

Afro-Paraguayan Spanish: The Negation of Non-Existence

by

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Introduction

One of the most interesting chapters in the history of the Spanish and Portuguese languages throughout the world is the African contribution. There exists a tantalizing corpus of literary, folkloric and anecdotal testimony on the earlier speech patterns of Africans and their descendents, in the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America. In the nearly 500 years of Afro-Hispanic literary imitations, there has been a cyclic pattern, oscillating between reasonably accurate linguistic imitations (although riddled with cultural stereotypes and vicious word-play) and totally fanciful formulaic representations, perhaps based on some earlier legitimate Afro-Hispanic speech, but out of touch with the reality of the time. The one common thread running through such second-hand accounts is a tone of reproach and ridicule, based on the tacitly or explicitly asserted notion that Africans and their descendents in the Americas spoke “broken” and “incorrect” Spanish. Afro-descendents were denied even the legitimacy of their own native language(s), which were always judged from the standpoint of those wielding power, and which became shibboleth-ridden badges of ignorance and marginality. In 21st century Latin America, as Afro-descendents intensify their continent-wide activism, demanding the rights and recognition withheld from them since the time of the slave ships, cultural symbols of Afro-descendents are undergoing major iconic reversals. Beginning with the legitimization of artistic expressions such as music and dance, and extending to traditional medicinal and religious practices, the reaffirmation of elements cultural elements once ignored or felt to be demeaning is now extending to language. The present study describes some small Afro-descendent communities that have not previously been the subject of linguistic analysis, with an eye toward the search for authentic emblems of cultural identity in the midst of multi-secular social invisibility.

Paraguay is one of the least likely places in Latin America to search for remnants of Afro-Hispanic language and culture, and many researchers have taken at face value the many quasi-official pronouncements to the effect that there are no Black people in Paraguay, and have looked no further.

Although the history of Black people in colonial Paraguay has been widely discussed, mention of contemporary Afro-Paraguayan communities is usually based on second-hand sources, often with misleading or even erroneous references. The reasons for these lacunae are not hard to fathom. Landlocked Paraguay has never gone out of its way to welcome foreign visitors, beginning with the hermetic Francia dictatorship in the first decades following independence (1812), passing through the devastating Triple Alianza (1864-1870) and Chaco (1932-1935) wars that destroyed more than half of the male population and left the country devastated, and culminating in the decades of the Stroessner dictatorship (1954-1989), in which tourism was discouraged. Paraguay is best known as the only Latin American nation in which all citizens, including those of European and Asian origin, acquire the indigenous language Guaraní natively, usually in preference to and even at the expense of Spanish.

Afro-descendants in Paraguay: Past and Present

Despite the scarce mention of African presence in Paraguay, either during the colonial period or at the present time, the Black presence has at times been considerable, but the linguistic and cultural imprint of Africans and their descendants in Paraguay is a virtually untouched area of inquiry. Colonial Paraguay imported few enslaved Africans, due to the unique conditions of this colony, and those who did arrive more frequently came from Buenos Aires or Brazil than directly from Africa.ⁱ An estimate of the population in 1682 suggested some 6% of the total population was Black, with the proportion rising to 11% in Asunción (Argüello Martínez 1999:69; Pla 1972; Boccia Romañach 2004; Williams 1974). In 1800 the free and captive Black population was some 11,000 or nearly 11% of the total national total. When one considers that another 31% of the population was indigenous—including many not participating in the Spanish colonial culture—the proportion of Blacks to whites rises to nearly 18% (Andrews 2004:41). A census of young people (age 11-16) Asunción taken in 1854 revealed 385 white children and 294 *pardos* (Black and mulatto) children (Pla 1972:33). A count of Blacks and mulattoes taken in 1782 revealed a total of 10,838 Black enslaved and free citizens (Pla 1972:36). In the 1860's it was estimated that at least 10% of Paraguay's population was Black or mulatto (Pla 1972:37; Rout 1976:206). In 1925 there was an estimate of some 10,000 Paraguayans of noticeable African descent, another estimate of 31,500 in 1935, and as late as 1951 an informal estimate of 3.5% of the national population was presumed to have some African blood (Rout 1976:208). Oviedo (1992) extended this estimate into the 1990's, and this figure was incorporated into the map in *Minority Rights Group* (1995: xiii). As a little-known facet of Afro-Paraguayan history, during the dictatorship of Dr. Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia (1814-1840), known as *El Supremo* 'the Supreme one,' Francia decreed that white citizens could not marry other whites, but could only marry Blacks, mulattoes, or Indians (Williams 1971:272); to the extent that this law was actually enforced (and Williams' sources suggest that it was), racial mixture was further accelerated in a nation whose colonial origins already stemmed from an atypical demographic mix: Spanish men (mostly soldiers), and Native American women.

There is little accurate information on the arrival of Africans in colonial Paraguay, beyond the indisputable predominance of the Spanish port of Buenos Aires, as well as the ongoing contraband trade with neighboring Brazil. According to the few available colonial documents, it appears that the arrival of African-born captives (known as *bozales* 'untamed' by slave dealers) dropped off sharply after the end of the 17th century (Cooney 1995). The Swiss travelers Rengger and Lompchamp (1828), describing a voyage to Paraguay in 1825, noted that there were few Blacks in Paraguay, either enslaved or free, and that the majority of Black Paraguayans had been born in the colonies (Boccia Románach 2005: 80). Pastor Benítez (1955:81) attributes the minimal presence of Africans in colonial Paraguay to the absence of large-scale mining plantation agriculture: "La esclavitud era más bien casera; los siervos adoptaban el apellido del dueño. Las paraguayas prefieren amamantar al hijo, antes de confiarlo al aya negra" [Slavery was mainly domestic; servants took the surname of their owner. Paraguayan women preferred to nurse their own children, rather than entrusting them to Black nursemaids]. These observations notwithstanding, accounts of *bozal* (African-born) maroons recur in Paraguay well into the 19th century; there are even accounts of uprisings in some villages (Argüello Martínez 1999: 67).

Despite the consistent historical documentation, by the beginning of the 20th century the Afro-Paraguayan population had shrunk to the point where most Paraguayans sincerely held the opinion that the country had no Black residents. Thus for example the Paraguayan historian indirectly hinted at the lack of a Black population in Paraguay in his description of a trip to Lima, Peru in 1912 to attend a conference of educators: "El bajo pueblo ofrece idénticas analogías con la nuestra. Hay, sin embargo, en sus filas elementos exóticos, que no existen en nuestro país. Chinos y negros" [the lower classes offer identical analogies to ours; there are, however, exotic elements in their ranks: Chinese and Blacks] (Stefanich 1914: 88). Around 1970 the late African-American historian Leslie Rout declared that "As far as most citizens in the capital city are concerned, the total physical assimilation of the Afro-Paraguayan has already occurred" (Rout 1976:208). Rout had seen some Black residents near the river in Asunción, but they fled when Rout called out to him; Rout imagined that they considered him to be a Brazilian. Andrews (2004:60), in speaking of Paraguay, cites Montaña (1997:210-10) in briefly referring to the communities of Laurety and Camba Cua, considered as exogenous communities not originally arising in colonial Paraguay.

Contemporary Afro-Paraguayan Activism: The 2007 Census

In the first decade of the 21st century the notion that Paraguay has no Black population still persists, despite the widely acclaimed Afro-Paraguayan dance group Ballet Kamba Cuá, which gives performances across the country and in neighboring countries, and whose celebration of St. Balthasar on January 6 attracts spectators from around the nation.

In order to combat the official policy of invisibility, a group of Afro-Paraguayan activists, headed by the director of the Ballet Kamba Cuá, Lázaro Medina, and Kamba Cuá cultural development leader José Carlos Medina organized a census of Paraguayan Afro-descendants in 2007, focusing on three communities with an acknowledged Afro-Hispanic population: Camba Cua, just outside of greater Asunción; Kamba Kokué, on the outskirts of Paraguairí, and the city of Emboscada (AAPKC 2008).ⁱⁱ The census was supported by the Interamerican Foundation of the United States and by Mundo Afro from Uruguay. The census, which was formally presented to and accepted by the Paraguayan government and representatives of the United Nations in Asunción, contained the following results: in Camba Cua 418 residents were included; in Kamba Kokué some 385 Afro-descendants, and in Emboscada 2686 in the urban area and another 4524 in the surrounding rural zone, for a total of 8,013 acknowledged Afro-Paraguayans. This figure is obviously incomplete, being only a fraction of the total Afro-descendent population in Paraguay, although probably much closer to reality than the figure of 156,000 suggested by Oviedo (1992). The census did not reach all potential residents, especially in Emboscada; some individuals approached by the census takers preferred to not identify as Afro-descendants; moreover, there are other nuclei of Afro-descendent Paraguayans scattered throughout the country that have not yet been included in any reckoning. At this point it is impossible to estimate the total number of Afro-Paraguayans, but Lázaro Medina feels that the figure of around 8000 presented in the 2007 census could easily be doubled. The present study focuses on the three communities identified in the Afro-Paraguayan census, with the addition of the small enclave of Laurelty, close to Camba Cua and descending from the same original population. If any discernible cultural and linguistic elements harking back to an Afro-colonial past are to be found in contemporary Paraguay, they are most likely to be present in self-identified Afro-descendent communities.

San Agustín de la Emboscada: Town of Free Blacks

Beginning at the turn of the 17th century several villages comprised of free and enslaved Black people were established by colonial officials, usually with an eye to fortifying remote areas that were subject to attacks by hostile indigenous groups. The first Black Paraguayan community Tabapy (today named Roque González de Santa Cruz) was founded in 1653 (Silva 2005: 36; Williams 1977). As a side note, in 1813 some forty Black and mulatto men were forcibly extracted from Tabapy and sent to the northern border of Paraguay to form the fortified community of Tevegó (Williams 1971; Viola 1986:142-156). This experimental community was short-lived, and did not survive past the devastating Triple Alliance War of 1864-1870. Other Black villages founded during the colonial period were Areguá and Guarambaré. Today, few distinguishable Afro-descendants are found in Tabapy, Areguá, and Guarambaré, and there is no community sense of an Afro-colonial past, although the Kamba Cuá activists are beginning outreach activities in these towns. Around 1740 (proposed dates range from 1740 to 1744), the town of San Agustín de la Emboscada was founded, the result of constant attacks by the hostile Mbayá.

