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Chapter 3: Nicaragua's Miskito Coast Creole English

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Although Nicaragua ~~and Honduras~~^{is} ~~are~~^a both officially Spanish-speaking countries, English has long been spoken on ~~their~~^{its} Caribbean coasts. Early buccaneers named this area the "Mosquito Shore", apparently in reference to the insect, and the name was transferred to the new tribe of Afro-Indians that came to dominate this area after contact. The Miskito (who prefer the German spelling of their name made current by Moravian missionaries) today speak a Macro-Chibchan language; the syntax of this Indian language has not undergone simplification, but the lexicon contains thousands of English words, as well as some from African languages and Spanish. In addition to Miskito, most speak Miskito Coast Creole English (MCC) as a second language. Growing out of a trade pidgin brought to Central America by the British in the 1630's, MCC is one of the oldest varieties of English in the New World; it predates by a quarter of a century the English creole that evolved on Jamaica after the British captured ~~this colony~~^{it} from Spain in 1655. MCC became the first language of the ~~Creoles~~^{language} of the Mosquito Shore, which became a British colony in the eighteenth century. When the area was ceded to Spain in the 1780's, the British settlers and their slaves were evacuated to Belize, bringing the creole ^{language} with them. Other ~~Creoles~~ remained in Nicaragua, where they and their descendants have continued speaking MCC English to the present day.

Prior to contact, the fertile western part of Nicaragua had been settled by Mayan and then Aztec farming populations from the north, while the jungles of the Miskito Coast were settled by hunters and gatherers of Chibchan stock from South America. The Spanish conquered and gradually hispanicized the western groups during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but ignored the eastern region ^{because of} ~~owing to~~ its lack of mineral wealth or agricultural potential. English privateers visited the area in the 1570's, then English Puritans established a colony on nearby Providence Island (see chapter 6) from 1631 to 1641, when they were routed by the Spanish. The Puritans had established trade with the Indians on the Miskito Coast (probably Sumu of Chibchan stock), presumably via a simplified form of English. English traders stayed on along the Coast ~~X~~ to become the buccaneers ^{of} the latter half of the seventeenth century ^{whose ships}

* The German form is Miskito however.

attacked
~~preyed on~~ Spanish galleons laden with gold from Mexico, then darted back to hide in the many lagoons along the Miskito Coast. 9

8/ Around 1640 the Indians of this area were joined by Africans from a slave ship which was wrecked off the coast. Their Afro-Indian descendants allied themselves against the Spanish with the British buccaneers, who took them along on voyages as harpooners and often set up conjugal arrangements with their women in exchange for metal tools and arms. With these the Miskito soon subjugated other tribes along the coast from Panama to Honduras.

By the early eighteenth century the buccaneers had been replaced by British traders, loggers, and planters who brought African slaves with them, usually bought in Jamaica. The latter's creolized English influenced (and was influenced by) not only the English of the British-born settlers but also the pidginized English spoken by the Miskito. MCC emerged; its syntax was a compromise between English and the Africans' native languages, based largely on structures common to both, although certain features (e.g. the verb phrase in general and the copula in particular) were clearly more African than English (Holm, 1978:248-274). Its lexicon was largely English, including many words now considered archaic, nautical, or regional (especially North Country and Scots), but to fill lexical gaps for cultural and natural phenomena unknown in Britain, words were borrowed from Miskito, African languages, and (probably via the English of the buccaneers) New World Spanish --itself containing many American Indian words.

C 2/ Eventually the British regularized their settlements on the Miskito Coast into a colony with a superintendent appointed from Jamaica. This lasted for nearly half a century (1740-1787), until Spanish military victory forced Britain to evacuate all her settlers from the coast. Most went to Belize, but a significant number of Creoles stayed on and continued speaking MCC for the next two centuries, although they lost nearly all contact with speakers of uncreolized English.

Spanish attempts to settle the area failed. After Central America became independent in 1821, Belizeans tried to re-establish the British protectorate on the Miskito Coast, but American interest in the area as a possible ^{trans-isthmian} canal site forced an 1860 treaty giving Nicaragua certain authority over the external affairs of the Miskito Coast.

Meanwhile the Black Caribs, the descendants of Arawaks, Caribs, and Africans, had been deported by the British from St. Vincent in the Lesser

Antilles to Central America in 1797 after an uprising. They spread along the Caribbean coast, reaching the area of their present settlements on Pearl Lagoon in the second half of the nineteenth century. Their Arawakan language, Central American Island Carib, has been almost completely replaced by MCC.

The Rama, the remnant of of a Chibchan-speaking tribe, have also almost completely given up their Indian language in favor of a variety of English based on MCC but influenced by their former language. Since Rama Cay Creole seems to be a distinct variety, it is discussed separately on page 19.)

Ladinos ^{Western Nicaragua's} ~~Spanish-speaking~~ ^(called Ladinos) descendants of Aztecs and Spaniards began settling on the Miskito Coast during a rubber boom in the 1870's. Nicaragua finally annexed the Miskito Coast by force in 1894 and began a program of hispanicization in educational and other cultural institutions. In 1976 about two-thirds of the people in Bluefields (the major town) spoke MCC as their mother tongue, while the remaining third spoke Spanish. However, the proportions may have changed during the 1979 revolution, when many Spanish-speakers fled Managua for the relative safety of Bluefields.

After initial bitterness over the imposition of Spanish and their reduced status on the Coast, the Creoles are gradually becoming resigned to being part of Spanish-speaking Central America rather than the English-speaking Caribbean. Each new generation becomes more proficient in Spanish, and the future of MCC is uncertain. The language has undergone massive lexical borrowing from Spanish (especially in vocabulary for business, government, and modern life in general), and seems to have begun borrowing Spanish syntactic structures as well. However, the new government has begun programs to teach literacy in English and Miskito as well as Spanish, in its efforts to build a new society tolerant of cultural pluralism.

To summarize, the ethnolinguistic ^{groups} complexities of the Miskito Coast are indicated in the following table:

<u>Ethnic group</u>	<u>population</u>	<u>first language</u>	<u>second language</u>
Miskito	35,000	Miskito	MCC English, Sp
Creoles	20,000	MCC English	Spanish
Ladinos	10,000	Spanish	MCC English
Carib	3,000	MCC English	(Carib)*
Sumu	2,000	Sumu	Spanish
Rama	500	RCC English	(Rama)*

* almost extinct

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: Early fragments

As early as 1707, Sloane (lxxvi-lxxviii) commented that the Indians of "Cape Gracias de Dios (vulgarly known by the name of the Muskitos).... will not permit any other Nation to settle among them but the English... The Men generally speak broken English". There are no direct references to the English spoken in Nicaragua until Bell (1899:19): "Who can describe the language spoken by the Creoles of Blewfields? It was a jargon of English which, left to itself, would soon have become a distinct language."

However, fragments of MCC English can be found in the literature on the area dating back to the eighteenth century. The authenticity of such fragments can be established by comparison with contemporary MCC, especially by examples of grammatical constructions unlikely to be known to monolingual speakers of standard English. Clearly such fragments are valuable in tracing the diachronic development of the creole.

Several of these fragments are presented below in chronological order, each followed by a brief discussion of notable linguistic features which are underlined:

- (1) 1783 (a Rama): "That Birry...Bird...go all nights, bite bird little." (William, 90). A modern MCC speaker defined the bóri bord as equivalent to the Spanish sinsonte or mocking bird (*Mimus polyglottus*), although the one above would seem to be a nocturnal bird of prey. The adjective, as in Rama, follows the noun (Lehman, 1920:421).
- (2) 1827 (an Indian who thought he had found the tracks of an extraordinary animal): "Hai Robert! him devil tract found." (Roberts, 62). Note the use, as in modern MCC, of him as a subject pronoun. Because final consonant clusters in English are simplified in MCC (cf. MCC fak 'fact'), there is a tendency to hypercorrect as in tract 'track'. Finally, the quotation has the same subject-object-verb word order found in modern Miskito (Conzemius, 1929:76).
- (3) 1847 (a Carib): "Now me glad—good buckra come—take me away, Gracias á Dios. De donde viene vm," asked he, "De la Crieva?" (Young, 131). The speaker uses modern MCC features, such as me as subject pronoun, zero copula before adjectives, and the word buckra 'white man'. The Carib were migrating south at this time from Honduras, where they had learned Spanish fairly well since being brought there by the British in 1797. The Spanish sentence corresponds to modern "¿De dónde viene Vd.?" 'Where do you come/ are you coming from?' (vm being the archaic vuestra merced—literally 'your mercy'—for 'you', polite; this is now usted or Vd.) De la Crieva is probably an error for de la Ceiba 'from Ceiba' (a town on the east coast of Honduras). The speaker's use of the zero preposition with proper place names—"take me away (to Cape) Gracias á Dios"—is especially typical of modern Carib speakers of MCC.
- (4) 1872 (Ramas): "Old John said, 'Me happy, me happy!'...Another said, "Me know that Jesus is my father, but me like rum too much." (Periodical Accounts, 28). In accordance with modern MCC rules, adjectival verbs have zero copula, but the copula iz is used before a predicate noun phrase.
- (5) 1899 (a Creole): "A mid day yerry de coong shell bin day blow." (Bell, 20). Re day, cf. MCC de 'preverbal progressive aspect marker'; re mid and bin, cf. MCC mi or bin 'preverbal anterior marker'; cf. also archaic yeri 'hear' and kang shel 'conch shell trumpet, used as signal'.

