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Title	'Twee shishi': A remembered secular song in Carriols (Virgin Islands Dutch Creole)
Authors	Bøegh, Kristoffer Friis
Published in	Taal en tongval
Publication Date	2025-08-02
Link	<a href="https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/478631">https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/478631</a>
Citation	Bøegh, K F 2025, "'Twee shishi': A remembered secular song in Carriols (Virgin Islands Dutch Creole)", <i>Taal en tongval</i> , vol. 77, no. 2, pp. 141-170. <a href="https://doi.org/10.5117/TET2025.2.001.BOEG">https://doi.org/10.5117/TET2025.2.001.BOEG</a>
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## 'Twee shishi': A remembered secular song in Carriols (Virgin Islands Dutch Creole)

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### Abstract

This article examines a 1980 recording of a remembered song in Carriols, or Virgin Islands Dutch Creole, the now-extinct Dutch-based creole once spoken in the former Danish West Indies and current US Virgin Islands. Recorded in St. Thomas, the song, 'Twee Shishi' ('Two Sisters'), was part of an African-derived musical tradition known as bamboula, common in the Caribbean during the era of slavery. While European missionaries documented many religious songs in Carriols, little secular material produced by members of the colonized population has been preserved. This is the only known surviving audio recording of a song in Carriols from before the language died out in 1987. The article offers a brief historical overview of bamboula in the Virgin Islands and presents a linguistic analysis and discussion of 'Twee Shishi', situating it within the broader context of Carriols documentation. While the song aligns with 20th-century Carriols linguistically, it likely originates from before the mid-19th century.

**Keywords:** Carriols, Virgin Islands Dutch Creole, basilect, secular song, bamboula, missionaries, 19th century, St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, US Virgin Islands

### Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to MaryJane Soule for input and discussions on the interpretation of 'Twee Shishi' and to Cefas van Rossem for his help in connection with translating the song. I am also thankful for their valuable

comments, as well as those of Peter Bakker and two anonymous reviewers, on an earlier version of this article. Additionally, I thank Stanley Jacobs for answering my questions about bamboula on St. Croix in the 20th century. The work presented here is supported by the Carlsberg Foundation (Grant CF23-1162).

## 1. Introduction

On February 10, 1980, the American cultural archivist MaryJane Soule recorded an interview with the sisters Gerda Benjamin (1925–1983) and Gladys Venzen (1923–2008). The location of the interview was Ms. Benjamin's home on the east end of St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, where the two sisters were born and raised, and also lived as adults. In the interview, the two sisters talked about bamboula, an African-derived musical tradition that was common in the Caribbean during the era of slavery. In the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, the following description of bamboula as practiced in the Virgin Islands is provided:

Bamboula, an extinct or reconstructed tradition of African-style dance, drumming, and song, is associated with St. Thomas. In the early twentieth century, before it ceased to exist in its traditional form and social context, it apparently consisted of two drummers playing a single drum (one with the hands and heel, the other with two sticks), dance movements (probably of African derivation), and men and women singing songs with collective refrains punctuating often improvised solo texts. (Sheehy 1998: 973)

The sisters' late mother was Clarita Simmonds Smith Mathias (1887–1963), known locally as 'Miss Clara'. She was revered, writes Soule (2014: 19), as 'the last bamboula queen of St. Thomas'. In the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*, the term *bamboula queen*, known primarily from the Virgin Islands, is defined as '[t]he woman singer who compose[d] songs extemporaneously, based on local scandal, and [led] the bamboula street-dancers who would repeat the lines in call-response pattern' (Allsopp 1996: 76).

This article examines 'Twee Shishi' ('Two Sisters'), a remembered song in Carriols (ISO 639-3: dcr) from Miss Clara's bamboula repertoire, as featured in the 1980 interview with her two daughters.<sup>1</sup> Carriols, also known as Virgin Islands Dutch Creole, was a Dutch-based creole language that emerged on St. Thomas in the late 17th century through contact between enslaved people of African descent and European colonists. It later spread to St. John and

St. Croix, the two other islands that at the time made up the Danish West Indies, becoming a lingua franca from the 1730s onward. It was used among the enslaved, the colonists, and in European missionaries' proselytizing activities, leading to different varieties developing in the different population groups. The use of Carriols declined during the 19th century as the majority of the islands' population shifted to English or English Creole, yet it continued to be spoken by a small minority of Virgin Islanders in the 20th century. Its last known native speaker, Mrs. Alice Stevens (b. 1899), who had learned the language from her grandparents, passed away in 1987. Altogether, Carriols was spoken for about three centuries (for overviews, see e.g. Stolz 1986; Van Rossem and Van der Voort 1996; Sabino 2012).

