CALUNGA: AN AFRO-BRAZILIAN SPEECH

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1. Introduction

Calunga is an Afro-Brazilian speech found in the state of Minas Gerais, particularly in the western region of the Triângulo Mineiro (see Map 1). Referred to as a type of “secret language” by its speakers, this speech is labeled linguistically as a *falar africano* (‘Africanized speech’) according to the categorization of Castro (1967, 1980, 1983, 2001, 2002), or as an “anti-creole” according to Couto (1992, 2002) and Petter (1999). The origins of this speech are obscure, even to its speakers, though theories have pointed to the *quilombos* (‘maroon slave communities’) of the Triângulo Mineiro, or to the speech of Afro-Brazilian cowboys known as *tropeiros*. In terms of its linguistic evolution, Calunga was the socio-historical result of Portuguese slave activity along the West African coast and the subsequent concentration of slaves in Minas Gerais in the 18th and 19th centuries. Contemporary Calunga grammar is rooted in *português caipira* – the regional Brazilian Portuguese vernacular (henceforth BPV) – with African lexical items. The possible etymologies of these lexical items are derived mostly from the Bantu languages of the Angola/Congo region: Kimbundu, Umbundu, and Kikongo (to a lesser extent). Currently, the Calunga speech community is a small group of speakers, possibly in the hundreds, that lives in and around Patrocínio, Minas Gerais, although rumors exist that there are Calunga communities as well in rural areas of the Brazilian states of Goiás and Tocantins – two states near the Triângulo Mineiro. Only two books – Batinga (1994) and Vogt & Fry (1996) – offer some lexical and sociolinguistic studies of Calunga: Batinga makes a vague anthropological panorama of Calunga with a small glossary of terms; Vogt & Fry dedicate a chapter of their book comparing the lexicon and sociolinguistic aspect of Calunga to the *falar africano* of Cupópia – a speech of the Afro-Brazilian community of Cafundó (in São Paulo state). Henceforth, the objective of this paper is to provide a general introduction to Calunga by providing samples of the speech and a general description and analysis of its grammar and lexicon.
2. Calunga samples

The samples below are transcribed from impromptu recorded interviews of Calunga, which took place in Patrocínio, Minas Gerais. Accompanying the Calunga examples are a comparative translation in English. The interviews were transcribed and translated by myself and Daniela Bassani Moraes, a native of southern Minas Gerais, who is knowledgeable of Calunga. All Calunga transcriptions follow Brazilian spelling patterns, though some devices are employed in order to highlight phonetic and phonological patterns: e.g. camanu < camano ‘man’; apumanu < aprumando ‘making’; etc. Some Calunga expressions and terms in the samples are highlighted and footnoted for explanation and etymological discussion.

Sample #1, recorded June 27, 2004, illustrates a typical Calunga dialog.
Sample #1 participants:

**JB**: João Batista, born 1954  
**JRS**: Jorge de Souza, born 1964  
**JL**: Joaquim Luís, born 1928  
**TB**: Tadeu de Barros, born 1962  
**SB**: Steven Byrd, researcher  
**DB**: Daniela Bassani, researcher

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Calunga | English
--- | ---
JB: E aí camanuá oofí, vampumá pa dentu du injó, uai. | JB: What’s up there black man, let’s go in the house, uai.
JRS: Camanu num tã apumandú a nangá mai, não. | JRS: He is not putting on [nice] pants anymore.
JL: Eu falei que era pa aprumá uma nanga, sô! | JL: I said that it was to wear [nice] pants, sir!
JRS: Oh camanu! | JRS: Oh man!
JB: Uai! E já calungó ca ocaí ca nanga daquei jeito, agora... vampu lá Chiquito, que ocê é mai veio. | JB: Uai! He has already spoken with the woman in that way, now... let’s go Chiquito, you are older.
DB: Num precisa troçá de caça nãão, né? | DB: You do not need to change your pants, ok?
JRS: Bora lá, Chiquito! | JRS: Let’s go Chiquito!
JB: Vá, vai lá Chiquito que o senhor é mai veio; eu num vô te matá. | JB: Go, go Chiquito that you are older I am not going to get in your way.
JL: Nãã, eu vô... o que ceis calungá..., eu vô dã ôã na calunga do ceis! | JL: No, I am going... what you speak.... I am going to beat your Calunga [talk].
JL: Entra pra dentro, sô! | JL: Come inside, sir!
TB: Tá baió! | TB: It’s OK!
JB: O camanu e a ocaí tá querenu qui os camanucá calunga sobri? | JB: The man and the woman are wanting that we speak [Calunga] about?
DB: Qualqué coisa que ceis quisé calungá. | DB: Whatever you want to talk [in Calunga] about.
JB: Os camanu e de qual omenha? | JB: You [both] are from which **omenha** (‘water, region’)?
DB: Eu? Omenha é o quê memo? | DB: Me? **Omenha** is what?
JB: De qual água que ceis é? | JB: From which “water” are you [both] from?
DB: Uai num sei, eu num entendu issu não! | DB: Uai, I don’t know, I don’t understand that!
TB: Qual cidade? | TB: Which city?
DB: Qual água? | DB: Which “water”?
JB: Qual cidade, qual cumbaca que ceis é? | JB: Which city, from which **cumbaca** (‘city’) are you [both] from?

