Portuguese Settlement of the Chaul/Korlai area and the Formation of Korlai Creole Portuguese

J. Clancy Clements
Indiana University
clements@indiana.edu

Abstract

A perspective is offered on the social and historical developments surrounding the formation of Korlai Creole Portuguese (KCP), a creole language spoken in the village of Korlai, located around 150 kms south of Mumbai. I argue that lower-caste Hindus who were enslaved by the Portuguese in the Chaul-Korlai area were instrumental in the creation of KCP. I claim that KCP formed by 1530 and that it has been maintained up to the present day due in large part to the isolation of its speakers because of their religion, their caste and their occupation.

Keywords

Korlai Creole Portuguese – Hindu slaves – Portuguese settlers – creole formation and religion

1 Introduction

Korlai Creole Portuguese (KCP), referred to by its own speakers as nɔ liŋ “our language”, is spoken by the approximately 800, largely agriculturalist inhabitants of Korlai village, which is located around 150 km south of Mumbai, India. In addition, there are small communities of diasporic KCP speakers in and around Mumbai. KCP exhibits similarities to the Portuguese-based creoles of Daman and Diu, spoken to the north of Mumbai (cf. Clements, 1996: 1–4; Clements and Koontz-Garboden, 2002 for Daman; and Cardoso, 2009 for Diu).

Based on historical information gleaned from a variety of sources, this study presents a view of the sociohistorical situation in which KCP is likely to have
formed as part of the Portuguese colonisation of India. Much of the content in what follows has been taken from Clements (1996: 4–18, 2009: 42–48). All other information is referenced individually.

What sets KCP, as well as the other Indo-Portuguese creoles, apart from their Portuguese-based Atlantic counterparts is the nature of the contact situations prevalent in India vs. in the Atlantic area. Whereas the Portuguese-based Atlantic creoles formed in situations in which several-to-many languages were in contact, the Indo-Portuguese creoles formed in two-language contact situations. In the specific case of KCP, from 1505 to around 1740 Portuguese was in contact with Marathi, a highly inflected, western Indo-Aryan language. As is the case with all Indo-Portuguese creoles, KCP is an endogenous creole. That is, it is a language that formed in the place where its eventual speakers resided. The formation of KCP involved no transportation of slave labour over long distances. On the contrary, the population who came to be the speakers of KCP stayed in the same area in which they lived previously. What did change for those who created KCP, as will be discussed, was their status within the highly developed, all-pervasive caste system of the area. When the Portuguese settled in India, this newly-arrived community was incorporated as a new caste within the already-present caste structure, with restrictions on marriage and other social contracts. Alfonso de Albuquerque, Governor of India from 1509 to 1515 (Zúquete, 1962: 71–75), instituted a policy by which he encouraged his soldiers to marry “white and beautiful” Aryan women as opposed to the darker Dravidian-origin women (Boxer, 1963: 64–65). Due to caste restrictions, the type of marriage Albuquerque sought to promote was rare. Instead, rather than marry, the Portuguese soldiers, especially as younger men, preferred to keep harems of slave girls, who were lower-caste women (Boxer, 1975: 68).

As was the practice, many of these women eventually were converted to Christianity. By converting to Christianity (Catholicism in this case), the creators of KCP, as well as its subsequent speakers, came to be doubly isolated, due to their new religion and their new status within the caste system. There were two major consequences of this isolation: First, the creators of what was to become KCP would have only superficial contact with Portuguese speakers given the societal norms governing their behaviour. Second, by converting to Catholicism, these lower-caste Indians created a new division in the caste system that set them apart from Hindus and Muslims and resulted in the loss of all their rights and responsibilities they enjoyed as members of their former caste.

The linguistic consequence of these societal barriers has been that KCP has been well maintained over several centuries, roughly from 1530 till the present day. Moreover, the fact that until very recently the inhabitants of Korlai have...
always been agriculturalists has added to their relative isolation because they have been able to maintain some degree of self-sufficiency in terms of food production and consumption.

As I will suggest in section 4, KCP most likely formed abruptly by around 1530 in a situation in which many lower-caste Indians who had attached themselves to the Portuguese in order to improve their lot, converted to Catholicism and were thus exposed to some variety or varieties of Portuguese, always within the constraints of the caste system. Before I discuss the details of how KCP initially formed, who its creators were, and when it formed and in what circumstances, we need to first consider, as background, the social history of the Chaul area in the first half of the 16th century, as well the social circumstances in Portugal that led up to the colonisation of India by the Portuguese. I will address this second question first.

2 Portugal and its Colonisation of India

Before discussing the first 50 years of the Portuguese in India, and specifically in the Chaul/Korlai area, it is useful to offer a brief overview of the external ecology of 15th and 16th century Portugal, the sociohistorical background which led to the formation of restructured varieties of Portuguese that constituted one of the bases of pidgin Portuguese, and one possible source of the Indo-Portuguese creoles.

2.1 Demographic Distribution of 15th-16th Century Portugal

Part and parcel of the Portuguese colonisation of Africa and Asia involved slavery, a practice that in Portugal dates back at least to late medieval times. Ramos Tinhorão (1997: 45, 437, note 90) notes that from the mid-14th century there were slave-selling establishments in the Rua Nova of Lisbon where captured Moors and other Africans (some of which were even brought from Seville, the entrepôt for Castile), were bought and sold.¹

In reference to Portugal at the beginning of its colonisation efforts, Saunders (1982: 48–49) observes that in the latter half of the 15th century and the first part of the 16th century its northern half was overpopulated relative to the arable land available, which resulted in the migration of northerners southward in search of work. These workers could not find jobs in rural southern Portugal because, even though it was underpopulated, Saunders notes that the feudal

¹ He also mentions the record of a nun from the Chelas Convent who bought a female Moor as a slave in 1368. Thus, the Catholic church also participated in the slave trade from early on.
property owners made it exceedingly difficult, and therefore unattractive, for workers to make a living as small farmers.

