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## Portuguese Folklore Sung by Malaccan Kristang Groups and the Issue of Decreolization

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### Introduction

Kristang is the denomination for the Portuguese-based creole still in use in Malacca. Forms derived from Kristang spread to neighboring islands of the Indonesian Archipelago, but as far as I have been able to understand, they are almost extinct. Introduction to the present geographical location and extent of use of this creole as a daily means of verbal interaction by its native speakers was reported at the VIII<sup>ème</sup> Collóque International des Études Créoles in Guadeloupe. (Nunes, 1996).

The origin of Kristang goes back to the year 1511, when Alfonso de Albuquerque took the prosperous port of Malacca by force. We know for sure that there was a considerably large migration of Ceylonese Burghers to Malacca, both during the Portuguese occupation as well as during the Dutch and British eras. As Kenneth David Jackson (1990) has shown us, the Ceylonese Burghers were and still are inheritors of a rich oral folklore, clearly based on

oral Portuguese medieval folklore themes. Just as Jackson did in Sri Lanka by identifying several types of Portuguese-based *cantigas*, so did Silva Rego (1942), who found evidence of such *cantigas* in Malacca. With reference to songs, he classifies them into three categories: the true Kristang songs, those of Malay origin, and the so-called *européanas*, which were generally of English origin, either from popular films or famous singers.

The pattern of communication of this community shows that generations have almost lost the knowledge of the ancient oral folklore traditions. The *cantigas* can still be heard only when they are requested by an elder. What the community performs during popular and religious festivals, such as the *Pesta di San Pedro*, *Pesta di San Juang* and *Intrudu*, or in national or international folklore festivals, is actually Portuguese folklore, brought into Malacca as recently as the 1950's. As with all the other creoles of different bases, the Portuguese creoles are not well regarded by scholars, governments, and the Church as they are seen as a minor or corrupt form of the base language. The attitude of these groups is that the errors made by the speakers of these creoles should be corrected.

Kristang was no exception to this situation. However, correction of the so-called errors in the Malaccan Portuguese-based creole was more complicated than other creoles. We should not forget that the Portuguese were ousted from Malacca in 1641. Although Kristang survives, it has not been in touch with standard Portuguese for over 400 years. The community priests were the only ones using standard Portuguese. António Silva Rego was one of such men sent to this community in more recent times.

He collected oral folklore traditions and wrote them down, thereby preserving them for the benefit of future generations. He, too, shared the general opinion that Kristang was a corrupt dialect of Portuguese, and that Portugal should do her best to prevent the corruption of the Portuguese language. In 1965, he wrote: "Thanks to the songs that the Malaccan folklore group presents every now and then, the *cantigas* of Malacca will necessarily undergo a beneficial influence. These songs will enter the local folklore; they will start to be sung by all with a better pronunciation, thus correcting old mistakes."<sup>(1)</sup> The songs and dance steps had been introduced to the community, some ten years prior to Rego's statement, by the efforts of Rego's predecessor. Two further folklore groups were formed and they performed regularly in hotels, at

folklore festivals and other events throughout Malaysia and abroad. Their repertoire consisted mainly of the songs brought in during the 1950's. Only a small number of *true Kristang* songs are sung by them. What I propose to analyze now is how far Father Rego's statement has become a reality.

I do not wish to conduct a theoretical discussion of the notion of decreolization in this paper. Such work has been done by several authors who are much more knowledgeable in the field. Bickerton (1975) was probably the first, and we all know that decreolization is a central topic in his concept of the development of creoles. Based on his list of creole universals, I would like to focus on the influence these songs have had on Kristang. This paper does not pretend to be a complete and finite observation, as I have not done an analysis based on spontaneous discourse between Kristang speakers. My analysis is based on the Kristang version of two of the most popular Portuguese folk songs adopted in Malacca, "Tia Anica" and "Malhão, Malhão", as well as a recent recording of "Dia di San Pedro", a Kristang song (KS). In the transcription of the Kristang Version (KV) and the KS I have followed the orthography proposed by Joan Marbeck (1995).