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Sample #2, recorded June 27, 2004, features a story from Joaquim Luís regarding slavery in the Triângulo Mineiro:

Sample #2 participants:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calunga</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>JL:</strong> Os camanu maioral, os maioral, punha os imbundu pá curimá, né? Intão aqueis imbuninhz que os camanu pegava e levava pá omenha lá pá aprumá a saravo na custela dus imbuninh. Os camanu mucafó ficava de cá aprumano a calunga nu [ingambí* (oi!)] aprumano a calunga de [ingambí pá modi aquela omenha distraviá du... aquei zap que que aquei saravu de omenha distraviá du imbunim, pegá só a omenha, só omenha. A o saravo num pegava nu imbunim. Aí, eis calunganav de cá, ficava calunganav, aí os camanu maioral vinha com o camanu, tirava os camanim avai, pucurava, os camanu macafu avia os camanim e sarava [omam] pá, uranu*, sá? Uranu... Cê sá que é uranu?</td>
<td><strong>JL:</strong> The powerful men, the powerful men (‘plantation owners, bosses’) used to make the black men work, right? So the little black kids that the powerful men used to grab and take to the water to beat the backsides of the little kids. The older [black] men stayed on one side praying (oi!) praying so that the water would go another way... so that whip moved by the water would miss and just the water would strike the black kids. So the whip would not beat the black kids. There, they [the blacks] were on one side, praying, then the powerful men would come with the black men, would take down [the black kids], would look for [the wounds on the black kids], the old blacks would look at the boys and would thank urano (‘God’), you know? Do you know what urano is? <strong>DB:</strong> Não. <strong>JL:</strong> Uai, uranu é o céu, pra Deus, pra ajudá a num acontecê nada, sá? <strong>DB:</strong> Ah... <strong>JL:</strong> É p’que o que ia apanhá era os camanim, né? Ia pu injó da água*! E ali a água tocava, pegava na correia e pegava nu imbunim, vap, vap, vap, vap. É. Aí, os camanu, os imbundu de cá, fica va nu [ingambí, rezanu, sabe? Rezanu pa aquilu num pegá nus, nus camanim. <strong>DB:</strong> Ah, nus imbunim. <strong>JL:</strong> É. Aí dava, vencia o horário lá assim, os camanu ia lá tirava, o camanim saía mesma coisa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>JL:</strong> Não.</td>
<td><strong>JL:</strong> Well, urano is for, for heaven, for God, to help that nothing happens, you know? <strong>DB:</strong> Ah... <strong>JL:</strong> It is because the ones that were going to be whipped were the kids, right? They were going to the water house (‘mill’), the water would move the whip to beat the black kids, vap, vap, vap, vap. Yes. Then, the men, the black men were on the side, praying, you know. Praying so that that [the whip] would not beat the boys. <strong>JL:</strong> [Beat] the black kids. <strong>JL:</strong> Yes. Then at the end of the workday, the man would go there [to the water house] to get [the kids], they would leave in the same condition [that they entered]. <strong>DB:</strong> Ah, then it [the whip] did not hit them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample #3, recorded June 28, 2004, features three calungadores who were tropeiros. The tropeiros were Brazilian cowboys – many of whom Afro-
Brazilian — responsible for the delivery of cows and horses to many rural towns between the southern states of Minas Gerais, São Paulo, and Goiás. According to *calunghador* José Dinamérico (personal interview), Calunga was widely spoken and maintained by Afro-Brazilian *tropeiros*. Non Afro-Brazilian *calungadores* all report to have acquired Calunga from these Afro-Brazilian cowboys on their long cattle voyages.

Sample #3 participants:
- **R**: Ramiro Paulino, born 1930
- **O**: Oswaldo Diniz, born 1949
- **J**: José de Barros, born 1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calunga</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong>: O camanu cá já apumô muito em riba de <em>ingomo</em>¹ potas <em>cumbaca</em>²</td>
<td><strong>O</strong>: I have traveled a lot by moving cattle to other cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J</strong>: Tamé?. Ah! Intão foi que nem eu!</td>
<td><strong>J</strong>: [You] Also? Ah! So you were like me!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Ah muitas cumbaca, tem quarenta, quarenta e cinco anu, eu aprumava...</td>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Ah many cities, it has been forty, forty five years, [that] I used to do...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong>: <em>Injó de ingomo</em>³</td>
<td><strong>O</strong>: Stable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J</strong>: Quando mexia cus ingomo, aprumava injó...</td>
<td><strong>J</strong>: When I used to work with cattle, I used to get a house...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong>: <em>Marangol±a</em>⁴</td>
<td><strong>O</strong>: Horse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Marangorda. Eu quemava o aio...</td>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Horse. I used to cook...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong>: <em>Tipoque</em>⁵</td>
<td><strong>O</strong>: Beans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong>: É, eu quemava o aio, o tipoque pa pus camanu, sabe? Dez camanu...</td>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Yes, I used to cook, beans for the men, you know? Ten men...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong>: <em>Aprumá na mucota</em>⁶</td>
<td><strong>O</strong>: To eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Dez camanu <em>quinhamanu</em>⁷... quinhamanu cus ingomo, né? Cumiγu. E, nós, eu sempe quemava o aiu; todus, todus <em>cumba</em>⁸. Todu día, né? Du cumba, eu quemava o aiu direitimho pra eles, né? Dois cargueru, né? Porque... de quinhimá cu macenete⁹ nosso, né? Eu quemava o aiu, arriava, disarriava, tudo diretu.</td>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Ten men traveling... traveling with the cattle, right? With me. And, we, I always used to cook every, everyday. Everyday, right? Of the year, I used to cook everyday for them, right? Two cargos, right? Because... to travel with our <em>macenete</em>, right? I used to cook, I used to prepare, to saddle and unsaddle [the cargos], all right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong>: Cumbaca dali...</td>
<td><strong>O</strong>: City from there...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Pus ingomo num soprá, pus ingomo num soprá os <em>urungu</em>¹⁰. É... o imbundu cá quinhimó muito!</td>
<td><strong>R</strong>: So that the cattle would not blow (‘die’), for the cattle not to blow (‘die on’) the cargos. Yes... I traveled a lot!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J</strong>: O camanu doido pa <em>sucaná cu ocai</em>¹¹</td>
<td><strong>J</strong>: The man is crazy to marry [a woman]!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong>: Não, mai o camanu que eu tabaiava no urungu du injó, tem muito <em>zipaque</em>¹²</td>
<td><strong>O</strong>: No, but the man that I used to work with on the pick-up truck, has a lot of money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong>: É u camanu é <em>aprumadu du zipaque</em>¹³! É dotas cumbaca, né? Aprumá o...</td>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Yes, the man has a lot of money! He is from somewhere else, right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J</strong>: Intão é pur isso que quê sucaná, uai!</td>
<td><strong>J</strong>: So that is why he wants to marry, <em>uai</em>!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong>: É, iche, é!</td>
<td><strong>O</strong>: It is, <em>iche</em>, it is!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R</strong>: Eu aprumava em muitas cumbaca!</td>
<td><strong>R</strong>: I used to go to many cities!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong>: Cumbaca de longe.</td>
<td><strong>O</strong>: Faraway cities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Grammatical description and analysis