The consequence of this situation was that many of these northerners ended up settling in urban areas, and particularly in Lisbon. In turn, this demographic shift put a larger burden on the rural south where the bread grain was grown and taken to the cities. In addition, given that in Portugal industry was underdeveloped, the new urban settlers had difficulty finding employment, and thus, as Saunders (1982: 49) notes, began to seek their fortunes overseas.

From around the middle of the 15th century until 1505, Ramos Tinhorão (1997: 86) calculates that as many as 150,000 sub-Saharan Africans were captured and taken as slaves to Portugal. The estimated numbers of slaves are shown in Table 1 (based on Ramos Tinhorão's, 1997: 86 table). Some of the slaves brought to Portugal were instructed in Catholicism, taught Portuguese and educated in order to be used in the king’s court. And through the ties cultivated in these positions some of the slaves were able to buy their emancipation as early as in the 15th century (Ramos Tinhorão, 1997: 93). However, the vast majority of African slaves were placed in menial jobs in urban areas or forced into agricultural work in the southern rural areas of the kingdom.

As was mentioned above, one reason for the influx of African slaves into Portugal was the demand for cheap labour, but the Portuguese emigration to the recently established colonies was also a factor. Moreover, underpopulation in parts of Portugal at that time was also a consequence of the bubonic plague (1348–1350) and various other epidemics that followed in the last half of the 14th and first half of the 15th centuries. This series of diseases decimated the population and weakened the resistance to disease of various generations. Oliveira Marques (1998: 101–102) reports that, from north to south, there were innumerable reports during this time of a lack of able-bodied people. The social ramifications of this situation were deep, with the urban areas being affected most.

A variety of factors thus served as motives for the introduction of African slave labour into the Portuguese work force. By the first part of the 16th century, sub-Saharan Africans came to make up more than 10% of the rural population in Portugal south of the Douro (Ramos Tinhorão, 1997: 101). Between July 1547 and December 1555, Évora had a population of African origin 9 and 10 per cent (Saunders, 1982: 57). For its part, between 1533 and 1538 Lisbon had a population of around 100,000 inhabitants, Africans making up around 15 per cent (15,350) of that total (Ramos Tinhorão, 1997: 113).

This brief overview of the demographic and labour situation in Portugal in the 15th and 16th centuries serves us as the basis for discussing some details of Portuguese emigration to India and beyond.
### Table 1  
*Number of slaves brought to Portugal from sub-Saharan Africa (1441–1505).*

| Interval     | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Number       |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1441 to 1448 | From the predatory period in the region of Cabo Branco up until the establishment of Arguin                                                                                                                     | 1,000 to 2,000 |
| 1448 to 1450 | From the beginning of trading slaves as a commodity, in Arguin, to the issuing of slavery concessions to particular individuals’                                                                                   | 1,500 to 2,000 |
| 1450 to 1505 | From the period of slaving concessions, in Arguin, to the establishment of the monopoly of slave trade, extending the traffic of slaves to inland territories (approximately 700 to 800 individuals annually) | 38,500 to 44,000 |
| 1450 to 1460 | Initial period of trade in the Senegal region, with an average of 400 to 500 individuals annually                                                                                                                                 | 4,000 to 5,000 |
| 1460 to 1470 | Period of full operation of commercial slaving in the south of Senegal, with twice the volume annually, that is, 800 to 1000 individuals per year                                                                    | 8,000 to 10,000 |
| 1470 to 1475 | Period of Fernão Gomes’ contract, with an average increase up to 1000 to 1200 individuals per year                                                                                                               | 10,000 to 12,000 |
| 1475 to 1495 | Period of the heaviest slave trafficking along the whole coast, calculated by Duarte Pacheco to be 3500 individuals per year (excluding the exportation of slaves through Arguin, which is calculated separately) | 54,000 to 56,000 |
| 1495 to 1505 | Period of the decline of slave trafficking after the death of D. João II (the yearly average was estimated at 2500 individuals, excluding the exportation of slaves by Arguin, which is calculated separately)                        | 19,000 to 20,000 |
| **TOTALS**   |                                                                                                                                                                                                            | **136,000 to 151,000** |
2.2 Portuguese Emigration to India

The first point of contact for the Portuguese on the Indian subcontinent was Calicut (see map 1), with Vasco da Gama as the leader of the expedition. Oliveira Marques (1998: 207) notes that Vasco da Gama left Lisbon in July, 1497, with a fleet of three ships plus a supply vessel. After a layover in Cape Verde of around a month, the expedition headed directly south, travelling 90 days without sight of the mainland. In November, 1497, they arrived at what is now South Africa, passed around the Cape of Good Hope, and, with the help Arabian pilots, moved up the east African coast to Mombasa. From a
location slightly north of Mombasa, another Arabian pilot guided the fleet to the Indian subcontinent. They arrived in Calicut, India, on May 20, 1498 (Chaudhuri, 1998: 163; according to Oliveira Marques, 1998: 206–207, it was May 22, 1498).