A detachment of free Blacks and *pardos* (mixed-race or mulattoes) was moved from Tabapy to Emboscada, while other Black residents were sent by the religious orders based in Asunción. It is widely believed that Blacks and mulattoes resettled in Emboscada received some kind of conditional freedom by means of official decrees or *amparos*, provided that they participate actively in military defense operations. This has given rise to the popular designation of Emboscada as the “Town of free Blacks” (Pueblo de Pardos Libres), despite the fact that many of the original settlers were still enslaved (Blujaki 1980, Granda 1983). Azara (1904: 47-49, 61-62, 69), in a report dated 1790 offered descriptions of the Black and mulatto populations in Emboscada, Areguá, and Tabapy, all of which were still considerable in the late 18th century. Today, Emboscada is a modern and well-groomed city of some 13,500 inhabitants, according to the 2002 census. Although the 2007 Afro-Paraguayan census reported that some 58% of the population of Emboscada is of Afro-colonial origin, there is little collective awareness of Afro-descendancy, except for occasional holiday celebrations. Recently, Emboscada activists have formed the Misión de Afrodescendientes de Emboscada, loosely tied to the town’s municipal offices, but this group has yet to initiate the task of recovering traditions and memories among the scattered rural sectors (for example Minas) most likely to contain Afro-Paraguayan cultural remnants. Within the urban area of Emboscada, characterized by neatly manicured parks and carefully maintained churches and monuments, there are no visible reminders of the founders of the city, although occasional mixed-race phenotypes can be seen. Since the last African-born *bozales* would have disappeared from this region more than 250 years ago, it is not surprising that no traces of any earlier Afro-Hispanic language or ethnolinguistic traits are to be found in contemporary Emboscadeño Spanish. As in other Paraguayan cities, proficiency in Spanish (as opposed to Guaraní) is directly proportional to the level of formal education and to contacts with Spanish-speaking sectors of the population.

The Afro-Paraguayan Community of Camba Cua

The most significant Black presence in Paraguay derives not from captives formerly held in the Spanish colony, but rather from a group of free Black soldiers who arrived in 1820. In that year the Uruguayan general José Gervasio Artigas, following numerous defeats in his homeland, went into exile in Paraguay, where he received political asylum from the country’s first president, Dr. Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia. Artigas was accompanied by some 250 Black lancers (accounts vary as to the precise number), not surprising in view of the key role played by Black soldiers in Uruguay and Argentina in the many civil wars that erupted in the decades following independence. Francia—who had already proclaimed himself supreme dictator for life—evidently had second thoughts about a powerful and popular political leader establishing himself in the nation’s capital, and he sent Artigas into internal exile in distant Curuguatí, where the Uruguayan leader spent most of the rest of his life. The Black soldiers were resettled in at least two areas some 15 km. to the east of Asunción, Laurety and what became known as Campamento Loma(s), then Lomas Campamento, and ultimately Camba Cua.

Each Black family was given land, a team of oxen, and seeds to plant, and for more than a century and a half these tiny settlements retained a distinctly Afro-Hispanic character. Lomas Campamento (still the “official” name of this community) became known by the Guaraní term Camba Cua, combining an originally derisive term for Black people, *camba*, and the word *cua*, meaning cave or hideout.ⁱⁱⁱ The original land grant to the residents of Camba Cua was some 100 hectares. In 1940 the dictatorship of General Higinio Morínigo snatched half of the land. In 1967, at the height of the Stroessner dictatorship, soldiers suddenly cordoned off most of the remaining land with barbed wire, with the intent of turning over this rich farmland, now part of greater urban Asunción and bordering on the lands of a major university, to private owners (Machado 2000, Montañó 1997:201-210; Carvalho Neto 1971:29-130, Cooney 1995). The residents resisted as best they could, sending the men into hiding for fear of being killed, while the women, armed only with sticks and machetes, tore down the fences and attempted to hold back the soldiers and police. The latter prevailed in short order and the community was stripped of all but seven hectares. In recent years the community has been able to recover three more hectares, but although the Paraguayan government acknowledges the resident’s putative rights to more land, the law requires that the land originally taken by force and coercion be paid for at current fair market prices, estimated to be several million US dollars and beyond the wildest dreams of the settlement’s poor residents. After losing more than 90% of their original land, the former farmers were forced to seek alternative employment. Many of the women found work as maids in Asunción, while those men who could find work labored as masons and carpenters. There is considerable prejudice against visibly Black people, and consequently unemployment and underemployment is high in the community. Currently all that remains of Camba Cua is a long narrow strip of land along a dirt road that branches off a major artery linking Asunción and towns to the east, the Avenida Mariscal López. The dirt road is bordered on one side by the Hospital Materno Infantil, for women and children, and further along by lands belonging to the college of agriculture of the national university. On the other side the community is hemmed in by a housing development, so that Camba Cua is effectively a narrow string of houses along a winding dirt road some 1.5 km. long. The 2007 Afro-Paraguayan census counted 418 residents in 89 households, reaching nearly every community member. The community now has an elementary school, but many older residents are functionally illiterate.

Of the rich drumming and dancing traditions of Afro-Uruguayan and earlier Afro-Argentine communities little survived the march to Paraguay in the 19th century. Afro-Paraguayans in Camba Cua and Laurety have always celebrated the feast of San Baltasar on January 6 with dancing and drumming, but with only a few dancers and drummers carrying on the tradition across generations. Ruiz Rivas de Domínguez (1974:2521-3) describes the formerly popular *galopa marimba* dance with drum accompaniment; the term *marimba* does not refer to the xylophone-like instrument but rather to an African drum, which accompanies the *galopa*. In recent decades the annual San Baltasar celebration in Camba Cua has become a regional and even national tourist attraction, covered extensively in the press, the subject of short television documentaries and occasional recordings.

The Ballet Folklórico Kamba Cuá has just finished a commercially produced video DVD of traditional dancing and drumming, and YouTube contains various video clips dealing with Camba Cua. Hundreds of visitors show up at the tiny Camba Cua chapel, in crowds that sometimes include members of the diplomatic corps and other resident and visiting dignitaries. This activity has given considerable publicity to the Camba Cua community and has resulted in generally favorable press coverage. Although there have always been traditional drummers in the community—Santiago Medina (b. 1920), who learned from his own father, is the oldest surviving drummer—but in recent decades the Afro-Paraguayan community has received an infusion of cultural assistance from Afro-Uruguayan groups, most notably the Montevideo-based Mundo Afro. The latter group has contributed Afro-Uruguayan *tamboriles*, elongated drums similar to the Afro-Cuban *congas* or *tumbadoras*, to complement the rounder drums previously used by Afro-Paraguayans. The Ballet Folklórico Kamba Cuá has toured extensively, including in Uruguay and at international Afro-Latin American events, and there is clearly some syncretism and borrowing in their contemporary interpretation of drum patterns claimed to be purely traditional. The success of the dance group has given impetus to the sister Organización Kamba Cuá, which by means of local activism as well as contact with international Afro-diasporic and human rights organizations is fighting for the return of the lands seized by the Stroessner government as well as official recognition as an ethnic community. As has occurred in Chile, Bolivia, and even in Peru, the cultural identity as *afrodescendientes* is a recent phenomenon in a country where possessing visible African traits has always been considered a social liability. Despite the popular acclaim of the Ballet Folklórico Kamba Cuá, the community remains marginalized and outside the pale of proactive government assistance.^{iv}

The Other “Artigas-Cué”: The Afro-descendants of Laurelty

The historical record is generally clear as regards the arrival of Artigas and his Black soldiers (known as “Artiguas-Cué”) and their subsequent redeployment in at least two areas near Asuncion, known as Campamento Lomas (modern Camba Cua) and Laurelty. Despite this fact, and possibly due to the recent name-recognition afforded to Camba Cua, there has arisen a considerable confusion as to the nature and identity of the Uruguayan-derived Afro-Paraguayan population. While some more recent accounts explicitly acknowledge the existence of two separate communities, other descriptions mention only a single community, while still others assert that Lomas Campamento/Camba Cua and Laurelty are alternative names for one and the same community. The Afro-Uruguayan historian Montaña (1997:204) quotes a personal testimony from the Paraguayan historian Juan Stefanich, who in turn indicated that Artigas’ soldiers were given “un terreno llano muy apto para la agricultura situado a dos leguas de la ciudad en un lugar llamado Laurelty” [a flat piece of land well suited for agriculture and situated two leagues from Asuncion, in a place called Laurelty] Montaña notes that Laurelty “conserva aún ese nombre y allí siguen viviendo los descendientes de los soldados artiguistas, todos morenos” [it still retains this name and the descendants of Artigas’ soldiers, all Black, still live there].

Montaño goes on to say that Artigas' soldiers were also resettled in "el otro lugar [...] fue en el distrito de Fernando de la Mora [...] Esta comunidad se dio en llamar Loma Campamento o Cambá Cuá [...] Es aquí donde hoy siguen viviendo los descendientes de aquellos negros y negras que acompañaron a Artigas" [the other place was in the district of Fernando de la Mora ... this community became known as Loma Campamento or Camba Cua. It is here that the descendents of those Black people that accompanied Artigas continue to live]. Addressing the confusion regarding the names, Montaño (1997:204) observes that "El que sean dos las denominaciones que han superado el paso del tiempo, es un motivo elocuente de que se piense en la existencia de dos poblaciones" [the fact that two names have survived the test of time provides a strong motive for believing in the existence of two communities], and cites a personal communication from Lázaro Medina in 1996 to the effect that both communities continue to exist. A contemporary web site,^v translating a pamphlet originally prepared in Spanish by Lázaro Medina, quotes that activist as having affirmed that "Our ancestors, the honor guard for General Jose Gervasio Artigas, accompanied the General to Paraguay while he was seeking political asylum from Uruguay [...] the dictator of Paraguay at the time, Gaspar Rodriguez de Francia, who had granted them asylum, dispersed them into three groups widely separated from each other. Sergeant Ansina remained with General Artigas in Caraguatay. A second group was sent to what is called Laurelty today, and our ancestors were sent to Lomas Campamento, which used to be within the city jurisdiction of San Lorenzo and is now within the city of Fernando de la Mora." Andrews (2004:60) refers indirectly to two Afro-Paraguayan communities descended from Artigas' soldiers: "As Artigas went down in defeat, his Black troops formed the loyal hard core of his forces and followed him into permanent exile in Paraguay, where they settled in two Afro-Uruguayan towns outside Asunción that still exist to the present." Bejarano (1960:63) speaks of "una imagen del SANTO REY Baltazar, a quien un año festejaban en Campamento Loma o Kambakuá, y otro año en Laurelty, compañías próximas habitadas por sus familias, descendientes de los negros que acompañaron a Artigas" [an image of the Holy King Balthasar, which is celebrated every other year in Campamento Loma or Kambakua and Laurelty]. He goes on to say (p. 64): "Tanto los de Laurelty (pasando San Lorenzo), como los de Campamento Loma (al norte del Colegio Nacional de Agronomía Mariscal Estigarribia), se esfuerzan en hacer fiestas mejores que los contrincantes" [both the people from Laurelty (past San Lorenzo) and those from Campamento Loma (to the north of the Mariscal Estigarribia National Agronomy School) make great efforts to put on a better festival than their competitors]. Ruiz Rivas de Domínguez (1974:251), who interviewed Catalina and Eulalia Medina in 1954, mentions Campamento Loma (Cambacua) and Laurelty as separate communities: "Un pequeño grupo de familias negras se ubicó en dos compañías de la ciudad de San Lorenzo, denominadas Campamento Loma o Cambacuá (cueva de negros) y Laurelty" [a small group of Black families was settled in two sectors of the city of San Lorenzo, known as Campamento Loma or Cambacuá, and Laurelty]. Obliquely suggesting a reason for the ambiguity surrounding the two communities, Boettner (1956:192) explains that "Los negros de Artigas [...] fueron ubicados cerca de San Lorenzo.