3.1 Phonetics and phonology

Calunga does not employ a phonology that is peculiar or different from the regional BPV; that is, there are no phonemes or phonological patterns that are distinct from the Portuguese of the Triângulo Mineiro. Furthermore, calungadores are not identified with any “foreign accent” that would categorize them as speakers of an Afro-Brazilian speech or “Black Portuguese”. Nevertheless, some of the following patterns are typical of Calunga.

Calunga has seven oral and five nasal vowels on par with Portuguese. Moreover, nasal vowels do not appear to be phonemic as in Portuguese, but are employed due to regressive nasalization from nasal consonants. One vocalic form or another constitute the nucleus of the syllable: camano-cá [ka.ma.nu.'ka] ‘I’; curiá [ku.ri.'a] ‘food’. Open and closed mid vowels are typically on an item-to-item basis, though some possible phonotactic patterns, such as unstressed mid-vowel raising, may open and close mid vowels accordingly. One peculiarity, though, is the lack of diphthongs in the data; however, one falling diphthong occurs, albeit in few words: [aj] (e.g. ocaia [u.'kaj.a], oçião [u.'kaj.ø] or oçú [u.'kaj] ‘girl’). Another attested diphthong from Portuguese [ej] (e.g. brasileiro [bra.zi.'lej.ru] ‘Brazilian’) is somewhat rare in the data, and often realized as a monophthong [e]: zugra [zu.'ej.ø] > [zu.'e.ø] ‘noise’.

In terms of consonant phonemes and their corresponding allophones, Calunga shows little difference from the regional Portuguese except perhaps in the syllable-final coda. Voiceless and voiced plosive stops are phonetically realized in the same manner and same positions. Unlike the regional Portuguese, however, affricate phonemes and allophones in Calunga are rare and accounted for in few words. Likewise, other palatal sounds, which are realized frequently in BPV as phonemes and allophones, are less common. Calunga realizes palatal consonants /ʃ/ and /ʒ/, but no form of /ɲ/ is attested in the data. The phoneme /r/ – phonetically realized as [h] like the local variety of Portuguese – is only present in few words of Calunga (e.g. lorri [lu.ri] ‘fish’; ricomo [hi.'ko.mu] ‘knife’). In addition, one peculiar /tʃ/ allophone in both the regional Portuguese and Calunga is the retroflex [ɾ] in syllable-final position (and somewhat between vowels), which appears to be a carry-over from the regional Portuguese (e.g. Calunga mavero [ma.'vi.ru] ‘white’; BPV fazendeiro [fa.z bred.'dej.ru] ‘farmer’).

Regarding phonotactics, again both Calunga and BPV are virtually parallel. That said, one difference is the behavior of muta cum liquida consonant clusters, which are popular in Portuguese (and Romance languages in general), though are more restricted in Calunga. Interestingly, BPV – which has a number of consonant clusters – reduces some clusters like Calunga: /lɡ/ > [ɡ], /tr/ > [t] (e.g. negro > nego ‘black man’, outro > oto ‘other’). Some Portuguese-based words that have
entered the Calunga lexicon do have onset consonant clusters: C(C)V: aprumá(r) [a.ep(r)u.'ma]. The second consonant of the cluster must be an [r], which is subject to deletion as discussed above. Calunga also presents the morphological inflection /s/ (and allophonic [z]) and very marginally some variant of /t/ – both from Portuguese – in word-final position: e.g. os camano [us.ka.'ma.nu] ‘the men, they’; og gumbo [uz.'gu^u.bu] ‘(the) days’. Other than this, there are no other consonantal sounds permitted in the syllable coda (e.g. atual > atuá ‘day’, calungar > calungá ‘to speak, talk (Calunga)’). There is evidence that some Portuguese-based words may have passed through Bantu resyllabification: salvar > saravá ‘goodbye, dance’; though, on the other hand, most (if not all) Bantu-based words may have incorporated Portuguese (or Romancesque) syllabification as well, which likely explains such parallels of phonetics and phonology.