Initially, the Portuguese policy in India did not involve building fortified settlements, but rather they planned to send annual expeditions to India from Portugal for trading purposes, particularly in spices. But soon they adopted a new policy of establishing settlements (Maharashtra State Gazetteer, 1915: 75), and as things developed, they realised that in order to control the ancient trade network in the area they would have to follow an aggressive policy bent on destruction and ultimately the conquest of the “enemy” (Oliveira Marques, 1998: 213).

In the short period of 15 years, the Portuguese made significant conquests in India and further east. By 1518, Colombo in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) was under Portuguese control and they would build fortifications in Cochin by 1506, in Cannanore by 1507 (Zinadím, 1998: 55), Goa by 1510, Chaul by 1523, Diu by 1535, and Bassein by 1534, locations which were converted into veritable Portuguese cities, as was Goa, which continued to grow until the beginning of the 17th century (Oliveira Marques 1998: 215).

Saunders (1982: 47) reports that emigration from Portugal to India “is believed to have depleted the population by about 2,400 men every year in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, dropping to between 1,000 and 1,500 by mid-century”. For his part, Boxer (1975: 67) states that, “[i]t can be estimated with some degree of accuracy that during the sixteenth century approximately 4,000 people left Portugal yearly for overseas, the majority of them being able-bodied and unmarried young men, bound for ‘Golden Goa’ and further east, relatively few of whom ever returned to Europe”.

Boxer (1963: 57–58) further notes that:

the Estado da India was a commercial and maritime empire cast in a military and ecclesiastical mould. Every male Portuguese who went out to the East did so in the service of the Crown or of the Church. Laymen who married after reaching India were allowed to leave the royal service and settle down as citizens or traders, being then termed casados or married men. The remainder were classified as soldiers (soldados) and were liable for military service until they died, married, deserted, or were incapacitated by wounds or disease.

India was considered a frontier area and few white women made the trip east. Boxer (1963: 58) notes that, “[t]here would seldom be more than a dozen or so
women in a ship which might carry six or eight hundred males”. Given these circumstances, Boxer (1963: 59) continues, “miscegenation and more of it was the general rule with the Portuguese male in India”.

In a letter dated 1550, a Catholic priest in India wrote about the miscegenation, deploring the custom of the Portuguese men in India of buying many slaves, both male and female. Many would buy droves of girls and sleep with them, and would then sell them afterwards. The priest wrote (in Boxer, 1963: 61) that “[t]here are innumerable married settlers who have four, eight, or ten female slaves and sleep with all of them and this is known publicly”.

Boxer (1963: 61–62) states that although the number of respectable Indo-Portuguese married families was most likely greater than alluded to by the aforementioned priest, the system of domestic slavery which obtained in Golden Goa, and by extension elsewhere in India at that time, “was not conducive to a wholesome family life”. He notes that the Portuguese kept slaves of both sexes and treated them cruelly, and that “the children of this promiscuity with slave mothers seldom had the chance of an adequate upbringing or education, and were apt to be despised by new arrivals from Europe, whether these were learned Jesuits or teen-age soldiers from the slums of Lisbon and Oporto”.

There is strong evidence that the slaves of the Portuguese casados and soldados converted to Catholicism and that the illicit offspring of the Portuguese men and Indian women were also baptised Catholics (see Boxer, 1963: 57–84). Early on, Alfonso de Albuquerque followed a “social policy of assimilation” (Zúquete, 1962: 75), whereby he sought to create a “mixed but legitimate Christian race through intermarriage with selected India women” (Boxer, 1963: 65). The Portuguese men were not successful in carrying out de Albuquerque’s policy of marrying upper-caste Indian women, due at least in part to the constraints of the caste system. But as mentioned, many had relations with what would be lower-caste Indian women, which gave way to mixed-race offspring, who were born into Christianity.

Although the incorporation of Indo-Portuguese offspring as well as native Indians into the Catholic Church meant that a new element of that society was beginning to emerge, it took place within the highly structured and isolating caste system of India. Boxer (1963: 75) explains, that “the Portuguese at first tried to abolish caste distinctions among their Indian converts, but they soon found that this was impossible and they were forced, however reluctantly, to compromise with this immensely powerful and deep-rooted social and religious system”.

The caste system carried directly over into Portuguese India. The divisions mentioned in the literature are shown in Table 2 (following a description by
Table 2  The Christian caste system of India according to Boxer (1963: 62–83).

| Caste       | Description                                                                 |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reinol      | European-born Portuguese                                                    |
| (no term)   | Portuguese born in India of pure European parentage (very few)              |
| Castiços    | People born of a European father and a Eurasian mother                       |
| Mestiços    | People born of Eurasian-Indian or Eurasian-Eurasian parents                 |
| Brahmins    | Corresponding to the Brahmin caste in Hinduism. In Hinduism only Brahmins were allowed into the priesthood, and the Portuguese followed this practice with their converts up until the 19th century |
| Chardos     | Corresponding to the Kshatriyan and Vaisyan castes in Hinduism; these were the warriors and merchants |
| Sudras      | Corresponding to subgroups of the Vaisyan and Sudra castes in Hinduism; this caste included some types of menial laborers, peasants and artisans |
| Corumbins   | Corresponding to part of the Sudra caste in Hinduism; members of this caste were chiefly landless workers and peasants |
| Farazes     | Corresponding to the pariahs or untouchables in Hinduism; the professions of the Farazes were the most menial jobs such as sweeping, grave-digging, etc. |

