). Orderson's spellings for creole forms (e.g., *yent* for [en] or [ent], *It's* for [ɪs] or [ɪz], and *fau* for [fʊ] or [fə]) are somewhat unusual, and disguise the creole identity of the forms to some extent, but not enough to prevent them from being noticed. The following extracts feature the speech of Hampshire, a "confidential Black servant" to a wealthy planter (page references are from the play):

- (16) Oh, massa, me no been go no way. I bin tink you send me for call my nyung missy. I no bin go no way. . . . I didn't bin rude to Miss Alice, sir, I yent say nothing to she! (p. 6)
- Oh Massa! No bex! Its no me make you trike me! . . . Ums da dam soning in you foot make you trike me! (p. 7)
- She heart beat—beat just as if um was going fau bruck. . . . Missa Missa den recover a little bit, she take breat. . . . Missa, when this last time she go 'peak, she say, but, George, no ge me child to Tom fau marry, less he be worthy of she, and she fall dead. (p. 31)

Many of the creole features already cited from earlier texts are also represented here, but with the exception of (c), which occurs also in text (11), the following are the first occurrences of these features in the texts examined in this paper:

- (a) The initial palatal nasal in *nyung* 'young' (cf. Turner 1974:243, Rickford 1987:144).

- (b) The use of mesolectal (*y*)*ent* as preverbal negative, in *I yent say* (Bickerton 1975).

- (c) The use of *um* (= 'it') as third person neuter subject pronoun, a characteristically Bajan feature, although one also found in mesolectal speech in Guyana, particularly in Georgetown (cf. Allsopp 1958:II.91).<sup>22</sup> This is one creole feature which may clearly have a British dialect source. According to Niles (1980:116),

the third person *um* is now used in DE [British Dialect English] both for the nominative and objective singular neuter as in BE [Barbadian English]. But the form was of wider usage in the dialects, particularly in Devon.

- (d) Topicalizing/sentence clefting with *It*'s in *Its no me make you trike me!* Fields (1992) felt that this distinctive creole feature had never been attested in Bajan, either in historical or modern data. Orderson's text shows that it was certainly attested in earlier times, and, according to Roberts (1991:293):

in [modern] Barbadian speech, *iz* + *topicalized element* is possible where the topicalized element is other than the verb, e.g. . . . *Iz me she give it to*.

Of course, some of these creole features vary with more standard (or other nonstandard) forms, but this is characteristic of longer samples of connected dialogue or speech, as noted above in relation to samples 10 and 11 and their source narratives.

##### 5. Summary and Conclusion

Many of the 16 texts (from 1676–1835) considered in this paper have not previously been consulted by linguists as sources on the diachrony of Bajan. Examination of these texts has shown that vernacular spoken varieties were attested from at least the late 18th century, and these exhibited creole features similar to undisputed creoles in other regions, such as Guyana and Jamaica.<sup>23</sup> Although the literary attestations date from the late 18th century, the creole features they exhibit were undoubtedly present in Barbadian English at an earlier period. This earlier period cannot be dated for want of sufficient textual evidence. In any case, available linguistic data make clear that by at least the later years of the slave period, Barbadian English, like many aspects



of Black sociocultural life, exhibited creole patterns. Thus, on the basis of our data, we agree with Hancock's earlier (1969:33, note 58) observation that "however close to standard English modern Barbadian speech may be, a pidgin, if not a creole, must have been in use during the early years of colonization in Barbados." And we disagree with his later suggestion that "the samples of Barbadian speech" found in several 19th century texts "appear to have been collected from slaves in transit rather than from locally born individuals" (Hancock 1980:23). On the contrary, we maintain that this suggestion is not only disputable for the samples Hancock cites, but it is also invalid for the texts examined in this paper. Barbados clearly had its own creole speech by the late 18th century, if not earlier. Whether this developed completely in situ, or whether it was a development from a Guinea Coast Creole English introduced by African slaves (cf. Hancock 1987:275) remains to be determined; nonetheless, the creole features evidenced in the texts deserve to be considered an integral part of the Barbadian linguistic tradition.