Hoy persisten dos comunidades llamadas Loma Campamento y Laurelty. No pasan de pocas familias. El pueblo designa esos sitios como CAMBACUÁ [...] [the Blacks who came with Artigas ... were relocated near San Lorenzo. Two communities exist to this day, named Loma Campamento and Laurelty. They have only a few families. People refer to these sites as Cambacuá].

Despite such clear indications, several studies refer only to a single Artigas-derived Afro-Paraguayan community, usually Laurelty (although Rodríguez 2001 and Machado 2000 only mention Camba Cuá). Rout (1976:208) only mentions a single Afro-Paraguayan community, Laurelty “which was started in 1820 by fifty Black and mulatto followers of the vanquished Uruguayan patriot, José Artigas.” Rout’s visit to Laurelty in the 1960’s convinced him that “the time of the disappearance of the last Black person in the settlement cannot be far off.” The distinguished Afro-Hispanic linguistic scholar Granda (1983). P. 231, nota 1), states that “En el municipio de San Lorenzo existe otro núcleo de población negra, Laurelty. Pero su origen es exógeno, ya que surgió como tal a consecuencia del asentamiento en dicha área de un grupo de negros uruguayos que acompañó a Artigas en su destierro al Paraguay durante la dictadura del doctor Francia” [In the municipality of San Lorenzo there is another Black community, Laurelty. But its origins are exogeneous, since the community arose through the resettlement in this area of a group of Black Uruguayans who accompanied Artigas into exile in Paraguay, during the Francia dictatorship]. Granda makes reference to Carvalho Neto (1971)’s Afro-Paraguayan studies, and it is not clear whether Granda had personal knowledge beyond that gleaned from secondary sources. Since Granda had lived in Asunción at one point and had done extensive research on Paraguayan Spanish, it is reasonable to suppose that he was familiar with communities only a few km. outside of the capital city. The Paraguayan musicologist and composer Sánchez Quell (1947:189), in his description of colonial Asuncion, speaks of “la aldea de negros denominada Laurelty [...] Allí celebraban anualmente la tradicional fiesta de San Baltasar, el Rey Mago negro [...] enorme cantidad de gente iba llegando a la capilla de Laurelty, donde se veneraba la imagen de San Baltasar” [the Black village called Laurelty ... there the traditional feast day of St. Balthasar, the Black Wise King, is celebrated annually ... a great number of people would go to the Laurelty chapel, where they adored the image of St. Balthasar]. Sánchez Quell had composed (together with Mauricio Cardozo Ocampo) a musical work “San Baltasar” based on Afro-Paraguayan traditions, so he presumably had some personal knowledge of the Black communities on the outskirts of Asuncion. Decoud (1930: 18), in a monograph about Laurelty, describes the community without reference to any other Afro-Paraguayan settlement, although his description of Laurelty appears to more accurately fit the location of Camba Cua: “distante como dos leguas de la capital, en la jurisdicción del departamento de San Lorenzo del Campo Grande, sobre la orilla de una abra o cañada que, por un extremo, comunicaba con la calle pública que une dicho pueblo con el de Luque y, por el otro, con el campo llamado Ñu Guazu (Campo Grande)” [about two leagues from the capital, in the jurisdiction of the department of San Lorenzo del Campo Grande, on the edge of a ravine which at one end connects to the public road uniting that town with Luque, and on the other end with the open area known as Ñu Guazú ‘big field’].

Decoud indirectly suggests that the name Campamento (currently applied to Camba Cua) in fact pertained to Laurely; according to his analysis, Guaraní speakers who saw Blacks for the first time exclaimed ¡Cambá, memetéro chamento! `they are really black!' According to Decoud (1930: 16): “estos vocablos nativos, con el transcurso del tiempo, fueron transformándose hasta quedar definitivamente castellanizado, bajo el nombre de “Campamento”, el cual conserva hasta hoy, existiendo siempre algunos de los descendientes que dieron origen a tal denominación, que muchos aún están radicados en las tierras que fueron de sus remotos antepasados [...]” [these native words, with the passing of time, became transformed into Spanish with the name “Campamento,” which is used to this day, since some of the descendents of those who gave rise to this name continue to live there]. Decoud (1930:13) also describes the founding of Laurely in 1843 “sobre el camino entre San Lorenzo y Luque” [along the road between San Lorenzo and Luque], which also corresponds to the location of Lomas Campamento/Camba Cua. In his literary vignettes, Galeano (1984: 149-150) only makes reference to “Campamento Laurely” in describing the arrival of Artigas’ black soldiers in Paraguay.

To add to the confusion, several prominent researchers have referred to Laurely and Lomas Campamento/Camba Cua as being alternative names for a single community. The Brazilian anthropologist Carvalho Neto (1971: 109), referring to data collected in Paraguay in 1951, states that “El actual negro paraguayo vive en colonias de negros, geográficamente distantes entre sí [...] tuvimos referencias de las siguientes: Campamento o Campamento Loma o también Campamento Laurely, Emboscada, Camba-Cuá, Lavretá, Fernando de Lamora y San Baltasar [...]Campamento Loma o Laurely es aún hoy aquel mismo sitio donado por el dictador Francia a algunos de los negros orientales que acompañaron a Artigas al Paraguay en 1820” [The contemporary black Paraguayan lives in Black settlements, geographically separated from one another [...] we heard about Campamento or Campamento Lomas or also Campamento Laurely, Emboscada, Camba Cua, Lavretá, Fernando de La Mora and San Baltasar [...] Campamento Loma or Laurely is even today the same site donated by the dictator Francia to some of the Black Uruguayans who accompanied Artigas to Paraguay in 1820]. The Afro-Uruguayan scholar Pereda Valdés (1964: 6) asserted that “En el Paraguay, a dos leguas de la ciudad de Asunción existe un lugar llamado Laurely también denominado Cambá Cuá ... donde habita desde hace muchos años un núcleo de descendientes de africanos que mantienen sus tradiciones” [in Paraguay, two leagues outside of Asuncion there is a place called Laurely and also called Camba Cua ... inhabited for many years by a group of African descendents who maintain their traditions]. A number of didactic web sites also maintain the ambiguity surrounding Laurely. One site devoted to the Paraguayan polka^{vi} asserts that “ [...] algunas comunidades como Kambacuá en Laurely, situada en el límite de Fernando de la Mora y San Lorenzo, han reivindicado su ascendencia negra con el cultivo de su música, sus danzas y sus tradiciones” [some communities like Kamba Cuá in Laurely, located on the border of Fernando de la Mora and San Lorenzo, have acknowledged their African ancestry through cultivating their music, dance, and traditions].

It is precisely Camba Cua that is located in Fernando de la Mora, while across the street only a few meters away the municipality of San Lorenzo begins. An official web site of the nearby city of Luque^{vii} claims that “Se los llama Kamba Kua. ... El gueto de gente de color ubicado en Laurelty, Luque. Gente de origen humilde, cuya presencia en el país arranca del tiempo en que el general uruguayo Artigas busco refugio en el país, allá por 1820” [they are called Kamba Cuá .. this group of colored people located in Laurelty, Luque, people of humble origins, whose presence in this country goes back to the times in which the Uruguayan general Artigas sought refuge in the country in 1820].

While it is not surprising that writers from outside of Paraguay might confuse the names and even the existence of the two Black communities arising from Artigas' exile from Uruguay, it is not clear why such confusion should have recurred so frequently among Paraguayans. It is possible that the use of *Camba Cua* to refer to any small Black enclave may have caused some ambiguity, but the failure to distinguish names and places as distinct as Campamento Loma and Laurelty is more likely attributable to racist indifference in a society supremely uninterested in accurate details about its tiny Afro-descendent population. After sorting through the tangle of contradictory statements and after receiving ambiguous or vague responses from several Paraguayan sources, I returned to Camba Cua in 2008, and accompanied by Lázaro Medina, director of the Ballet Folklórico Kamba Cuá, conducted field research in Laurelty. Today Laurelty is a marginal sector of the sprawling city of Luque, and located only a few kilometers from Camba Cua. Like Camba Cua, Laurelty consists of several blocks of semi-rural residences, located less than one kilometer from a main road that traverses Luque. Ordinarily ignored by other residents of Luque and neighboring communities, Laurelty made headlines throughout South America in early 2008, due to a serious outbreak of yellow fever, surprising in such an urbanized area, and indicative of the marginality and poor sanitary conditions of this sector. The Santo Rey (Holy King) chapel of St. Balthasar sits in the middle of the community, recently rebuilt on the ruins of an older chapel. As in Camba Cua, residents of Laurelty celebrate the feast of St. Balthasar on January 6, and older people recall a time when drumming and dancing were part of the celebration. At the present time, drumming is rare on the feast day, but some younger community members are in contact with Camba Cua activists in an attempt to revive the cultural links between the two communities that flourished in earlier generations. Few people in Laurelty exhibit Afro-descendent phenotypes, and even fewer actively identify themselves as Afro-descendents, although the growing popularity of the Ballet Folklórico Kamba Cuá and the annual festivities in that community are piquing the interest of some Laurelty residents.