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: Interference with standard English

Speakers of Miskito and MCC have special problems in learning both Spanish and English; the following extracts are from letters written by ~~students~~ ^{Nicaraguans} with high-school level education from Bluefield's Colegio Cristobal Colón, where, ~~as~~ elsewhere in Nicaragua, Spanish is the language of instruction and English is taught as a foreign language.

(Miskito speaker) I'm being ausent I'm reside in port thats where I have my home...I'm sick in the Hospital about one weeks but still I'm being very happy when I did receive your letter in hand and God help me and give me the privilege to answer you this letter back to you... I'm sending you some Miskito words and I hope it will be of mutch agreeableness for you and your friends.

(MCC speaker) Today its make me 20 days since I on my bed, I was very sick, am just feeling a little better praise God boy the doctor told me that I have to go true a local oparation...He say that he or going to luck for you when he go back...I will work and pay for it lest and a year then you cand right to Fr. Paul...Please to excuse me with some of these words they do not spell correct.

Spelling aside, most of the deviations from standard English in the second paragraph can be easily accounted for by referring to MCC phonological and syntactic rules. Unfortunately on the Miskito Coast—as in most other Creole-speaking areas—the literary language of North America and Britain is taught with no reference to the profound differences between it and the pupil's mother tongue, Creole English. It is therefore not surprising that the exotic verbal and inflectional systems of the written language often remain only half understood, even after many years of study.

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 1

EH: a 70-year-old Creole woman born and raised in Bluefields

ED: her 25-year-old nephew, a sailor

JH: John Holm

Recorded in Bluefields, Nicaragua in ~~August~~, 1976. Numbers in parentheses refer to explanatory notes at the end of the text; passages in quotation marks are in Spanish (traditional orthography).

ED: Mahnin.

EH: A no wahn a ting tu duw wid yuw bika yuw kom...lang taym an yuw no kom luk fu Titi (1). Huw iz dis, Pap? (2)

EH: A fren a mayn.

JH: "Mucho gusto" (3)

EH: Yes, sar.

JH: "Buenos días" (4)

ED: Hiy down spiyk iynnglish; hiy iz jarman. Wiy jos wahkin arawn.(5)

EH: Wahkin arawn. "Paseando." (6)

JH: "Paseando"

EH: On-hon. (7)

ED: Way yuw down wahn siy miy naw?

EH: Sow naw hay. Ay no wahn siy yuw naw bika wen yuw kom Titi sik (8) an yuw no kom tu siy miy naw or notin. Yuw nat (9) iyvn bring wan fayv sins (10) fo miy naw. Ay hiyr yuw gahn brahd Bihowldn (11). Papasiyto (12), kot dat awt, hiyr? Lisen, dis iz ruwineyshon (13). A de pan Seysar ray naw (14).

ED: Hav a siyt. "Sientese" (15)

EH: "Sientese"

JH: "Gracias, señora." (16)

EH: Diyz bway. Leyzi bway ya (17) in Bluwfiyl. Siy de? Mista Borti (18) sik from (19) wiyk bifow lahs wid di dengge (20). Evri iyvnin misef ha di fiyva ray naw. Bot inihaw a de tray (21) tu sowp awt mi klowz. Orl, a ha nowbodi tu duw notin fo miy sow a haf tu tray. Ay, a gat fiyva ray naw, Orl, bot a (22) wa tu duw? A gat tu dwiyt (23); a no hav nowbodi. Bot no maynd, Beyb (24); no fret abaw dat pleys. Dat gon kliyn; a gon kliyn i. An a na tuw pantikyuwla fo it kliyn (25). Orl-siyto (26), dey kyahn mek a res wid di melokoton (27). Dey

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 1 (continued)

kyahn mek a res wi di yong kowknot. Wen di pleys kliyn awt, luk ya Tam, Dik a Hari (28) kom in an dem (29) gwayn wi dem kowknot; dem gwayn wi dem sak a melokoton. A kyahn sey notin. Wen a tel dem initing dey sey miy (30) kom from Katn Triy (31) --miy no bring no triy op ya. A sez (32), "Yes, a neva bring no triy an a neva bring notin op hiyr," a sez, "bot am an di pleys," a sez, "an a bahs. Ontil di mistres kom an tek mi af," a sey. Ow, dey kos miy a howl payl a ting (33), a tel yuw. A de tray, bway, bot Lahd! Titi sik bawt fowr mons treyt (34) naw. Bot wa fo (35) duw. Wen a fiyl bad, a ley dawn.

ED: We yuw get ahl dem ting from? (pointing to tea bags)

EH: Dem sen dem for ai dringk (36). Fo di presha (37). Sow wen yuw gwayn bak, sow wen yuw gwayn bak, sow wen yuw gwayn bak, Pap?

ED: A mey gow bak bawt di dey afta tamara.

EH: Ye, das way yuw kom fo kom siy Titi naw. Yuw, Orl. If a mi ded, a gow pan di ship an hahl yuw af (38). (Both laugh; to JH) "Yo crecé--de chiquito" (39).

JH: "A éste? Ah! Desde pequeño?" (40)

EH: "Sí. Casa aquí." (41)

JH: "Jugabas aquí cuando eras niño?" (42)

ED: "Esta casa estaba ahí, entonces lo quitaron. Es la misma casa. Toda la familia: mama, papa, abuelo, abuela." (43)

EH: Yuw mos lahn (44) im iyingglish naw. (To JH) "El inglés es muy bueno. Le ayuda. Si Poquito a poco." (45)

ED: Mista Borti kom der wan dey an im sey suw sey...

EH: A sey, "No! Tel Mista Orl...bika wen yuw gow de, yuw tel mista Orl..." Bika Satidie, dis Satidey a tingk, Seysar kom hiyr... A sey, "Ow Lahd, iz (46) naw Orl trow miy wey layk dat?(47)" a sey. "Orl triyt miy bad. An from wen Orl kom?" I sey, "Wel, Mama, a tingk it dey bifer yestidey nayt a siy Orl kom bak agin." A tingk wa wiyk bifow lahs.

ED: Sins a kom, wan taym a siy Seysar. Tuw taym a siy Seysar.

EH: Den di nayt op der.

ED: Bihowldn.

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 1 (continued)

- EH: Yes. I sey, "Orlsiyto sey, 'Howl mi wach an howl mi cheyn'" i sey. Lisen, Orl, yuw howl an tu yuw wach. Orl, down gow howm gow (48) get moni. Orl bway, a tel yuw, Papasiyto, iz (49) truwt. Yuw gow an yuw kom. Wel, ahl rayt. Yuw kom wan dey, yuw gat (50) a gud taym wi dem, an i don (51). Bot diyz bas-tad wi milk yuw, dey wi milk yuw until yuw gow. An meybi wen yu kom fo fayn awt dem tiyf (52) evri dam ting af a yuw, an gahn bawt dem biznis an yuw no now iz huw (53). Sow duw tray kiyp yu ay opm. Miy de pan Seysar nayt an dey. Wel, im no... sins hi hav wayf an children naw im luk layk im no de hahdli wori wid i (54), bot i pik it op (55). Bot i...wen i pik it op, nou i no kom we a de (56). I tel miy lay, wen i kom naw. Da iyvnin i sey, "Mama," i sey, "A did tayad an neva kom." (57) A sey, "Yuw dam lay. Siy yu ay? Yuw mi dringkin; das way yuw no mi wahn kom ya." (58) Bot no fala dat, Beyb.
- ED: Ye, man. (59) Dat nayt a gow op der. An a miyt dem, yuw now. Sow im sey...a mos stey wi dem (60). Bot a...em..sow a tel dem, "ahl rayt." A tel di fela der tu gi dem som rom, bot den i sey i gon from der, i gon at Faya (61), sow dem no wahn dringkin di rom der. Sow a tel im ay komin bak. Im biliyv se (62) ay no komin bak, sow ay tel im i mos howl di wach, sey a komin bak. Wen a kom bak a no siy dem.
- EH: No wori wi dat, no wori.
- ED: From dat nayt a no siy im.
- EH: Dat dam bway di luk...wahn reyk wa yuw gat (63). Som powr piypl, som powr piypl dem no iyvn gat i tu iyt an dringkin neks dey. Sow dem sidon af a sombodi els (64). Wotlis ting-dem! (65).
- ED: Im hep yuw dow? (66)
- EH: Im ownli getin wiykli salari naw, bway. Di liys i gi miy...
- ED: We im wok de naw?
- EH: Skuwna Kiy (67), we dem stodi-in. Yes, naw. Dey hav im stodi-in, yuw siy. Yes, stodi-in. Bawt di injin an ting, no? Di injin paht, naw, we hi iz. From him...wel, from im gahn awt der, im iz dat. Bot naw i waz getin (68) bay di mont. I waz

MISKITO COAST CREOLE:TEXT 1 (continued)

ah rayt. I waz komin an gud inof, bot wel...dey put im naw intu di ada part (69). Sow naw wen i duw kom af tuw initing, im ownli gi miy meybi ten kowrdoba (70) or som taym ten kowrdoba i gi miy, bot wat iz ten kowrdoba? Orliyto (71), a kyahn...a freyd fu (72) gow teyk di tingz.