3.2 Morphosyntax

Like the phonetics and phonology, the morphosyntax of Calunga is related to the regional Portuguese of the Triângulo Mineiro for the most part. The nominal system employs the Romancesque grammar of singular-plural, masculine-feminine. However, different from Romance languages, gender in Calunga is realized exclusively by the determiner: i.e. o(s), a(s), both derived from Portuguese. In standard Portuguese, the determiners and adjectives must agree in gender and number with the noun: a casa branca > as casas brancas; in Calunga, such agreement is virtually absent or unnecessary: a ocai mavero ‘the White woman’ > as ocai mavero ‘the White women’; o injó indaro ‘the red house’ > os injó indaro ‘the red houses’.

Another peculiarity of particular morphosyntactic interest is the nominal pronouns of Calunga. Observe Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano-cá ‘I, me (masculine)’</td>
<td>(o) camano ‘they, them’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano-(o)fiú / (o) umbundu-cá ‘I, me (black)’ (To emphasize the subject is black)</td>
<td>(a) ocai(a) ‘I, me (feminine)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) ocai(a) ‘I, me (feminine)’</td>
<td>(o)cê ‘you (masc/fem)’ (from BPV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano-(ai) ‘you (masculine)’</td>
<td>(o)camano ‘he, him’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) ocai(a) ‘you (feminine)’</td>
<td>(a) ocai(a) ‘she, her’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o) ocai(a) ‘you (masc/fem)’ (from BPV)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at the table, it is noteworthy that Calunga has a notion of gender and ethnicity for the subject (i.e. camano-(o)fú, umbundu-cá) – a nonexistent trait in Portuguese, nor in Romance languages for that matter. Also peculiar is the use of gender (i.e. camano ‘man’, ocai ‘woman’) in the first person.

Of some 27 verbs I have collected in Calunga, many of which are derived from Bantu languages, all are first-conjugation –AR verbs, and based on regular 3rd-person singular inflections from Portuguese. All infinitives are phonetically realized without the inflectional /-r/ (though, when asked, Calunga speakers write the verbs with the final –AR). In fluent discourse, however, many Portuguese verbs, both regular and irregular, are utilized: tábata (from estar ‘to be’), ô/ô/a (from ser ‘to be’), tem/teve/tinha (from ter ‘to have’), and quer/quis/queria (from querer ‘to want’); all conjugated in the 3rd-person singular. In addition to the highly reduced paradigm, the nominal forms are realized syntactically without exception; this is also a common occurrence in vernacular Brazil Portuguese (cf. Mello 1997). Note the conjugations of the verb quinhámá(r) ‘to walk/go/travel’ in Tables 2-4 for a general verbal construction in Calunga:

Table 2: quinhámá(r) ‘to walk, go, travel, return’ in the present indicative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano-cá quinhama ‘I walk’</td>
<td>os camano-cá quinhama ‘we walk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano-ai quinhama ‘you walk’</td>
<td>os camano-ai quinhama ‘you (pl) walk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano quinhama ‘he walks’</td>
<td>os camano quinhama ‘they walk’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: quinhámá(r) in the preterite

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano-cá quinhâmô ‘I walked’</td>
<td>os camano-cá quinhâmô ‘we walked’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano-ai quinhâmô ‘you walked’</td>
<td>os camano-ai quinhâmô ‘you (pl) walked’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano quinhâmô ‘he walked’</td>
<td>os camano quinhâmô ‘they walked’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: quinhámá(r) in the imperfect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano-cá quinhâmava ‘I used to walk’</td>
<td>os camano-cá quinhâmava ‘we used to walk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano-ai quinhâmava ‘you used to walk’</td>
<td>os camano-ai quinhâmava ‘you (pl) used to walk’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(o) camano quinhâmava ‘he used to walk’</td>
<td>os camano quinhâmava ‘they used to walk’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned above, the regular, indicative –AR forms from Portuguese dictate the verbal paradigm; this characteristic applies to all Bantu-derived verbs.

The syntactic structure of Calunga, in general terms, has incorporated the basic syntactic patterns of the regional vernacular Portuguese, though with further simplifications, verbal reductions, and a higher degree of periphrasis due to the limited lexicon. As stated above, all verbal forms are indicative, even in situations that would “trigger” a subjunctive form (see example 2 below); however, irregular verbs from Portuguese are commonly introduced in Calunga discourse, again conjugated in 3rd-person singular. Observe the following sentences:

1. Os camanu maioral, os maioral, punha os imbundu pá curimá.
   The-(pl) men great, the-(pl) great, put the-(pl) black to work.
   ‘The strong men, the strong men (‘plantation owners’) used to put the blacks to work’.

2. O camano e a ocai tá querenu que os camano calunga sobre?
   The-(pl) man and the woman is wanting that the-(pl) man speak [calunga] about?
   ‘You (pl) want us to speak [Calunga] about [what]?’

3. Os camano é de qual omenha?
   The-(pl) man is from which water?
   ‘You (pl) are from where?’

For the sake of morphosyntactic comparison, note the following popular Brazilian speech from the Patrocínio region in Minas Gerais, as written in the novel Cisquim – O menino bóia-fria (Ferreira & Ferreira 1993):

É pra isso qui nósis tá qui
‘That is why we are here’ (Ferreira & Ferreira 1995: 50).

Nósis cumeu uns trem! [...] Um’as coisa qui nósis trôxe lá de casa
‘We ate something [...] Some things that we brought from home’ (Ferreira & Ferreira 1995: 13).