Boxer, 1963: 62–83). The Reinol caste, or European-born Portuguese, tried to marry Indian women of the Brahmin and Chardo castes as mentioned, but with little success, as these continued to maintain purity of caste and race. For their part, the Mestiços (and probably Castiços) tried to arrange marriages with Portuguese, although this did not occur often given that the Reinols and Brahmins alike tended to despise the Mestiços and Castiços. In turn, the Castiços and Mestiços did not get along with Indian Christians of pure Indian stock of any caste. The extension of the caste system in the first years of Portuguese colonisation of India and the enmities that developed profoundly affected the interrelations between the Portuguese and the Indian Christians and also those among the Indian Christians themselves. I suggest that it is due to these caste distinctions that new converts and their offspring learning some version of Portuguese were socially isolated and thus had less than complete and direct access to Portuguese spoken by the soldiers. Although we can assume that there were casados, married to Indian women who had complete and direct access to Portuguese, my assumption is that this happened later and...
that the creole emerged not with this section of the community, but rather it emerged relatively abruptly among the many slaves and their offspring who at the beginning of the Portuguese occupation of the area converted to Christianity and became part of the Portuguese community while maintaining the isolating caste distinctions.

3 The Settlement of Chaul and the Founding of Korlai

The Portuguese arrived in the Chaul area for the first time in 1505, attacking Muslim ships that were anchored in the harbor, after which they demanded and received payments of tribute from the Muslim ruler of the area (Fernandes, 1926: 66). Chaul was an important trade city—its reputation for trade dates back to the sixth century A.D. (Kulkarni, 1989: 164)—and it was to become an important control point for Portuguese trade in India throughout the 16th century. Chaul had fallen under Muslim rule in 1318 (Maharashtra State Gazeteer, 1915: 73). The budding supremacy of the Portuguese on the Arabian Sea not only alarmed the Muslim rulers of Gujarat, the kingdom in which Chaul was then located, but also seriously affected the interests of Arabia and Egypt by depriving them of the duties levied on Indian goods. The Gujarati Muslim rulers appealed to the Sultan of Egypt for aid. He subsequently dispatched a fleet to the area which devastated the Portuguese fleet off Chaul in 1508, killing Lourenço de Almeida, the son of Francisco de Almeida, the first Portuguese Governor and Viceroy of India. This attack was avenged by the Portuguese in a battle at Diu in 1509 (Maharashtra State Gazeteer, 1915: 75; Fernandes, 1926: 66; Zúquete, 1962: 67). Alfonso de Albuquerque, the second Portuguese Governor and Viceroy of India, visited Chaul in 1513 and recognised its importance as a port (Whiteway, 1979: 157; Kulkarni, 1989: 167). A letter written from Chaul in 1514 allows us to assume that the Portuguese had established some sort of base at Chaul during the nine-year period between 1505 and 1514. Two years later (1516), they were permitted to set up a trading post in Chaul (Meersman, 1971: 240), which they were granted permission to fortify in 1521. By 1524 they had completed the fortification Maharashtra State Gazeteer, 1915: 76). Meanwhile, the Portuguese built a lookout tower on the promontory across the river from the Chaul fort (cf. map 2). The content of a letter from 1521 attests that there

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2 The letter, written in 1514, was addressed to the King of Portugal, complaining about a trial of a soldier. It was found in Summarios do Corpo Cronológico, parte primeira, maço 16, doc. 127, located in the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Lisbon, Portugal.
was by then a Portuguese commercial presence in Chaul, probably a contingent of traders linked to the feitoria there.\(^3\)

In the 1550s (1553 in Fernandes, 1926: 66 and 1559–60 in Kulkarni, 1989: 167), the Portuguese made plans to fortify the promontory, which they called the morro or hill (see map 2). Melique, the Muslim ruler, blocked this, then moved against the further fortification of the Portuguese fort in Chaul, seeking to occupy the morro with his own troops. A truce was finally reached, which lasted until April 1593 (Andrade, 1945[1594]: 9), when the Muslim troops again attempted, this time with success, to occupy the morro and thereafter began to fortify it.

Andrade, a chronicler of the Portuguese court at that time, provides a detailed account of the war involving the fortification of the morro, in which he describes the area where the fighting took place between April of 1593 and September of 1594. It is in his description of the battleground that we first find the name Korlai, which appears as Corlé: “And between this mountain [lying to the south of the hill] and the morro is a small valley, which is about the length of two rifle shots, and it is called Corlé” (Andrade, 1945[1594]: 6). At the time of the war—some eighty years after the Korlai area had been settled by the Portuguese, there were around 600 casados, i.e. Portuguese men married to indigenous women, living inside the Chaul fort, along with around 1600 Muslim and Hindu shop-keepers with their families for a total of around two thousand inhabitants (Andrade, 1945[1594]: 11–12). Melique, who had commanded his troupes to go ahead with the fortification of the morro, ordered as well that in that valley called Corlé, that is between the mountain and the morro, a camp be set up surrounded by ditches and trenches with good lookout posts, and that in it there be a big and well-stocked market to serve as the place in which provisions and other necessary goods can be sold, where the whole army can provide for themselves without bother (Andrade, 1945[1594]: 18).