ED: Sow im gat tuw pikni (73) naw?

EH: Now, wan.

ED: Wan, an wan an di wey? Somting sow? Gadi (74) tel miy, no?

EH: Di gal no de briyd, man (75). Di gal, shi did fiyl layk shi wa briydin, bot shi no briydin (76). Yuw siy, dat gyal, from dat gyal kowrtin--sey fuwlin rawn (77)--di gal no teyk porj, man. Di gyal bilyos, man; di gyal dorti. An naw him hav a peyn. A peyn wor (78) in him hiyr. Dis iz fo-him jab (79). Im kliyn ~~rawn~~ iya (80). Den hi papa kliyn ~~rawn~~ der. Bot, powr ting, i hav a peyn. A sey, a no now if iz...Seysar tuw krakra (81), tuw, man. A fiyl layk Seysar gon gow lif op dem hevi injin.

ED: Im hav trobl wid dem peyn from taym...

EH: On-hon. An naw wos. Sow naw a no...i mi staht bot i stap. Gat di peyn sow, i ownli..

ED: A memba (82) som taym i pleyin, i pleyin (83), an wayl i pleyin ahl in a sodn (84) i wi stap.

EH: I wuda neva get awtsay der an tray kot dem gras dong. Neva. I wuda neva tray.

ED: Papi...

EH: I wuda neva tray.

ED: Him weytin an det (85).

EH: Wel, a tel yuw, a litl bihayn jos in i pants (86).

ED: Elviyta, shi no kom de?

EH: Now. We i de? We shi de? (87)

ED: Elviyta, shi no kom op de.

EH: Som taym.

ED: Shi hep put im op tu ahl dem ting de, yuw now.

EH: Dem ahl wi siy it dow. Ye, miy sey...an...a...in lahs wiyk a gahn luk fo Mis Ayris.

ED: Dey hav som laym triy op de, tuw, en?

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 1 (continued)

EH: On-hon.

ED: Som laym triy.

EH: Now, ariynj (88). Wich wan--di big wan op de?

ED: Miy no now, on...

EH: Dis big wan ya?

ED: Now, bika...

EH: Dat iz ariynj. Yuw memba di ariynj yuw grani had? Yuw memba di ariynj we grani had? An tu di bak, tuw. Tu di bak tu di ariynj triy, dem kom bak op. Evri taym Borti kliyn awt, dey spring op mow. Siy--siy haw tahl dat wan iz de naw? Wel, im no duw notin yet, bika wen dey chap (89) di pleys, hi doz (90) trim di melokoton triy rawn. Trim it rawn, yuw now. Bot i no staht kotin. Liyv im lown.

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT I (Notes)

- (1) Tití: a term of affectionate address used within the family to the eldest daughter or grandmother; cf. Scots titty 'a child's word for sister; a young girl' (CSD). Ja file
- (2) Pap (also papiito, papasiito): an affectionate term of address to a male; cf. the parallel colloquial Spanish papito and papacito, diminutives of papa and colloquial English pop, all 'father'.
- (3) Mucho gusto: here 'Pleased to meet you'.
- (4) Buenos días: 'Good day; hello'
- (5) wahkin' arawn': shows semantic influence of paseando (see next)
- (6) paseando: present participle of pasear (now also MCC) 'to go for a stroll; to go on an excursion; to take it easy'
- (7) On-hon: 'yes'; frequently represented in American English as uh-huh, this grunt of assent is apparently of African origin via Black English; cf. Nupe ahá, Twi ehé, Mende uhú, all 'yes'.
- (8) sik: to be sick. As in many African languages and creoles of various lexical bases, in MCC there is a category of stative verbs that correspond to English predicative adjectives; like other verbs, they require no copula but can follow preverbal tense and aspect markers, e.g. /evriting did chiip/ 'Everything was cheap'.
- (9) yuv nat iyv: bring: 'You didn't even bring'. The basilectal negator no also has the forms nat and down (without reference to tense). The tense in focus (i.e. the time under discussion) is unmarked, whether past or present.
- (10) van fayv sins: a five cent(avo) coin.
- (11) Bihovlän: Beholden, a neighborhood in Bluefields; gahn brahd: to go out (on the town); cf. archaic usage of go abroad 'to go out (of one's home)!'.
- (12) Papasiito: see note 2.
- (13) dis iz ruwineyshon, i.e. 'Your drinking will be your ruin'. Note the requirement of a copula before a predicate noun, but not before a predicate adjective (note 8). This follows a pattern in other creoles and West African languages such as Yoruba (Holm, 1980:371), which has survived in American Black English Vernacular (Labov 1969).
- (14) A de pan Seysar: I'm on Caesar's back (i.e. nagging him about his drinking); Caesar is another nephew who provides some support); see note 56 on de.
- (15) siéntese: sit down.
- (16) Gracias, señora: Thank you, ma'am.
- (17) ya: here
- (18) Mista Bortie: Mr. Bertie, her husband. Note MCC use of title with the Christian name, now archaic except in southern US.

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 1 (Notes)

- (19) from: since; this usage has been archaic in standard English since 1602 (OED) but is still found in Ireland and Scotland (EDD) as well as the Caribbean.
- (20) dengge: a bad cold with fever; cf. local Spanish dengue same meaning, but W3 defines it as a more serious tropical disease whose name is of African origin; cf. Swahili kidinga 'fever'.
- (21) a de tray: I'm trying. Basilectal MCC has de as a preverbal marker of progressive aspect (vs. mesolectal a trayin); it is probably related to the locative copula (note 56) merging with an African construction. In Twi, the progressive is "formed with the prefix re (originally de, 'to be')"
(Christaller, xxiii).
- (22) bet a wa tu dum? 'But what can I do?' The MCC particle a introduces and emphasizes noun phrases and question words, as does na in Cameroonian and Twi; this 'highlighter' seems to be of African origin (Holm, 1980).
- (23) dwiyt: do it (also DJE)
- (24) Beyb: a term of endearment; cf. BEV baby, babe.
- (25) a na tuw pahtikyumla fo it kliyn: I'm not too particular about cleaning it.
- (26) Orlsiyto: a diminutive of the name Earl; cf. the Spanish diminutive endings Juanito, Juancito.
- (27) dey kyahn mek a res wid di melokoton: 'They don't give me a moment's peace with the peach tree' (i.e. the neighborhood children are constantly stealing the fruit). MCC kyahn (cf. can't) often has a simple negative force with no implication of ability; mek (cf. make, pronounced /mek/ in northern and western English dialects) can mean 'let' in expressions such as /mek a siy/ 'let me see', apparently under influence of such African usage as Twi /na yɛ mɛk/ (lit. 'make we go') meaning 'let's go'. (K. Aboagye). Cf. also Sp melocotón 'peach (tree)'.
- (28) Tam, Dik a Hari: everyone (cf. every Tom, Dick and Harry)
- (29) dem: they. In basilectal MCC, dem (cf. them) is used as 'they' and 'their' as well as 'them'; cf. also pluralizing -dem (Pronominal case (and gender) distinctions are not typical of West African and creole languages.
- (30) miy: I (cf. me and above note). (note 65)
- (31) Katn Triy: Cotton Tree, another Bluefields neighborhood.
- (32) A sez: I said. Basilectal MCC has no verbal inflections per se, but some standard English inflections have been borrowed along with their root as a single morpheme; cf. narrative present in colloquial English "He says..." and non-standard "Then I says..."
- (33) dey kos miy a howl payl a ting: They called me a lot of names. MCC kos (cf. curse) has acquired the syntactic features of English call, taking a direct object plus complement.