The Afro-Paraguayans of Kamba Kokué

The existence of Afro-Paraguayans in Emboscada was known to other Paraguayans even in recent times, while the communities of Lomas Campamento/Camba Cua and Laurely had been mentioned by historians (in Paraguay and Uruguay) and musicologists, although largely going unnoticed in the remainder of the national population. As the Kamba Cuá activists began preparations for the Afro-descendent census, a third historically Black community not previously mentioned in historical accounts came to light, in a marginal sector on the outskirts of the city of Paraguari, some 70 km. to the southeast of Asuncion. The traditional name of the community is Kamba Kokué, which in Guaraní means 'farm of the Blacks'; the official name today is Barrio Virgen de Caacupé, although the residents themselves continue to use the older name. The community currently consists of a few semi-rural blocks just off the main highway at the entrance to Paraguari; dirt roads and small homes are flanked by an old cemetery and several fallow plots of land. The 2007 Afro-descendent census counted some 385 inhabitants in 90 households, approximately the same as Camba Cua. Older and even middle-aged residents tell tales of discrimination, racist comments and shunning by residents of neighboring sectors of Paraguari, and the census takers not surprisingly discovered that not all residents willingly identify themselves as Afro-descendents. As in the other Afro-Paraguyan communities, racially distinctive phenotypes, while not uncommon in Kamba Kokué, are interspersed with other more indeterminate physical traits, to the point where Kamba Kokué is no longer a visibly "Black" neighborhood. In one corner of the community, sandwiched among several large trees, are found two chapels, one very small and rustic, the other a larger more recent construction. The latter building bears a brightly painted sign over the entrance reading "Oratorio Virgen del Rosario Kamba Kokué",^{viii} and inside are several paintings depicting African and Afro-American figures. Young community activists have formed the Comisión Afroamericana Kamba Kokué, and group members participated in the Afro-descendent census and in other Afro-Paraguyan cultural events. The oral history of Kamba Kokué is now mentioned in some of the local schools, although no written materials have yet been prepared and the official curriculum makes no mention of Black Paraguayans. Older residents interviewed for the present study expressed pride in the census and in the renewed sense of community identity, even those inhabitants who do not consider themselves to be Afro-descendents. Younger people within the Kamba Kokué sector are increasingly proud of their heritage, while the rest of Paraguari, including the immediately adjacent neighborhoods, appears to have scarcely noticed the presumed Kamba Kokué cultural revival.

To date no accurate information on the origins of Kamba Kokué's Black community has come to light. According to the collective memory of many older residents, the community of Kamba Kokué has its roots in colonial history, quite probably to the slaveholding estates of religious orders throughout Paraguay. As in the case of the Afro-Hispanic communities of highland Ecuador's Chota Valley, the majority of slaveholding estates in Paraguay were managed by the Jesuits until their expulsion in the middle of the 18th century.

In Paraguari, the former Jesuit estates were taken over by the Ignacian order. According to Boccia Romañach (2004: 223; 2005: 80) and Maeder (1996), when the Jesuits were expelled, they held 519 enslaved Blacks in Paraguari, a number which increased through natural reproduction in the following years. As late as 1837 there were still some 160 enslaved Blacks in the estates surrounding Paraguari, together with an unspecified number of free Blacks and *pardos* (Boccia Romañach 2004: 224; Argüello Martínez 1999: 74). Although Kamba Kokué was never geographically isolated from nearby Paraguari, the status of community members as captives and later free persons of color resulted in the social and linguistic marginalization of this tiny ethnic enclave. According to Kamba Kokué oral traditions, the image of the Virgen del Rosario currently placed in the large chapel was originally discovered by a Black woman during the colonial period. The same residents tell tales of the old communal well—still in existence at one edge of Kamba Kokué and still occasionally used for drawing drinking water—as the main source of water for the Black community in the past.

Linguistic Traits of Afro-Paraguayan Spanish

The history of the Afro-Paraguayan communities is one of isolation and discrimination, coupled with a traditionally strong sense of ethnic identity. These are precisely the conditions that favor the retention of ethnolinguistic traits apart from the speech of the surrounding non-Afro descendent Paraguayan towns, as has occurred in some other Afro-Hispanic communities throughout Latin America. An obvious source of such potential differentiating features would be the partially restructured Spanish first acquired as a second language by African-born *bozales* during the colonial period; in some instances traces remained in subsequent generations of Afro-descendants born in the colonies and acquiring some variety of Spanish as a native language. In view of the de facto ghettoization of Afro-Paraguayans, especially in Camba Cua, Laurety, and Kamba Kokué, some innovations may have arisen that are not directly traceable to earlier Afro-Hispanic speech patterns. To date Paraguay has never been included in the search for remnants of Afro-Hispanic language, and there are no documents—not even literary parodies or folkloric texts—to give testimony to Africans' approximations to Spanish during earlier time periods; the only fragment uncovered so far is a legal document dated 1789, which offers a brief fragment in pidginized Spanish attributed to an African (Argüello Martínez 1999: 95): *¡Sargento! ¡No haber de llevar!* [Sergeant, not take {me}!].

In order to probe for ethnolinguistic differentiators among Afro-Paraguayans, field research was conducted in 2007-2008, in Camba Cua, Laurety, Kamba Kokué, and Emboscada.^{ix} The first research trip, to Camba Cua in 2007, was carried out prior to the census; the remaining research was conducted following the completion and publication of the census, an event that briefly brought Afro-Paraguayans to national prominence and provoked considerable reflection in the Afro-Paraguayan communities. In each community, interviews were conducted with most of the oldest residents, as well as with activists and a cross-section of younger individuals, for the purpose of uncovering any possible remaining Afro-Hispanic speech traits as well as any emerging Afro-Paraguayan characteristics.

The interpretation of the data is complicated by the fact that most elderly residents are functionally illiterate, and all speak Guarani, sometimes more often (and more fluently) than Spanish. This matter will be addressed again in a following section. In Emboscada, a careful analysis of the data revealed no unique linguistic features; in view of the size of the community and the many far-flung rural districts, it is possible that somewhere within Emboscada distinctive linguistic features may be uncovered. In Camba Cua, Laurely, and Kamba Kokué there are several linguistic traits, most concentrated in the speech of the oldest residents, that coincide with observed and attested Afro-Hispanic language elsewhere in Latin America, and which are qualitatively—and sometimes quantitatively—different from the speech of other Paraguayans of non-African origin. Most of the features involve deviations from world-wide Spanish grammar as spoken by monolingual native speakers, and which evidently reflect earlier time periods in which Africans acquired Spanish as a second language (Lipski 2005a). The principal linguistic traits are presented in the following sections.

Lapses of Noun-adjective Gender Agreement

Afro-Paraguayan speech in the three small enclaves exhibits several instances of lack of the usual adjective-noun agreement for grammatical gender (masculine-feminine), which is obligatory and exceptionless in Spanish. As with other Afro-Hispanic dialects, the masculine gender usually predominates, but cases like *la motivo* ‘the motive’ occasionally occur.

Camba Cua

la [el] motivo é ... {the motive is}; é jodido [jodida] la cosa que tiene ... {the thing that he has is screwed up}; loh [las] mujere {the women}; todo [todas] mih cosa [all my things]; algún [alguna] comida {some food}; esas oracione legítimo [legítimas] que han traído {those legitimate prayers that they have brought}; aquí demasiado [demasiada] plata {too much money here}; hasta el propio [la propia] justicia {the very same justice system}; láhtima que de la raza negro [negra] ya quedamo muy poco {it’s too bad that there are so few of us Black people left}; tenemoh gente jóvene sano [sanas] {we have healthy young people}; toda la ciudad tranquilo [tranquila] {the whole city [is] calm}; comprar yerba importado [importada], lo peor que puede suceder {the worst thing that can happen is to buy imported yerba mate}; unoh [unas] fuente de trabajo {some jobs}; un [una] canción {a song};

Kamba Kokué

fue una casa colonial muy antiguo [antigua] {it was an old colonial house}; nuestro [nuestra] comunidad es muy respetada dentro de la sociedad de Paraguarí {our community is well respected within Paraguarí society}; madera tierno [tierna] que se saca {green lumber that is cut}; una pare(d) francés [francesa] {a French style wall}; mucho mucho había gente negro [negra] {there were a lot of Black people}; la miel de caña es rico [rica] {honey is very tasty}; hay mucho [muchas] hierba para curar; el [la] hierba buena {there are a lot of medicinal herbs, like mint};

Invariant Plurals

Paraguayan Spanish routinely aspirates or deletes word-final /s/, which often marks plurality on nouns and adjectives, so that sometimes plural marking (as in *casa* ‘house’ vs. *casas* ‘houses’) disappears phonetically and plural reference has to be extracted from the surrounding context. Nouns and adjectives ending in a consonant add /-es/ to form the plural (e.g. *mujer-mujeres* ‘woman, women’), so that even deletion of the final /s/ does not obliterate the plural marker. In the speech of older Afro-Paraguayans, there are instances of invariant plural consonant-final nouns and adjectives, i.e. a singular form in a plural context, indicating that no plural suffix has been added. Some examples are:

Camba Cua

las tropa los camión [camiones] {the troops, the trucks}, lo militar [militares] {the soldiers}; esos militar [militares] que venía uniformao {those soldiers who arrived in uniform}; había parterah particular [particulares] {there were private midwives}; tuvimo atropello de militar [militares] {we had military assaults}; tiene niñoh, adolescente y grupoh mayor [mayores] {there are children, adolescents, and groups of older people}; fueron loh soldadoh fiel [fieles] de Artigas {they were Artigas’ loyal soldiers}; llegaron loh militar [militares] {the soldiers arrived}; eran personah muy mayor [mayores] {they were very old people}; loh embajadore, loh cónsul [cónsules] {ambassadors and consuls};

Kamba Kokué

anteh comíamo lah cosa natural [naturales] {in the past we ate natural things};

“Stripped Plurals”

In addition to invariant plural nouns and adjectives, and superimposed on the general weakening of the word-final /s/ that marks plural on nouns, adjectives, and determiners, Afro-Paraguayan speech frequently exhibits “stripped” plural noun phrases, in which the final pluralizing /s/ (often aspirated to [h]) occurs only on the first element of the noun phrase, usually a determiner such as a definite or indefinite article; the remaining elements in the noun phrase remain in the singular. Since word-final /s/ is usually not effaced completely except in absolute phrase-final position, stripped plurals can usually be identified unambiguously. Some examples include:

Camba Cua

las tropa[s] {the troops}; loh muchacho[s] ya hablar cahtellano {the kids speak Spanish now}; loh chico[s] de acá {the five kids from here}; unoh [unas] fuente[s] de trabajo {some jobs}; hay muchoh chico[s] quiere ehtudiá y no puede {there are a lot of kids who want to study and cannot}; ahí fue que se le murió muchoh soldado[s] {that’s where many of his soldiers died}; loh muchacho[s] en seguida aprendió {the kids learned quickly}; loh hombre[s] que trabaja en la chacra {the men who work on the farm};

Laurelty

se celebra con los promesero[s] {we celebrate with the promise-carriers}; se celebra con los camba[s] {we celebrate with the people from Camba Cua}; esta zona era, según los antaño[s], se plantaban muchos árboles {this area, according to the old folks, was where many trees were planted}

Kamba Kokué

después lah casa[s] vieja[s] de ante era casa [s]de paja {then the old houses in the past were made of straw}; anteh comíamo lah cosa[s] natural[es] {in the past we ate natural things}; mi abuelo trabaja en lah máquina[s] {my grandfather worked on the trains}; esoh boliviano[s] vino a cavar allá {those Bolivians came to dig around there};

Lapses of Subject-verb Agreement

Afro-Hispanic language throughout Latin America is characterized by a reduction in subject-verb agreement; as in semi-creole and creole languages, the third person singular of the verb is most often the form chosen for non-agreeing constructions, since this is the most frequently used and unmarked form in Spanish. Many instances of suspended subject-verb agreement are found in Afro-Paraguayan speech:

Camba Cua

mandó [mandé] hacer [el tambor] {I had the drum made}; loh muchacho ya hablar [hablan] cahtellano {the boys now speak Spanish}; servicio militar aprendé [aprendí] cahtellano {I learned Spanish in military service}; hay mucho muchacho que no trabaja[n] ... falta[n] ehtudio {there are many boys who don't work, they need education}; ya murió [murieron] todo(s) ya {they all died}; alguno(s) aprendió [aprendieron] loh chico de acá {some of the kids from here learned}; nosotros no tenía [teníamos] apoyo {we didn't have any support}; cómo noh dihcriminó [discriminaban] loh policía {how the police discriminated against us}; hay muchoh chico quiere [quieren] ehtudía y no puede [pueden] {there are many kids who want to study and cannot}; loh padre ehtán con el corazón el la mano ehperando [que] lo chico llega [lleguen] del colegio {the parents are with their heart in their mouth waiting for the kids to come home from school}; porque así nueh tro chico ehtá [están] cerca de nosotros {because in that way our kids are close to us}; lah abuela siempre deja [dejaban] {the grandmothers always allowed it}; ese fulano y mengano é nueh tro [son] pariente {that guy and that other guy are relatives}; Ello hice [hicieron] otra cosa {they did something else}; quiere que nosotros abandone [abandonemos] la tierra {he wants us to give up the land}; ello ehtá [están] gestionando {they are making the claim}; si uhtede quiere [quieren]... {if you want}; ahí fue que se le murió [murieron] muchoh soldado {that's how many of his soldiers died}; loh muchacho en seguida aprendió [aprendieron] {the kids learned quickly};

aquí todo loh día pasa [pasan] doh señora que vende [venden] menudencia {every day two ladies come by here selling tripe}; loh hombre que trabaja [trabajan] en la chacra {the men who work on the farm}; siempre se ha visto que no existe [existen] afrodescendienteh {it's always been thought that there are no Afro-descendants}; en mucha ciudade de nuestro país existe [existen] afrodescendientes {in many cities in our country there are Afro-descendants}; ello hace [hacen] su fiesta {they have their party}; una virgen que ello venera [veneran] {a virgen that they worship}; de ahí sale [salen] cosah muy importante {important things come from there}; y que todo loh ehtado piense [piensen] que de que nosotros también tenemos derecho de ser ciudadano comunes {and for all countries to think that we too have the right to be common citizens}; nuestro abuelo noh contaba [contaban] siempre cómo fue la historia cómo llegó este grupo de raza negra a Paraguay {our grandparents always told us the story of how this Black race arrived in Paraguay}; loh negroh de África que llegó [llegaron] a Montevideo {the Black people from Africa who arrived in Montevideo}; graciah a Dìoh, yo en esa época eh [era] muy jovencita {thank God I was a young girl at that time}; qué se va hacer, si lah cosah cambia[cambian] {what can you do, if things are changing}

Laurelty

casi todo(h) sabe [saben] tocar {almost everyone knows how to play}; se descompuso [descompusieron] todoh los tambores {the drums got broken}

Kamba Kokué

elloh mihmoh leh proveía [proveían] otra vez {they themselves provided it again}; ya se terminó [terminaron] lah casah vieja de lo que vivía [vivían] ante {there are no more old houses like people lived in before}; después lah casa vieja de ante era [eran] casa de paja {then the old houses from the past were made out of straw}; venía [venían] elloh el día de la virgen {they came on the Virgen Mary's feast day}; mi tía y eso mi mamá y eso no eh [son] casada {my aunt and my mother are not married}; mah ignorante pobrecitoh, no entiende [entienden] {those poor ignorant people don't understand}; esoh boliviano vino [vinieron] a cavar allá {those Bolivians came to dig around there}

Present-tense Verbs with Past Reference

The use of present-tense verbs with clear past reference (and not in any sort of “historical present” narrative style) is quite frequent in the speech of older Afro-Paraguayans. Some examples are:

Camba Cua

aquel tiempo pertenece [pertenecía] a San Lorenzo {at that time it belonged to San Lorenzo}; hace [hacíamos] [conciertos] alguna vez {sometimes we gave concerts}; se van [fueron] lo militar y después lo policía {the soldiers left, then the police}; yo tengo [tenía] vacas, bueyes, chancho {I

had cows, oxen, hogs}; yo tengo [tenía] [en la época de] la guerra del Chaco doce año {at the time of the Chaco War I was twelve years old}; había ciertah personah que hacen [hacían] [el carbón] {there were certain people who made charcoal}.

Laurelty

casi todo(h) sabe [sabían] tocar {almost everyone knew how to play}; mah o meno hay [había] Eugenio Morel, González {for example there were Eugenio Morel and González}

Kamba Kokué

no formamos [formábamos] parte de la sociedad {we weren't part of society}; yo por ejemplo con mujereh tengo [tuve] los hijos {for example I had the children with midwives}; nosotros nos sacamos [sacábamos] cuando alguien viene [venía] {we would go away whenever anyone came}; cuando yo siento [sentía] esa cosa antes {when I felt that way before}; ahora cuando viene [vino] el padre Luna es cuando sabemos [supimos] {when Father Luna came, that's when we found out}; mucha gente no quiere [quería] recibir los que hacen [hacían] el censo {many people didn't want to let the census takers in}; yo digo que eh [era] mejor anteh; cuando viene [venía] la virgencita siempre le hace [hacía] fiesta ahí {I tell you it was better before, when the Virgen's feast day came, they always celebrated it here}; mi abuelo es [era] muy generoso, mi abuelo trabaja [trabajaba] en lah máquina ...y a su señora le hace [hacía] vestido {my brandfather was very generous, he worked on the trains, and his wife made his clothing}; no sé si eh [era] profesión o aprende [aprendió] no mah {I don't know whether it was his profession or he just learned on his own}; yo no sé si vende [vendía] o lo que hace [hacía] {I don't know whether it was sold or whatever}; el señor eh [era] hijo de italiano, no eh [era] negro, pero la señora eh [era], ehclava {the man's parents were Italian, he wasn't Black, but his wife was a slave}; murieron toda la gente que conoce [conocía] {all the people who knew about it have died}; no sé qué le pone [ponía] {I don't know what he added to it}; se sentaba la mujer cuando va [iba] a tener hijo {when a woman was about to give birth she would sit down}; mi papá vive [vivía] aquí cerca la cancha Sudamérica; mamá vive [vivía] acá {my father lived near the Sudamérica soccer field, and my mother lived here}; nosotros ya estamos [estábamos] con nuestro abuelo, y ella viene [venía] de noche {we were already living with our grandfather, and she would come at night}; colegio también hay [había] pero muy poco {there were schools, but very few}; yo no hablo [hablé] con elloh {I didn't talk with them}; mi abuelo lu hace [hacía], y pintaba todo {my grandfather made them, and painted everything}; Ehtroner era muy querido acá en Paraguari, todoh le queremos [queríamos] {Stroessner was well-loved here in Paraguari, we all loved him}; mi papá eh [era] combatiente {my father was a combatant}

Comparisons with the Speech of non-Afro Paraguayans

Before analyzing the Afro-Paraguayan data within the framework of Afro-Hispanic language, it is necessary to address the issue of the degree to which these patterns differ significantly from the speech of other, non-Afro descendent Paraguayans. The analysis is not straightforward, given the complicating factor of bilingualism with Guaraní. The grammatical features just described are found only in the speech of the community's oldest residents, who strictly speaking are not monolingual Spanish speakers, but usually acquired Spanish after Guaraní. The same acquisition pattern holds for younger Paraguayans, but a greater shift towards the use of Spanish in the most urban settings (which have now completely surrounded the once rural Camba Cua, Laurelty, and Kamba Kokué communities) as well as greater access to formal schooling have instilled a greater confidence in Spanish language usage among younger residents. In principle it could be the case that the deviations from monolingual/native Spanish usage found among the oldest Afro-Paraguayans are simple reflections of their imperfect acquisition of Spanish, rather than vestiges of earlier Afro-Hispanic language. This eventuality is rendered less probable by comparing the speech of these elderly Afro-Paraguayans residents with that of other non-Afro descendents for whom Spanish is clearly a second language.

Nearly all studies of Paraguayan Spanish have focused on Spanish-Guaraní bilingualism and the sociolects of Spanish that show clear traces of Guaraní grammatical intervention.^x Guaraní speakers who are not fully fluent in Spanish may produce errors of subject-verb and adjective-noun agreement, but not with the consistent gravitation toward the 3rd person singular as invariant verb and masculine gender as invariant adjective form, as among Afro-Paraguayans. Welti (1979; 1982:656-8) finds gender concordance errors distributed between incorrect masculine and feminine forms, e.g. *mi taller propia* [*propio*] 'my own shop', *alguno[s] trabajos buenas* [*buenos*] 'some good jobs' vs. *persona bueno* [*bueno*] y *aseado* [*aseada*] 'a good and well-groomed person.' Usher de Herreros (1976:37-8) notes only a few cases of gender discord, such as *te traigo agua frío* [*fría*] 'I'll bring you cold water', a combination sometimes heard as a performance error in monolingual varieties of Spanish, given the morphophonetically-motivated syntagm *el agua*.