Another relevant syntactic aspect is the use of aprumá(r) to generate phrases (see examples 4 and 5 below). In Portuguese, this verb means ‘to put [something] vertical, or prudence’ (Cunha 2001: 643). According to calungador José Astroildo (personal interview), “a calunga tem só um verbo e um ‘desverbo’, que é ‘aprumá’ (‘Calunga has only one verb and one ‘un-verb’, which is ‘aprumá’).” Astroildo’s
Comment is informative in that speakers realize the “multiuse” of the verb; however, it can be observed from the samples that Calunga has more verbs to create sentences. That said, note the types of sentences that are created from *aprumá(r)*, keeping in mind that there is not a precise translation for this verb in English:

(4) *Camanu gosta de aprumá uíque na mucota?*
   Man like to put sweet in the mouth?
   ‘Do you like to drink [alcohol]?’

(5) *O camanu já apruma nessas cumbaca há quantus cumba?*
   The man already been in these village for how many year?
   ‘You have been in this region for how many years?’

3.3 Lexicon

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Calunga grammar is its African lexicon, which is drawn mostly from Kimbundu, Umbundu, and Kikongo (to a lesser extent). Interestingly, lexical items are what Calunga speakers most often cite when asked what Calunga *is*. This is probably due to the fact that *calungadores* are aware that Calunga grammar is closely related to BPV. Furthermore, this raises a separate question as to when exactly Portuguese ends and Calunga begins? The Calunga lexicon is the best answer to this question: that is, if Calunga were defined solely by the grammatical patterns of phonology and morphosyntax, it could not be concluded decisively as an Afro-Brazilian speech; however, when the lexicon enters the discussion, the picture is more complete. The lexicon is what truly distinguishes this speech as “Afro-Brazilian” and which most purely captures its socio-historical and linguistic links to Africa and to Brazilian slavery of the colonial past. According to Queiroz, this type of “lexical Africanization” has a two-fold objective: 1.) For the purposes of a “secret language”; and 2.) For the recreation of a remote past of “a mythical Africa in which the Black individuals were free, owners of their space of land, of work, in the end, of their destiny” (Queiroz 1998: 104-105, my translation).

To underscore the complexity involved, consider the etymology of the term *Calunga*, which means ‘speech, talk [Calunga]’ to the speakers. In a personal interview with *calungador* José Dinamérico, he explained that the term is derived from Portuguese *(a)cá + língua* ‘language here’. However, Afro-Brazilian researcher Nei Lopes (2003: 57-58) argues for a multilingual Bantu term *kalunga* ‘God’ from the verb *oku-lunga* ‘to be intelligent, clever’ – for the Ambos and surrounding African tribes it is found with this usage. Or, perhaps the word originates from Kimbundo *kalunga* ‘sea’ which is type of secondary god in the Bantu cults (Cunha
Afro-Brazilian ethnolinguist Yêda Castro (2001: 192-193) argues that the word *calunga* evolved from either Kikongo, Kimbundu, or Umbundu *kalongela* > *kalonga* ‘helper or carrier of the carriage’. *Enciclopédia Luso-Brasileira de cultura* (1963: 551) provides one definition of *calunga* as “helper boy in the carriages and vehicles of cargo transportation” (my translation). Finally, according to www.pantheon.org, *calunga* (or *kalunga*) is the father of patron god(dess) Musisi – the ancestral god(dess), or supreme being, of creation and death – for the Lunda people of Angola, Zaire, and Zambia.

With this discussion in mind, the Calunga lexical items gathered here are not only specific to Calunga, but to other *falares africanos* and even to Brazilian Portuguese (see Lopes (2003)). Indeed, while some words have remained essentially specific to *falares africanos* such as Calunga, others have entered the lexicon of the regional Portuguese, and some known throughout Brazil. Azevedo elaborates:

As the [Portuguese] language traveled far and wide, it was adopted in the newly established settlements by people who used it as their first or second language. In so doing they modified it to meet their communicative needs and to reflect the new natural, cultural, and linguistic environment in which they lived.

[...]

[In Brazil] During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries slaves were primarily of Bantu origin and spoke languages such as Kikongu and Kimbundu. Destined initially for the labor-intensive sugar cane industry and later for mining and for coffee plantation, a number of slaves who worked in homes acquired varying degrees of fluency in Portuguese through interaction with members in the household. Today African influence is noticeable at the lexical level, where several hundred words are incorporated – often, as in the case of words of Indian origin, regionally – in everyday vocabulary, involving various aspects of social life. (Azevedo 2005: 181, 219)

Looking at the Calunga terms, the “various aspects of social life” of the Calunga speakers come out in these lexical items: food and drink, flora and fauna, people and relationships, work and money, and social events. Furthermore, these are the basic topics which are talked about when Calunga is employed. Given that the social oppression of slavery is a thing of the past, the sociolinguistic function of “secret language” is not as relevant to the present as it used to be. On the other hand, these lexical items remain a fundamental testimony to that slave past.

In examining the Calunga terms, there are roughly five categories that comprise the lexicon: 1.) Direct Africanisms; 2.) Metaphoric Africanisms (i.e. with a metaphorical sense); 3.) Portuguese; 4.) Hybrid Portuguese-Africanisms; and 5.) Tupi-derived terms. (See note 2 at the end of this article for bibliographic references and commentaries of the etymological analysis of Calunga lexical items).