Section 2 presents background on Carriols and its documentation, along with a brief historical overview of bamboula in the Virgin Islands. Section 3 provides a linguistic analysis and discussion of 'Tweeshishi', situating it within the broader context of the documentation of Carriols. Section 4 concludes the study.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Carriols and its documentation

Carriols is one of the most extensively documented Caribbean creoles, with records spanning around 300 years. The earliest surviving fragment dates back to 1681, less than a decade after the Danish colonization of St. Thomas (Bøegh et al. 2025). Starting in the late 1730s and continuing for 250 years, the language was documented, though with varying approaches and purposes, and with an uneven amount of material across different periods (see Van Rossem and Van der Voort 1996 for an anthology of texts). There is a notable difference between the early and the later main documentation. In general, sources from the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century show the language closer to Dutch, while later sources reflect a basilectal creole, structurally distinct from Dutch. Some of the differences are discussed in Stolz (1986) and Van Rossem (2017). The early period was primarily defined by missionary-produced material, much of it of a religious nature. The Moravian Brethren, a pietistic Protestant group from Herrnhut, Germany, arrived in the early 1730s and were followed by a Danish Lutheran mission in the 1750s, with parallel activities. The later period is characterized by secular material from 20th-century academic fieldwork.

Soon after their arrival, the German Moravians, and later the Danish Lutherans, began laying the groundwork for producing religious and literacy

materials in Carriols for enslaved children and converted adults. Appel et al. (2024: 204) note that a total of at least 25 books – including ABC-books (or primers), hymnbooks, catechisms, and partial Bible translations – were printed during the entire period of mission and schooling with Carriols as the main language, the first in the 1760s and the last in the late 1830s. A large number of manuscript pages can be added to this material (for overviews, see Stein 1986; Hinskens 1995; Van Rossem and Van der Voort 1996). Also in the 18th century, a number of descriptions of Carriols were produced, linked to (if not directly part of) missionary work (see Stein 2024 for an overview). In 1770, J.M. Magens from St. Thomas published a grammar of Carriols in Danish (Magens 1770). It was the world's first printed grammar of a creole language (for a partial translation into English, see Bakker and Van der Voort 2008). Another important example from around the same time is the account by the German Moravian missionary and historian C.G.A. Oldendorp (1777/2000–2002). Magens' description reflects the language as spoken primarily by the European-descended population, whereas Oldendorp's description relates more to the language use of the enslaved population; both are shaped by 18th-century approaches to grammar and (in places) influenced by prescriptive attitudes toward language. Additional secular materials were collected in the 20th century by scholars such as the Dutch anthropologist J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong; the American academic Frank G. Nelson; the Virgin Islands-based linguists Anne Graves, Gilbert Sprauve, and Robin Sabino; as well as by the lexicographer R. 'Lito' Valls (e.g. De Josselin de Jong 1926; Nelson 1936; Graves 1977; Valls 1981; Sprauve 1984, 1985; Sabino 2012). The difference between these distinct periods is even more apparent due to the limited documentation from the late 1830s and the following 90 years, from which comparatively little material is preserved (cf. Van Rossem and Van der Voort 1996: 231 ff.), including examples of proverbs and short texts recorded by casual observers (e.g. Pontoppidan 1881, 1887; cf. Stein 2014).