Melique and his troupes temporarily occupied the morro, but after a series of struggles, the Portuguese retook the promontory. They had to rebuild the morro fort, as it had been nearly entirely destroyed in the battle. Although to date, I have not identified any incontrovertible proof, it seems likely that at that time a market consisting principally of creole-speaking Indian-Christian vendors

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3 The letter, dated November 15, 1521 (parte primeira, maço 27, doc. 69 in ANTT in Lisbon, Portugal) is written to the King of Portugal from Cochin about an unsatisfactory business transaction. The person in charge of trading in Chaul recommended that a certain Lourenço Moreno should be sent to Cochin, implying that this person would put the situation in order.
formed at the base of the fort on the *morro* to sell goods to the Christian soldiers stationed in the fort there. As I have suggested at the end of the previous sections and will argue in more detail in section 4 below, there is good reason to believe that a creole formed abruptly in the Korlai area by around 1530. Following the arguments and the reasoning to be presented, these Indian-Christian vendors would have been the second or third generation of creole speakers. The market they created would not have necessarily replaced the market already there, but would have been an addition to it. We can assume that over time a small Christian community formed, suggested by the small church drawn on the painting of the Chaul and Morro promontory forts by Mariz Carneiro (1990: 105), based on a drawing by António Resende from around 1630 or earlier (see also Humbert, 1964: 31). Meersman (1971: 245) believes that the church was named *A Nossa Senhora do Mar* ‘Our Lady of the Sea’, which is confirmed by a passage in Thomas Nicolls’ travel journal in 1683. But what led to the formation of what we call today Korlai Creole Portuguese? I have given some details regarding a possible scenario. Further details are laid out in the next section.
In section 2, I mentioned the initial policy of the Portuguese in India was only to send annual expeditions to India from Portugal for trading purposes, but that by 1505 the Portuguese had adopted a new policy of settling in India permanently (Maharashtra State Gazetteer, 1915: 75). I also mentioned that during the 16th century 2,000 to 4,000 Portuguese men sailed overseas yearly, the majority “being able-bodied and unmarried young men, bound for Golden Goa and further east, relatively few of whom ever returned to Europe” (Boxer, 1975: 67). These men were for the most part from the lower classes of Portuguese society (Boxer, 1963: 62). The emigration of Portuguese women to Asia was exceedingly rare compared with that of the men. And the Portuguese crown is said to have discouraged their women from going out to the colonies (Boxer, 1975: 64–65). The few women who did travel to India with the Portuguese were either Arabic women taken from Kilwa (present-day southeast Tanzania) to Cannanore and Cochin at the beginning of the Portuguese colonisation of India (Germano da Silva Correia, 1948: 227–240),4 or they were Portuguese women who stayed in Goa or moved to the Province of the North, which consisted of the coastal area between Chaul and Daman (Boxer, 1975: 67).

Apart from the Crown’s policy, one main reason for the paucity of Portuguese women was “the fact that so many Portuguese men, including the soldados (as the unmarried men were called for centuries owing to their liability to military service), preferred to live with a harem of slave girls rather than to marry, at any rate in their younger and more virile days” (Boxer, 1975: 68). Many of the Portuguese who practiced polygamy in this form became casados, men who had gone to Asia in service of the Crown and the Church, who after reaching India married native women and were then allowed to leave the royal service and settle down as citizens or traders (Boxer, 1963: 58; 1975: 68, note 3). But the

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4 Germano da Silva Correia (1948: 225–266) states that the colonisation of south India took place in part through the marriages between Portuguese men and Arabic women from Kilwa on the east coast of Africa. Specifically, in 1502, as Vasco da Gama led an expedition to India and had made a stop in Kilwa, where he was approached by well over 100 Arabic women, with their daughters, who begged to be taken to India. Germano da Silva Correia reports that after carrying out inquiries about the situation of these women, Vasco da Gama accommodated 40 women and their daughters in his own ship and took them to India and had them settled in Cannanor and Cochin where they became Christians and married Portuguese soldiers (1948: 227). Although Germano da Silva Correia mentions that the women wanted to leave because they felt mistreated, he does not touch upon how they could have escaped their compound, which would have been extremely difficult, as well as dangerous.
Portuguese *casados* also had concubines and often owned slaves as well, both men and women, to carry out farm and other types of work (cf. Boxer, 1963: 61–62). I suggest that these individuals would have significantly less than full and direct access to Portuguese due to the caste-based divisions.

From very early on there is evidence of Indo-Portuguese offspring in India. In a 1516 letter, Fernão da Veiga, the judge in charge of the orphans in Goa, reported to the King of Portugal that “70 orphans, children of Portuguese, that were in this city were living from alms, and [the King] should provide money for them.” It is reasonable to assume that this type of situation was prevalent at that time, not only in Goa, but also in Chaul and other Portuguese settlements.

As already alluded to, many of the *soldados* and *casados* took it upon themselves to make Christians out of their slaves and their offspring, as reported by a Jesuit missionary in 1550 (in Boxer, 1963: 59–60):

> Your Reverence must know that it is fifty years since the Portuguese began to inhabit these regions of India. Whereas all those who came out here were soldiers, who went about conquering lands and enslaving people, these same soldiers began to baptize the said people whom they enslaved, without any respect and reverence for the sacrament, and without any catechizing or indoctrination. And since the inhabitants of these countries are very miserable, poor and cowardly, some were baptized through fear, others through worldly gain, and others for filthy and disgusting reasons which I need not mention. And not only was this (in my opinion) great abuse done in the beginning, but it continued even when India became full of Christian ecclesiastics, and it is still in vogue at the present day. ... I confess that I originally baptized some people in this manner; but for a long time I have not baptized anyone except children, or adults whom I have catechized for three or four months. Many people come in order to be baptized, and I ask them why they want to become Christians? Some reply because the lord of the land tyrannizes and oppresses them, and others reply that they must become Christians because they have nothing to eat.