## Analysis

I. I will first examine possible morphological influences the Portuguese version (PV) had on the Kristang version (KV). According to the established creole universals, attention should be drawn to the presence or absence of the following:

(a) gender maker; (b) number marker; (c) prepositions; (d) verb inflection.

(a) In (L3 + L9) of the first song (S1) (Appendix) we observe the marker of the feminine gender in the adjective "*mã*", and "preta" which also occurs in the KV. The gender marker in relative possessive pronouns – "da" (L1+2+5) of S1; and "do" (L17+L9) of the second song (S2) is also present. These two latter examples maintain the feminine marker /a/ and the masculine /o/ respectfully. A further example can be observed in (L3+L9) of S1 with regard to the Portuguese demonstrative pronoun "esta". This is maintained in the KV, instead of the Kristang corresponding "esti" which has no gender marker. This apprehension of the gender

marker by the Kristang singers is, however, not consistent. In (L4) of S1, the possessive relator “de” of the PV becomes “di” in the KV. This is probably due to the tendency in Kristang to glide the Portuguese mid closed [O] when it is in final position, to a closed palatal [I], and thus correspond to the unmarked Kristang possessive relator. The KS shows no evidence of a gender marker.

- (b) Marking the number is another characteristic of the base language not found in Kristang, just as in other creoles. In S2 (L17+19), the word “ondas” (waves) in the PV carries the plural marker /s/, which is kept in the KV. It is also observed that the plural marker /s/ attached to the feminine form of the Portuguese singular definite article “a” in (L17+19) is kept in the KV. In the KS we find no case of a plural marker.
- (c) With regard to the prepositions, it is a known fact that creoles tend to simplify or even omit them. The preposition in the PV of S2, “na” (L6+8), is maintained in the KV, since the Kristang equivalent to the Portuguese masculine marked “no” and the feminine marked “na” is always “na” in any case. Therefore we cannot, in this case, state that the singers have consciously perceived the Portuguese use of this preposition, as there is no equivalent masculine form in either song to compare with. In the KS, however, we clearly see that there is an omission of a necessary preposition in the corresponding Portuguese syntax in (L5+18): “Jenti keng bai mah.” According to the syntax of the base language (Portuguese), we observe the omission of the preposition “para” or “ao”, indicating direction. The KS thus shows no sign of a newly acquired Portuguese – based syntactic element, not even its morphological simplification.
- (d) As for verb inflection, yet another universal absent in most creoles and also in Kristang, the following was observed.

In S1, the inflected verb forms “deixaria” (L2), “esta” (L3+9), and in S2, the inflected forms “dancei” (L13), “fungi” (L14), “vai” (L16) and “vão” (L18), are all used in the KV. This introduces an element alien to the typical Kristang morphology. In the cases of “deixaria” and “dancei”, however, there are phonological shifts in the KV, leading to the forms “dezaria” and “dansi”. The KS never registers verb inflection. In the first word, the non-sonorant palatal fricative [ʃ] in the PV becomes a sonorant or resonant palatal fricative [ʒ] in the KV. This leads to the second category of possible influences on creole

universals: the phonologic aspect. To illustrate, we might quote the examples of “alegrah” (L2), “Lembrah fazeh...” (L6), which maintain the equivalent to the Portuguese infinitive form.

