INFLECTIONS IN 19TH C. UPPER GUINEA CREOLE TEXTS

JOHN HOLM, DOMINIKA SWOLKIEN

Abstract. Until recently, most creolists assumed that an inherent part of restructuring was the loss of any inflectional morphemes from the lexical donor language in any pidgin or creole resulting from contact. However, this characterization of restructuring is no longer tenable given recent evidence (Clements 1996, Bakker 2002) that not all inflections in pidgin and creole languages can be credibly attributed to recent contact with the superstrate and must, therefore, have existed since the languages' genesis. What this implies is no less than a paradigm shift in creole linguistics (Holm 2005). This paper examines in detail a number of nineteenth-century grammars and texts of two closely related Portuguese-based creoles, those of Guiné-Bissau (GBC) and Cape Verde (CVC). It focuses on attestations of inflections in both the noun phrase and the verb phrase, comparing them with modern descriptions of these languages. The aim is to critically evaluate the reliability of these older works, which have sometimes been dismissed out of hand by later researchers when the data they reported did not conform to current theory. The purpose of this paper is to assess what light these older works might cast on issues such as when the acrolect emerged and what relation (if any) its emergence had to decreolization.

0. INTRODUCTION

Until recently, most creolists assumed that an inherent part of restructuring was the loss of any inflectional morphemes from the lexical donor language in any pidgin or creole resulting from contact. However, this characterization of restructuring is no longer tenable given recent evidence (Clements 1996, Bakker 2002) that not all inflections in pidgin and creole languages can be credibly attributed to recent contact with the superstrate and may, therefore, have existed since the languages' genesis. What this implies is no less than a paradigm shift in creole linguistics (Holm 2008).

This paper[*] examines in detail some of the available nineteenth-century grammars and texts of two closely related Portuguese-based creoles, Guiné-Bissau Creole Portuguese (GB CP)[1] and Cape Verde Creole Portuguese (CV CP),

[*] Revision of a paper presented at the *XIe Colloque international des Études Créoles*, Praia (Cape Verde), Oct. 31−Nov. 7, 2005.

[1] List of abbreviations: AUX – auxiliary, CV CP – Cape Verde Creole Portuguese, GB CP − Guiné Bissau Creole Portuguese, FEM − feminine, MAS − masculine, P − Portuguese, PTCP − participle, SG − singular.

RRL, **LIV**, *3–4*, p. 231–252, Bucureşti, 2009

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

particularly the variety of Santiago. It focuses on attestations of inflections in both the noun phrase and the verb phrase, comparing them with modern descriptions of these languages. The aim is to critically evaluate the reliability of these older works, which have sometimes been dismissed out of hand by later researchers when the data they reported did not conform to current theory. The purpose of this study is to assess what light these older works might cast on issues such as when the acrolect emerged and what relation (if any) its emergence had to decreolization.

The creole of Guiné-Bissau (along with that of Casamance in Senegal) and that of the Cape Verde Islands make up the Upper Guinea Creoles. They are very similar and are believed to have a common origin; their structure reflects a common substrate (and, for GB, an adstrate) of West Atlantic and Mande languages, groups within the Niger-Congo family.

Our survey of the fate of Portuguese inflections in the Upper Guinea creoles is organized by morphosyntax: we will examine the noun phrase (section two) for inflections of number and gender, and then the verb phrase (section three) for inflections indicating the past tense, present participle (or gerund), and the past participle. In each case we take a look at the inflection first in Portuguese and then at the corresponding forms in GB CP and CV CP. After examining the modern forms in each creole, we look at the forms that appeared in nineteenth-century texts. Finally, we will see what conclusions can be drawn in section four.

1. TEXTS

The following is a brief discussion of what is known about the nineteenth-century authors cited in this study and what can be deduced about the reliability of their texts as accurate descriptions of the Upper Guinea creoles at the time these texts were written.

1.1. Guiné-Bissau CP

Bertrand-Bocandé (1849), born in Nantes in 1800, a French naturalist and traveler who settled in Guinea (*Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira* 2000−2002: 807) is described as

> [um] infatigavel naturalista francez, que residiu cerca de 20 annos no Casamansa... Quando abarca generalidades dialectaes – é um primor. Se entra em especialidad – *grand dommage!* – nem sempre é impeccavel...conviveu na mais sympathica intimidade com os indigenas (Barros 1897/99: 278): [an untiring French naturalist who lived around 20 years in Casamance...When he makes generalizations about dialects he's perfect, but if he goes into details – it's a great pity – he is not always impeccable... He lived in the most congenial intimacy with the indigenous people] (my translation; J.H.)

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

Bertrand-Bocandé (1849) was written before Casamance was transferred to France by Portugal in 1886, and focuses largely on the ethnic groups of what is today Guiné-Bissau and southern Senegal, with a section on their languages (p. 69−73), including the Portuguese-based creole (p. 73−77). The only actual linguistic data from the latter are in a discussion of verbal markers, oddly illustrated in phrases with French pronouns and verbs, said to be used by a Creole speaker communicating in French, e.g. *moi* ***ta*** *faire*, *je ferais* roughly translatable as '*me* ***ta*** *do,* I shall do' (p. 75). However, there is some discussion of social, regional, and ethnic variation (76−77).

Padre Marcellino Marques de Barros was born in Portuguese Guinea (modern Guiné-Bissau) in 1843, according to Moser and Ferreira (1983: 317). After being ordained as a priest in Portugal in 1866, he returned to Guinea and became a general vicar (*vigário-geral*) of the parish of Bolama and Rio Grande (Schuchardt 1888a: 302) and director of the missions in Guinea in 1879. It was during this period that he corresponded with Hugo Schuchardt and provided him with the data in *Zum Negerportugiesischen Senegambiens* (Schuchardt 1888a). The latter notes that as far as he knows, Barros "belongs to the African race" (1888a: 301), but Reinecke describes him as "a creole cleric" (Reinecke *et al*. 1975: 76). Barros appears to have some knowledge of philology and quotes the American linguist, W. D. Whitney. Barros (1897/99) discusses GB CP phonetics, including regional variation, and problems of transcription (176−181); the second chapter includes grammatical notes (271−281) and a comparison with Cape Verdean CP (281−289) illustrated by parallel texts of the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the CV CP of Santiago and GB with notes and a comparison of various tense and aspect markings of the verbs for 'be', 'have', 'speak' and 'rain' in both varieties (289−294). This is followed by a discussion of contrasting CV and GB lexicon, including words with etyma in African languages (294−300). Barros (1900−01) also discusses syntax, appending a list of errata in Barros (1897/99).

As for Schuchardt (1842−1927), the German father of creole studies was already an accomplished linguist teaching at the University of Graz in Austria. He had a good reading knowledge of Portuguese, although it is clear from his notes that he was just embarking on his study of the Upper Guinea creoles. Schuchardt (1888a), based on material from Barros, includes folktales (p. 302−304) without a translation but with notes (304−308) dealing with meaning, including a number of remarks such as "Den Eingang verstehe ich nicht" or 'I don't understand the introduction' (p. 308). There then follows contrasting columns of lexical items in CV and GB CP (p. 309−311).