Another point which emerges quite sharply, from intra-textual as well as inter-textual evidence, is the need to recognize greater variability in Bajan speech than most commentators/scholars normally postulate or assume. The question, then, is not whether every variety in Bajan at an earlier point was creole, but whether some of its varieties were, and that much seems clear. However, unravelling and recovering all the relevant facts about the development of Bajan will require more data than we currently possess. More texts are needed, for example, relating to the crucial periods of the 17th century and early 18th,<sup>24</sup> and we still need to understand the social and cultural forces which kept Bajan closer to standard English overall than Guyanese or Jamaican notwithstanding the presence of more creole in its present and its past than scholars have usually been willing to recognize.

## NOTES

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Ninth Biennial Meeting of the Society for Caribbean Linguistics (SCL), held at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados, August 26–29, 1992. Rickford's research on Barbados English and his participation in the SCL conference was facilitated by grants from the National Science Foundation. Handler is indebted to the National Science Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the John Carter Brown Library for research support. We are also grateful to Jean D'Costa, Angela E. Rickford, and the anonymous reviewers of *JPCl* for their comments on earlier drafts.

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1) In general, we link speech attestations to the period of a writer's residence in Barbados, rather than to the year his work was published.

2) In particular, although we have analyzed them for their linguistic features, we do not discuss texts from some commonly known sources (e.g., Maryat 1834, Bayley 1832) which have been previously examined by two or more researchers (e.g., Niles 1980, Morrow 1984). The 16 texts we cite (from 11 sources) are drawn from a set of 49 texts (from 26 sources) which we have analyzed in detail. It should be noted that Fields (1992) also examines several texts which had not been previously considered in the debate over early Barbadian speech, including Hoffland (1818) and Orderson (1835). Our conclusions regarding the existence of early creole varieties in Barbados were arrived at independently of Fields, but they are in substantial agreement with her conclusions.

3) Note, however, that Lalla & D'Costa's (1990) study of Jamaican texts includes two brief Angolan and Korumanti *chants* recorded by Sloane (1707–1725) during his 1687–1689 visit to Jamaica.

4) We interpret Cassidy's argument on this point to mean that, at this period, the majority of the slaves would *not* have been living together in large numbers in exclusive slave quarters or villages, with their linguistic and social interactions primarily or entirely restricted to other slaves.

5) "And this is all I can remember concerning the Negroes, except of their games, which I could never learn, because they wanted language to teach me" (Ligon 1657:54).

6) These are preliminary estimates derived from a variety of contemporary sources, e.g., Dutton 1681:70, Willoughby 1668, Blake 1669, Colleton 1673, Atkins 1676, 1680b, British Library 1684, *Calendar of State Papers* 1696.

7) Tense pronominal vowels are particularly rare in the case of second person *you* [ju], which occurs only 4% of the time in a sample of 300 tokens from Guyanese plantation field laborers, and only 22% of the time in a sample of 302 tokens from their lower middle class counterparts (Rickford 1979:211–2).

8) Utilizing new sources, the slave population is now estimated to be higher than the figures Handler published earlier (1974:18–9).

9) This is the only known musical transcription of a slave work song for Barbados, and it may be the only early example of its kind known in the British Caribbean source materials.

10) The writer also glosses *Obudda* as 'destruction' and *Regulaw* as 'to be sold', or 'merchandise', relating them to Hebrew sources: '*abad* (the destroyed)' and '*recai*, a Merchant or Merchandize'. We see no reason to relate these words to Hebrew, and are more convinced by an anonymous reviewer's comments on an earlier draft of this paper that *regulaw* simply meant 'regular', 'in the usual way'; the meaning of verse 1 as a whole would then be that since Massa has paid good money for the slave, rather than kill him, he would sell him to someone else, in the usual manner. The reviewer also suggests that verse 2 means that rather than live with a bad man, the slave would drown himself (go to the River side); this is plausible, but we do not yet have a convincing etymology for *Obudda-bo*.

11) Although published in 1806, Pinckard's book is based on letters which he wrote between 1795–1797, the period of his stay in the West Indies.



12) The fact that the verb is irregular, forming its past tense in English by stem change plus suffixation of *-ed*, reduces the possibility that the zero past marking is due to *phonological* deletion of a final [t] or [p].