The situation sketched out above raises the question of whether Carriols evolved from a more Dutch-like form to a basilectal creole or if the differences instead reflect distinct approaches to documenting the language. More specifically, early approaches were influenced to varying extents by prescriptivism, potentially distorting the picture of the structure of the language. Sabino (2012) argued that, due to the nature of the differences in documentation, the early and later sources should not be treated as a single continuous dataset, and thus decided to accept only material from the 20th century that can be verified as originating from actual speakers, as genuine records of Carriols. Taking a step back, Bakker (2014) argued instead for treating Carriols as documented in different periods and sources as distinct

lectal varieties, emphasizing the continued importance of the early material (akin to e.g. Muysken 1995 and Stein 2013). Meanwhile, significant progress was made in digitalization, facilitating more comprehensive analysis. As a result of a project led by Pieter Muysken, a digitally accessible and searchable Carriols database (the 'NEHOL Collection') was published, which compiles many of the linguistic sources (see Van Sluijs 2014). Today, it is available through *The Language Archive*<sup>2</sup>. Subsequent research (e.g. Van Sluijs 2017; Van Rossem 2017, 2024; Bøegh et al. 2022, 2025; Appel et al. 2024; Robbe and Bakker 2024; Stein 2024) has worked to carefully map diachronic developments through in-depth analysis, meticulous contextualization, and inter- and intra-textual comparison of sources, as well as unearthing additional texts. This has contributed to our understanding of the evolving historical (socio)linguistic situation and the preferences and limitations in documenting the language.

Given its status as a moribund language at the time, with only a handful of speakers remaining (cf. Graves 1977), the existence of Carriols in a recording from 1980 – one that was not specifically intended to document the language – is unusual. Not only that, the bamboula song recorded in the interview with Miss Clara's daughters, 'Tweeshishi', is, in fact, the only known surviving audio recording of a song in Carriols from before the language became extinct. Many religious songs in Carriols were documented by European missionaries, but little secular material created by members of the colonized population has been preserved. Until recently, 'Tweeshishi' had not been recognized as being in Carriols. Consequently, the discovery of this recording adds a novel example to the existing Carriols corpus, showcasing this now-extinct Caribbean contact language in use within a previously unattested context, reflecting an African-influenced aspect of Virgin Islands culture. It is unknown when the song was created, but as will be argued, it likely dates from before the mid-19th century. Since the language in 'Tweeshishi' aligns with Carriols as documented in the 20th century, the song sheds new light on the documentary and (socio)linguistic history of Carriols.

## 2.2 The bamboula tradition in the Virgin Islands

With regard to the African origin of the bamboula tradition, it can initially be noted that, based on information from Mikael Parkvall's *Afrolex* database (Parkvall, n.d.), the word *bamboula* has historical ties to Bantu-speaking regions of Central Africa, including areas associated with the Kikongo language, where a related lexical item, *bula*, means 'to strike' or 'to hit' (as one would do when playing a drum). Moreover, similar terms to *bamboula*, referring

to a drum and dance tradition, are found not only in Bantu languages but also in West African languages within the Mande and Atlantic subgroups of Niger-Congo, spoken in the Senegambia region. The dance has been identified as having Bantu origins, as noted for instance by Bastide (1971: 173) in relation to Haiti. In Dutch, Portuguese, and French creoles of the Caribbean, the word tends to refer to a dance or a drum. In modern French, *bamboula* can be used as a racist slur against Black people, associated with colonial-era stereotypes. Note, however, that such a connotation does not exist in the Virgin Islands context, where *bamboula* is instead positively associated with the population's history of resilience, and is generally regarded as a form of expression of resistance (for examples, see Nicholls 2012: 245–246).

Before the islands were sold to the USA in 1917, St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix were known as the Danish West Indies (see Figure 1), having been colonized by Denmark(-Norway) in the 17th and 18th centuries. St. Thomas was permanently settled in 1672, St. John in 1718, and St. Croix in 1734 (having been acquired from the French the year before). Under the Danish flag, the islands were developed as a slave society, with an economy based on trade and sugar production. For a general overview of the historical background of the Danish West Indies and a survey of research pertaining to the period of Danish colonial rule, see, for example, Jensen and Simonsen (2016).