1.2. Cape Verdean CP

Adolpho Coelho (1847−1919) was a renowned Portuguese ethnographer and philologist. Although an autodidact, he was a professor of the *Curso Superior de Letras* in Lisbon; by introducing the historical-comparative method he became a

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

precursor of scientific linguistics in Portugal (Monteiro 2001: 144). Between 1880 and 1886 he published in the *Boletim da Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa* describing numerous world creoles and semi-creoles (such as Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese). These articles and notes were republished in Morais-Barbosa (1967: 3−234; henceforward cited as Coelho 1880−86 [1967]). His data on CV CP (pp. 5−31, 32−34, 110−111 and 154) includes miscellanea, some bibliographical references and his own analysis. Among the 19th c. authors writing about CV CP and republished by Morais-Barbosa, Coelho was the only one who had a solid background in linguistics (Morais-Barbosa 1967: xviii). However, he did not have first-hand access to data and his description of the CV CP is based on material offered to him mostly by a Mr. César Augusto Sá de Nogueira from Santiago who had attended his lecture on creoles in 1878. The material consists of three letters (p. 5−10) written to Nogueira in Creole by educated people who were fluent in Portuguese but knew the *crioulo rachado* or basilectal creole of Santiago (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 5). They are accompanied by a Portuguese translation and contain some linguistic commentaries, mostly on the difficulty in writing in Creole. These are followed by miscellanea (p. 10–12) and *adivinhações* or riddles (p. 13–15). According to Coelho, these are the only genuine samples of the Santiago variety. Although he is right about their basilectal character, their fixed structure and proverbial nature are not necessarily likely to reflect the morphosyntax of ordinary contemporary speech.

These texts are followed by Coelho's analysis (p. 15−31), most of which deals with phonetics and the etymology of names, although there are a few pages on morphosyntax (see sections 2.2. and 3.2. below).

Joaquim Vieira Botelho da Costa was born in Portugal in the 19th century and lived in Cape Verde (Moser and Ferreira 1983: 324). He became an administrator of the island of São Vicente during the 1880s and married a Cape Verdean woman. Thus he had first-hand access to data but was not himself a native speaker and had no background in linguistics.

Custódio José Duarte was born in Cape Verde in 1841 and died in Portugal in 1893. He studied medicine in Oporto, training as a surgeon for the colonies (Moser and Ferreira 1983: 327). He was a native speaker of Cape Verdean Creole, but it is not known of which variety. Coelho considers both Botelho da Costa and Duarte his 'fellow countrymen' (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 333).

Botelho da Costa and Duarte's (1886) study (republished in Morais-Barbosa 1967: 237−327; henceforward cited as Botelho da Costa and Duarte 1886 [1967]) was written at Schuchardt's request and based on bilingual informants. All translations from Portuguese to creole were done by *naturais do país muito conhecedores do português* (p. 238), i.e. 'natives of the country with a good knowledge of Portuguese'. This methodology of translating Portuguese texts and grammatical constructions into creole contributes to the very acrolectal character of their Creole.

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

Its main aim is to present the differences between the Sotavento varieties (the inhabitants of the islands of Santiago, Fogo, Brava were considered to speak a "proper creole") and the Barlavento varieties (here the islands of Santo Antão, São Nicolau and Boa Vista). Unfortunately, this comparison is not systematic (sometimes only one variety is described, or only a general label like *Sotavento* or *Barlavento* is used to identify the source of the data) and lacks clear organization. The linguistic analyses are often amateur, e.g. failing to distinguish between orthography and actual sounds. It concentrates on phonetics and sound changes, but some attention is given to morphological processes (see sections 2.2. and 3.2. below).

This is followed by texts: a one-page Parable of the Prodigal Son translated into all of the varieties under consideration. This could have been an extremely valuable corpus if it had not been merely a translation from Portuguese with slight adaptations for each variety's pronunciation. These texts are followed by riddles and miscellanea and a short letter written in 1884 in Portuguese by a woman from Brava (the text shows very strong creole influence) inserted in order to prove the author's claim that a knowledge of Portuguese was fairly widespread in Cape Verde (though women rarely used it) and everybody, even those with very little education, used only Portuguese in writing or at least aspired to it (Botelho da Costa and Duarte 1886 [1967]: 326).

António de Paula Brito was born on the Cape Verdean island of Fogo in 1853. He studied law (probably at the University of Lisbon) and later lived on the Cape Verdean island of Santiago where he worked as a lawyer and the director of the post-office; he died in Angola in 1894 (Moser and Ferreira 1983: 319).

Brito's grammar of the variety of Santiago (1887) (republished in Morais-Barbosa 1967: 331−404; henceforward cited as Brito 1887 [1967])[2], written in both creole and Portuguese, is particularly important given that the author was a native speaker of the Santiago variety (although born on Fogo). It benefitted from his familiarity with the work of linguists such as Coelho and the phoneticist Gonçalves Viana, which enabled him to produce a coherent writing system. Brito (1887) [1967] is not only rigorously organized but also introduces some original grammatical terms for Creole, such as *berbu dizordiadu* 'irregular verbs'. Morais-Barbosa (1967: xix) notes that Brito's grammar reveals the principles of how Portuguese forms were adapted into creole though this statement would be more adequate in relation to the previous work. The grammar, written in Lisbon, is based principally on Brito's idiolect and some field notes he took in Santiago. It concentrates on orthography, phonetics and morphology. The author's plan was to describe syntax only after collecting samples from monolingual speakers in order to focus on a variety of Creole free from the influence of Portuguese (Brito 1887 [1967]: 338). In his introduction to Brito's work, Coelho emphasizes the importance of analyzing oral samples collected from monolingual Creole speakers

[2] Part of Brito's work has been translated into English (Swolkien *et al*. 2008).

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

(Brito presents them in the riddles, proverbs and *batuques* [African-style songs] which follow his grammar) and postulates that all Cape Verdean dialects should be studied separately and then compared with one another in order to obtain a clearer view of their relationship (Morais-Barbosa 1967: 334).

Schuchardt (1888b; see section 1.1) consists of a text sent by a Mr. António Ribeiro from Santiago in 1882. It is a short play (p. 313−314), for which Schuchardt provides linguistic footnotes (p. 316−322). The actor, a creole speaker, code-switches to a second-language version of Portuguese. The whole text is quite basilectal as far as phonetics is concerned, and contains no inflected verb forms or auxiliary constructions. It is followed by the Parable of the Prodigal Son and some riddles, also with notes. Schuchardt also published reviews of Botelho da Costa and Duarte (1886) in 1887 and of Brito (1887) in 1889.

José Leite de Vasconcellos (1885−1941), the father of Portuguese dialectology, admired Schuchardt and corresponded with him. Vasconcellos (1901) includes short descriptions of various Portuguese − based creoles among his studies of Portuguese dialects. He based these on second-hand information, chiefly from Coelho and Schuchardt, developing what today would be called a superstratist position. His most extensive analysis of CV CP, which he nonetheless considered "provisional", is his description of the variety of Santo Antão. This is based on seven stanzas of the *Lusíadas* [five of which are reproduced in Vasconcellos (1898)] translated from Portuguese by António da Costa Teixeira, who was born on Santo Antão, and later taught at the Seminar-Lyceum in São Nicolau and founded a literary gazette called the *Almanach Luso-Africano* (Moser and Ferreira 1983: 362).