13) Most writers do not attempt to represent every phonetic detail of dialect speech, either because they are unable or unwilling (for instance to preserve readability) to do so. (See Rickford 1986:162 for the general non-representation of palatalized velars in Caribbean dialect writing.) But one factor that might have motivated Dickson to avoid using diacritics and special spellings to represent every non-standard feature of slave pronunciation — including shibboleths like *wid* — was his general effort to argue for the “natural equality of the Africans to the European” (Dickson 1789:73) in culture and behavior. Note, however, that Dickson does represent creole phonology more faithfully in his 1789 book, as evidenced by the texts of his reprinted as (5)–(8) below, which include *da* (‘that’, with an initial stop instead of a fricative) and other creole features.

14) An anonymous reviewer has suggested that this feature is “common in British dialects” and, citing Cassidy (1985:732, *come*, A3), notes the occurrence of *come* for ‘came’ in a variety of American dialects. However, zero past marking appears to be, and to have been, much more restricted in noncreole-related British and American dialects than in Caribbean English Creoles, and governed by a different set of constraints (lexical and phonological, rather than semantic); see Elsworthy 1877:13–4, Niles 1980:122).

In relation to the constraints, note that one of Niles’ British dialect examples (1980:122, e.g., 4) involves stative *warm*, but the unmarked pasts (without *bin*) in Bajan, as in other Caribbean English Creoles, are usually nonstative (Bickerton 1975:46, LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985:162, Rickford 1987:141–3). With respect to the range and frequency of the phenomenon, note that *come* is only one of many unmarked nonstative pasts that occur in Barbadian 18th and 19th century texts (see sample 10, for instance). Alleyne’s (1980:44) observation with respect to another Caribbean Creole feature is worth quoting:

One is tempted to explain the status of consonant clusters in some Afro-American dialects (including Black English) on the basis of their incidence in 16th–17th century dialects. . . . But the phenomenon in these Afro-American dialects is so widespread and all-pervasive that it could not be explained satisfactorily by its restricted occurrence in some dialects of British English.

15) The complete text of Sibell’s narrative is over 450 words; the complete text of Ashy’s narrative is about 100.

16) The form *bin* is undoubtedly derived from the English past participle *been*, but its common use with stative predicates to mark preterit or past tense rather than present perfect aspect (as in the examples in text 10) is more characteristic of Caribbean Creoles than of British dialects. Cassidy & LePage (1980:38) claim that the preterit use of *bin* in Jamaica is “familiar in English and US dialect,” but they also note that it is “hardly recorded in any of the dictionaries consulted.” Their only example comes from Wright (1898), under *be* VII.2: most of the examples under this entry are — it should be noted — present participles or present perfects, rather than preterits.

17) For instance, although text 4 is called an African chant, it is likely that it was sung by others besides people born in Africa.

18) An anonymous reviewer of this article, referring to Bilby’s (1983) research on the influence of Stranan on Jamaican Maroon speech, wondered if Stranan-speaking slaves from

Suriname might have come to Barbados during the late 1660s and 1670s, and thus might have had some influence on the development of creole in Barbados. There is evidence for such migrations from Suriname to various areas of the English Caribbean, particularly Jamaica and Antigua, during this period (Bilby 1983:60–1; cf. Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh 1972:198–200), but we have no evidence for such a migration to Barbados; if it did occur, it could not have involved many Blacks or Whites, or, we assume, some mention of it would have been made in the considerable primary and secondary literature relating to 17th century Barbados.

In considering the possibility that creole-speaking slaves from elsewhere in the Caribbean might have influenced language developments in Barbados, we have no evidence that Barbados depended in any way on slave importations from other New World areas. However, in the early phases of the sugar revolution, an unknown number of slaves were brought to Barbados from Portuguese-held areas (e.g., Ligon 1657:52). These slaves, as LePage & Tabouret-Keller (1985:42) have suggested, probably “spent some time in a Portuguese Creole-speaking environment, either on the African coast, or in Brazil, or in Curaçao.” They conjecture that Barbados was the Caribbean island “whose earliest slaves are those most likely to have had close contact with Creole Portuguese in slave depots,” although, they add, “there is no evidence that the linguistic influence of that contact was of any great importance in the formation of Bajan usage” (LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985:44).