Subject-verb errors are also scattered across the spectrum in the semifluent speech of non-Afro descendent Paraguayans (Welti 1979; 1982:660-665). Examples like *yo trabajos* [*trabajo*] 'I work,' *yo piensan* [*pienso*] 'I think,' *mi amigo me contaron* [*contó*] 'my friend told me,' *mi padre trabajo* [*trabaja*], *mi madre trabajan* [*trabaja*] 'my father works, my mother works' are found as frequently as the 3rd person singular as invariant verb, as in the Afro-Hispanic examples (e.g. Welti found examples such as [*yo*] *trabaja* [*trabajo*], *piensa* [*pienso*] 'I work, think,' etc. Usher de Herreros (1976:40-1) similarly found widely dispersed errors of subject-verb agreement, without a clear preference for the 3rd person singular: *mi abuela y mi tía te manda[n]* 'my grandmother and my aunt send to you.'

The use of invariant plurals, frequent among Afro-Paraguayans, is not typical of other Guaraní-Spanish bilinguals in Paraguay, although occasionally occurring outside of the Afro-Paraguayan communities. Some cases of invariant plurals are found among non-Afro Paraguayans not entirely fluent in Spanish (1982:657), although not as frequently as in Camba Cua: *irme otros país [países] a trabajar* 'for me to go to other countries to work.' Nor are stripped plurals usual in the speech of non-Afro descendent Paraguayans, irrespective of level of proficiency in Spanish. Usher de Herreros (1976:38-9) similarly notes only ambiguous plural combinations such as *soldados paraguayos[s]/soldado[s] paraguayos* 'Paraguayan soldiers,' where phonetic erosion of /s/ could be at issue, as well as *me dio mucho(s) guaraní [guaraníes]* 'he gave me many guaraníes'; the national currency, the *guaraní*, is often given no plural even by Paraguayans entirely fluent in Spanish and who evince no other instances of Guaraní interference. Welti (1979; 1982:656) found examples like *mi familiares* analyzed as an error of number agreement, although phonetically-motivated loss of /s/ in *mis* is a probable alternative. The preference for present tense verbs to describe past tense events is not found in other contemporary Afro-Hispanic communities, and there is no evidence to suggest that such behavior was previously characteristic of Afro-Hispanic speech in any other region. In the case of Afro-Paraguayan speech, the influence of Guaraní cannot be ruled out, since in the latter language it is possible to specify past tense only once in a sentence, by means of an adverb or particle, with the remaining verbs being conjugated in the present tense (Krivoshein de Canese y Acosta Alcaraz 2001: 92-95; Krivoshein de Canese y Corvalán 1987: 54-56). The use of present tense verbs for past reference has also been observed in the speech of Guaraní-dominant bilingual speakers in Paraguay (Usher de Herreros 1976: 68-69), although informal observations suggest that the phenomenon may be more common among Afro-Paraguayans—most of whom are reasonably fluent in Spanish—than among other bilingual Paraguayans. These qualitative differences combine to bolster the affirmation that the speech of the oldest Camba Cua residents is more than simply the Spanish of illiterate Guaraní-dominant Paraguayans, although aspects of the latter are certainly present in their speech.

Afro-Paraguayan Speech in the Context of Afro-Hispanic Language Past and Present

Based on this limited but representative corpus of Afro-Paraguayan speech it is possible to assert that subtle quantitative and qualitative differences exist between the traditional Spanish of this Afro-Paraguayan community and the vernacular Spanish of other Paraguayans of similar age, educational level, and socioeconomic status. The question arises as to whether these differences are due to a residue of post-*bozal* Spanish, emerging in Paraguay in the case of Kamba Kokué and carried by some of the the Afro-Uruguayan lancers who accompanied Artigas to Paraguay in 1820 for Camba Cua and Laurely. Although it will probably never be possible to definitively test such a hypothesis, circumstantial evidence suggests an affirmative answer, based largely on Afro-Uruguayan demographics of the early 19th century.

When the Banda Oriental colony at Montevideo was settled from Buenos Aires, beginning in 1726, few Africans were found on either side of the Río Plata, but the Black population of Montevideo rose sharply in the course of the 18th century, peaking at figures estimated at between 30% and 40% for the turn of the 19th century. A census of Montevideo taken in 1781, just before construction of the Caserío (a walled-off area of the city used to quarantine Africans), showed some 2600 Blacks and mulattoes in a total population of just over 10,000, or 25%. Since the Black population was always concentrated in certain areas, the real figures were much higher in many zones of the city. By 1843, long after importation of enslaved Africans had ceased and some two decades after Artigas' exile in Paraguay, the proportion was some 4300 Blacks out of a total of 31,000; the figures are smaller but the numbers are still significant. In Buenos Aires, the figures are similar. Increasingly large numbers of Africans were settled in Buenos Aires; the Black and mulatto population rose steadily during the 18th century, reaching a high of some 30% in the 1777 census (Comadrán Ruíz 1969). A census of 1810, at the verge of independence, also fixed the Black and mulatto population at 30% of the total (García Belsunce 1976: 72; Goldberg 1976). In 1822, some 12% of the population of Buenos Aires represented enslaved Blacks, although the free Black and *pardo* community was much larger (García Belsunce 1976: 89). By 1836, the reported proportion had dropped to some 26%, although it is likely that mulatto or *pardo* Argentines were increasingly regarded as white, particularly if they had sided with the creoles in the revolt against Spanish rule (Andrews 1980). Thus a figure of 30% could be projected as far as the middle of the 19th century.^{xi} In Montevideo, as in other Latin American cities, African-born *bozales* and their immediate descendents formed mutual aid societies known as *cabildos*, which had the collateral effect of providing a venue in which retention of African languages—as well as Africanized or *bozal* Spanish—was facilitated. The Montevideo government conducted censuses or *padrones* on a street-by-street basis, in which Africans gave their ethnic “nationality,” and an extract from 1812-1813 (Montaño 1997:62-64) reveals high concentrations of Africans in several neighborhoods, with natives of Angola, the (Portuguese) Congo, and Nigeria being the largest single ethnic concentrations. Well into the 19th century interpreters were needed in Montevideo and Buenos Aires in order to deal with the *bozales* ((Fontanella de Weinberg 1987a:85; 1987b), and African languages survived in Montevideo well past the middle of the 19th century, as did *bozal* or pidginized Afro-Spanish. The traveler Wilde (1960:126), writing in 1881 and describing earlier decades of Buenos Aires life, speaks of *candombe* groups: “era digno de presenciarse las discusiones allí sostenidas y de oír perorar en su *media lengua* al señor presidente y a los señores consejeros” [it was really something to hear the arguments and vociferations in their ‘half-language’ speaking to the president and the councilors] Wilde (1960:128) also described the speech of Black *hormigueros* (pest exterminators): “pero el interés del espectador y oyente aumentaba cuando se juntaban dos profesores, y en los casos difíciles, tenían una consulta, en castellano chapurreado” [but the interest of spectators and listeners increased when the teachers got together and, in the most difficult cases, offered consultations in broken Spanish].

In Montevideo the same situation obtained. Magariños Cervantes' (1878:387) observations on the literary *bozal* imitations by the poet Acuña de Figueroa includes the statement: "El Canto de los Negros ofrece una curiosa muestra de la especie de dialecto inventado en nuestro continente por los africanos bozales ... nuestros nietos ya no orían hablar esa graciosa jerga ..." [the songs of the Black people offer a curious specimen of the dialect invented on our continent by *bozal* Africans ... our grandchildren will not be able to hear this charming jargon]. Such terms as *media lengua*, *jerga*, and *castellano chapurreado* are nothing other than references to *bozal* Afro-Hispanic pidgin, still a strong presence in Montevideo in the first decades of the 19th century.

There is no documentation on the ethnicity of the Black soldiers who accompanied Artigas to Paraguay, but given the demographics of early 19th century Uruguay it is likely that at least some were African-born *bozales*. Artigas himself owned several enslaved Africans, as did members of his immediate family; most were listed as Benguela, Congo, Angola, and Mozambique (Isola 1975: 285), representing ethnic groups prominent in the Portuguese trade to Brazil in the 19th century. As early as the 17th century, the languages of Angola (principally Kimbundu) were the most common among Afro-descendants born in Buenos Aires and the colonies—including Paraguay—supplied from that port (Tardieu 2005). It is also known that the Paraguayan dictator Francia took in numerous maroons from Brazil (Pla 1972:28-9, 48-52; Boccia Románach 2004: 233-234), among whom would have been African-born *bozales* speaking some form of pidginized Portuguese. It is therefore not unreasonable to postulate the presence of semicreolized *bozal* Spanish, as well as perhaps an ethnically-tinged Spanish spoken natively among Artigas' Black soldiers, which would have left traces in the speech of the newly formed Black enclaves in Paraguay.

The Afro-Paraguayan community of Kamba Kokué does not descend from Uruguayan soldiers, but evidently came into existence during the colonial period in which large estates were owned by religious orders. This history is similar to that of the Afro-Ecuadoran communities in the Chota and Salinas valleys, in the northern highlands of Ecuador. The latter sites continue to exhibit several linguistic traits that reflect an earlier period in which Africans' approximations to Spanish were the principal lingua franca on the Jesuit-run estates. The Afro-Choteño dialect shows many similarities with Afro-Paraguayan speech, as will be shown below.

Similarities Between Afro-Paraguayan Speech and other Afro-Hispanic Speech Communities

The grammatical features described for traditional Afro-Paraguayan Spanish are also found in other Afro-Hispanic speech communities in Latin America, all of which result from socially marginalized groups of Afro-descendants, living in relatively isolated sites and maintaining a strong endogamous cultural identity. In addition to the aforementioned Chota and Salinas Valley Afro-Ecuadoran groups, another highly restructured Afro-Hispanic dialect is found in Bolivia, spoken in several tiny communities in the Yungas, tropical valleys to the northeast of the capital, La Paz (Lipski 2005b, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2008).