2. NOUN PHRASE INFLECTIONS

2.1. Number inflections

Portuguese nouns and most of their modifiers take a plural inflection *-s*:

(1) P *este livro* *este**s*** *livro**s***
this book these books

2.1.1. *Number marking in GB CP (modern)*

Kihm (1994: 131) notes that "Plural marking is... the only inflectional morphology there is in [Guiné-Bissau] Kriyol" Based (at least in part) on the Portuguese plural *-s*, nouns denoting humans (or humanized animals) can take a plural *-s* after vowels (2) or *-is* after consonants (3):

(2) GB CP *omi* 'man'; *omi**s*** 'men' (Kihm 1994: 132)
(3) GB CP *minjer* 'woman'; *minjer**is*** 'women' (*ibid*.)

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

However, unlike Portuguese, GB CP only marks the plurality of such nouns when it is relevant and not already implied by a numeral or quantifier. Moreover, there is no number agreement with adjectives or other modifiers in basilectal varieties, although this can occur in more decreolized lects, as in (4):

(4) GB CP *sapatu**s** altu**s*** 'high [− heeled] shoes' (*ibid.*).

While this is likely to be a set phrase, it is worth noting that in (4) above *sapatu**s*** is not [+ HUMAN] either, and one might assume a general breakdown of rules in decreolizing varieties that could account for the very existence of GB CP plural *-s* in the first place. However, Intumbo (p.c.) argues against this being the case, given the inflection's regular occurrence in basilectal varieties. Support for the pluralizer's early presence in GB CP can be found in the inflectional marking of plurality in its West Atlantic substrate/adstrate languages such as Balanta, which make a morphological distinction between the singular and plural forms of class-marking prefixes on nouns (Intumbo 2008).

2.1.2. *Number marking in GB CP (19th century)*

Many instances of the inflection *-s* marking the plural form of nouns can be found in Barros (1897/99). Some of these nouns have human referents (5) but others do not (6):

(5) GB CP *se criado**s*** 'seus criados' [his servants] (Barros (1897/99: 288)
(6) GB CP *se cassa**s*** 'suas casas' [his houses] (*ibid.*, 272).

Some of these forms appear to come from archaic or regional Portuguese:

(7) GB CP "Em Bissau e Bolama, *pon, pon**s***, em Cacheu *pon, pome**s*** = pão, pães." (ibid.: 287)

Barros also refers to "*O plural duplo*, em que concorrem a um tempo um prefixo africano, e um sufixo português ['the *double plural*, combining an African prefix and a Portuguese suffix']:

(8) GB CP ***ba**-quissa**s*** 'coisas' [things] (Barros 1897/99: 272)
(9) GB CP ***ba**-fina**s*** 'as Finas (nome proprio)' [the Finas (family name)] (*ibid.*).

Some light is cast on this construction by Rougé (2004: 292):

> En Guinée et en Casamance *ba* est un article défini pluriel utilisé uniquement devant des noms désignant des personnes; il correspond à l'utilisation de «les» en français du Sénégal. *N bay kaw di ba Djon*: «je suis allé chez les Jean» (chez Jean et ses amis)... Dans les langues ouest-atlantiques, *ba-* est souvent le préfixe de classe pluriel ou collectif pour les humains.
> [In Guiné and Casamance *ba* is a plural definite article used only before nouns designating persons; it corresponds to the use of *les* in the French of Senegal.

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

N bay kaw di ba Djon: 'I went to see John and his friends'... In West Atlantic languages, *ba* is often a plural or collective class prefix for humans." (my translation; J.H.)]

And, as Intumbo (2008) points out, in Balanta (a West Atlantic substrate/adstrate language for Guiné-Bissau Creole Portuguese) *ba* is also the third person plural pronoun 'they; them' as in the nonstandard American English equivalent, *John and them*.

Again, many nouns, both [+ HUMAN] and [− HUMAN], can be found marked with plural *-s* in Schuchardt (1888a):

(10) GB CP *limaria**s*** ['animals' ...*criádo**s*** ['servants'] ...*bida**s*** ['lives'] ...*rópa**s*** ['clothes'] ...*palabra**s*** ['words'] ... *cô-minjjére**s*** ['with wives'] (Schuchardt 1888a: 303).

2.1.3. *Cape Verdean CP (modern)*

The same pluralizing *-s* inflection with grammatical constraints similar to those in GB CP occurs in Cape Verdean CP, both in the relatively basilectal Sotovento varieties (Baptista 2002: 38 ff.) and in the more acrolectal Barlavento variety of São Vicente (Holm and Swolkien 2006). Baptista quotes Comrie's observation that "It is not surprising, given the universal that plural distinction is more likely higher up the animacy hierarchy, to learn that this marker is first made obligatory [in Tok Pisin] with human nouns" (Baptista 2003: 328).

The assumption that the presence of this inflection is the result of decreolization (an assumption echoed in the study of many other Atlantic creoles) does not stand up to a close examination of the sociolinguistic facts in the case of the Barlavento island of São Vicente (Holm and Swolkien 2006) and is further undermined by its existence in basilectal varieties of GB CP discussed in 2.1.1., which are historically closely related to CV CP.

2.1.4. *Cape Verdean CP (19th century)*

Apart from marking the plural on bare [+ HUMAN] nouns such as *mujére**s*** 'women' or *scribon**s*** 'clerks' (Coelho (1880−86 [1967]: 9, 12), there are numerous other uses of plural *-s* attested in the texts collected by Coelho. For example, nouns following the numeral and possessive may optionally carry the morpheme *-s*:

(11) CV CP ***dôs*** *fója_* 'two sheets of paper' (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 5) ***dôs*** *companhero**s*** 'two companions' (*ibid.,* 8).

When plurality is marked on a determiner, such as the possessive in (12), the following noun does not carry the morpheme *-s.* Nonetheless, the modifier may remain singular with the noun marked for plurality.

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

(12) CV CP ***sês*** *empregado* 'his servants' (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 6) *nha_ cabalo**s*** 'my horses' (ibid.:17) (cf. Lang *et al.* 2002: 744 *nha katxor**is*** 'my dogs').

Moreover, both the modifier and the noun, even a [− ANIMATE] as in (13), may carry the plural morpheme.

(13) CV CP *quê**s** berço**s*** 'these verses' (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 9).

Both [+ HUMAN] and [− ANIMATE] nouns can be marked for plural when followed by a quantifier:

(14) CV CP *cuzá**s** chéo,* lit. 'things many' (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 6)
*ghente**s** chéo,* lit. 'persons many' (*ibid.*, 7).

There is no adjective−noun number agreement:

(15) CV CP ***máo**_ trato**s*** 'bad treatments' (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 12).