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 1 (Notes)

- (34) treyt: straight. Earlier MCC reduction of English initial consonant clusters has resulted in hypercorrections such as skromz 'crumb' and striga 'trigger'.
- (35) bot wa fo dun: But what can you do (cf. British 'But what to do'). MCC fo alternates with tu as an infinitive marker; cf. West country 'came for see' with infinitive of purpose (Orton S3), possibly reinforced by African usage such as the infinitive-forming particle fa in Twi and Yoruba (Cassidy 1961:67). 1978:
- (36) for ai dringk: for me to drink
- (37) presha: high blood pressure
- (38) If a mi ded, a gow pan di ship an hahl yuw af: If I died, I'd go to the ship and haul you off (i.e. if the nephew didn't visit her while he was on leave, he might fear her ghost if she died). MCC mi marks the anterior (note 58) as well as hypothetical conditions.
- (39) Ye crecé—de chiquito: I raised him from the time he was small. Normally, this would be 'Yo lo crié desde muy pequeño'; since the speaker's first language is MCC (in which grow can mean both 'increase in size' and 'raise'), the same semantic range has been transferred to Sp crecer, which only means 'increase in size', not 'raise'.
- (40) ¿Éste? Ah! Desde pequeño?: Him? Oh, from the time he was small?
- (41) Sí. Casa aquí: Yes. House here. (It is unclear whether this foreigner-Spanish is for the "German's" benefit or simply that of an MCC speaker, but the latter seems unlikely in light of other sentences.)
- (42) Jugabas aquí cuando eras niño? Did you used to play here when you were a child?
- (43) This house was over there, then they took it down here. It's the same house. My whole family—mom, dad, grampa, gramma.
- (44) lahn: teach; cf. Scots lear(n) 'to teach' and this general dialect usage of learn.
- (45) El inglés es muy bueno. Le ayuda. Sí—pocoito a poco. (grammatical Sp): English is very good. It helps you. Yes—little by little.
- (46) iz: an alternate form of the question emphasizer a (see note 22)
- (47) Iz haw Orl trow miy wey layk dat? How could Earl reject me like that?
- (48) Down gow howm gow get moni: Don't go home to get money. The second gow has the force of 'in order to'; this may be related to the sense of go as purpose or intent in the colloquial U.S. phrase "Why did you go and do that?", or it may derive from a serial verb construction of African origin.

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 1 (Notes)

- (49) iz: like the question-word emphazizer iz (note 46), a noun emphazizer iz seems to derive from an earlier form a (note 22; see also Holm, 1980). Although iz can "pass" for English it's, there are no synchronic MCC phonological rules that could produce such a contraction so it must be considered a single morpheme. It is interesting to note that BEV has a form /is/ to introduce noun phrases which is distinct from /iz/ elsewhere.
- (50) gat: have (note that this usage would be unidiomatic in standard English)
- (51) i don: it's over; MCC don is also used preverbally to mark the completion of an action (see RCC text, note 19)
- (52) tiyf: steal (cf. thief, thieve)
- (53) yuw no now iz huw: You don't know who it is (cf. question-word emphazizer iz, note 46)
- (54) im no de hahdli wori wid i: He hardly bothered with it (i.e. drinking)
- (55) i pik it op: He's started in again
- (56) we a de: where I am. MCC locative copula de probably represents a convergence of English there (MCC de) and African forms such as Twi dɛ or Ewe dɛ 'to be' (DJE). See also RCC text, note 24.
- (57) A did tayad an neva kom: I was tired and didn't come. Like other verbs, MCC adjectival verbs take preverbal tense markers such as anterior did, showing that the action took place before the time under discussion (not equivalent to the past tense, which may be the one in focus); neva is the anterior negator.
- (58) Yuw mi dringkin; das way yuw no mi wahn kom ya: You had been drinking; that's why you didn't want to come here. MCC mi is another form of the anterior marker did; it is phonologically related to English been but semantically and syntactically closer to similar African markers such as Yoruba ti or Efik ma.
- (59) man: a term of address to both sexes (and all ages) in varieties of Black English from Cape Town to San Francisco; Scots man is a familiar term of address, but only to adult males.
- (60) im sey...a nos stey wi dem: He told me to stay with them. This is the usual MCC construction for quoted commands.
- (61) i gon at Faya: He went to Fire (a bar)
- (62) im biliyv se ay no komin bak: He thought that I wasn't going to come back. MCC se marks quotations and dependent clauses after certain verbs, like the English subordinator that; it seems to be a convergence of English say and Twi se, a similar subordinator that happened to be similar in form.

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 1 (Notes)

- (63) wahn reykw wa yuw gat: (they) want to fleece you.
- (64) Sew dem sidon af a sombodi els: So they sit down and drink at somebody else's expense.
- (65) Wotlis ting-dem! Worthless things! Note MCC pluralizer -dem, (also the third person plural pronoun (note 29); its use parallels exactly that of the Yoruba pluralizer àwon, which also means 'they' (Rowlands 1969:196).
- (66) Im hep yuw dow? Does he help you though? (i.e. her nephew Caesar)
- (67) Skuwna Kiy: Schooner Cay, a small island with a fish-packing factory near Bluefields.
- (68) getin: getting (paid)
- (69) part: place; cf. MCC wich part? 'where?' and colloquial Scots and US these parts 'here; this region'. Regarding post-vocalic /r/, MCC could be described as semi-rhotic, part alternating with paht. This leads to hypercorrections such as sunpar for the peach palm (*Gulielma utilis*) from Miskito supa.
- (70) kowrdoba: córdoba, the Nicaraguan unit of currency (then worth 14¢ US, now 5¢)
- (71) Orliyto: Earl (diminutive); see note 26.
- (72) fu: an alternate form of fo (note 35)
- (73) pikni: child; tuw pikni: two children. As with Yoruba àwon, the MCC pluralizer -dem is not used when plurality is already marked (cf. BEV two cent). MCC pikni is from Portuguese pequenino 'small one', dating back to the seventeenth-century slave trade in Africa; the Rama Cay form píknini (RCC text, note 16) is closer to the archaic US pickaninny 'small (black) child', now considered offensive.
- (74) Gadi: godmother (affectionate); cf. Scots and North Country goddy, same meaning (EDD).
- (75, 76) Di gal no de briyd, man. Di gal, shi did fiyl layk shi wa briyidin, bot shi no briyidin. The girl isn't pregnant. The girl felt as if she were pregnant, but she isn't pregnant. Note the proximity of the two alternate constructions for the progressive: "no de briyd...no briyidin"; did and wa are both anterior markers, so it probably best not to consider wa briyidin a third progressive construction but simply anterior plus progressive. OED indicates this sense of breed as dialectal.
- (77) fuwlin rawn: fooling around (i.e. having extramarital sexual intercourse)

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 1 (Notes)

- (78) wor: was (hypercorrection)
- (79) fo-him jab: his job. MCC fo can combine with pronouns to form possessives; the origin ~~my~~ lie in an English construction like "This is for you" being construed as "This is yours". The Haitian construction pa-u 'yours' may be related, as well as African constructions such as the Ewe possessive particle fe before nouns (Edwards, 1974:11). MCC also has the possessive interrogative fo-huw 'whose'.
- (80) Im kliyn rawn iya: He cleaned (out the weeds) around here.
- (81) krakra: 'nervous, clumsy; cf. Twi krà kra 'restless, excited' (DJE).
- (82) memba: remember; such aphesis is frequent.
- (83) i pleyin, i pleyin: MCC verbs are freely repeated to indicate continuation of an action, even three or four times. In English more than one repetition seems unacceptable (except in children's stories), but in African languages such as Yoruba there is no such restriction (Rowlands, 1969:207).
- (84) ahl in a sodn: all of a sudden; cf. archaic all on a sudden (OED).
- (85) Him weytin an det: He's waiting for death; in England wait on in the sense of 'wait for' has been archaic since 1694 (OED); but it is still heard in the southern US and Caribbean.
- (86) a litl bihayn jos in i pants: i.e., he has lost so much weight that one sees 'just little buttocks in his trousers'.
- (87) We i de? We shi de? Where is she? Where is she? MCC i is a gender-neutral third person singular pronoun, but the speaker chooses to repeat the question with the unambiguous form shi. Note that MCC, unlike English but like most West African languages, has no inversion of subject and auxiliary verb (or be) in forming questions; re locative de, see note 56.
- (88) ariynj: 'orange'
- (89) chap: clean out weeds
- (90) doz: habitual aspect marker; its lexical source is clearly the English auxiliary does (which conveys the idea of repetition, being in the simple present tense), but its syntactic use in MCC was probably reinforced by African preverbal habitual aspect markers such as Yoruba maa (Rowlands, 1969:61).

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 2

The speaker is ⁶¹a 36-year-old Creole man with some education. Unlike the basilectal creole spoken by EH in Text 1, his creole is mesolectal or midway between "deep" creole and standard English.