Despite being Danish by name, the Danish West Indies were characterized by extensive African ethnic diversity. In the late 1760s, the Moravian Oldendorp (1777/2000–2002) documented the enslaved population speaking over 25 African languages (see Bøegh 2024 for an in-depth study of this material). The African-descended population introduced and maintained various cultural practices during slavery, and sources suggest that *bamboula* was practiced shortly after the onset of colonization. For example, in 1684, an ordinance was issued banning drum playing and gatherings among the enslaved, with punishments for violations (cf. Highfield and Bøegh 2018: 32).

During the 19th century, before the abolition of slavery in 1848, *bamboula* was documented on both St. Thomas and St. Croix. By this time, *bamboula* dancing, which involved vigorous, rhythmic movements performed to the beat of a drum – a practice easily recognizable as an African-derived form of expression – was permitted but discouraged by the Danish authorities. As Nicholls (2012: 246) writes, '[b]amboula dances were energetic and viewed by Europeans as overtly sexual, with offensive and ribald lyrics', and as noted by Highfield (2018: 35), the establishment considered *bamboula* 'to be a threat to the docility of the enslaved'. Virgin Islands lexicographer R. 'Lito' Valls made note of a more positive view of *bamboula* existing among the broader European-descended population, stating that it was a '[a] favorite,

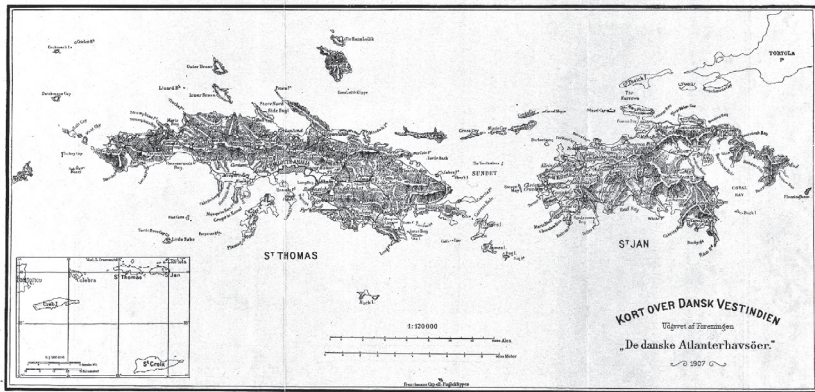


Figure 1. A map of St. Thomas and St. John from 1907 when they were still Danish colonial possessions. St. Croix, the largest and the southernmost of the Virgin Islands, can be seen in the inset map located in the left bottom. The Virgin Islands are located east of Puerto Rico. Source: The Royal Danish Library's digital collection, available online at <https://www.kb.dk>, accessed 30 May 2025.

and now obsolete, island dance *indulged in by both blacks and whites*' (Valls 1981: 6, emphasis added).

As described in various sources, bamboula as practiced in the Virgin Islands included drumming, dancing, and singing, and was especially associated with festive celebrations during holidays. Dora Richards Miller, an author and educator who was born and raised in the Danish West Indies before leaving the islands for Louisiana, described a bamboula festival on St. Croix in the 1840s that took place between Christmas Eve and January 2. She wrote the following in her memoirs, finalized around 1886 (cf. Bøegh and Bakker 2024), as part of a longer passage dedicated to this topic:

In looking back [...] nothing [...] appears so strange an accompaniment of slavery as the annual Saturnalia<sup>3</sup> which was permitted from Christmas Eve to January 2nd, during which time the Bamboula was danced by day and night. The preparations for this festival went on through the year in meetings held at night at the cabins of the principal leaders [among the enslaved – KFB], and its most curious feature was the censorship exercised over the morals and manners of their owners and the white population at large. Every smallest bit of private scandal or family gossip, which who else could find out so well, was seized upon and made the theme of all songs which were sung during the dances, so that the expression 'the town will ring with it', was here literally true. (Miller 2024 [ca. 1886]: 119–120)

Participants in bamboula could include both men and women, unlike in Haiti, for example, where only men would perform in bamboula contexts. This is noted by Miller (2024: 120, 122) and it is also highlighted in another description from the 1840s, namely an account by Thurlow Weed, an American newspaper publisher who spent the winter of 1844–1845 on St. Croix. He wrote as follows in his account of his stay, offering an impression of what bamboula entailed, referencing both the type of drum and its playing, as well as the mixed-gender composition of the dance:

The instrument which, on these occasions [i.e. bamboula get-togethers], ‘discourses most eloquent music,’ is a large keg or half barrel, over the head of which a goat skin is drawn, and upon which a negro beats with his hands, as proudly and triumphantly as Ole Bull draws his cat gut. The Dance is opened by the King and Queen. The Prima Donna sings ballads, while the whole gang unite in the chorus, to which the Drums furnish a *very* base, but truly appropriate accompaniment. (Weed 1866 [1844/1845]: 346, original emphasis)

On July 3, 1848, an estimated 8,000 people – approximately half of the total enslaved population in St. Croix – gathered for a demonstration demanding their freedom. This uprising led to the abolition of slavery in the Danish West Indies (cf. Hall 1992: 208 ff.). Bamboula declined in the post-emancipation period (cf. Nicholls 1998: 82 ff., 2012: 245–246). By the beginning of the 20th century, bamboula appears to have disappeared from St. Croix. According to Crucian (adjective meaning ‘of/from St. Croix’) flutist, bandleader, and cultural advocate Stanley Jacobs (b. 1941), he never heard of bamboula being practiced in St. Croix during his youth, nor had it been mentioned by the generation directly preceding his own or by the many elderly locals he knew through his career in the elder care sector (personal communication, 2025).<sup>4</sup>

In St. Thomas, the bamboula tradition remained viable longer. ‘Due to the efforts of devoted practitioners’, Nicholls (1998: 85) writes, ‘bamboula continued in a modified form [...] and was featured, for example, in the 1914 Carnival’. Specifically, it was women who kept the tradition alive, with Miss Clara (pictured in Figure 2) as the last principal culture bearer.

As noted by Nicholls (2012: 246), ‘Miss Clara and the Southside Bamboula Dancers kept the genre alive until the St. Thomas Carnivals of the 1950s’.<sup>5</sup> However, ‘by this time’, Nicholls (2012: 246) continues, ‘it was more of a form of adult parade entertainment than a viable folk form’. This development was not new; according to Leaf (1948: 136), the tradition had been ‘considerably subdued and refined’ since the colonial period, and already in the 1880s, Taylor (1888:



Figure 2. Miss Clara in her bamboula attire. Date and photographer unknown. This photograph was shared by Gerda Benjamin with MaryJane Soule to accompany Ms. Benjamin's recorded memories of her mother. Source: Soule (1993–2025).

62) wrote that '[t]he humbler classes no longer dance the bamboula', a sentiment later echoed by Gimenez (1933: 87). In 1950, a Danish Lutheran pastor on St. Thomas, Jens Larsen, asserted that '[a]lthough [bamboula] is today performed in a modified form on special holidays, it has lost its attraction and is now looked upon as a practice associated with bondage of the past' (Larsen 1950: 214).

The traditional form of bamboula is no longer practiced in the Virgin Islands. For further information and discussion of bamboula, see the work of Lieth-Philipp (1989, 1990) and Soule (1993–2025), based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork with Virgin Islanders, as well as Sheehy's (1998) musicological survey of the Virgin Islands.

### 3. 'Tweeshishi' and its place within the broader context of Carriols documentation

#### 3.1 'Tweeshishi'

The St. Thomas bamboula dances – as recalled by Ms. Benjamin and Ms. Venzen in the 1980 interview – were accompanied by call-and-response singing. The songs alternated between four-line verses with a refrain and litanies where each line was shared between a solo singer and a chorus. The lyrics centered around local news and scandals. As Nicholls (2012: 220) writes, 'songs of bamboula dances [...] drew attention to and sought to remedy socially unacceptable behavior'. An example of such a song appears on the recording with Ms. Benjamin and Ms. Venzen. The recording of the song is included as a 39-second track with the title 'Tway She She' on the CD *Zoop Zoop Zoop: Traditional Music and Folklore of St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John*, released on New World Records in 1993. The track is available online on the audio streaming platform Spotify<sup>6</sup> and on Youtube<sup>7</sup>, and possibly elsewhere. In the CD's liner notes<sup>8</sup>, available via the record label's

website<sup>9</sup>, the lyrics are incorrectly identified as being in English Creole (p. 18), and the fact that the song is in Carriols, a Dutch-lexifier creole (i.e. a creole whose lexicon is largely based on Dutch), has not been known previously among specialists.