Botelho da Costa and Duarte (1886 [1967]: 258) consider the 'regular plural' (i.e. the Portuguese *-s* morpheme) to be suppressed in Creole, in which plurality is expressed via modifiers. Oddly, however, nouns can take plural *-s* in diminutive forms such as *gatinhas, cavalins* 'little female cats, little horses' (all from the Santo Antão variety) and the same is true of adjectives "other than attributive" ones (Botelho da Costa and Duarte 1886 [1967]: 260).

Unlike Coelho's texts, Brito's data present a fairly consistent lack of number marking on nouns. Brito explicitly claims that plurality is marked solely by modifiers (in a pre-nominal or post-nominal position) and considers plural marking on pronouns such as *nhos*, *nharás* exceptional (Brito 1887 [1967]: 348):

(16) CV CP *nós palabra* 'our words' (Brito 1887 [1967]: 347)
cheu kuza 'many things' (ibid.)
Ês pronomi tudo, lit. 'these pronoun all' (ibid.: 356).

However, there are sporadic examples in his data that contradict his claim:

(17) CV CP *nubri**s*** 'clouds' (Brito 1887 [1967]: 350).

In the short play and the Parable of the Prodigal Son collected by Schuchardt (1888b) some of the pluralization strategies noted in Coelho's texts can be observed. The marking of [−ANIMATE] nouns for plurality is sporadic, while [+ HUMAN] nouns may carry the morpheme *-s*.

(18) CV CP *qui cá tâ dâ asno* ***chifre*** 'that didn't give the donkey horns' (Schuchardt 1888b: 316)
*qui branco**s** ta fassê li* 'what the whites are doing here' (*ibid.*, 313).

Vasconcellos (1898) and (1901) provide very limited data but the lack of plural marking via plural morpheme *-s* seems fairly consistent. However, a case of a plural morpheme on an adjective can be observed.

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

(19) CV CP *grénd**s** cosa* 'big things' (Vasconcellos 1898: 252).

However, this probably has less to do with the Santo Antão variety than with the fact that the text was a Renaissance Portuguese epic poem translated by a bilingual Capeverdean.

The heterogeneous data analyzed above seem to present features along a creole continuum and should be dealt with cautiously, given the methodological problems involved. It is clear that the Santiago variety already had as wide a range of pluralization strategies in the second half of the 19th century as those attested today. Coelho observed that "there are no clear tendencies in plural marking", adding the comment of one of his informants that "the tendency to apply plural forms regularly (in CV CP) is nowadays more and more noticeable" (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 16). This variability of plural marking, which contrasts with Brito's account of CV CP grammar, seems less likely to point to ongoing decreolization than to the intrinsic acrolectal nature of the creole spoken by the bilingual speakers who served as informants and to the deep-rooted nature of the plural morpheme *-s* in CV CP.

2.2. Gender inflections

In Portuguese, most masculine nouns and their modifiers end in *-o* while most feminine nouns and their modifiers end in *-a*:

(20) P ***o*** *carr**o*** *nov**o*** ***a*** *biciclet**a*** *nov**a***
the car new the bicycle new
'the new car' 'the new bicycle'

2.2.1. *Gender marking in GB CP (modern)*

Kihm (1994: 126) refers to Guiné-Bissau CP's "conspicuous absence of Gender; even third person pronouns do not distinguish it". Moreover, "agreement is entirely absent" (*ibid.*, 133).

2.2.2. *Gender marking in GB CP (19th century)*

Barros (1897/99) gives essentially the same report for 19th century GB CP: "Os adjectivos sempre na fórma masculina não variam para o feminino" ('Adjectives, always in the masculine form, never take the feminine ending' − p. 273).

2.2.3. *Gender marking in CV CP (modern)*

In Sotovento varieties of Cape Verdean CP, there are gender-linked pairs of nouns like the following:

(21) CV CP *fidj**u*** 'son' versus *fidj**a*** 'daughter'
*noib**u*** 'groom' versus *noib**a*** 'bride' (Baptista 2002: 42).

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

These contrasts, confined to [+ ANIMATE] and especially [+ HUMAN] nouns, appear to follow those of Portuguese (cf. *filh**o*** versus *filha**;** noiv**o*** versus *noiv**a***), but the CV CP forms could well be considered single morphemes like their English equivalents without gender inflections. While CV CP adjectives, as a rule, do not agree in number with the nouns they modify, what appears to be gender agreement does occur with both singular and plural head nouns if these are [+ HUMAN]:

(22) CV CP ***un*** *minin**a*** *bonit**a***
a girl beautiful-FEM **'**a beautiful girl' (Baptista 2002: 66)
uns *minin**a*** *bonit**a***
some girl beautiful-FEM 'some beautiful girls' (*ibid*.).

However, adjectival gender agreement is optional, and with [− ANIMATE] nouns non-agreement is preferable in some varieties (*ibid.*, 67). In the Barlavento variety of São Vicente, however, instances of such agreement occur:

(23) CV CP *mader**a*** *tort**a***
wood curved-FEM 'curved wood' (Holm and Swolkien 2006: 208).

It cannot be ruled out that the above is something of a set phrase, in which case the retention of Portuguese gender agreement would be more likely, as in the retention of number agreement in (4) above. In general, apparent inflections of grammatical gender seem more likely to be a result of decreolization than do occurrences of the noun pluralizer *-s,* given the latter's presence in basilectal varieties of both CV CP and GB CP.

2.2.4. *Gender marking in CV CP (19th century)*

Coelho (1880−86 [1967]: 7) observes that the natural gender of animate nouns is marked by free morphemes as in (24) and that the variety of Santiago lacks adjective-noun gender agreement; he considers the Portuguese masculine form to be the default gender of CV CP adjectives, as in (25).

(24) CV CP *minino **fémea*** (lit. 'child female') 'daughter' (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 7)

(25) CV CP *pucarinh**a*** *chei**o*** *d'ôsso* 'a bowl full of bones' (*ibid.*, 13).

However, he overlooks (or omits for the sake of generalization) cases of gender agreement such as:

(26) CV CP ***má*** *scój**a*** 'bad (FEM) choice' (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 6)
máo trat**os'** 'bad (MAS) treatment' (*ibid.*, 12).

(27) CV CP *un caz**a*** *branc**a*** 'a white house' (*ibid.*, 14).

Example (27) of agreement between an inanimate noun and an adjective is particularly striking, given that it would be considered unacceptable even by contemporary speakers of the Barlavento variety of São Vicente yet comes from a

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

supposedly basilectal riddle. We cannot exclude the possibility that it is due to a lack of attention on the part of the transcriber or data supplier or even Coelho himself, underscoring the need for caution when dealing with these texts.

Botelho da Costa and Duarte (1886 [1967]: 257) state that all nouns that have no natural gender distinction are masculine in Creole (e.g. *un casa, gato macho*, *gato fêmea* 'a house, cat male, cat female') and that CV CP lacks adjective/noun agreement even with [+ HUMAN] nouns (28), which seems to be corroborated by the data from Schuchardt (29):

(28) CV CP *un* ***mujer*** *pret**o*** 'a black woman' (Botelho da Costa and Duarte 1886 [1967]: 259)

(29) CV CP *qui tem móç**as*** *fajhad**o*** 'that have beautiful women' (Schuchardt 1888b: 314).