It waz (1) a ragid fishaman. I yuwsa layk fishing an evar dey hi gowz (2) awt fishin an i kech fish an bring it an sel. Sow wan dey hi went awt fishin an hi didn kech eniting...til hi kech a gowldn fish. An di fish sez tu him, i sez, "Trow miy bak intu di siy," i sey, "an ail giv yuw a riwahrd." Sow di owl man teyk di fish an i trow im bak intu di siy. Sow wen i went howm hiz wayf sez tu him, i sey, "Wat yuw kech?" I sez, "Owl leydi, ayz (3) ownli kech a gowldn fish." "Sow wat yuw don wid it?" "Di fish towl mi tu trow im bak intu di siy an hi wil giv mi a riwahrd." "An wat yuw aks for a riwahrd?" I sez, "Noting." Di owl leydi sez tu im, i sez, "Yuw now dat awr kotbowrd ar empti. (4) Wi down hav a skromz (5) av chiyz nar a piys av bred tu iyt. Gow bak an tel di fish dat wi down wahn awr kotbowrd ar empti." (6) Di fishaman wen tu di siy. I sez, "Hed in di eyr an teyl in di siy: fish, fish, listen (7) tu miy." Di fish kom op; i sez, "Wat duw yuw wahn?" I sez, "May wayf sez tu tel yuw dat awr kotbowrd ar empti. Wiy down hav a...skromz av chiyz nar a piys av bred." Di fish sez tu him, "Gow bak howm." Naw hi gowin bak diskorijin bika hi din get no riwahrd. Hi wen an di wey howm an i luk bot di wayf hapi, yu now, sow i kahl im in. Sow wel, di teybl waz wel set sow dey sit dawn an enjay derself. Fyuw deyz afta di wayf kompleyn tu im. I sez, "A piys av chiyz an a piys av bred iz nat inof for a riwahrd." I sez, "Gow bak an tel di fish dat dis owl haws dat wi ar living intu (8) iz notin mowr (9) beta dan a pig pen."

MISKITO COAST CREOLE: TEXT 2 (Notes)

- (1) It waz: (once) there was
- (2) yusaa...gowz: since yusaa (cf. 'used to') sets the time in the past, the present tense ending modeled on 'goes' would be inappropriate in standard English; such hypercorrection typifies the mesolect.
- (3) ayz: hypercorrect I's, perhaps modeled on he's
- (4) kotbowrd: cupboard (via folk-etymology); ar: is (hypercorrection)
- (5) akromz: 'crumb, via hypercorrection of the initial consonant cluster and incorporation of the plural inflection into a new single morpheme; see text 1, note 34.
- (6) wi down wahn awr kotbowrd ar empti: we don't want our cupboard to be empty. This MCC construction seems to have been borrowed from Spanish, which requires the subjunctive in subordinate clauses after verbs of volition: No queremos que nuestro armario esté vacío. Some remarkable syntactic borrowing from Spanish is occurring as MCC borrows Spanish lexical items. MCC falta '(there) is a need for' (from the third person singular form of Spanish faltar), not only fills a semantic gap in English but also establishes the extraordinary syntactic category of a verb requiring no subject in a declarative sentence:

<u>Spanish</u>	<u>MCC</u>	<u>English</u>
A: ¿Que falta?	A: Wat falta?	A: What's missing?
B: Falta hígado.	B: Falta liva.	B: Liver.
- (7) listen: a spelling pronunciation, suggesting that the speaker is on his best linguistic behavior.
- (8) intu: in. This seems to be a "correction" of archaic basilectal MCC ina 'in', still found in Jamaican (DJE) and Rama Cay Creole (RCC text, note 5). A similar general locative preposition na is found in creoles of French, Portuguese, and Dutch lexical bases, suggesting an early Portuguese pidgin form na from Portuguese na 'in the (feminine)' converging with "locative na...in Ibo with the same range of functions as in the creoles, whereas neither Ptg. na...nor Dutch naar 'to, after' has such a wide semantic range" (Taylor 1971:294-295).
- (9) mowr beta: better; the double comparative suggests that the inflected form from English may lack the semantic force of the free morpheme.

Rama Cay Creole English

Barbara Assadi and John Holm

Rama Cay Creole (RCC) is a variety of English distinct from MCC which is spoken on Rama Cay, a small island in Bluefields lagoon, by the Rama Indians. This small tribe, today numbering only 500 people, appears to be the remnant of a Chibchan-speaking group that once occupied a much larger area but was decimated and displaced during contact with the Spanish, English, and Miskito. Over the past century their original language, Rama, has been undergoing replacement by RCC, which is lexically based on the MCC spoken by Creoles in nearby Bluefields, but which seems to have been influenced by the structure, phonology and semantics of Rama. Today their original language is spoken by only some dozen or so people living principally on the mainland away from the majority of the tribe, the RCC-speakers on Rama Cay.

A further complication in RCC is the influence exerted on it by the imperfect English spoken by German missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century: "All the (Rama) children are taught English as their mother-tongue...(but) the teachers themselves—all Germans—were by no means proficient; indeed, only learners themselves" (Pim & Seemann, 1869:282). Fifty years later the tribe's change from Rama to RCC was almost complete, but a visiting German-speaking anthropologist noted that "The Rama Indians speak English with a certain strange intonation and pronunciation, which is strikingly reminiscent of the English spoken as a foreign language by Germans" (Conzemius 1927:339). Possible lexical influence from German on RCC includes bay 'at (someone's house)' (cf. G bei); for triy deyz 'three days ago' (cf. G vor); sling 'trap' (cf. G. Schlinge); rayt af 'to copy (in writing)' (cf. G abschreiben); stingk pásam 'skunk' (cf. G. Stinktier); kech yuself 'recover (from an illness)' (cf. G sich erholen); klapansaya 'snake species' (cf. G Klapperschlange); puti 'partridge' (cf. G Pute); miuk 'gnat' (cf. G Mücke). RCC lexicon also contains items from Rama as well as semantic extensions or folk etymologies of MCC words (Holm, 1978:360-379).

A great deal more work needs to be done on the structure and lexicon of RCC; there is an even more urgent need for an adequate description of Rama before it becomes extinct.

Rama Cay Creole Text: recorded on Rama Cay in Bluefields Lagoon, Nicaragua in 1975 by B. Assadi. The two speakers are old women: (N) "Nela" (~~Daniela MacBae~~) and (O) "Ol-Ol" ("Old Lady" Angela); they are discussing a neighbor who has gone out fishing and her baby, who is sick.

N: Tuv litl kówkonot ai mi (1) get fram a. Da (2) wen ai get dat
Two little coconuts I did get from her. When was it I got that

kówkonot fram a? Yéstudey?
coconut from her? Yesterday?

O: Dey bifowr.
The day before.

N: Dey bifowr yéstudey.
Day before yesterday.

O: Di lahs kówkonot.
The last coconut.

N: On-hon.
Uh Uh-huh.

O: Da (3) Elba gi wi wan wen i kiar di dówri yéstudey. Fo
It was Elba who gave us one when she took the boat yesterday. To
kuk, sow. I gwahn gow luk fish gahn rayt naw.
cook. She was going to go look for fish. She's gone right now.

Haw dey wi (4) kech fish if dey now gow ina (5) dowri? I gahn leyt,
How can they catch fish if they don't go in a boat? She went late,

yu hier. gow kech a (6) dow. Di wéda gud. I wi
you hear. She'll catch them though. The weather is good. She will

kech a, Owl leydi.
catch them, Old Lady.

N: If fishin gud, i wi kech.
If the fishing is good, she will catch some.

O: Bot i kyahn trow net, sow i gahn widawt net.
But she can't cast a net, so she went without a net

(7)
N: Wid huk. Wich paht...haw truw i gahn, den?
With hooks. Which way...how did she go, then?

O: Haw? A, wel, hi wi kech alang di lagúwn ej.
What? Well, she'll take the way along the edge of the lagoon.

N: Huv-da (8) get dem...huv-da get lok wi kech dem, yu now.
Whoever has them...those who have luck will catch them, you know.

Rama Cay Creole Text (continued)

O: Layk haw di, haw di wéda kyahm naw. ai hier di úman (9)
Like the way...the way the weather is calm now. I hear the woman's

béybi sik bad.
baby is very sick.

N: I mi gahn, i mi gahn hu (10) bai wan kówkono tuw op de.
She went, she went to buy a coconut up there.

O: On-hon.
Uh-huh.

Mp Op de i mi gahn, an i gahn, an i gahn fayn a de wid di béybi
Up there (s)he went, and he went and found her there with the baby
sik wan (11). Di siknis...mi (12) farget haw (13) di siknis neym naw.
sick indeed. The sickness...I forget what the sickness is called now.

Jos teyk kayna sodn, i sey. Di bey...di litl bway
It just started kind of suddenly, she said. The ba...the little boy

mi (14) gud, yu now. Nat di riyl riyl beybi self (15); now, nat di
was fine, you know. Not the real little baby; no, not the

riyl beybi self.
real baby.

O: Fiyl hiyt?
Is he feverish?

N: On-hon.
Uh-huh.

O: Sow. Fiyl hiyt. Di piknini (16) noude hu grow (17).
So. He's feverish. The child isn't growing/going to grow.

Sow i mi gud, i sey, di piknini mi gud.
So he was fine, she said, the child was fine.

N: Wan litl bway, yu now, dat.
That little boy is small, you know.

O: Yes, ai nuo di litl bway.
Yes, I know the little boy.

N: Farget haw dat piknini neym naw. Wan piknini we (18) don (19) wahk
I forget the child's name, now. A child that walks

an tahk ahrédi. Farget haw dat litl bway niem naw.
and talks already. I forget that little boy's name now.

O: Now luk gud, dem. Di piknini-dem (20) now luk gud.
They don't look good. Those children don't look good.