In the recording, Ms. Benjamin sings while slapping her hands on the arms of her chair to simulate the *katta* rhythm (*katta* were the sticks used to strike the drum, cf. Soule 2014: 19, 558). In its intended context, the song would have been performed with alternating parts between a solo singer and a chorus, with the solo singer starting each phrase and the chorus responding. Ms. Benjamin (speaking local English influenced by English Creole) comments on this in the longer interview, as follows:

So you see it was like a chime, she sing and they answer. And that time, the type of the music going on and they're just holding their skirt and jiggling around. (Transcription adapted from Soule 2014: 271)

The recordings included on *Zoop Zoop Zoop* were sourced from the Soule Archive (Soule 1993–2025), a collection of recordings with Virgin Islanders made by MaryJane Soule in the years 1978–1985. The Soule Archive is housed at the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.<sup>10</sup> The collection comprises approximately 78 hours of audio material. The original analog recordings were digitized in the 1990s, and a digital library copy was donated to the Danish Folklore Archives, now part of the Royal Danish Library. More recently, a copy was also donated to the University of the Virgin Islands. The collection also includes companion texts containing verbatim transcriptions of parts of the material as well as metadata about the individuals recorded.

The focus of Soule's documentary project, she writes, was to capture 'the songs, stories, and oratorical traditions that were fading from practice' (Soule 2014: 12) at the time of her collection efforts. The musical traditions documented by her include 'scratch' bands, *quelbe* (the traditional dance music of St. Croix), and *cariso* (a topical song form specific to St. Croix, almost always sung by women), as well as *bamboula* and other forms of music. Meanwhile, approximately half of the recordings in the collection contain oral history interviews with Virgin Islanders, most of whom were born under the Danish regime. Most of the recordings in the Soule Archive are in local English and English Creole, ranging from standard English with a Virgin Islands accent, to comparatively 'deep' Creole, at times unintelligible to outsiders (for further discussion of this type of sociolinguistic situation and creole typology in the Caribbean, see e.g. Bøegh and Bakker 2025).

However, a few recordings stand out. For example, there are some recordings of elderly women switching from English Creole to a form of Danish that they remembered from when they learned Danish in school, before the US transfer in 1917 (for more on the history of the school system in the Danish West Indies, see Johansen et al. 2008 and Lawaetz 1980 for the early period). A few other recordings appear to be in St. Thomas French, which was a conservative, now-extinct French dialect spoken in the Frenchtown neighborhood just outside the main town of Charlotte Amalie in St. Thomas (described in Highfield 1979).

Finally, there is the song in Carriols – a language that was rarely heard anymore by 1980. Indeed, Ms. Benjamin and Ms. Venzen were not themselves active Carriols speakers – their language was Virgin Islands English/English Creole – so it was a remembered language for them. In the interview, Ms. Venzen says that Carriols was ‘ancient, old time’, and Ms. Benjamin adds, ‘it was a language which we did never learn – they never taught us – but a few of our people used to speak it’ (Soule 2014: 271). Despite this claim, the recording shows that they had at least some passive competence in the language, and they were able to understand and reflect on the lyrics. It is unknown who created ‘Tweeshishi’, or when. It could have been Miss Clara, but it is more likely that it was an old song she knew and continued to perform. The fact that it is in Carriols rather than English Creole lends support to this view. It is possible that the song had been passed down from ‘old time’, perhaps the time around the abolition of slavery, but it could also be older yet, considering that Carriols is generally held to have ‘only really flourished between 1730 and 1830’ (Van Rossem and Van der Voort 1996: 32).