In his insightful analysis Brito (1887 [1967]: 349) distinguishes three classes of nouns, i.e. those that form lexical pairs such as *galu-galinha* 'hen-rooster', those marked for natural gender by free morphemes, and all other nouns (which he calls 'inanimate'), which are genderless. He also claims that noun-adjective agreement does not exist:

(30) CV CP *u* ***mujhêr*** *formôs* 'a beautiful woman'
u ***omi*** *formôs* 'a beautiful man' (*ibid.*, 351).

However, in his own translation of a Portuguese poem into Creole, there are constructions like *rapariga* ***soltêra*** 'a single girl' (Brito 1887: 394). Such noun-adjective agreement can also be found in a careful reading of the riddles, where noun phrases such as *nha bak**a*** *pret**a*** 'my black cow' appear (Brito 1887: 398).

A quick review of the above data reveals that gender agreement in nineteenth-century CV CP was a rarer phenomena than plural marking, but that it did indeed occur. The texts attest to a lack of gender agreement between adjectives and [+ HUMAN] nouns, a feature that is becoming rare if not ungrammatical in modern CV CP, at least in the variety of São Vicente. There are two possible explanations for these phenomena: decreolization and the generalization of the agreement rule according to the animacy hierarchy.

3. VERB PHRASE INFLECTIONS

3.1. Tense inflections

Portuguese verbs have many inflections for person, tense and mood, e.g.:

(31) P *canta**r*** 'to sing'; *canta**va*** 's/he was singing'; *cant**ou*** 's/he sang'.

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

3.1.1. *Tense marking in GB CP (modern)*

At first sight, the GB CP past marker *ba* looks like the Portuguese inflection -*va* , used to mark the imperfect tense of first conjugation verbs:

(32) GB CP *Mandingas kontinwa nega* ***ba*** *rasa*.
Mandings continue refuse PAST pray
'The Mandings kept on refusing to pray' (Kihm 1994: 99).

However, GB CP *ba* is clearly not a bound morpheme: pronouns can intervene between it and the verb:

(33) GB CP *N konta u* ***ba***...
1sg tell 2sg PAST 'I told you...' (*ibid.*).

And it can even occur without a verb:

(34) GB CP *Kil omi* ***ba*** *i kin?*
that man PAST it who
'Who was that man?' (*ibid.*).

Kihm suggests conflation with GB CP *kaba* 'finish' (cf. P *acabar, idem*) and substrate forms: "We may suppose that both /-va/ and *(a)cabar*, the latter reinforced by the phonetically similar Manjaku, Diola-Fogny, and perhaps still other languages, *ba*, had to enter into the process" (1994: 103).

3.1.2. *Tense marking in GB CP (19th century)*

Bertrand-Bocandé (1849: 75) provides examples of the morpheme *ba,* used alone to indicate the past or with *ta* to mark the conditional:

> […] *va,* aprés, forme l'imparfait; enfin *ta* précédant et *va* suivant le radical indiquent le mode conditionnel.... *moi ta faire va*, je ferais ou j'aurais fait" ['*va* after (the verb) forms the imperfect; *ta* before and *va* after the verb indicate the conditional mood... *moi ta faire va*, 'I would do' or 'I would have done'; *my translation; JH*]

Barros (1897/99: 292) also provides examples of this tense marker. However, it was clearly a free morpheme rather than an inflection since object pronouns could occur between the verb and the tense marker:

(35) GB CP *se ê mi que panha-l-****ba*** 'if I were the one who caught it'
if is me who catch it PAST (Barros 1900/01:307).

3.1.3. *Tense marking in CV CP (modern)*

In CV CP, however, Baptista (2002: 201) finds that "...-*ba* is a verbal inflection found exclusively bound to verb stems...whereas *ba* is a non-inflectional (unbound) tense marker in GBC [Guiné-Bissau Creole]". In fact, the inflectional

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

status of CV CP *-ba* is of some theoretical importance since "the presence of a single inflectional affix on the verb stem (*-ba*) is a sufficient cue to trigger verb movement" (*ibid.*, 266).

3.1.4. *Tense marking in CV CP (19th century)*

Coelho observes that the verb phrase of the Cape Verdean Creole of Santiago is much richer in forms than in creoles generally. He attributes this fact to the constant contact between 'the population that speak creole and those that speak pure Portuguese' (1880−86 [1967]: 18). Coelho attests a variable position of *-ba*:

(36) CV CP *En bá**ba** oja un nha parente, qui stába doente…*

is translated as 'fui ver uma parenta minha que estava doente' and it is given as synonymous with:

(37) CV CP *En bá ojá**ba** un nha parente, qui stába doente*
'I went to see a relative of mine who was ill (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 11).

Though *-ba* is suffixed to the verb stem in both cases, it still has some mobility, which could be a vestige of its link with the free morpheme *-ba* in GB CP (3.1.1). This example seems parallel to the synonymous use of constructions such as *Es kába di kantá**ba*** / *Es kabá**ba** di kánta* /*Es kabá**ba** di kantá**ba*** [They had stopped singing…] in the present day variety of Santiago (Lang *et al*., 2002: xxix).

The verbal system of CP CV presented by Botelho da Costa and Duarte (1886 [1967]) contrasts sharply with the parsimony of the one attested by Brito 1887 (see below). In detailed comparative tables, which unfortunately include many misinterpretations, the authors present a whole range of inflected-like forms for both the Sotavento and the Barlavento varieties that can't be dealt with in this article (*ibid.*, 275, 278−279). These forms seem likely to indicate that none of the authors was really proficient in Creole, nor had they done what today would be considered fieldwork; their examples suggest the forced acrolectalization of a linguistic corpus in order to make it compatible with Portuguese paradigms.

However, what is interesting is that the Barlavento varieties show the variable use of the tense marker *-ba*:

(38) CV CP Sotavento: *tâ canta**ba*****,** Barlavento: *tâ canta**ba*** (for S. Nicolau and Boavista)
tâ cantâ (for Santo Antão) (*ibid.* 278).

The question of the dialectal distribution of the suffix *-ba* in CV CP is beyond the scope of this study, though it is clear from the present data that in the 19th c. this suffix was already optional in the Santo Antão variety.

The verbal system of the Santiago variety presented by Brito (1887 [1967]) is extremely regular and economical. The marker *-ba* is suffixed to the verb stem or

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

to the marker *sta.* However, in two footnotes Brito interprets predicates without –*ba* preceded by other TMA markers as having anterior meaning.

(39) CV CP *i satâ´- papia**ba*** as equivalent to '*i stâ ta papiá* 'eu estava falando'
[I was talking] (*ibid.*, 366)
*kuza ki bu **'stâ ta fazê**?* 'o que estavas tu fazendo?'
[what were you doing?]
*i **stâ' ta bajhâ*** 'estava dançando' [I was dancing] (*ibid.*, 373).

These data are too limited to allow any firm conclusions, but the question of interpreting the tense of these sentences deserves further research. Brito considers verbs such as *ser, istâ* 'to be' and *tẽ* 'have' as irregular and functioning as auxiliaries but his work does not attest any of the inflected-like forms presented by Botelho da Costa and Duarte with the exception of the gerund *sẽdu, istãndu* 'being' and *tẽdu* 'having' (Brito 1887 [1967]: 373, 375).