These Afro-Bolivian groups evidently descend from Africans taken to the Potosí mines beginning in the 16th century, as well as to plantation workers from the Cochabamba region beginning in the late 17th century; migration to the Yungas valleys began sometime during the late 18th century. Colombia is home to the maroon village of San Basilio de Palenque, formed around 1600 when a group of enslaved Africans in the Spanish port of Cartagena de Indias (now part of Colombia) revolted and fled to the partially forested interior some 70 m. to the south. Residents of the community continue to speak an Afro-Iberian creole language known locally as *lengua* ‘the language’ and to linguists as Palenquero, as well as highly vernacular varieties of Spanish. The colloquial Spanish spoken by the oldest and least educated Palenqueros shares many of the features described for Afro-Paraguayan speech.^{xii} In northwest Colombia, the isolated Afro-Colombian villages of the Chocó also exhibit some residual Afro-Hispanic speech patterns, although not the extent found in the other Black communities described in this study^{xiii}.

LAPSES IN NOUN-ADJECTIVE GENDER AGREEMENT. Traditional Afro-Bolivian Spanish does not inflect for grammatical gender, but some less restructured varieties show partial agreement. Afro-Ecuadorans in the Chota and Salinas valleys show occasional lapses of gender concord, particularly with postposed *mismo* ‘the same’ (Lipski 1986, a). Some lapses in gender concord are also found in the vernacular Spanish of San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia. In previous centuries, sporadic or missing gender agreement was a recurring feature of Afro-Hispanic language, and has been immortalized in Afro-Iberian creole languages, none of which distinguish grammatical gender. This is not an unexpected development, since not only is the acquisition of inflectional paradigms challenging for any second language learner, but also no African language known to have come into contact with Spanish and Portuguese in previous centuries exhibits grammatical gender. Rather than simply reflecting learners’ errors, the partial suspension of grammatical gender in Afro-Hispanic language can be attributed in part to African areal linguistic characteristics. Moreover, no African language family exhibits any sort of grammatical inflection—nominal or verbal—by means of suffixes (although some languages postpose the 3rd person plural subject pronoun to signal plural), which would represent a further disadvantage to speakers of African languages attempting to acquire a Romance language under duress. Some examples of suspended noun-adjective gender concord in other Afro-Hispanic dialects are:

Chota, Ecuador:

la gente *mismo* [misma]... se dañó, no quiere trabajar `the very people are spoiled, they don't want to work'
remedios que ellas *mismos* [mismas] han ido a criá `remedies that the women themselves have gone to pick'
las casas eran de paja de la caña *mismo* [misma] `the houses were made out of straw, out of the sugarcane itself'
les pongo *todo* [todas] estas cosas `I give him all these things'
bien *cortado* [cortadas] las uñas `with the fingernails well trimmed'
con *el poco* [la poca] leche que tenían `with what little milk they had'
en *el* [la] casa del difunto `in the deceased person's house'
la vida era más *cómodo* [cómoda] `life was easier'
sembradito [sembradita] tengo la manzanilla `I am growing camomile'
trabajé dos horas, *hichadísimo* [hinchadísima] la cara `I worked for two hours with my face really swollen'

San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia, vernacular Spanish

cogió una amplitud *amplísimo* [amplísima] `it took on a broad amplitude'
ta mal *alineao* [alineada] la cosa `the thing is poorly aligned'
eso é como *lo* [la] gente de acá `that is like the people from here'
yo tengo *un* [una] botella `I have a bottle'
una presa bien *parejo* [pareja] `a well-prepared piece of meat'
la gente comía arepa(s) *asao* [asadas] `the people ate roasted corn patties'
esta civilización ta má *fregao* [fregada] `this civilization is really messed up'

Traditional Afro-Bolivian Spanish:

las mujeres *altos* [altas] `the tall women'
siempre contaba *algunos* [algunas] cosa[s] `he always said some things'
esos [esas] fiesta `those parties'
loh [las] persona[s] mayó[res] `the old people'
los hombre[s] con camisa[s] *blanco* [blancas] `the men with white shirts'
han quedao *hartos* [hartas] viuda[s] `there are many widows'
unos [unas] quince mula[s] `some fifteen mules'
comunidad *entero* [entera] iba `the entire community would go'

Chocó, Colombia

Como negros somos personas *contentos* [contentas] `we Black people are happy'
Quieren cosa[s] *ligero* [ligeras] `they want light things'
Como yo no puedo hacer fuelza con cosa *pesao* [pesadas] `I'm not strong enough to lift heavy things'
Las cosas están mucho *distinto* [distintas] `things were very different'

INVARIANT PLURALS. These are found in all of the aforementioned Afro-Hispanic dialects. Invariant plurals are occasionally found in dialects of southern Spain. The widespread loss of word-final consonants, e.g. in rustic Andalusian and Extremadura dialects, often leads to phonological restructuring in vernacular speech, resulting in the loss of canonical plural endings: *árbo* < *árbol*, *árboles* `tree(s)'; *re* < *res*, *reses* `cow(s),' etc.^{xiv} Afro-Hispanic dialects in Latin America are also characterized by widespread elimination of word-final consonants, especially /s/ and /r/. In San Basilio de Palenque and Chocó, Colombia, regional varieties of Spanish also weaken or elide final consonants, so that African speakers may have reinforced tendencies already present in the surrounding Spanish dialects; in highland Ecuador and Bolivia, word-final consonants are quite resistant in local Spanish dialects, so the elimination of these sounds in Afro-Hispanic speech is more likely to be a direct consequence of African language speakers' acquisition of Spanish. Few African languages transported to Spanish America present word-final consonants, and almost none have final /s/ or /r/.

Chota, Ecuador (Schwegler 1996:282, 392; 1999:240; Lipski a):

como a *los dos mes*[meses] ... `some two months later'
hahta los *los mimo patrón* [patrones] eran malos `even the landowners themselves were wicked'
los pobre peón [peones] trabajaban como burros `the poor peons worked like donkeys'
hacían abrigarles *los pulmón* [pulmones] `they had the [sick person's] lungs wrapped tightly
los mayor [mayores] no había esa costumbre `the old people didn't have that custom'
nosotros vamos a *las dirección* [direcciones] `we're going to those addresses'
nos remangamo *lus pantalón* [pantalones] `we'll roll up our pants'
no había como ahora la ciencia de *lus dotor* [doctores] `there wasn't any of the doctors'
science, like today'
yo alcancé sembrar, sin *esas curación* [curaciones] `I was able to plant without those cures'
yo tenía pánico a *los hospital* [hospitales] `I'm terrified of hospitals'

San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia, vernacular Spanish

hay que ponerle flores, plantarle *árbol* [árboles] `we should put in flowers, plant trees'
después de esos aportes *sobrenatural* [sobrenaturales] `after those supernatural contributions'
en todah parte hay *mujé* [mujeres] pa cuaquíé hora `everywhere there are women for all hours'
cuando hay cinco hombre y cuatro *mujé* [mujeres] eh mejó `when there are five men and
four women it's better'

Chocó, Colombia

¿de esos aparatos musical [musicales]? `about those musical devices?'

Traditional Afro-Bolivian Spanish:

Los patrón [patrones] y loh mayordomo no dejaba que venía polecía `the landowners and
the overseers didn't want the police to come'
todito *lu mujé* [toditas las mujeres] `all of the women'
Ese presión complica disi al corazón, a loh *riñón* [riñones] `that high blood pressure is
bad for the heart they say, bad for the kidneys'
Lu profesor [los profesores] taba jai marchandu `the teachers were marching'
Yo lo hacía como hacía *los mayó* [los mayores] `I did it like the older people did'
con *sus tambó* [tambores] `with their drums;

STRIPPED PLURALS. Plural noun phrases in which the plural /s/ occurs only on the first element (usually a determiner such as an article) occur very frequently in Afro-Ecuadoran speech from the Chota and Salinas valleys, and less commonly in San Basilio de Palenque and Chocó, Colombia (Caicedo 1992; Schwegler 1991), where plural /s/ is more often lost in all words. Traditional Afro-Bolivian Spanish does not mark plural at all, except by the plural article *lu*, but stripped plurals occur in some partially decreolized Afro-Bolivian speech. In Brazil, stripped plurals are extremely frequent in vernacular Brazilian Portuguese, itself with a strong Afro-Iberian imprint. There is considerable documentary and circumstantial evidence that marking plural /s/ on the first element of noun phrases has been a component of Afro-Iberian language at least since the late 16th century. While not directly attributable to any African language or areal feature, although as mentioned previously, no African language signals pluralization through a suffix. At the same time, the morphological marking of plural only once in a DP is common to many languages. From a discourse perspective front-loading of semantic features is a common strategy and one that can be readily grasped by speakers of a wide variety of languages. Therefore, while stripped plurals cannot be directly predicted from the contact between Spanish and Portuguese and a cross-section of sub-Saharan African languages, they are consistent with universally observed learners' strategies as well as with the optionality of nominal plural marking in many African languages.

Some examples of stripped plural noun phrases from Afro-Hispanic speech communities are:

Chocó, Colombia:

Se despiertan *los lucero* `the stars come out'
Después *quesas cosa* le hacía jaltá `after those things that are necessary'
Tengo *seiscientos navío* `I have six hundred ships'

San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia

así se acaban *los tiempo* hasta que se muera uno `that's how time passes until one dies'
pero ahora con los grandes *libro* `but now with the great books'
los hermano peruano, los haitiano `our Peruvian brothers, the Haitians'
hay *algunas fibra* que hacen sonido `there are some fibers that make a sound'
igual *las magre a los hijo* `just like mothers to their children'
las lengua hay que respetarlo `one should respect languages'
Palenque con *esas casa* de paja `Palenque with those straw houses'
Los hijo lloraban que la plata no valía nada `the children cried out that the money was worthless'

Chota, Ecuador:

las casita eran de paja, entonces ... `the houses were made of straw then'
si me desafía a *los puñete* `if he attacks me with his fists'
cogíamos *nuestras pala* ... `we would grab our shovels'
unas tirita que nos daban izqui di huasipungo `some little strips of land that they gave us to till'
tanto golpe que tienen que sufrir de *las pierna* `they had to withstand many blows to the legs'
hacían *unas mecha* di trapo `they made some wicks out of rags'
compraron *sus piso* e hicieron *sus casa* `they bought their parcels of land and build their houses'

Traditional Afro-Bolivian Spanish:

Huahua iba recogiendo *esuh moneda* `the kids would pick up those coins'
Había que llevar *personas responsable* `we had to bring responsible people'
Tiene un señor aquí, acuerda pueh de *loh baile de loh negritu* `there is a man here who remembers the Black people's dances'
¿Han venidu *esus médico* di Cuba? `Have those Cuban doctors come?'
en idioma antiguo di *mis abuelo* `in the old language of my grandparents'