### 3.2 Interpretation and linguistic analysis

In the following, an interpretation of ‘Tweeshishi’ is presented along with a number of linguistic observations aimed at characterizing the language in the song. ‘Tweeshishi’, like most songs in the bamboula genre, is about a scandal. Specifically, the lyrics allude to two sisters who were living with the same man – and, it is implied, were both intimately involved with him. Some important considerations in this connection – should the song predate 1848, the year of the abolition of slavery – but which we cannot know for certain, include whether the two sisters in question had been freed (possibly by this same man), had purchased their own freedom, had been free since birth (there was a considerably-sized free Creole population, cf. population figures in Hall 1992: 5), or were enslaved; whether they were members of the white population (which, notably, was not spared in connection with bamboula songs); or whether they even existed in reality or were merely imagined

(possibly inspired by actual individuals). The lyrics can be transcribed, interpreted, and translated as follows:

- (1) a. Twee shishi *shoo wah wah*  
 two sister *shoo wah wah*  
 ‘Two sisters, shoo wah wah’
- b. Loo won me een man *shoo wah wah*  
 ASP live/reside with INDF/one man *shoo wah wah*  
 ‘Are living with a/one man, shoo wah wah’
- c. Grotnom sa weet di *shoo wah wah*  
 big.man FUT know 3.INAN/DET *shoo wah wah*  
 ‘“Big man” will find out about it/this, shoo wah wah’
- d. Da bin da wat da get *shoo wah wah*  
 that COP that/there what/how that get *shoo wah wah*  
 ‘That is how it goes (lit. “what that gets”), shoo wah wah’

Initially, it seems that the chorus (*shoo wah wah*) consists of vocalizations, conveying no specific meaning. As for the rest of the lyrics, the free translation provided in (1) represents one possible, relatively straightforward interpretation; however, the lyrics allow for other, more risqué readings as well. This is consistent with the fact that older songs created by Virgin Islanders are generally filled with double entendres, slang, and words and phrases used symbolically or metaphorically (Soule 1993–2025). Given what we know about the bamboula genre – and taking into account the significant laughter elicited in the interview accompanying the song recording – it is likely that this ambiguity was fully exploited.

A number of linguistic observations can be made to establish that the song is in a Dutch-lexifier creole, specifically Carriols, rather than some other form of Dutch(-based) variety. Moreover, some of these corroborate that structurally, the language in the song aligns closely with Carriols as documented in 20th-century sources. In particular, as it will be illustrated below, the language appears nearly identical to Carriols as documented in De Josselin de Jong (1926), a collection of fairy tales and fables with a glossary, gathered by the Dutch anthropologist J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong during an archaeological expedition in 1922–1923 in St. Thomas and St. John. De Josselin de Jong (1926) is considered a key source for the study of the Carriols of the African-descended generation born in the mid-19th century (see Van Rossem 2024 for an in-depth study of De Josselin de Jong’s fieldwork). The basilect as documented in De Josselin de Jong (1926) is taken as the default lect surveyed in the *Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures* (Van Sluijs 2013, in Michaelis et al. 2013; online atlas resource: APiCS).

First off, the form *shishi* /ʃiʃi/ (1a), derived from Dutch *zusje* (i.e. *zus* 'sister' with the diminutive ending *-je*) and with a CVCV morpheme structure, is well-attested in 20th-century sources. This includes De Josselin de Jong (1926) and, as noted by Sabino (2012: 285), also Nelson (1936) and Valls (1981), as well as spoken texts collected in the 1980s by Sabino. Earlier sources, by contrast, tend to reveal forms such as <Sischin> (entry in anonymous 18th-century glossary, usually attributed to the Danish missionary J.C. Kingo, in Stein and Van der Voort 1996: 175), likewise from Dutch, where the origin of the <n> is unknown, or <suster> (letter from 1753 cited in Van Rossem and Van der Voort 1996: 85), from German. A tendency for CV syllables and, consequently, CVCV morpheme structure, as observed in 20th-century Carriols sources (cf. Van Sluijs 2013: 267–268) and as also found in 'Tweeshishi', is a feature very often associated with comparatively 'deep' creoles (cf. Bartens 2013: 83–85).

In terms of NP structure, we can note that *shishi* ('sister') (1a) is not morphologically marked for plurality but is modified only by the preceding adnominal numeral *twee* ('two'). Absence or variable extent of plural marking is a feature often associated with creoles, including Carriols (cf. feature 22 in APiCS; Van Sluijs 2013: 268). Carriols employed a number of strategies for indicating nominal plurality (or not). For example, De Josselin de Jong (1926) also has a plural marker *sinu*, with a number of variant forms, following the noun (cf. feature 23 in APiCS), and in older sources (e.g. Magens 1770) we also find the variants <sender> and <sellie>, which both can be found in several different orthographies (see Hinskens and Van Rossem 1996 for an in-depth discussion).