Vasconcellos does not go beyond expressing his bewilderment (*il y a des curieuses formes de l'imparfeit en -ba*) at *-ba* forms which he considered analogous to some of the Spanish dialects (1901: 153), a hypothesis held by Quint (2000: 232). His analysis of the Santo Antão (1898) creole shows, however, that the verb phrase lacked *-ba*.

3.2. Present participle inflections

Portuguese verbs form the gerund or present participle by dropping the *-r* of the infinitive and adding *-ndo*:

(40) P *canta**r*** –> *canta**ndo*** 'singing'; *ferve**r*** –> *ferve**ndo*** 'boiling'.

3.2.1. *Gerund marking in GB CP (modern)*

Kihm (1994: 251 ff.) suggests that these participial forms may have been reanalyzed due to their chance formal similarity to a derivational morpheme in local languages' causative verbs:

(41) Mandinka *fáa* 'be full' *fa**ndi*** 'fill'
bèng 'meet' *be**ndi*** 'bring together'
dómori 'eat' *dómori**ndi*** 'feed'

He speculates that speakers of these languages reanalyzed Portuguese pairs like the following as having the same derivational morpheme forming causatives:

(42) P *ferver* 'boil' *aferve**ntar*** 'boil' [transitive]
mamar 'suck' *amame**ntar*** 'suckle; give suck'.

This gave rise to the derivational marking of causativity in some GB CP verbs (although the rule no longer seems to be productive):

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

(43) GB CP *firbi* 'boil' *firbi**nti*** 'boil' [transitive]
kume 'eat' *kume**nte*** 'make eat' (Kihm 1996: 251).

Although the present participial ending in Portuguese is an inflectional morpheme, the GB CP morpheme above is derivational.

3.2.2. *Gerund marking in GB CP (19th century)*

Barros (1897/99: 279) seems to be referring to the same morpheme as Kihm in 3.2.1 when he says:

> Temos ainda a formação singular de alguns verbos enchoativos com a desinencia de um participio do presente junto á ultima sonante do radical, *lantandâ*, de levantando; perdentê, de *perdentendo, de perdendo; *bebent*ê (dar de beber) de *bebentendo, de bebendo. ['we still have the singular formation of some inchoative [*sic*] verbs with the inflection of the present participle added to the last sound in the root, e.g. *lantandâ* from [P] levantando 'lifting'; *perdentê*, from *perdentendo, from [P] perdendo 'losing'; *bebentê* ('give to drink') from *bebentendo, from [P] bebendo 'drinking'. (*my translation; JH*)].

However, his description of these forms as "singular" suggests that this derivational process for forming causatives was already unproductive by the late nineteenth century.

This is made even clearer in Barros (1900/01) in a section contrasting gerunds in Portuguese with their GB CP equivalents, which are always different constructions. For example,

(44) P *Encontrei-o durm**indo**.* 'I found him sleeping'. (Barros 1900/01: 314)
(45) GB CP *m ncontra-l **na** durmi*. 'I found him sleeping' (*ibid.*).

3.2.3. *Gerund marking in CV CP (modern)*

As for the survival of the Portuguese inflection *-ndo* in Cape Verdean, the presence of the *-nti* or *-nte* suffix corresponding to that in GB CP is unknown to the present authors. Moreover, the 864-page dictionary by Lang *et al*. (2002), the most complete to date, does not contain CV equivalents of the GB terms *firbinti* and *kumente* discussed in section 3.2.1 above.

As for CV CP semantic equivalents of the Portuguese gerund, Quint observes that:

> Le badiais moderne peut produire un gérondif, au moyen de la préposition **na** /n / *dans, en.* Le gérondif badiais, si proche sémantiquement du progressif **sata**, se retrouve aussi à l'identique en créole de Guinée-Casamance (CGC). Il est par conséquent trés probable que se soit le gérondif en **sta na** qui sois à l'origine de la particule aspectuelle progressive **na** du CGC […] *Pedru **sta na** laba kurpu Pierre est en train de se laver* (2000: 264−265).

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

['The modern Santiago basilect forms a gerund with the preposition *na* 'in'. This gerund, semantically close to the progressive marker *sata*, is also found in an identical form in the Creole of Guine-Bissau and Casamance. Thus it is very probable that it was a gerund marked with *sta na* that gave rise to the progressive aspectual marker *na* in CV CP [...] *Pedru* ***sta na*** *laba kurpu* 'P. is taking a bath' (*my translation; JH*)]

Swolkien recorded São Vicente speakers using gerund forms such as *sendu* 'being' sporadically, but these are probably lexical borrowings from Portuguese rather than productive morphological constructions.

3.2.4. *Gerund marking in CV CP (19th century)*

Botelho da Costa and Duarte present a whole range of gerunds such as *cantando* 'singing', *pondo* 'putting' (1886 [1967]: 278), but again this was in all probability the result of an effort to force the creole's grammar into fitting the verbal paradigm of the lexifier. Brito (1887 [1967]: 373) attests gerund forms such as *sẽdu, istãndu* 'being' and *tẽdu* 'having' but does not give examples of their usage. Vasconcellos (1898) gave examples of gerunds in the Santo Antão variety (e.g. *cortánde* 'cutting') but this was in all likelihood due not to a peculiarity of this variety but rather to the demands of the complex rhyme of the Camões' poem being translated into Creole.

3.3. Past participle inflections

Portuguese verbs form the past participle with the inflection **-do**:

(46) P *cantar* 'to sing', *canta**do*** 'sung'; *comer* 'eat', *comi**do*** 'eaten'.

3.3.1. *Participle marking in GB CP (modern)*

Kihm (1994: 243) notes that in GB CP "Passive is an entirely productive formation affecting all transitive verbs and materialized as a /-du/ suffix. This morpheme is obviously descended from the Portuguese past participle suffix /-do/. Regularization has been thorough, however, so that there is no trace in Kriyol of the so-called 'irregular' forms such as *escrito* 'written' (Kriyol *skirbidu* 'be written'), *feito* 'done' (Kriyol *fasidu* 'be done'), and so forth". This form is a verb with passive meaning, which can take as its subject either the direct object (47) or (unlike passive constructions in Portuguese) the indirect object (48) of the corresponding active verb:

(47) GB CP *Dinyeru pistadu el*.
money be-lent him
'Money was lent to him'. (Kihm 1994: 245)

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

(48) GB CP *I pistadu dinyeru*.
he be-lent money
'He was lent money'. (*ibid.*).

These constructions are characteristic of basilectal varieties; such passive verbs behave just like their active counterparts regarding tense, mood and aspect markers, and there is no question of their having a "zero copula", although constructions with *yera* 'be' can occur in the acrolect. Kihm characterized the formation of passive verbs in GB CP as a lexical process, i.e. one involving a derivational suffix rather than an inflection (ibid., 243).