Although the incorporation of Indo-Portuguese offspring as well as native Indians into the Catholic Church meant that a new element of that society was beginning to emerge, it took place—as alluded to above—within the well-entrenched and rigid caste system of India, which the Portuguese in vain tried to abolish (Boxer, 1963: 75).

To date, the first mention found of the population at Chaul during the 16th century comes from a letter to the King of Portugal, dated 1535 and saying “here
there are about 70 or 80 married and hard-working [honrados] inhabitants [moradores] very ready to be of service to you” (Mendes, 1989: 43). Evidently, the town grew quickly: In a letter dated 1548 from the Portuguese king D. João III to the Chaul officials it is stated that Chaul had 400 inhabitants and an official for orphan matters, a fact which lends support to the assumption that Chaul had Indo-Portuguese orphans from very early on (Mendes, 1989: 43). By 1572, the population had doubled, with slaves and native Christians being added to the count: “... the Portuguese in Chaul not being more than eight hundred with some slaves and Christians of the land” (Mendes, 1989: 43).

It is reasonable to assume that when the Portuguese arrived in Chaul in 1505 they found a vast majority of the population were Marathi-speaking Hindus, although the area was under the rule of Muslim lords. It was the lower-caste Hindus that the Portuguese enslaved and with whom they mixed (cf. Boxer, 1963: 59–61). The first Portuguese to arrive in Chaul were largely soldiers, also of socially lower classes (Boxer, 1963: 62–63). These men spoke their own dialect of Portuguese and had possibly been exposed to some forms of restructured Portuguese, such as L2 varieties spoken by foreigners they may have interacted with (e.g. with Africans in urban areas such as Lisbon) and fellow Portuguese speakers who could have served as models for the production of foreigner talk (cf. Clements, 2009: ch. 3, 1992). When communicating with non-Portuguese-speaking people, these Portuguese most likely used any and all means available to them to make themselves understood, as did their interlocutors.

What we have, then, is a two-language contact situation in the Chaul area with Portuguese as the target language. More precisely, the target for the newly enslaved and newly-baptised Indians was the language the soldiers spoke—most likely a mixture of natively-spoken Portuguese and different varieties of restructured Portuguese, including foreigner talk (Clements, 1992). Because of the aforementioned caste barriers, the access to Portuguese on the part of these Indian slaves, concubines and their offspring was arguably only partial. Thus, thrown into a new living situation and presented with incomplete input from a new language, which they were obliged to somehow learn, the Indians naturally tried to communicate, making guesses about what their Portuguese interlocutors would understand. For their part, the Portuguese most likely altered their speech to the extent that promoted the greatest likelihood of communication, using models that they had already been exposed to or restructuring their speech, as alluded to above. The positively perceived instances of communication, that is, those that promoted intelligibility, were taken as successful by the speakers. The grammar of the emerging L2 variety, then, would have initially been a direct reflection of the shared successes
(partial as well as complete) in communication experienced by the shifting recent converts and the colonial-language speakers. Instances of partial success would have yielded lexical items with altered meanings, due to substrate influence. An example of this would be KCP pe ‘leg/foot’ and mão ‘hand/arm’, corresponding to Marathi pay ‘leg/foot’ and hat ‘hand/arm’, where in Portuguese we find mão ‘hand’ and pé ‘foot’.

I argue that nativisation occurred when the offspring of these Indian Christians began learning as a first language the variety of Portuguese spoken by one or more parents or guardians. This process most likely happened with input from various adult L2 varieties, and possibly in situations in which children spoke among themselves—recall that there were Indo-Portuguese offspring in Chaul from very early on—in which case it is reasonable to speak of abrupt rather than gradual nativisation (cf. Thomason and Kaufman, 1988: ch. 6). In other words, I conjecture that there was a pidgin developing between Indian Christians and Portuguese soldiers, which Indo-Portuguese offspring were exposed to, and they picked up this emerging linguistic system, imposing structure and/or grammar on it where necessary and thereby converting it into a full-fledged creole. With this new primary language connected to their new religious customs, I assume that these new Christians were also instrumental in the development of a new cultural and religious identity.

What is crucial to understand in this development is that once the lower-caste Hindus converted to Catholicism, they became doubly limited in their social contact with others, not only by the extremely strict constraints on social interaction placed on them by their caste, but by religious constraints that isolated them from their Hindu peers. It is not that the Indian Christians did not interact with Christians of other castes (e.g. Reinols or Mestiços) or people of other religions; rather, the range of interaction was considerably narrow. In particular, where before they could not marry outside of their group because of caste restrictions, after conversion they no longer married even Hindus of equal caste because of their new religion.

I have just outlined one feasible scenario for the formation of KCP. I have argued that the formation of KCP was abrupt, as just mentioned, and that this new variety was spoken as early on as 1530 as the pidginising variety at least by the lower-caste native Indian Christians, and as a first language by the Indo-Portuguese offspring. I have also argued that, because of their caste and religion, the emerging lower-caste Indian Christian community who came to speak the creole were relatively isolated from other Christian castes and from the Hindus and Muslims of the area in that there was virtually no intermarriage between the lower-caste Christians and members of the other groups. In my argumentation, I assume, reasonably, that many
of the lower-caste Indian Christians were farmers by caste, but tenant farmers in practice, both before and after their conversion. This assumption would account for why, until quite recently, virtually all the Korlai inhabitants were farmers.