II. As for the possible phonologic changes brought into the KV by the PV, the following aspects are worth noting:

(a) monothongization, (b) convergence of consonant; (c) occlusion; (d) apocopation of the /r/

(a) Although the two verbs “deixaria” and “dancei” of the PV are transposed to the KV respecting the verbal inflection, as already mentioned, as far as phonology is concerned, in the second word, the oral diphthong [aj], “deixaria” in the PV, shifts to a mid closed monophthong in the KV. And the same PV diphthong [aj] in the coding morpheme of “dancei” changes to a closed palatal [ɪ] in the KV. Yet another case of a shift from a diphthong to a monothong by the Kristang singers can be observed in S2 (L3+9): “nãõ” = “nu”. Although the KV does not keep the diphthong in this last example, it certainly introduces a new lexical element to Kristang, as the Portuguese negation “nãõ”, in Kristang should be “ngka” or “nang”. This process of monothongization is not consistent however. In S2 the same nasal diphthong [aw] in the words “malhão” (L1, 3, 9, 10, 15, 16) and “vão” (L18) is kept in the KV as the oral diphthong [aw]. The diphthong [aj] in the word “vai” (L16) is kept as in the PV, since it is not alien to Kristang phonology. In authentic Kristang songs (KS) the singers maintain their Creole diphthong [a] and have not changed it to the corresponding Portuguese nasal diphthong [ãw]: eg. “Kristang” (L3), “nasang” (L4), “nang” (L9).

(b) In Kristang we normally observe a convergence of consonants, in relation to double consonants, from the base language (Portuguese). This phenomenon can be detected in S1 (L5). “Barra” in the PV becomes “bara” in the KV i.e., the sonorant velar [R] becomes a sonorant post-alveolar [r].

In (L7) of the KS, the word “moreh” is an example that the sonorant velar [R] from the Portuguese base word continues to undergo a consonant convergence, and is once again produced in Kristang as [r].

- (c) A common creole universal is the tendency to substitute the labio-dental fricatives [f] and [v] with the bilabial plosives [p] and [b]. Kristang is no exception. But in these instances, the KV maintains the labio-dentals of the PV: “vida” in S1 (L3+9) and in S1 (L2+4), “vai” in S2 (L16), and “vāi” in S2 (L16), and “vão” S2 (L18+20).

In the KS we find evidence of a continued occlusion in the substitution of the PV labio-dental fricative [v] in the word “vai”, with the bilabial plosive/occlusive [b] in the KV, producing “bai” (L5+17).

- (d) In S2, there are a number of words with the end phoneme [r] in the PV, being part of the infinitive form of the verb in Portuguese. Kristang, as with other Portuguese-based creoles, tends to register an apocopation of the [r] when it is in final position. However, once again, we observe that in the KV the singers are neither consistent in adopting the PV’s elements, nor in maintaining their own. Thus S2 portrays three cases where, in the PV, words end in the sonorant post-alveolar [r] as evident in Kristang singers’ enunciation of “comer” (L5+7), “Passear” (L6+8) and “ver” (L16). Further examples in which the KV registers an apocopation of the ending [r] are also found. This reflects Kristang phonological rules as demonstrated in “bebeh” (L5+7), “dansah” (L13), “the” (L18+20).

The KS always registers an apocopation of the [r] when this phoneme is at the end of the Portuguese word: “alegrah” (L2+8), “skiseh” (L7+9), “moreh” (L7), “leh” (L9), “santah” (L15), “mah” (5+17), “lembrah” (L17).

- III. The KV of both of the above songs are quite faithful to the PV as far as syntax is concerned. That is to say, they do not follow Kristang syntactic rules. One such example is the continued use of the definitive article “a”, from the PV, S1 (L5+6) and S2 (L2+4) and its plural form “as” (L17/19), S2. However, as has been mentioned, the KS shows no clear evidence of recently acquired Portuguese syntactic rules.