3.3.2. *Participle marking in GB CP (19th century)*

Barros (1897/99) readily identifies as (past) participles the GB CP forms "fal**ado**" 'spoken' (p. 293) and "chob**ido**" 'rained'. Moreover, these forms are used to translate the passive meaning of the Portuguese reflexive:

(49) P *Esta falta se reparou...* 'This lack was remedied...' Barros (1900/01: 315)
(50) GB CP *Es falta remedi**ado**...* 'This lack was remedied...'(*ibid.*).

3.3.3. *Participle marking in CV CP (modern)*

There are similar verbs ending in **-du** with passive meaning in CV CP (Baptista 2002: 112−113), although the status of the suffix as an inflection is unclear. Baptista refers to "the use of the *-du* inflection on the verb stem" (*ibid.*, 112), although elsewhere she says that *-ba* "is the single inflectional affix on the verb stem" (*ibid.*, 266). In the Barlavento variety of São Vicente, the Portuguese passive constructions are found, complete with the irregular forms of both the auxiliary verb *ser* and the past participle:

(51) São Vicente CV CP *Trabói foi fet.*
work be.AUX do.PTCP
'The work was done'. (Swolkien's fieldwork).

3.3.4. *Participle marking in CV CP (19th century)*

The texts at hand suggest that the *–du* suffix was a fully productive morpheme in the late nineteenth-century variety of Santiago. Brito clearly states that:

> *Partisipi* ta-formadu ĩfinitu di silba *du: fladu, xinadu, ôbidu*, etc. Ês partisipi ta-sirbí pâ birâ' berbu i pesoal ó pasibu (Brito 1887 [1967]: 365). ['Participles are formed with the infinitive followed by the syllable *du*: *fladu* 'spoken', *xinadu* 'taught', *obidu* 'listened' etc. These participles serve to make verbs impersonal or passive [*my translation; DS*].

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

Baptista (2002: 79) points out a quasi passive construction with the marker *ta* as in (52) and a passive construction with the active indirect object as the passive subject, parallel to that found in GB CP (cf. 48 above):

(52) CV CP *Pa* ***ta*** *faci**do** quel festa tudo* 'for all this feast to be done' (Schuchardt 1888b: 315)

(53) CV CP *Ê da**do** un cabo* 'He was given a place…' (*ibid.*)

In addition, verbs with -du are found in auxiliary constructions:

(54) CV CP *Unde nhu* ***têⁿ*** *stad**o*? 'Where have you been?' (Coelho 1880−86 [1967]: 11).

Coelho (*ibid.*) analyzed (54) above as synonymous with *unde nhu staba*. These auxiliary constructions with participles are abundant in the Botelho da Costa and Duarte (1886) texts of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but we must bear in mind that their presence in the Creole may have been influenced by the fact that they were being translated from a Portuguese original.

(55) CV CP *qui tudo fijo* ***era*** *q'rêd**o*** 'that all children were loved' (Botelho da Costa and Duarte 1886 [1967]: 310).

Brito notes also that in order to form preterit impersonal constructions, the anterior marker *-ba* attaches to the participle suffix *-du*:

(56) CV CP *fláduba, obiduba*, '*dizia-se', 'ouvia-se*' [it was said, it was heard] (Brito 1887 [1967]: 376).

Quint (2000: 235), citing Brito, speculates that these forms gave rise to the modern suffix *–da* combining anteriority with passivity, a position also held by (Lang 2002:104, also based on Brito) but disputed by Baptista (2002: 112), who considers *-da* as triggered by gender agreement with the subject and object predicates and hypercorrection. If Brito's data is trustworthy, his examples show that there were cases in the late nineteenth-century variety of CV CP spoken in Santiago in which the anterior marker *–ba* is not attached directly to the verb stem, suggesting that it may have developed from an earlier free morpheme *ba* parallel to that in modern GB CP (section 3.1.1), as speculated in Holm (2008). More importantly, the existence of *-da* supports Baptista's position that modern CV CP has inflections, including *-du* (2002: 112) and *-ba* (2002:201) and helps decide the issue of whether *-ba* is the single true one (2002: 266). What is clear is that the creators of *-da* had the grammatical category of a true inflection as opposed to a clitic (i.e. *-du* could not be separated from the verb, although *-ba* could). Whether there was an external source for this grammatical category (i.e. Portuguese) is a moot point: if the rule was productive in their speech, then it must have become part of their idiolect, i.e. Creole.

Finally, Vasconcellos shows that due to phonological processes, the unstressed vowel in *-du* was reduced to *-de* in Santo Antão:

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

(57) CV CP *falláde* ‘spoken’, *navêgáde* ‘navigated’, *fazide* 'done’ (Vasconcellos 1898: 247−8).

This and other data in the above texts can cast valuable light on many other phonological and morphosyntactic features of late nineteenth-century CV CP, such as variable verb stress, copula deletion with negation, and a Pro-drop tendency– issues that go beyond the scope of this paper.

The above texts make clear that the anterior suffix *-ba* in CV CP was different from the free morpheme in GB CP; they may also cast light on modern geographic distribution of *-ba* in the Barlavento varieties of CV CP. Moreover, the past participle was already a well established form in the late 19th century, although the constructions into which it could enter varied according to lect. Finally, the Portuguese gerund inflection appears never to have played a significant role in CV CP grammar.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The grammatical inflections which are found in the contemporary creoles of Guiné-Bissau and Cape Verde have long been thought to be the product of decreolization that took place in fairly recent times, i.e. after the spread of literacy and primary education, particularly after 1975. However, the late nineteenth-century texts examined in this study reveal that a century ago these creoles already made widespread use of most of these inflections: number marking, tense marking, and participle marking. It seems likely that modern gender marking in GB CP (particularly in cases of agreement within the NP rather than inflections on nouns standing alone) is indeed an indication of decreolization that began in the 20th century. However, identifying the relationship of gender marking to decreolization in modern CV CP is complicated by the unusual role of Portuguese in the genesis of, for instance, the Barlavento variety of São Vicente (Holm and Swolkien 2006). The contemporary status of morphemes derived from Portuguese inflections in the modern creoles is another complicating factor: the tense marker *ba* is clearly a bound morpheme in contemporary CV CP, but not in GB CP, but its status as an inflection (rather than a clitic) in CV CP is less certain. Even if we consider the Portuguese gerund and past participle inflections to have equivalents in the modern creoles that function more like derivational rather than grammatical morphemes, this still leaves the undisputable inflectional status of the plural marker *-s* on nouns in both GB and CV CP–in the late nineteenth century as well as in modern times. We have argued in favor of this analysis above (2.1.1) by pointing out the inflection's regular occurrence in basilectal varieties of GB CP, and the fact that it occurs frequently in late nineteenth-century texts provides further support. A logical explanation for the pluralizer’s early presence in GB CP can be found in the inflectional marking of plurality in its West Atlantic substrate/adstrate languages such as Balanta, which make a morphological distinction between the singular and plural forms of nouns, but with class-marking prefixes rather than with inflectional

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

suffixes as in Portuguese. Thus the grammatical category (PLURAL) and morphological device (AFFIX) were already available to many of the creoles' creators from their knowledge of their own language. This provides yet more evidence that creoles can indeed have inflectional suffixes when both their superstrates and their substrates are inflecting languages (Holm 2008). It took the indisputable inflections of the Indo-Portuguese of Korlai (Clements 1996) to make creolists realize this, but other evidence has long been around. Regarding Jamaican Creole English, Patrick notes: "As with tense-marking morphology, the plural *-s* suffix appears in the speech of most Jamaicans, but is commonly ascribed by creolists to decreolization or English interference. Yet, while *-dem* appears relatively late in Jamaican texts [19th century JH], variation between *-s* and zero is attested in the earliest records". (Patrick 2007).