5 Possible Models for Indo-Portuguese and the Chaul-Area Creole

In discussing possible models that may have been available for the Chaul-area creole, I begin with the demographic distribution in Portugal in the 15th and 16th centuries. With the influx of so many African slaves into the workforce in rural as well as urban Portugal in the 15th century, the linguistic aspect of the situation takes on an interesting light. It can be reasonably assumed that the vast majority of these slaves learned Portuguese naturalistically. Thus, the speech of the first generation Africans would be the 15th-16th century equivalent to immigrant varieties of Spanish or Portuguese spoken today in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries (see Clements, 2009: 124–157). In the plays of the 15th (e.g. Enrique da Mota) and 16th centuries (e.g. Gil Vicente), we find approximations of African speech in the mouths of some of the characters of their plays. It is also not illogical to assume that these approximations, variably called guinéu ‘Guineanese’, língua de guiné ‘language of Guinea’, língua de negro/preto ‘negro/black language’, would reflect typically occurring traits in the speech of the Africans during that period and may have served those Portuguese travelling to India as one model for interacting with people who did not speak Portuguese. The examples in (1)–(9) represent what are arguably portrayals of African speech that reflect naturalistically acquired L2 Portuguese. That is, given the demographic makeup of Lisbon and southern Portugal in the late 15th and early 16th century, it is likely that these portrayals of fala de guiné reflect L2 varieties of Africans of the period and may have formed part of the basis for a Portuguese-based pidgin developed by the Portuguese with indigenous people during their colonisation of Africa and Asia. The examples (1)–(3) are taken from A lamentação do clérigo ‘the lamentation of the priest’, a poetic farce written in the last quarter of the 15th century by Enrique da Mota, in which a priest laments a cask of wine that had fallen on the ground and spilt. In the poem, a voice of a slave woman speaks the lines (1)–(3) below (taken from Tarracha Ferreira 1994: 282–83).

(1) a mym nunca sar ruim.
   to me never be bad
   ‘I’m not (or never) bad.’
(2) *Vós logo todos chamar...*
you right.away all call
‘You call everyone right away.’

(3) a. *Aqui estar juiz no fora,*
here be judge in-the outside
‘The judge is outside here.’
b. *a mim logo vai ‘té là.*
to me right.away goes until there
‘I’m going to go there.’
c. *Mim também falar mourinho...*
me also speak moorish
‘I also speak Moorish.’
d. *mim não medo no toucinho...*
me no fear in lard
‘I have no fear of lard.’

Naro (1978) compiled numerous examples from plays in which there were African-origin characters whose speech was portrayed by the playwrights. We cite six of his examples, given in (4)–(9).5

(4) *logo a MI bae trazee.*
right.away to me go-3sg bring
‘I’ll go bring it right away.’ (Naro, 1978: 329)

(5) *Quando já paga a rinheiro, deytá a mi fero na pé.*
when already pay the money put to me iron prep foot
‘When he paid the money, he put irons on my feet.’ (Naro, 1978: 329)

(6) *bosso barba já cajaro.*
your beard already white
‘Your beard {has turned/is already} white.’ (Naro, 1978: 330)

(7) *Ya mim diseê isso JA*
already me say this already
‘I already said that.’ (Naro, 1978: 329)

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5 The glosses and translations are mine.
(8) *Porque tu nam bruguntando?*  
why you NEG asking  
'Why aren't you asking?' (Naro, 1978: 330)

(9) *... e levare elle na bico.*  
and carry he PREP beak  
'... and carry it off on the sly.' (Naro, 1978: 332)

It is revealing that the *fala de guiné* portrayed in these examples shares several key traits with L2 varieties such as Bozal Spanish, Chinese Coolie Spanish, Chinese immigrant Spanish (see Clements, 2009: 68–157). For instance, the main tense-aspect-related traits common to both the just-mentioned L2 varieties and *fala de guiné* are:

- the use of adverbials such as *logo* ‘right away’ and *já* ‘already’ for tense/time markers with no corresponding verbal inflection;
- the use of gerund form, such as *bruguntando* (<Ptg. *perguntando*) in (8) for dynamic, [+durative] predicates (in this case an accomplishment);
- the use of 3sg-present-tense or infinitival forms as default forms (*vai* or *bae* (<Ptg. *vai* ‘s/he goes’) for *vou* ‘I go’, *sar* (<Ptg. *ser* ‘be’) for *sou* ‘I am’, *chamar* ‘call’ for *chamades* ‘you.pl call’, *estar* ‘be (located)’ for *está* ‘s/he is (located)’, *paga* ‘pays’ for *pagou* ‘s/he paid’, *deytá* ‘put-inf’ for *deytou* ‘s/he put’, *disse* (<Ptg. *dizer* ‘say-inf’) for *disse* ‘s/he said’.

More general traits shared by such varieties are lack of copula and the use of an all-purpose preposition. Based on findings by Klein and Perdue (1992) regarding what they call the “basic variety” of immigrant speech, I suggest that the similarities between the traits of Portuguese attributed to the Africans in Portugal in the 15th and 16th century and the aforementioned L2 varieties of Spanish are not coincidental. Rather, in large part they are the consequence of naturalistic L2 acquisition. Such varieties of Portuguese must have also emerged in interactions between the Portuguese sailors and African natives along the African coast, and these varieties would have had similar features as well. It is also quite probable that the Portuguese who ended up as soldiers travelling to Asia, if they had had any direct or indirect contact with the speech of Africans in Portugal and Africa, could possibly have already become familiar with strategies for restructuring their Portuguese or even developed an actual restructured variety that they then used in India. Expressed another way, in contact situations where successful communication was urgent, and drawing
on the linguistic feature pool in such contact situations, the Portuguese sailors and speakers of the indigenous languages would have co-constructed a system of communication based primarily on the Portuguese lexicon, the target language. The most commonly used lexical and structural features in the feature pool would have found their way into the emerging linguistic systems in each contact situation. It is out of these contact situations that we assume pidgin Portuguese likely developed, which for the Chaul area was one of the sources (along with L2 varieties of Portuguese and substrate languages) for the formation of the creole there. If this is true, then the Portuguese creoles should display features found both in Immigrant Spanish and L2 African Portuguese. For example, we would expect to find stative verbs to be based on the most commonly used verb forms for stative predicates. Revealingly, stative verbs in the Portuguese-based (as well as Spanish-based) creoles are based on the 3sg present-tense form (cf. also Holm, 1989: 268).