Direct Africanisms are words that are equivalent both in one or another Bantu language and Calunga. Some examples of these Direct Africanisms are:
Chipoquê/Chipoque/Tipoquê ‘beans’. Umbundu kipoque ‘bean’ (L: 213); Kimbundu kipeque ‘bean’ (VF: 355).

Cuendá(r) ‘to walk’. Kimbundu kuenda ‘to walk’ (L: 86; VF: 299).

Curia ‘food’. Kimbundu kudia, kuria ‘to eat’ (L: 87; VF: 301); Umbundu kulya ‘to eat’ (L: 87).

Curima ‘work, job’. Kimbundu kudima, kurima ‘to work’ (L: 88; VF: 301); Umbundu okulima ‘to cultivate, labor’ (L: 88).

Cuzeca ‘sleep, tiredness’. Kimbundu kuzeca, kuzeta ‘to sleep, rest, tiredness’ (L: 89; VF: 303).

Embuete ‘wood, tree, stick, club’. Umbundu mbweti ‘stick, wood’ (L: 95; VF: 304).

Imbuá ‘dog’. Kimbundo or Kikongo mbua ‘dog’ (L: 115); Kikongo mbwa ‘dog’ (BE: 62).

Metaphoric Africanisms are terms for which the slaves likely had no equivalent in their native languages and therefore adapted a similar or related term to the concept:

Angora ‘horse’. Kimbundo ngolo ‘zebra’ (L: 50; VF: 309).

Indaro ‘fire, yellow, red’. Kimbundo ndalu ‘fire’ or Umbundu ondalu ‘fire’ (L: 28; VF: 287).

Maiaca ‘seed’. Kikongo mayaca ‘manioc’ (L: 133).

Malungo ‘brother, equal, same’. Of uncertain Bantu origin, possibly related to Kimbundu ma’lugo ‘companion’ or Kikongo ma-lungu (plural of lungu) ‘suffering, pain, death’, or na-lungu ‘he who suffers’ or madungo ‘stranger’; hence, this term may be a joint idea of all these ideas since the slaves suffered together without knowing each other (L: 135). Or, possibly from Kimbundu malungo ‘companion, of the same condition, adopted brother’ (VF: 315).

Marafa ‘cachaca, (alcoholic) drink’. Kimbundo or Kikongo malava ‘wine’ (BE: 536; L: 141; VF: 516).

Marango ‘donkey’. Related to Kimbundu ngolo ‘zebra’ or Umbundu ongolo ‘zebra’ (L: 30, 168; VF: 309).

Mavero ‘milk, breast, white’. Umbundu omavele or Kimbundo mavele, both plural forms of avele ‘milk’ (L: 146); Kimbundu mele ‘breasts, milk’ is the plural form of diele and avele (VF: 318).

Calunga also has a number of terms derived from Portuguese. For example, mirante ‘eye’ from archaic Portuguese mirar ‘to see’, different from con-
temporary Portuguese term *olho* and corresponding verb *olhar*. It is not entirely understood why such terms would come about, given that Bantu languages have these words:

*Arigó* ‘late person’. Regional BPV *arigó* ‘rustic person, bumpkin’ (VF: 288).

*Atuá* ‘day’. Possibly Portuguese *atual* ‘in the present’ (C: 83).

*Escutante* ‘ear’. Portuguese *escutar* ‘to hear’.

*Fuzilo* ‘lightning’. Possibly from Portuguese *fuzil* ‘rifle, shotgun’ (C: 373).

*Greta* ‘hole’. Portuguese *gretar* ‘to split, crack’ (C: 395).

*Grimpa* ‘high, up’. Portuguese *grimpar* ‘to rise, go up’ (C: 396).


Calunga hybrid Portuguese-Africanisms join both Portuguese and Africanisms to create terms, often with a metaphorical sense:

*Amparo de curiár* ‘fork’. *Amparo* ‘covering, protection’ – Portuguese *amparar* ‘to protect, defend’ (C: 41). *Curía* ‘food’ – Kimbundo *kudia, kuría* ‘to eat’ (L: 87; VF: 501); Umbundo *kulya* ‘to eat’ (L: 87).


*Aproná(r)* banzo ‘to have sex’. *Aprumar* ‘to do, make, happen’ – Portuguese *prumo* ‘iron instrument used to check verticality, prudence’ (C: 643); regional BPV ‘to make a better life’ (VF: 287). *Banzo* ‘sexual relation’ – Possibly related to Kikongo *banzu* ‘goat’ or Kimbundo *mbonzo* ‘passion’ (L: 39, 40); or Kimbundu *mbanze* ‘love amulet’ (VF: 289).

*Aproná(r)* omenha ‘to rain’. *Aprumar* ‘to do, make, happen’ – Portuguese *prumo* ‘iron instrument used to check verticality, prudence’ (C: 643); regional BPV ‘to make a better life’ (VF: 287). *Omenha/Omeia* ‘water’ – Kimbundo *menha* ‘water’ (L: 167).

*Camano desaprumado* ‘fool, stupid man’. *Camano* ‘man, person’ – Possibly from Umbundo *omanu* ‘man’ (L: 58); or Kimbundu *muana, mona* ‘son, daughter’, *kamona* ‘of the son’ (VF: 292). *Desaprumar* ‘to undo’ – See *aprumá(r)* above.