So from what we have observed in the analysis above, the KS of these Portuguese folklore songs introduced to Malacca in the 1950’s have not followed a perfect decreolization process as such. Although, in all of the three linguistic categories taken into account, there were elements new to Kristang, they were not consistent; they are not an identical category. There are two

realizations at times, one Portuguese and another Kristang, in the same song. It would seem that the singers simply repeat sounds, when confronted with words or morphological variations new to them. Sometimes such repetitions are faithful to the Portuguese phonology, e.g. “vai” S2 (L16). At other times, they are not. There is no evidence of decreolization or of the Kristang element. For example, in “raziah” in S2 (L6), the sonorant post-alveolar [r] is affixed to the Portuguese feminine form of the singular definitive article /a/, which in turn is joined to the noun “saia”. Together they read as one whole word and indicate the introduction of the gender marked definitive article into Kristang. The KS itself also does not show evidence of a significant shift from Kristang morphologic, syntactical or phonological aspects to those of the Portuguese base language which might have originated from the learning of Portuguese folk songs.

### Conclusion

The above analysis seems to clearly indicate that Silva Rego's forecast did not come true. Although there is no clear process of creolization of the PV of the songs, the Kristang speakers have given them a touch of their Malaccan creole and culture. This is manifested through the phonological shifts from the PV, adaptation of the Portuguese – inspired costumes modified by local fabrics and colors, as well as the local choreography of dances devised for the Kristang songs. Other songs such as Jinkli Nona, Nina Ba Boi Nina, Padre Se Chang are further examples of true KV with no interference from standard Portuguese. The mere presence of a Portuguese priest, the songs learnt from tapes, and even the increasing visits to the Settlement in Malacca by Portuguese tourists have not caused any shift of this creole to the direction of the lexifier language. Not only are younger Kristangs not exposed to the correct adult form of Kristang, they also have no access to the Portuguese language. It is thus suggested that any elements of decreolization would come from English and Malay, and probably only at the lexical level.

## APPENDIX:

## PORTUGUESE FOLK SONGS SUNG BY THE KRISTANGS

(KRISTANG VERSION)

(PORTUGUESE VERSION)

TIANICA	TI'ANICA
L1 Ti Anica, Ti Anica, Ti Anica da Fuseta	Ti'Anica, Ti'Anica, Ti'Anica da Fuseta
L2 Aken dezaria <i>ela</i> , aziah da Bara preta	A quem deixaria ela a saia da barra Preta
L3 Oleh, olah, <i>esta</i> vida nu stah mah-ah	Olé, olá, esta vida não está má á
L4 Olah, oleh, ti Anica di Lolehi	Olá, olé, ti'Anica de Lolé.
L5 Aziah da bara preta,	A saia da barra preta,
L6 Raziah do cachineh-eh,	A saia do cachiné – é
L7 Ti Anica, mananica,	Ti'Anica, mananica
L8 Ti Anica di Loleh,	Ti Anica de Loleh.
L9 Oleh, olah, <i>esta</i> vida nu stah Mah-ah	Olé, olá, esta vida não está má a
L10 Olah, oleh, ti Anica di Lolehi	Olá, olé, ti'Anica de Lolé



OH MALHO	O Malhão
<i>L1 Oh malhão, malhão</i>	Ó Malhão, Malhão
<i>L2 Ki videh a tua?</i>	Que vida é a tua?
<i>L3 Oh malhão, malhão,</i>	Ó Malhão, Malhão
<i>L4 Ki videh a tua?</i>	Ó Malhão, Malhão
<i>L5 Komer I bebeh, oh tirimtimtim,</i>	Comer e beber, ó terimtimtim
<i>L6 Pasiar na rua.</i>	Passear na rua
<i>L7 Komer I bebeh, oh tirimtimtim,</i>	Comer e beber, ó terimtimtim
<i>L8 Pasiar na rua.</i>	Passear na rua.
<i>L9 Oh malhão, malhão</i>	Ó Malhão, malhão
<i>L10 Oh malhão aki</i>	Ó Malhão aqui.
<i>L11 Oh malhão, malhão</i>	Ó Malhão, Malhão
<i>L12 Oh malhão aki</i>	Ó Malhão aqui
<i>L13 Si dansah dansi, oh tirimtimtim,</i>	Se dançar dancei, ó terimtimtim
<i>L14 Si fuji, fuji</i>	Se fugi, fugi.
<i>L15 Oh malhão, malhão,</i>	Ó Malhão, Malhão
<i>L16 Oh malhão vay vehr,</i>	Ó Malhão vai ver,
<i>L17 Asyondasy do mah, oh</i> tirimtimtim,	As ondas do mar, ó terimtimtim
<i>L18 Ah ondeh vāo teh</i>	Ai onde vão ter.
<i>L19 Ahsyondasy do mah, oh</i> tirimtimtim,	As ondas do mar, ó terimtimtim,
<i>L20 Ah ondeh vāo teh</i>	Ai onde vão ter.