LAPSES OF SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT. Inconsistent subject-verb agreement is characteristic of all learners' varieties of Spanish, irrespective of the speaker's native language, given the need to acquire the specifics of Spanish verbal morphology. A contact situation involving African languages none of which signals subject-verb agreement through suffixes only exacerbates these difficulties in a quantitative fashion. Although the infinitive is presented as the citation form for Spanish verbs, it occurs relatively infrequently in actual discourse, compared with finite conjugated forms. In almost all instances where Spanish is acquired informally through verbal interaction with native speakers, it is the third person singular form that represents a center of attraction for learners' errors, since this is the most frequently occurring variant in the verbal paradigm. Second-language varieties of Spanish and Portuguese worldwide, as well as semi-creolized Afro-Iberian dialects all converge on the third person singular, and in extreme cases, such as traditional Afro-Bolivian Spanish, the third person singular becomes the basis for an invariant verb, which is not conjugated for person and number. In other Afro-Hispanic dialects, lapses of subject-verb agreement are comparatively less common, occurring only in the speech of older uneducated individuals, from which it can be inferred that in previous generations such discrepancies were more frequent. Some contemporary Afro-Hispanic examples of lapsed subject-verb agreement are:

Chota, Ecuador:

murió [murieron] los chanchos *murió* [murieron] las gallina no tengo es nada `the hogs died, the chickens died, I don't have anything'
así eh [son] las cosa `that's how things are'
 los mayor no *había* [habían/tenían] esa costumbre `the old people didn't have that custom'
 se *pone*[n] lo guagua medios mal de cuerpo `the kids get kind of sick'

San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia

aquí *nació* [nacieron] cuatro o cinco jugadore `four or five players were born here'
 todo loh nombre aquí *era*[n] "cho" y "cha" `all the names were "cho" [Uncle] and "cha" {Aunt}'
 pero si los hijos *coge*[n] cinco `but if the children take five'

Traditional Afro-Bolivian Spanish

Nojotro *tiene* [tenemos] jrutita `we have fruit'
 Yo *creció* [crecí] junto con Angelino `I was raised with Angelino'
 ¿De qué nojotro pobre *va* [vamos] viví? `what are we poor people to live on?'
 Nojotro *trabajaba* [trabajábamos] hacienda. `we worked on the haciendas'
 Lo que nojotro *ta* [estamos] hablando este rato `what we are talking about now'
 Yo *quiere* [quiero] ti preguntá un cosa `I want to ask you something'

Summary and Conclusions

The “neo-Africanization” of Camba Cua, and by extension Kamba Kokué and Emboscada, while unquestionably a positive development for Paraguay’s *afrodescendientes*, presents a considerable research challenge, since few community members remain who recall the truly traditional cultural components, and many younger activists claim as Afro-Paraguayan recent adaptations from Afro-Hispanic groups in neighboring countries. To date the essence of Camba Cua culture is identified with drumming and the accompanying dance, while in Kamba Kokue and Emboscada only vague notions of a “Black” past form a common thread of identity, only recently supplemented by the activism of a handful of intellectuals. No element of language is associated with Afro-Paraguayan self-identity, with the exception of a lullaby thought to be in an African language which some Camba Cua community members assert has been part of the traditional culture, but which appears to have been taught by a visiting African artist.^{xv}

The linguistic features described in the present study are not explicitly acknowledged by Afro-Paraguayans themselves, and are predominantly found in the speech of older individuals who represent the legacy of generations past. Since the traits in question would be regarded as “errors” from the standpoint of worldwide Spanish usage, it is unlikely that the Afro-Paraguayan communities will spontaneously turn to these phenomena as linguistic markers of ethnic identity. Only by fitting such linguistic behavior into the framework of continent-wide Afro-Hispanic discourse, taken not as a legacy of the imperfectly-learned speech patterns of a slaveocracy, but rather as the triumph of cultural resistance, will it be possible to embrace language born in marginality, nurtured in hardship, and coming of age “better late than never.” Such revaluing of traditional language is already in full swing in San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia,^{xvi} and is emerging in the Afro-Bolivian Yungas^{xvii} and Afro-Ecuadoran Chota regions.^{xviii} Afro-Uruguayans, long in the forefront of Afro-Hispanic activism, include language as part of their cultural identity,^{xix} despite the fact that any distinctive Afro-Uruguayan language has long ceased to exist (Lipski 2001). As Afro-Paraguayans expand and consolidate their assertions of ethnic identity and the right to self-determination in a nation that considers them nonexistent, reflections on language may be added to the panoply of cultural symbols that give testimony to their reality. Walker (2001: 42) reconceptualizes the African diaspora in the Americas in terms of three intersecting “puzzles,” the further removed from Africa itself being “the intersection of these transatlantic African and African Diasporan puzzles with the Native American and European Diasporan puzzles of the Americas.” Paraguay epitomizes the intersecting loci of these diasporas,^{xx} and Afro-Paraguayan language must be situated in a diasporic cultural space that transcends the simplistic notions embedded in terms like “Afro-Hispanic.” Afro-Paraguayan speech—both vestigial and embryonic—is as unique as Paraguay itself.

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Notes

ⁱ In an indirect indication of the presence of Africans in colonial Paraguay from the earliest times, there developed a tradition of celebrating certain feast days with masks originally based on African facial features (Pla 1972: 168). These masked figures were known as *Kamba Ra'angá* ('black figure' in Guaraní), and the tradition continues to this day in some parts of Paraguay (Colombino 1986).

ⁱⁱ In accepted Guaraní orthography, the relevant spellings are *camba*, *cua*, and *cocué*. However, the Afro-Paraguayan activists in Camba Cua have adopted the spelling Kamba Cuá (occasionally alternating with Kamba Kuá) for their organization and for the dance group Ballet Folklórico Kamba Cuá. Similarly, activists in Paraguarí have adopted the spelling Kamba Kokué for their community and its respective cultural organization. This accounts for the variety of spellings in the present study.

ⁱⁱⁱ A neighborhood of Corrientes, Argentina also bears the name Cambá Cuá, due to the early presence of black residents, although no Afro-Argentines remain today (Salas 1990). Like the similarly named Paraguayan community, residents of the Argentine Cambá Cuá once celebrated St. Balthasar on January 6 and engaged in *candombe* drumming and dancing. Since Artigas spent the period from 1814 to 1820, just before his exile to Paraguay, in the province of Corrientes, Quereilhac de Jussow (1980: 103-105) suggests a possible connection between the St. Balthasar celebrations in Corrientes and Camba Cua, Paraguay. Cirio (2006) and the references therein provide additional information on Cambá Cuá, Corrientes and its *candombe* tradition. St. Balthasar celebrations were once common among Afro-Argentines in colonial Buenos Aires as well (Cirio 2002).

^{iv} Some officials in the newly elected Lugo government have ties to Camba Cua, and it is possible that the plight of this community may be somewhat alleviated in the coming years.

^v www.webpages.charter.net/roger.glass/lcampo.html

^{vi} www.webescuela.edu/py/Contenido/polcaparaguaya.php

^{vii} <http://www.infoluque.com.py/historia/vivencias/06kambakua.htm>

^{viii} Afro-Paraguayans in Kamba Kokué do not celebrate St. Balthasar but the Virgen del Rosario. This same celebration was prevalent among Afro-Argentines in colonial Buenos Aires (Andrews 1980:@)), providing another piece in the puzzle of the origins of this little-known group of Afro-descendants.

^{ix} I am grateful to Lázaro Medina of Camba Cua for his invaluable assistance during the field research. Thanks are also due to Carlos Medina, Eulalia "Laly" Medina, and Santiago Medina in Camba Cua. Preliminary results of this research were reported in Lipski (2006d). In Kamba Kokué I received the invaluable assistance of Susana Arce, as well as Delia Rivas, Silvia Galeano, and Primitiva Rivas. In Emboscada, Patricio Zárate offered his assistance.

^x Corvalán (1977), Corvalán and Granda (1982), Granda (1988), Krivoshein de Canese and Corvalán (1987), Malmberg (1947), Meliá (1974), Usher de Herreros (1976), Welti (1979). In general these deal with syntactic calques and other departures from monolingual Spanish, such as *Se murió de mí mi perrito* 'my dog died' [= *se me murió ...*], *Les visité a mis tías* 'I visited my aunts,' and the use of *un poco* as a translation of the Guaraní suffix *-mi* which in the latter language can also express a polite request or an expression of condolence or regret: *prestame un poco tu lápiz* 'lend me your pencil [please]'; *se murió un poco mi abuela* 'my [poor] grandmother died.'

^{xi} These census figures need to be interpreted cautiously, however. Individuals listed as *pardos* presumably spoke only regional Spanish, and were never part of the *bozal* linguistic phenomenon. Even those listed as *morenos* or *negros* were often native speakers of Spanish, and their representation cannot be weighed in ethnolinguistic terms as part of a possible 'Africanizing' of Río Plata Spanish.

^{xii} I conducted research in San Basilio de Palenque in August 2008. My sincere gratitude is offered to Víctor Simarra Reyes and Bernardino Pérez. Schwegler and Morton (2003) also studied the vernacular Spanish of San Basilio de Palenque, and provide a few examples of discrepancies in concord.

^{xiii} Chocó examples are taken from Ruíz García (2000) unless otherwise noted.

^{xiv} Carrasco Cantos (1981:99), Salvador Plans (1987b:40).

^{xv} Mario Casartelli, personal communication, June 4, 2006.

^{xvi} In 2005 Palenque was declared Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. The Colombian Ministry of Culture has declared San Basilio de Palenque part of the "immaterial patrimony" of Colombia, and the Palenquero language is taught in the schools and proudly displayed in the villages several cultural centers. Even the local dialect of Spanish, once despised and shucked off quickly when traveling outside of the community, is undergoing a positive re-evaluation.

^{xvii} As indicated by the recent publication of Angola Maconde (2008), containing narratives transcribed in the traditional Afro-Yungueño dialect, as well as the presentation of Afro-Bolivian language on this prominent Afro-Bolivian activist's web site: www.geocities.com/amacondejuan/

^{xviii} The recent publication of traditional narratives in Pabón (2007) is one such indication.

^{xix} For example Montañó (1997, 2008), among the more recent contributions.

^{xx} Strictly speaking, Native Americans were also pushed into a diaspora in colonial Paraguay, due to the reductionist efforts of the Jesuits and other religious orders.