Rama Cay Creole Text (continued)

N: Luk sik, sik. Dem luk ahl in, ina dey feys. Luk layk dey hav blod. They look sick. Their faces look tired. The look like they have (no?)

In a sodn i sey i teyk dat, i sey. Layk blood. That started up all of a sudden, she said. Like they were

shaht win, i sey. "Layk ázma i get?" mi short-winded, she said. "Is that something like asthma he has?" I

ask a den. "Da (21) ázma i get," naw i tel mi. Da now asked her then. "That's asthma he has," she tells me now. "That's not

ázma, now riyi ázma," i tel mi. asthma, not real asthma," she tells me.

O: Rayt naw, layk haw i de (unclear) rayt naw. Right now, the way he is (unclear) right now.

N: I gahn fayn a sik wan, a tel yu. I gahn fayn She's going to find him very sick, I tell you. She's going to find

a sik. If ai néba gahn hu luk (22) wan kówkonot, ai wudn now him sick. If I hadn't gone to look for a coconut, I wouldn't know

se (23) Elba get di piknini sik agin. I ha hu sit dawn ównli wid a ina that Elba has a sick child again. All she can do is sit with him in

hamáhk... an howl am op an... biká hu mi, mi gahn fain Owlga de de the hammock...and hold him up and...because I went and found Olga there that was

(24) an...frai wan tórtiya (25) ai tingk far a. Owlga de bay (26) a. and...frying a tortilla for her, I think. Olga was at her place.

Mos (27) i beg hu gahn bayl (28) káhti (29) far a, méybi, or wa-da. Probably she asked (her) to make coffee for her, maybe, or whatever.

Kafi or wa-da. Mi gahn fayn a...an Owlga de de, him (30) an... Coffee or whatever. I went to find her...and Olga was there, her and...

om...Dela. An dem de, de rawn di fáya sayd. Luk somting hu duw er...Dela. And they were there, around the hearth. Looking for something

hu di pik...hu di úman Di úman get di béybi howl op— to do for the chil...for the woman. The woman had the baby propped up—

kyahn duw nótin, i sey. Shaht, layk shaht win, ai tel yu. couldn't do anything, she said. He seemed to be short-winded, I tell you.

Haw-haw, jos layk yu siy di litl bway mi get a hu im. Hu (31) Liynos wan. Just exactly like the trouble the little boy had. Linus's boy.

(32)
Lahs nayt, howl nayt, i sey, i néba sliyp wid a, i sey. Last night, the whole night, she said, she didn't get a wink of sleep with him.

Rama Cay Creole Text (continued)

N: I no now wa-da (33) hu duw, i sey, wid a. No now haw hu duw,
She doesn't know what to do with him, she says. Doesn't know how to

i sey, wid a. Bot i di (34) tray wid a. Dey no layk wi.
manage with him, she says. But she was trying. They're not like us.

Dey now plénti médisin.
They know a lot of medicine.

O: Yu now di man gow tumóch ina di kowl an no wahn lian. Fra (35)
You know the man goes out in the wold a lot and won't listen. Since

lahs nayt, fra lahs nayt daw i teyk sik, di béybi.
last night, since last night though, he has taken sick, the baby

N: I sawn layk...
He sounds like...

O: Haw i sey i néba sliyp den? Dey néba sliyp, i sey,
How is it she said he didn't sleep then? They didn't sleep, she said,

lahs nayt. Biká i sey di litl bway mi gud ahl di taym.
last night. Because he (?) said the little boy always used to be healthy.

I lef (36) fo (37) fayn ud (38) awt de. An i kom show (39) an i bigin
He left to find wood out there. And he came home and he began to

shawt, i tel a, "A wi biyt yu séyka (40) yu béybi. Yu
shout, he told her, "I'm going to beat you because of the child. You

no wahn gow luk áfa yu béybi.
don't want to look after your baby.

N: Wel ai tel yu, wen him gow awt éniwe him no rimémba
Well I tell you, when she (he?) goes out anywhere she doesn't remember

hu gow siy i píkinini bak. Hin gow de di howl dey bawt an lef
to go back to look in on the child. She gads about the whole day and

dem pow píkinini-dem self hiya. Shi sey éwnli, "A jos kom show
leaves those poor children alone here. She just says, "I just got back

íyvn naw gahn siy mi béybi yet," i sey. Sow naw i gaan.
and I'm going to look in on the baby," she says. Then she's gone.

Sopów wen him gow awt an kom show, i fayn de píkinini-dem wan a dem
What if she took off and then came back to find one of the children

ded wan. Béybi-ka (41) ded wan. Wel, da hu fo, hu-da hu bleyim?
dead. The little baby dead. Well, who is it, who's to blame?

Bleyim píypl.
She'll blame others.

Rama Cay Creole Text: Notes

- (1) ai mi get: I got. Since preverbal tense and aspect markers seem to be a key feature in distinguishing between creoles, it should be noted that while MCC di marks the anterior, in RCC (as in Belizean) it marks progressive aspect, mi being the only anterior marker. They combine thus: /shi midi kuk/ 'she was cooking'; RCC mi^{also} precedes the equative copula da: /mi papa mi da wan fishaman/ 'My father was a fisherman' (unlike Belizean /mi papa da mi wan fishaman/). Like Jamaican, RCC has no progressive marker doz, which is present in MCC and Belizean.
- (2) Da wen: RCC da corresponds to MCC a (and iz) as a highlighter and introducer of noun phrases and question words (see MCC text 1, note 22)
- (3) Da Elba: da here emphasizes a noun (see note 2)
- (4) Haw dey wi kech fish? Note lack of subject-auxiliary inversion.
- (5) ina: see MCC text 2, note 8 and further RCC examples below.
- (6) a: any postverbal third person object pronoun.
- (7) wich paht: see MCC text 1, note 69.
- (8) huw-da: da here occurs after the question word, unlike the example in note 2 above. This may be related to the huw-da question form (often written who-dat) found throughout varieties of creole English in the Caribbean and West Africa and once associated with US southern blacks. This RCC use of huw-da in the sense of 'whoever' seems to parallel an MCC usage that may have been influenced by Spanish:
- | <u>Spanish</u> | <u>MCC</u> | <u>English</u> |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| A: ¿Quién cocina? | A: <u>Huw</u> kuk di fuwd? | A: Who cooks the food? |
| B: <u>Quien</u> sea. | B: <u>Huw</u> dey get. | B: <u>Whoever</u> they get to do it. |
- (9) uman: woman; this pronunciation was current in eighteenth-century England (DJR)
- (10) hu: an infinitive marker, corresponding to MCC fo or fu (MCC text 1, notes 35, 72, 79); RCC hu also serves as a preposition (hu di uman, p. 22) and possessive marker (hu Liynos wan, p. 22). The shift to /h/, possibly once the voiceless bilabial fricative /ɸ/, may have resulted from the lack of /f/ in Rama (also originally absent in Miskito), although /f/ is now a stable phoneme in RCC.
- (11) ^{wid} di beybi sik wan: with the baby sick (i.e., not just tired). This emphasizing wan may be related to an obsolete use of English one after nouns in the sense of 'alone': "I one of all others..." (OED, -1555). Wan can also be used in the sense of a reflexive; /duw somting yuw wan/ 'do something yourself', which is related to the sense of 'alone': /i sista get beks an mek i own kyamp an stey, liyv i brada him wan/ 'His sister got angry and made her own hut and stayed there, leaving her brother by himself'.

Rama Cay Creole Text: Notes

- (12) mi as a subject pronoun is rather more frequent in RCC than MCC; the frequency of this and other archaic MCC features in RCC probably reflects the state of MCC at the time of RCC's emergence in the nineteenth century, as well as RCC's subsequent relative isolation.
- (13) haw it neym: also MCC; cf. Spanish como se llama (lit. 'how it's called!').
- (14) mi: anterior marker; see MCC text 1, note 8.
- (15) self, like wan, serves to emphasize; cf. obsolete English usage: "the Poete selfe" (OED, -1579).
- (16) piknini: see MCC text 1, note 73.
- (17) de: probably locative
- (18) we: cf. North Country whe 'who, which' (EDD)
- (19) don: preverbal marker of completion (see MCC text 1, note 51). Hancock (1971:440) suggests that completive don represents a convergence of English done with "Wolof do:n 'past habitual action marker'". Although this particular semantic match is problematical, there is little doubt that the syntactic slot itself is African; that of Yoruba completive marker á (Rowlands 1969:73) corresponds to that of Jamaican don (Bailey 1966:42) and Haitian fin (Sylvain, 1936:92). It is through areal contact phenomena that white American cowboys (but no British rustics) say, "He done kicked the bucket".
- (20) dem: a pluralizer (see MCC text 1, notes 65, 73)
- (21) da: as well as the related basilectal a and mesolectal iz to introduce noun phrases, MCC also has the form das. The latter seems to represent a compromise between RCC da (phonologically closer to a Proto-Pidgin *na) and standard English that's. Creole das appears to be a single morpheme; there are no other instances of /iz/ contracting to /s/, and there are instances of das functioning like dat: "Das would be de bes' place" (DJE 197). It is interesting to note the phonological similarity of BEV tha's, which does not follow the usual rules of copula deletion (Labov 1972:116). The fact that this form is not normally used by white Americans lends credence to the hypothesis that it is of creole origin and historically related to MCC das, RCC da, and an even earlier form, na or a.
- (22) luk: look for, seek; cf. Midlands look idem (EDD)
- (23) se: that; see MCC text 1, note 62.
- (24) Owlgá de de: Olga was there; the first de seems to be the locative (see MCC text 1, note 56).