## A KRISTANG SONG

	DIA DI SAN PEDRO
L1	Dia di San Pedro
L2	Nus tudu alegrah
L3	Kantah kantiga Kristang
L4	Prah tudu nasang
L5	Jenti keng bai mah
L6	Lembrah fazeh alegria
L7	Ateh moreh, tudu nadi skiseh, San Pedro sa dia
L8	Alegrah, alegrah, tudu Kambradu
L9	Nang skiseh leh San Pedro se libro
L10	Jerubi palabra eli jah pegah
L11	Tantu pesi akeli unga dia
L12	Tudu nadi skiseh.
L13	Jenti keng ta bai mah
L14	Kamrah ku esti Santu
L15	Na riba di seu, eli satah muito alto
L16	Shavi eli pegah, libro di resa jah falah
L17	Jenti keng bai mah lo mesti lembrah.

ASPECT	SONG ONE	SONG TWO	KRIST. SONG
Ia) Gender Marker L1+5	L3+9 "má/preta" "da" L3+9 "esta" L4 "di" (x)	L17+L9 "do"	
Ib) Number Marker		L17+19 "ondas" L17+19 "as"	
Ic) Preposition		L6+8 "na"	L5+8 "para" (x)
Id) Verb Inflection	L2 "deixaria" L3+9	L13 "dancei" L14 "fugi" L16 "vai" L18 "vão"	L2 "alegrah" (x) L6 "lembrah" (x) L6 "fazeh" (x)
IIa) Monothongization	L2 "dezaria" (x)	L13 "dansi" (x)  (L3+9) "nu" (x) L1,3,9,10 15, 16 "malhau" (x) L18 "vau" (x) L16 "vai"	L3 "Kristang" (x) L4 "nasang" (x) L9 "nang" (x)
IIb) Convergence of consonants		L5 "bara" (x)	L7 "moreh" (x)
IIc) Occlusion	L3+9 "vida"	L2+4 "vai" L18+20 "vau"	L5+17 "bai" (x)
IId) Apocopation		L5+7 "comer" L6+8 "Passear" L16 "ver" L5+7 "bebeh" (x) L13 "dansah" (x) L18+20 "the" (x)	L2+8 "alegrah" (x) L7+12 "Skisoh" (x) L9 "leh" (x) L15 "santah" (x) L5+13 "mah" (x) L17 "lembrah" (x)
III) Syntax	L5+6 "a"	L2+4 "a"	

**Notes:**

(1) Silva Rego, A., "A Comunidade Luso-Malaia de Malacca e Singapura", V. Colóquio Intercional de Estudos Brasileiros, Actas 1: 507-512. Universidade de Coimbra, 1965.

No.	Título	Autor	Local
1	(1) Silva Rego, A., "A Comunidade Luso-Malaia de Malacca e Singapura", V. Colóquio Intercional de Estudos Brasileiros, Actas 1: 507-512. Universidade de Coimbra, 1965.	Silva Rego, A.	Universidade de Coimbra, 1965.
2	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
3	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
4	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
5	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
6	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
7	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
8	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
9	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
10	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
11	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
12	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
13	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
14	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
15	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
16	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
17	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
18	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
19	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
20	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
21	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
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25	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]
26	[Faint text]	[Faint text]	[Faint text]

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