*Dandará santo* ‘newly born’. *Dandara/Dandará* ‘child’ – Possibly Kikongo *ndandala* ‘that which lasts a long time (by irony or sarcasm)’ (L: 90); Kimbundu *ana* ‘children’ (VF: 322). *Santo* ‘pure’ – From Portuguese.
Finally, a few Tupi-derived terms are found in the Calunga lexicon. Though it is in no way certain, these few terms suggest that Calunga speakers acquired them from an Indigenous Brazilian language of the colonial period, likely *Língua Geral*, or from Brazilian Portuguese via *Língua Geral*:

*Guaxatina* ‘squash’. Possibly Tupi (see C: 399 for related flora and fauna Tupi morphemes with guax-).

*Ingazeiro* ‘penis’. Possibly from Tupi *inga* ‘common name for vegetable plants’ (C: 456).

*Manaiiba* ‘manioc’. Tupi *mani’iua* ‘manioc’ (C: 493).


On a final note, Calunga lexical items are interesting because they are not exclusive to just the Calunga speech community but many are known throughout the Patrocínio region, some throughout Minas Gerais, some even throughout Brazil. This may suggest a strong presence of these Bantu-derived *falares africanos* in colonial Brazil. For example, one term for ‘coffee’ in Calunga, *gatuvira*, is well-known in the Patrocínio region, though *café* is undoubtedly the most frequent. While several of these terms are somewhat obscure or archaic to many speakers – even to some speakers in Patrocínio – there may have been a time in the past when these words were more common, though there is no way to verify this.

4. Conclusions

Calunga is classified as a *falar africano* that is perhaps best translated and characterized in English as an *Africanized speech*. This terminology, I think, is correct given that Calunga is not a completely independent and fully grammatical *language* that is spoken natively within a speech community. I would not regard this as a pidgin, given the considerable size and creativity of its lexicon. It is not a creole either – as it is not a complete native language – a hallmark of most if not all true creoles. Instead, the linguistic data demonstrate that Calunga is not a fully expanded language with a completely autonomous lexicon and grammar. While the lexicon is derived largely from Kimbundu, Umbundu, and Kikongo (to a lesser degree), there is definite infiltration of Brazilian Portuguese from the rural Southeast in the phonetics/phonology and morphosyntax of the language. An analysis of Calunga’s Bantu lexicon might lead one to interpret it as an African language, but a careful investigation of the grammar shows far more elements of BPV vernacular than of Bantu, characteristic of the termed “anti-creole” (Couto 1992, 2002; Petter 1999) or of an “intertwined language” (Bakker & Muysken 1995; Thomason 1995). It seems plausible, therefore, that Calunga is the result of linguistic restructuring by African slaves who acquired Brazilian Portuguese
(in its multiple varieties). Hence, from the data it appears to be more of an Africanized dialect of Brazilian Portuguese than a descendant dialect of Bantu languages.

The grammatical structure of Calunga appears to have been conditioned more by reductions and acquisitions of BPV than by Bantu languages, with the exception of the lexicon. There are no particular phonemes, inflections, or syntactic structures that are uniquely Calunga, with the exception of nominal pronouns and aprumá(r) constructions. While some phenomena could be secondary results of African languages, the grammatical data lean more toward the second language restructuring of BPV with Africanisms and simplifications rather than the African restructuring of Portuguese, as observed in Portuguese-based creoles such as Guinea-Bissau creole or Sãotomense and Angolar creoles.

Currently there are no historical linguistic data from Calunga which could offer historical clues as to how this Africanized speech evolved. Calunga could have been “more African” in its grammatical structure in the past two centuries, but currently available evidence is not sufficient to ascertain this hypothesis. However, Calunga could, at a much earlier stage, have been a more “complete” language – one that that did not rely on Portuguese to fill grammar gaps. Calunga also may be passing currently through decreolization toward BPV, leaving subsequent traces of lexical items, though this too cannot be objectively proven.

Much future work remains to be done: for instance, further in situ research is needed into other Calunga communities that are rumored to exist in the surrounding areas of the Triângulo Mineiro, including in the neighboring states of Goiás and Tocantins, not to mention other Afro-Brazilian speech communities in Minas Gerais and throughout Brazil. Such communities are valuable in presenting a more comprehensive picture of the Brazilian linguistic puzzle of Minas Gerais and of Brazil. Moreover, they may better answer questions as to the African influence in Brazilian Portuguese, and they may also illuminate whether or not BPV is in fact influenced grammatically by (semi-)creolized speech. Difficult problems as these will only be solved by fieldwork and additional documentation of contemporary Afro-Brazilian speech, of which Calunga is but one of the pieces of this puzzle.

Notes

a “Anti-creole is a language with at least part of the lexicon from the original language (substrate language) used with the grammar of the involved superstrate language” (Couto 2002: 48-49, my translation).

b Given the little that is known about the history and evolution of Calunga, etymologies for Calunga words and expressions are tentative, many being uncertain or unknown. In some
cases, more than one language may have been a possible source. When applicable, all possible origins and subsequent commentaries are presented. The orthographic patterns originate primarily from Calunga informant José Astrogildo’s (personal interview) handwritten compilation of Calunga terms; others are from bibliographic sources. In gathering etymologies, the following sources appear:

(AL) = Alves, P. A. (1951)
(B) = Battinga, G. (1994)
(BE) = Bentley, W. H. (1887/1967)
(C) = Cunha, A. G. (2001)
(LA) = Laman, K. E. (1964)
(J) = Johnston, Sir H. H. (1919)

C
Camano ‘man, person’. Possibly from Umbundo omanu ‘man’ (L: 58); or Kimbundu mua- na, mona ‘son, daughter’ or kamona ‘of the son’ (VF: 292).