Rama Cay Creole Text: Notes

- (25) tórtiya: cf. Spanish (and US English) tortilla, a thin, hard pancake made of corn meal in Spanish-speaking Nicaragua but of wheat flour in English-speaking Nicaragua (probably due to traditional trade links with the Caribbean and southern US).
- (26) bay: at (someone's house); cf. German bei idem.
- (27) mos: cf. MCC mosi from English must be, used for conjecture; RCC mos and MCC mosi function as adverbs, however.
- (28) bayl: cf. German Kaffee kochen (lit. 'boil coffee'). RCC and MCC /ay/ as a reflex of standard /ɔɪ/ is the survival of a pronunciation current in England until the eighteenth century (DJE 111).
- (29) kahti: cf. MCC kafi-tiy (lit. 'coffee-tea') for coffee; MCC tiy is used for any hot beverage.
- (30) him: she (see MCC text 1, notes 29, 87)
- (31) hu: possessive marker (see MCC text 1, note 79 and RCC note 10)
- (32) neba: past negator, without the standard meaning of 'non-occurrence on more than one occasion' (see MCC text 1, note 57). Support for the theory of relexification can be found in the use of Indo-Portuguese creole nunca (lit. 'never') as a past negator also (Delgado 1900:42).
a
- (33) wa-da: note postposition of da; cf. RCC notes 2, 8.
- (34) di: see RCC, note 1.
- (35) fra: cf. Scots frae 'from the time that' (CSD) and MCC text 1, note 19
- (36) lef: this form is not marked for tense; it is derived from West Country leff 'to leave' (EDD).
- (37) fo: possibly hu influenced by preceding /f/.
- (38) ud: an eighteenth-century English pronunciation (cf. uman, note 9)
- (39) kom show: lit. 'come ashore'; this would seem to reflect the geography of the Ramas' island home, but is probably from general nautical English given the currency of this phrase with the same meaning in the Bahamas.
- (40) seyka: from obsolete English (for) sake of (OED, -1622)
- (41) béybi-ka: the suffix is puzzling. Rama has no such diminutive, and this is unlikely to be the Miskito nominalizing suffix -ka. It is conceivable that it is derived from the German diminutive -chen.

MISKITO COAST and RAMA CAY CREOLE: An Annotated Bibliography

BELL, Charles Napier. 1862. 'Remarks on the Mosquito Territory, its Climate, People, Production, Etc.' Journal of the Royal Geographical Society 32:242-268.

Sociolinguistic data and MCC flora and fauna terms.

----- 1899. Tangweera. Life and adventures among gentle savages. London: Edward Arnold. xi, 318 p.

Memoirs of a bidialectal Englishman raised on the Coast in the 1850's. Abundant lexical, social, and historical data passim; MCC dialogue (p. 19-27); an old Mandingo woman recounts childhood capture in Africa (p. 24); obeah chants (p. 31); Miskito (not MCC) grammar (p. 309).

BRAUTIGAM-BEER, Donovan. 1970. 'Apuntes para una historia de nuestra Costa Atlántica' La Prensa (Managua daily); series of 29 articles published from 19 May to 17 June.

A Bluefields historian attempts to make Creole history and culture understandable to Spanish speakers; sociolinguistic and lexical data passim, bibliography (17 June). (La Prensa archives were destroyed in the 1972 earthquake).

CONZEMUS, Édouard (or Eduard). 1921. 'Die Rama Indianer von Nicaragua' Zeitschrift für Ethnologie 59:291-362.

Note that the Rama were in the process of giving up their own language in favor of English (Creole) (p. 339); Rama loanwords in MCC and vice versa (p. 339-340).

----- 1928. 'Ethnographical Notes on the Black Carib (Garif)', AA 30:163-205.

Reference to the Caribs' use of English as a second language (p. 185); translation of Carib terms into MCC passim.

----- 1929. 'Notes on the Miskito and Sumu Languages of Eastern Nicaragua and Honduras' IJAL 5:57-115.

Many Indian terms translated into MCC.

----- 1932. Ethnographical survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua. Washington: GPO. vii, 191 p. (BAE, Bulletin 106).

Description of the Creole population (p. 7), with many references to its linguistic and cultural impact on the Miskito; glossary of MCC terms (p. 170-171).

COTTEAL, Alexander I. 1848. 'A Grammatical Sketch of the Languages Spoken by the Indians of the Mosquito Shore', Transactions of the American Ethnological Society 2:235-264.

Note that the Miskito "have adopted many English words" (p. 238); vocabulary (p. 257-262) glosses many Miskito words with MCC, using some terms from both which are now obsolete.

MCC and RCC Bibliography (continued)

DAMPIER, Willaim. 1699. A New Voyage Round the World. London.

Description of the Miskito alliance with English privateers against the Spaniards (p. 8-11); note that some Miskito "speak good English" (p. 9).

ESQUEMELING (or Exquemelin), John. 1893. The Buccaneers of America. London. 508 p.

1684 account of English privateers and their Miskito allies: 'Many speak English...and some of the Pirates their Indian language....They have among them some few negroes, who...happened to arrive there, swimming, after shipwreck made upon that coast.' (p. 249-250).

FELLECHNER, A., Müller, and Hesse. 1845. Bericht über die...bewirkte Untersuchung einiger Theile des Mosquitolandes. Berlin: Verlag von A. Duncker. 274 p.

Academics' report on the possible site for a Prussian colony; many MCC words, passim; example of the Afro-Indians' 'corrupt' but fluent English (p 21, 50); valuable data on inter-ethnic attitudes; Miskito grammar and vocabulary (p. 241-268).

HEATH, G. R. 1913. 'Notes on Miskito grammar and on other Indian languages of eastern Nicaragua', AA 15:48-62.

Remarks that the Miskito 'vowel scale is exactly the same as in the Jamaican Creole dialect' (p. 51), but a later note that 'in Miskito e and o scarcely exist' (p. 55) suggests that the first observation probably had more to do with their creole pronunciation of English. Much ahead of its time, however, in the call for a 'comparative study of Miskito, Sumu, Garif, Arawak, Guiana Carib, the West Indian Creole dialects, and the tongues of the Guinea coast' (p. 52).

----. 1950. 'Miskito Glossary, with Ethnographic Commentary', IJAL, 16:20-34.

Abundant references to MCC vocabulary and culture.

HOLM, John. 1977. 'Miskito Words in Belize Creole', Belizean Studies 5:6, pp. 1-17.

Study of 32 MCC words derived from or influenced by Miskito which are also used in the creoles of Belize, Costa Rica, and Providence Island.

----. 1978. The English Creole of Nicaragua's Miskito Coast: its socio-linguistic history and a comparative study of its lexicon and syntax. University of London, unpub. Ph.D. diss. 727 pp.

Study of the syntactic and lexical influence on MCC of English (archaic, regional, nautical), West African languages, Amerindian languages (Miskito, Black Carib, Rama), and Spanish in light of social history. Appen-

MCC and RCC Bibliography (continued)

dices: 2,800-item wordlist of MCC with cognates in creoles of Belize, Honduras, Limón, Providence, Caymans and Jamaica. 70 pages of tape-transcriptions.

----- 1980a. 'The Creole "Copula" that Highlighted the World', paper presented at XIIth International Congress of Linguists, Vienna; in J. Dillard (ed.) Perspectives on American English. Mouton.

---MCC highlighter a/iz (and RCC da) traced to similar constructions in BEV, French and West African creoles, and Yoruba.

----- 1980b. 'Sociolinguistic History and the Creolist', paper presented at Conference on Theoretical Orientations in Creole Studies, St. Thomas; in A. Highfield and A. Valdman (eds.) Historicity and Variation in Creole Studies. Ann Arbor: Karoma Press.

Study of English archaisms and regionalisms in MCC with discussion of their usefulness in tracing social history.

JONES, David W. and Carlyle A. GLEAN. 1971. 'The English-speaking communities of Honduras & Nicaragua', CQ 17(2):50-61.

Rich source of sociolinguistic information (albeit somewhat dated already) about communities using MCC as first (Creole) and second language (Miskito, Black Carib); notes similarity of MCC to Belizean (p. 54).