There is another possible model that may have influenced the formation of the Chaul-area creole, though little is known about it. There is lexical evidence found in Korlai Creole Portuguese that suggests that there was input from (a) language(s) from South India, either Malayalam or a Portuguese-based variety developed in the Malayalam-speaking area, in the formation of KCP. We find two lexical items from Malayalam, the regional language spoken in Cannanore, Calicut, and Cochin: khadya ‘tiger’ (<Malayalam kaduʋa ‘tiger’) and ap ‘hand bread’ (<Malayalam āppam ‘hand bread’). The presence of these lexical items in KCP leads me to conjecture that there would have been speakers from the south who were in the Chaul area and were taking part in the formation of KCP.

In this section I have argued that in the two-language contact situation that existed in the Chaul area, KCP conceivably formed through the interaction between the Portuguese soldiers, who in their communication with the indigenous population used Portuguese and one or more varieties of restructured Portuguese. For their part, the Marathi-speaking indigenous population were targeting Portuguese constructed language based on the repeated, successful instances of communication, whereby they incorporated into their emerging variety those features and structure with which they were successful in communicating with the Portuguese.

Given that in Korlai there was and continues to be a two-language contact situation, and given the highly inflectional nature of both Portuguese and Marathi, we might expect features that usually do not show up in creole languages to find their way into KCP, such as inflectional morphology. Indeed, this is exactly what we find. KCP maintains all three Portuguese verb classes. The base form of the KCP verb derives historically from the Portuguese infinitive,
the KCP progressive form from the Portuguese gerund form, the KCP past form from the 3sg Portuguese preterit form, and the KCP past participle form from the corresponding Portuguese counterpart. These are shown for all three conjugation classes in Table 3. The same is true of the northern varieties Indo-Portuguese creoles, as well, such as those spoken in Daman and Diu (cf. Clements and Koontz-Garboden, 2002; Cardoso, 2009).

6 Conclusion

Based on historical documents and descriptions from various sources, I have offered a perspective on the social and historical developments leading up to, and coinciding with the first 50 years of the 16th century, a time period in which the Portuguese colonised various places along the coast of the Indian subcontinent, including the Chaul-Korlai area, where Korlai Creole Portuguese is currently spoken. Starting around the second half of the 15th century, southern Portugal saw an influx of sub-Saharan Africans, who during this time made up 10–15 per cent of the population, depending on the area. At the same time, the younger Portuguese workforce in all of Portugal was attracted by the reports of the Portuguese colonial expansion. Throughout the 16th century, it is estimated that between 1,500 and 4,000 left Portugal yearly for overseas, the majority of whom were able-bodied, unmarried young men bound for the Indian subcontinent and beyond. From letters between governors and the Portuguese Crown, we know that many Portuguese young men in India kept harems, the women were converted to Catholicism, and their offspring were born Catholics. Given

| Class | Base form | Progressive | Past | Participle |
|-------|-----------|-------------|------|------------|
| Class 1 | kat-á | kat-á-n | kat-ó | kat-á-d |
|        | 'sing' | 'singing' | 'sang' | 'sung' |
|        | (<Ptg. cantar) | (Ptg. cantando) | (<Ptg. cantou) | (<Ptg. cantado) |
| Class 2 | beb-é | beb-é-n | beb-é-w | beb-í-d |
|        | 'drink' | 'drinking' | 'drank' | 'drunk' |
|        | (<Ptg. beber) | (<Ptg. bebendo) | (<Ptg. bebeu) | (<Ptg. bebido) |
| Class 3 | sub-í | sub-í-n | sub-í-w | sub-í-d |
|        | 'go up' | 'going up' | 'went up' | 'gone up' |
|        | (<Ptg. subir) | (<Ptg. subindo) | (<Ptg. subiu) | (<Ptg. subido) |
the introduction of a new religion in the subcontinent, and given that the conversions took place within the relatively rigid caste system in India, I argue that the new converts became doubly isolated, through their new religion, but also through caste system that carried over into Indian Catholicism. It was in this situation, that what we call Korlai Creole Portuguese was likely created.

It has been argued that KCP formed by 1530 and that because of the isolation of its speakers, largely because of their religion, their caste and their occupation, KCP has been maintained up until the present day even though the Portuguese presence has been virtually absent there since around 1740.

Given the focus of this study, nothing has been said about KCP’s viability in the 21st century, in a situation where education and the changing landscape of the area are creating a more diverse economic base in the Korlai area. Korlai’s younger inhabitants are gradually looking outside of Korlai for employment and marriage. As this happens, it will certainly affect the maintenance of KCP. But for now, Korlai mothers speak KCP and their children still learn it as their first language. As long as this situation obtains, KCP will likely be maintained.

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