D
Ofú ‘black’. Umbundo fufu ‘poor, person with ripped clothing’ (L: 167); or undetermined (VF: 325).

E
Vamos aprumá ‘let’s go...’ Aprumá(r) ‘to do, make, happen’. Portuguese prumo ‘iron instrument used to check verticality, prudence’ (C: 643); or regional Brazilian Portuguese ‘to make a better life’ (VF: 287).

F
Injó ‘house’. Kimbundo njo ‘house’ or Umbundo onjo ‘house’ (L: 118); Kikongo nzó (BE: 111; VF: 310).

G
Aprumando, gerund form of aprumá(r), see note 5.

H
Nanga ‘clothes, pants’. Kimbundu nanga ‘cloth’ or Umbundu onanga ‘clothes’ (L: 164; VF: 322).

I
Calungou: 3rd-person, preterite form of verb calunga(r). See section 3.3 for the etymological discussion of the term calunga.

J
Ocai/Ocaia/Ocaio ‘woman’. Kimbundu ucai ‘woman’ (VF: 325); Umbundo ukáyi ‘wife’ (L: 167).

K
Oa ‘bad, poor, worse, nothing’. Possibly related to Umbundo wa ‘to fall’ (L: 167); Nhaneca o ‘worse’ (VF: 324).

L
Os camano cá ‘we, us’ (lit. the-(pl) man here). See note 5.

M
Os camano ‘they, them’ (lit. the-(pl) man). See note 5.

N

O
Cumbaca ‘city, village’. Kimbundu ku-nmbara ‘in the village’ (VF: 300); Umbundo ochim- baka ‘city, capital, fortress’ (L: 86).

P
Os camano maioral ‘the plantation owners’. For camano see note 5; maioral is from Portuguese maior ‘greater’.

Q
Imbunda ‘black’. From a Bantu ethnic term mbunda for the Ambundu tribe (L: 115).

R
Curimá(r), verbal form of curima ‘work, job’. Kimbundu kudíma, kurima ‘to work’ (L: 88; VF: 301); Umbundo okulima ‘to cultivate, labor’ (L: 88).

S
Variation of imbundu. See note 17.

T

U
Aprumá(r) o saravo ‘to whip’. See note 5 for aprumá(r); saravo undetermined.

V
Mucofo ‘old’. Possibly related to Kikongo mu-nkavu ‘in half’ (L: 157); Kimbundu mukulu ‘old’ (VF: 319).
w Ingambi/Jambi ‘God, saint’. Possibly multilingual Bantu term nzambi ‘supreme being’ (L: 227); Kikongo nsambi ‘worshipper, one who prays’ (BE: 591).

x Diminutive variation of imbundu. See note 17.

y Imperfect form of calungá(r) ‘to talk, speak (Calunga)’. See section 3.3.

z Gerund form of calungá(r) ‘to talk, speak (Calunga)’. See section 3.3.

aa Diminutive variation of camano. See note 3.

ab Uranu ‘God, supreme being’. Undetermined etymology.

ac Injó da água ‘water mill’. For injó, see note 6; água ‘water’ from Portuguese.

ad Ingomo/Ingombe ‘ox, cattle’. Kimbundu ngombe ‘ox’ (VF: 309); multilingual Bantu term ngombe ‘ox’ (L: 117).

ae Cumbaca ‘city, village’. See note 15.

af Injó de ingomu ‘stable’. See notes 6 and 30.

ag Marangola/Marango ‘donkey’. Related to Kimbundu ngolo ‘zebra’ or Umbundu ongolo ‘zebra’ (L: 30, 168; VF: 309).

ah Ticoque/Chipoque ‘bean(s)’. Kimbundu kipoke ‘bean’ (VF: 335); Umbundo ochipoke ‘bean’ (L: 213); Nhaneca otchipoke ‘bean’ (VF: 335).

ai Aprumá(r) na mucota ‘to eat’. For aprumá(r), see note 5. Mucota/Micota ‘mouth’. Undetermined, possibly Bantu (L: 157); Kimbundu nukoto ‘cow, hoof, paw’ (VF: 320).

aj Gerund form of quinhama(r) ‘to walk’, derived from quinhama/quinhamba ‘leg’. Umbundo ochinama ‘leg’ or Kimbundu kina ‘leg’ (L: 189).

ak Cumba ‘time, hour, sun’. Kimbundu kumbi ‘sun, light, hour’ or Umbundu ekumbi ‘sun’ (L: 86; VF: 300).

al Unknown Calunga term.

am Urungo ‘vehicle, car’. Possibly related to Umbundu ulungundju ‘snoar, roar’ (metaphor for the sound of the motor) (L: 220); undetermined (VF: 358).


ao Zipaque ‘money’. Possibly Kimbundu vipaco ‘gold’ (VF: 340); Umbundo ovipako ‘wealth, riches, goods’ (L: 222).

ap Aprumadu du zipaque ‘rich’. Aprumado participle form of aprumá(r), see note 5. For zipaque, see note 41.

aq This may be analyzed as a separate lexical entry all together (i.e. meu nego ‘my buddy’, derived from meu negro; sapato negro ‘black shoe’ > *?sapato negro).

ar It is noteworthy that this same syntactic pattern is characteristic of the dialect from Helvécia, Bahia – possibly a Brazilian creole (cf. Baxter 1992); and in vernacular Brazilian Portuguese – possibly a semi-creole (cf. Holm 1987, 1992, 2004).

as These tables utilize only the pronoun camano-ca. See Table 1 for other possible Calunga pronouns that can be syntactically realized with the verb.

References