LEHMANN, Walter. 1920. Zentral Amerika. Teil I: Die Sprachen Zentral Amerikas in ihren Beziehung zueinander sowie zu Süd-Amerika und Mexiko. 2 vols. Berlin

Copious historical, syntactic, and lexical data (with many MCC glosses) on all the native and Afro-Indian languages of the Coast: Carib (p. 16-28), Rama (p. 416-460), Miskito and Sumu (p. 461-583).

MANTICA, Carlos. 1973. El Habla Nicaragüense: Estudio morfológico y semántico. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centro-americana, 429 p.

Study of the ways in which local Spanish was shaped by indigenous languages (mainly Nahuatl); the section on morphology (p. 41-87) shows remnants of the Nahuatl-Spanish of Nicaragua.

The rest of the book consists of three word-lists: Nahuatl loans, Nahuatl place names, and a comparative dictionary of seven prehispanic languages, including Miskito and Sumu. The latter is especially sketchy as the author seems unaware of Lehmann, 1920. The existence of MCC is grandly ignored.

McLEAN, Guillermo, and Ray PAST. 1976. 'Some Characteristics of Bluefields English' in R. di Pietro & E. Blansitt, jr. (eds.) The Third LACUS Forum, Columbia, S.C.: Hornbeam Press, Inc., p. 87-94.

Although written outside the context of current creole studies, McLean demonstrates accurate native-speaker insight; remarks on syntax (p. 88-91), phonology (91-92); texts (92-94).

MCC and RCC Bibliography (continued)

NIETSCHEMANN, Bernard. 1973. Between Land and Water: the Subsistence Ecology of the Miskito Indians, Eastern Nicaragua. New York and London: seminar Press, 279 p.

A geographical-anthropological study with perceptive linguistic observations; abundant references to MCC lexicon with glossary (p. 259-260) and chart of some 150 plant and animal names in English, Miskito, Spanish, MCC, and Latin. (p. 248-253).

NUHN, H. et al. 1972. "Zentral-Amerika; Ethno-linguistische Gliederung" (map). Universität Hamburg.

Large color-coded map of Central America showing precise location of speech communities, including MCC and other creoles.

PARSONS, James J. 1954. 'English-speaking settlement of the Western Caribbean', Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers, 16:2-16.

Invaluable sociolinguistic history, with map (p. 6) showing areas where English is used as a first and second language along Central America's eastern coast from Yucatán to Panama.

PERIODICAL ACCOUNTS relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren established among the heathen. 1846-1950. London.

A moving series of reports by Moravian missionaries; uniquely valuable observations of language use with abundant MCC lexicon, passim.

PIM, B. & B. Seemann. 1869. Dottings on the Roadside in Panama, Nicaragua, and Mosquito. London.

Useful historical insights into MCC and RCC speech communities.

REYBURN, William D. 1975. 'Assessing Multilingualism: an Abridgement of "Problems and Procedures in Ethnolinguistic Surveys"' in Ohannessian et al (eds) Language Surveys in Developing Nations. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, p. 87-114.

Results of 1955 survey of the use of Spanish, English, and Miskito in Bluefields, Puerto Cabezas, and several smaller towns on the Coast. Tables (p 107-112) need conversion from absolute numbers to percentages to be readable; since no sampling procedures were followed, the results are best regarded as a very random and partial census. Honduran data show English declining with Miskito population.

ROBERTS, Orlando W. 1827. Narrative of Voyages and Excursions on the East Coast and in the Interior of Central America. Edinburgh.

Valuable observations of language use; samples of Miskito MCC and lexicon, passim.

RYAN, J. M. et al. 1970. Area Handbook for Nicaragua. The American Univ., Washington, D.C. GPO.

Chapter 5, 'Ethnic Groups and Languages' (p. 61-74) contains data from the 1963 census showing 22% of the people on the Coast don't speak Spanish. Nicaragua's Negro population estimated at 9% (or 150,000), but no figures for the total number of English-speakers is given.

MCC and RCC Bibliography (continued)

SLOANE, Hans. 1707. A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica with a Natural History... London.

Notes that the Miskito are 'endeared to those of the English Nation. The Men generally speak broken English' (lxxvii).

SORSBY, W. S. 1969. The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore, 1749-1787, unpub. Ph.D. diss., Univ. College London, Dept. of History.

Valuable social history, with references and samples of language, passim.

SQUILER, J. G. (under pseudonym of Samuel A. BARD) 1855. Waikna, or Adventures on the Mosquito Shore. New York.

An unsympathetic account (Creole is 'abominable, unintelligible Congo-English') by a U.S. ambassador, but built on an informed core of fact that preserves the book's value; many references to language use, culture, and social relations, with samples of MCC (and pseudo-MCC) passim.

STRANGWAYS, Thomas. 1822. Sketch of the Mosquito Shore, Including the Territory of Poyais, Edinburgh.

Booster for an ill-fated Scottish colony, S. presents the Coast's attractions with scholarly care, nonetheless; numerous references to flora and fauna in local English, plus some ethnographic material.

SUNRISE OF THE PEOPLE: Workbook and Teacher's Guide. 2 vol. 1980. Managua: Ministry of Education. 139 and 106 pp., paperback.

The first book in English for Nicaraguans; published by the Sandinista government to teach literacy to MCC and RCC speakers. Photographs, a poem partly in MCC, and a statement of the new policy of cultural and linguistic pluralism.

VAUGHAN-WARMAN, Adolfo I. 1962. Diccionario Trilingüe: Miskito-Español-Inglés. Managua: Misión Católica de Waspan, Rio Coco. 794 p.

Monumental work by a Miskito-Creole scholar; many glosses are MCC, and the massive borrowing into Miskito from Creole rather than general English is immediately apparent.

VON HAGEN, V. Wolfgang. 1940. 'The Mosquito Coast of Honduras and its inhabitants', Geog. Review 30:238-259.

Many Miskito 'do not know a word of Spanish, but most of them understand a pidgin (sic) English' (p. 255); data on this isolated region may no longer be current due to Miskito migration to Nicaragua following the resolution of the border dispute (cf. Reyburn, 1975).

W., M. 1732. 'The Mosquito Indian and his Golden River' in A Collection of Voyages and Travels, A. Churchill (ed), London, vol. 6, p. 285-298.

Written in the 1690's, this account contains the first references to MCC terms for local plants and animals, plus valuable sociolinguistic data.

MCC and RCC Bibliography (continued)

WILLIAMS, William. 1969. Mr. Penrose: the Journal of Penrose, Seaman, edited by D. H. Dickason. Bloomington and London: Indiana Univ. Press.

1783 fictionalized account of a Welshman castaway among the Rama; lexical evidence suggests this was based on fact; fascinating reading with a claim to being the first American novel.

WILSON, John F. 1975. Obra Morava en Nicaragua: trasfondo y breve historia, tesis para Licenciado en Teología, Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano, San José, Costa Rica; 337 p., mimeo.

Rich source of data on social history and language issues in education. The cultural influence of the Creoles is seen in that the Moravian church's congregation, once mainly Creole, is now 79% indigenous (p. 324).

YOUNG, Thomas. 1842. Narrative of a residence on the Mosquito Shore, during the years 1839, 1840, & 1841: with an account of Truxillo, and the adjacent islands of Bonacca and Roatan. London: Smith, Elder, & Co. 2d ed. 1847. iv, 172 p.

Some of earliest samples of Miskito MCC (p. 12, 27-29, 46) and Black Carib MCC (p. 131); abundant MCC terms, passim and in Miskito vocabulary (p. 170-172); also good source of social data.

ZIOCK, Heinrich. 1894. Dictionary of the English and Miskito Languages, Herrnhut, Saxony. 338 p.

Compiled by a Moravian missionary after many years on the Coast; a German-speaker, English for him was MCC, whence many glosses.

GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY (i.e. books on creoles, African and other languages in general rather than specific Western Caribbean creoles and the areas in which they are spoken; the latter will appear in an annotated bibliography at the end of each chapter, whereas this unannotated list of references will appear at the back of the book, hopefully avoiding duplication of titles in each chapter.

Dictionaries: abbreviations used in the text

- CSD Chambers Scots Dictionary. A. Warrack. 1911. Edinburgh.
- DJE Dictionary of Jamaican English. F. G. Cassidy & R. B. Le Page. 1967. Cambridge University Press.
- EDD English Dialect Dictionary. J. Wright. 1898-1905. 6 vol. London.
- OED Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford University Press.
- W3 Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged. 1963. Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co.

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- Dalgado, S. 1900. Dialecto Indo-Português de Ceilão. Lisbon.
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- Labov, W. 1969. "Contraction, Deletion, and Inherent Variability of the English Copula" in Language 45, pp. 716-762.
- . 1972. Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Orton, H. et al. (eds.) 1978. The Linguistic Atlas of England. Humanities Press.
- Rowlands, E. C. 1969. Teach Yourself Yoruba. London.
- Sylvain, S. 1936. Le créole haïtien: morphologie et syntaxe. Port-au-Prince.
- Taylor, D. 1971. "Grammatical and Lexical Affinities of Creoles" in D. Hymes (ed.) Pidginization and Creolization of Languages. Cambridge University Press.