Slaves captured in neighboring colonies, or those who came as a result of the Napoleonic wars, were another possible source of outside creole speakers in Barbados. During the 17th and 18th centuries, while Britain warred against France or Holland, occasional expeditionary forces were launched from Barbados against various islands; sometimes these forces captured slaves and brought them back to Barbados. In 1672, for example, a Barbados expedition attacked the Dutch settlement at Tobago and brought back “about 300 Negroes” (B. 1673:6), and in 1702 another force attacked the French at Guadeloupe and returned to Barbados with a “good number of Negroes” (Oldmixon 1741:2:63). Some of these slaves may have spoken some type of creole which may have influenced the language spoken in Barbados, but concrete historical evidence on numbers and linguistic characteristics is lacking.

An occasional creole-speaking slave may have escaped to Barbados from another Caribbean area, while other creole-speakers may have come to Barbados as personal servants to masters who lived elsewhere, in the same fashion that Barbadian slaves accompanied their masters on voyages away from the island. The numbers of both categories of slaves could not have been very large, but no figures are available for the period before the early 19th century. From 1815 to 1830 about 165 domestic slaves, identified as imports, came to Barbados from other British Caribbean territories; the largest number (111) arrived from Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent; the next group (32) from Demerara and Berbice; while the remaining 22 were brought from Trinidad, Tobago, and various Leeward islands (Parliamentary Papers 1823, 1826, 1831–2).

The abolition of the slave trade in 1807 effectively cut off the supply of slaves from Africa, but the abolition act provided that slaves could be carried from one British colony to another; this intercolonial trade over the next two decades or so had some significance for several colonies, but does not seem to have involved Barbados as an importer, although the island played some role as an exporter (e.g., Higman 1984:79–85). Finally, during the years prior to emancipation, some Barbadian slaves, such as hucksters, cooks, carpenters, tailors, and sailors, were able to legally leave the island to work in another territory with the proviso that they return and pay their master part of the proceeds they earned. Demerara-Essequibo was particularly attractive in the late 1820s because wages for such jobs were higher than in Barbados, but only a very small number of Barbadian slaves were involved (Higman 1984:84).



In all, then, creole-speaking slaves from other Caribbean areas might have come to Barbados during the slave period, but at best their numbers would have been negligible and it is doubtful that they had much impact on the development of the Bajan language.

19) Dolly Newton's original letter is photographically reproduced with two other "slave letters" in Watson (1979: 140-5), but it is not within our evidence to judge if the letter is in her handwriting or that of another. An anonymous reviewer for this article points out that

There were professional letter-writers who knew the approved formulas and who were hired to write such letters as this. I doubt this proves the domestic slave's command of standard English!

The reviewer may be correct, but we have no evidence for such "professional letter-writers" in Barbados (and the reviewer does not produce any). In any case, at the time Newton's letter was written, there were literate slaves in Barbados. Although it is not unlikely that they or others would have been able to charge for their services, whether or not they could be considered "professional letter-writers" is another matter.

20) Of course, this may simply be a report of the general sentiments uttered by the "communal Sister" rather than a rendition of her exact words.

21) His real name was actually I. W. Orderson. See Handler (1971:68).

22) Like the mesolectal habitual marker *doz* (cf. LePage & Tabouret Keller 1985:113), subject *um* may well have been introduced to Guyana by Bajan speaking immigrants in the 19th century.

23) As we have acknowledged at several points in this paper, some of the features — e.g., the use of *dem* as a third person plural subject pronoun, or as a plural demonstrative pronoun — have parallels in British dialects. However, this does not prevent us from identifying the varieties which contain them as creole. In the first place, these features are generally more frequent in the Caribbean Creoles and/or are governed by a different set of internal constraints (see note 14). In the second place, the varieties exhibit other features (like copula absence) which are distinctive to the creoles. In the third place, while Bajan and other Anglophone Caribbean varieties obviously show influences from the Irish and southwest English dialects spoken by the earliest White settlers (Niles 1980:77, LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985:38-43), the Caribbean and British varieties are not identical, the former showing greater co-occurrence of the vernacular features with each other.

24) Given the amount of research that has previously taken place with early published sources (e.g., Handler 1971, 1991), if such texts exist, it is more likely they will be found in hitherto unidentified manuscript sources.

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