Alleyne (1980) hinted at what he understood to be the parallel time-depth of the basilect, mesolect and the acrolect, which at that time were widely thought to be sequential results of the decreolization process:

> The wide geographical distribution of...intermediate forms at every grammatical level suggests that like the widely distributed forms of the polar (acrolectal: basilectal) dialects, they derive from an underlying proto-dialect, a "proto-intermediate" Afro-American. Hence, they were generated in a contact situation at a very early stage when some segments of the African population began to be assimilated by rigorous acculturative processes. (1980: 183).

Thus there are both social and linguistic factors supporting the existence of acrolects – and the many phonetic, morphological and syntactic traits associated with them – since the very beginning of the societies that created creole languages. While some of these acrolects undoubtedly came to an early end, given the great variation in the history of these societies, others did not, and survived to meet and merge with the acrolectal products of decreolization.

REFERENCES

Alleyne, M. C., 1980, *Comparative Afro-American*, Ann Arbor, Karoma.

Bakker, P., 2002, "Pidgin inflectional morphology", in: G. Booij, J. van Marle, (eds), *Yearbook of Morphology*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 3−33.

Baptista, M., 2002, *The syntax of Cape Verdean Creole: the Sotovento varieties*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins.

Baptista, M. 2003, "Inflectional plural marking in pidgins and creoles: a comparative study", in: I. Plag (ed.), *Phonology and Morphology of Creole Languages*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer, 315−332.

Barros, M. M. de, 1897/99, "O Guineense", *Revista Lusitana*, 5, 174−181, 271−300.

Barros, M. M. de, 1900/01, "O Guineense", *Revista Lusitana*, 6, 300−317.

Bertrand-Bocandé, E., 1849, "Notes sur la Guinée portugaise ou Sénégambie mériodionale", *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, 12, 57−93.

Botelho da Costa J., C. Duarte, 1886, "O crioulo de Cabo Verde. Breves estudos sobre o crioulo das ilhas de Cabo Verde oferecido ao Dr. Hugo Schuchardt", in: J. Morais-Barbosa (ed.), *Estudos linguísticos crioulos*, Lisbon, Academia Internacional de Cultura Portuguesa, 1967, 235−327.

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)

Brito, A. de P., 1887, "Dialectos crioulos portugueses. Apontamentos para a gramática do crioulo que se fala na ilha de Santiago de Cabo Verde", in: J. Morais - Barbosa (ed.), *Estudos linguísticos crioulos*, Lisbon, Academia Internacional de Cultura Portuguesa, 1967, 329−404.

Clements, J. C, 1996, *The Genesis of a Language: The formation and development of Korlai Portuguese*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins.

Coelho, A., 1880−86, "Os dialectos românicos ou neo-latinos na África, Ásia e América", in: J. Morais-Barbosa (ed.), *Estudos linguísticos crioulos*, Lisbon, Academia Internacional de Cultura Portuguesa, 1967, 3−234.

Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira, 2000−2001, vol. 1, Lisboa, Página Editora.

Holm, J. 2008, "Creolization and the fate of inflections", in: T. Stolz, D. Bakker, R. Palomo, (eds.), Aspects *of Language Contact: new theoretical, methodological and empirical findings with special focus on Romanization processes*, Berlin, New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 299−324.

Holm, J., D. Swolkien. 2006, "A expansão do crioulo cabo-verdiano para São Vicente: factores históricos-sociais na difusão", in: J. Lang *et al*., (eds.), *Cabo Verde: Origens da sua sociedade e do seu crioulo*. Tübingen, Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 199−220.

Intumbo, I., 2008, "Balanta, Guiné-Bissau Creole Portuguese and Portuguese: a comparison of the noun phrase," in: S. Michaelis, (ed.), *Roots of Creole Structures: weighing the contribution of substrates and superstrates.* Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 263−278.

Kihm, A., 1994, *Kriyol syntax: the Portuguese-based Creole language of Guinea-Bissau*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia, John Benjamins.

Lang, J. *et al.,* 2002, *Dicionário do Crioulo da Ilha de Santiago (Cabo Verde)/Wörterbuch des Kreols der Insel Santiago (Kapverde)*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr Verlag.

Morais-Barbosa, J. (ed.), 1967, *Estudos linguísticos crioulos*, Lisbon, Academia Internacional de Cultura Portuguesa.

Monteiro, M. (ed.), 2001, *Dicionário de Biografias*, Porto, Porto Editora.

Moser, G., M. Ferreira, 1983, *Bibliografia das literaturas africanas de expressão portuguesa*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda.

Patrick, P. L., 2007, "Jamaican Patwa (Creole English)", in: J. Holm, P. L. Patrick (eds.), *Comparative Creole Syntax*, London, Battlebridge, 127−152.

Quint, N., 2000, *Grammaire de la langue Cap-Verdienne*, Paris, Montreal, L'Harmattan.

Reinecke, J. E. *et al.,* (eds.), 1975, *A Bibliography of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, Honolulu, The University of Hawaii Press.

Rougé, J. L., 2004, *Dictionnaire étymologique des créoles portugais d'Afrique,* Paris, Éditions Karthala.

Schuchardt, H., 1887, "Review of Botelho da Costa and Duarte (1886), *Literaturblatt für germanische und romanische Philologie*, 8, 132−141.

Schuchardt, H., 1888a, "Beiträge zur Kenntnis des kreolischen Romanisch II. Zum Neger-portugiesischen Senegambiens", *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 12, 1−312.

Schuchardt, H., 1888b. "Beiträge zur Kenntnis des kreolischen Romanisch III. Zum Neger-portugiesischen der Kapverden", *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, 12, 312−322.

Schuchardt, H., 1889. „Review of Brito (1887)", *Literaturblatt für germanische und romanische Philologie*, 10, 452−458.

Swolkien D., S. Gonçalves, J. Holm, 2009, "Translation of Notes for the grammar of the Creole spoken on the island of Santiago, Cape Verde by António de Paula Brito", in: J. Holm, S. Michaelis (eds.), *Contact Languages. Critical Concepts in Language Studies,* London, New York, Routledge, 110−130.

Vasconcellos, J. L., 1898, "Dialectos crioulos portugueses de África", *Revista Lusitana*, 5, nº 1, ano 1897−1899, Lisbon, Antiga Casa Bertrand, 241−261.

Vasconsellos, J. L., 1901 [1987], *Esquisse d'une Dialectologie Portugaise*, Lisbon, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica.

BDD-A317 © 2009 Editura Academiei

Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.128 (2026-09-14 19:31:02 UTC)