Next, the item *loo* (1b) is derived from the Dutch verb *lopen* ('to walk', infinitive form; stem *loop*). In 20th-century Carriols sources, *loo* is well attested as a lexical verb meaning 'to walk', but it had also grammaticalized and acquired aspectual meanings, also as a short form *lo* (cf. De Josselin de Jong 1926: 91; Sabino 2012: 247; Van Sluijs 2013: 269–270, 2017: 137 ff.). In 'Tweeshishi', *loo* functions as a tense-mood-aspect (TMA) marker – specifically, as a preverbal particle indicating progressive or habitual aspect. It is followed by the lexical verb *won* ('to live; reside', from Dutch *wonen*, stem *woon*, for which several variant forms are listed in De Josselin de Jong 1926: 107). A key feature diagnostic of creolization is the emergence of preverbal TMA particles (see e.g. Bartens 2013: 101 ff.). TMA marking elements in creoles tend to behave strikingly similarly, with a clear tendency for particles to immediately precede the verb (cf. feature 43 in APiCS). In most 18th-century Carriols sources, the form attested is *le* (e.g. Magens 1770: 23), not *lo/loo*. The earliest known occurrence of *lo* is in a text from 1788 (cf. Van Rossem and

Van der Voort 1996: 224; cf. also Section 3.3). An in-depth study of variation between *le* and *loo/lo* in Carriols data is offered by Van Sluijs (2017: 121 ff.).

It is also possible that the form which has thus far been analyzed as *me* ('with') (1b) should actually be *wee*, which, if so, represents a borrowing from English (Creole), based on English *way* or *away*. Based on the recording, it can be interpreted in either way. De Josselin de Jong (1926: 26) has a comparable example where *won* combines with *fawe* (< *far away*), and *wee* (< *away*) is also listed (p. 106) in the glossary. In fact, Carriols as documented by De Josselin de Jong (1926) is characterized by a significant number of English (Creole) borrowings. Given that all Carriols speakers in the 20th century were bilingual in English Creole (Sabino 2012: 6), it is not unexpected to find forms like these in De Josselin de Jong (1926), nor would it be so in 'Twee Shishi'. However, arguably, it remains preferable to interpret the (intended) form as *me* rather than *wee*, as it was stated by Ms. Benjamin when introducing the song, that it was about 'two sisters living *with* one man' (Soule 2014: 270, emphasis added).

The item *een* (1b) can be interpreted as either a numeral or an indefinite article. Indefinite articles in creoles are very often derived from the numeral 'one' in the lexifier – a feature commonly associated with creolization (cf. feature 29 in APiCS) – and Carriols follows this pattern, with its indefinite article originating from Dutch *een* (cf. De Josselin de Jong 1926: 78; Sabino 2012: 248; Van Sluijs 2013: 268).

The word *grotnom* (1c) is a compound otherwise only attested in De Josselin de Jong (1926: 12, 21, 83). Sabino (2012) defines Carriols *grot* as 'big, great' (p. 257) and *nom* as 'man, husband, uncle, person' (p. 273), with the compound *grotnom* being glossed as 'wise man' (p. 257). The etymology of *grot-* is, of course, Dutch *groot*, and the obvious etymology of *-nom* is Dutch *oom* ('uncle', with the secondary meaning 'respected older male'). The initial *n-* comes from frequent use in phrases like *mijn oom* ('my uncle') or similar. Some Belgian dialects have *nonkel* (< French *oncle*) as a default, and Zeelandic dialects have *noom* (Ghijsen 1964 has *nôôm*, *noam*, *nom*; cf. also Stroop 2015). In creoles, which are generally associated with having comparatively little morphology, especially in terms of inflectional morphology, compounding, by contrast, constitutes a highly productive morphological strategy for lexicon building (cf. Bartens 2013: 91–96).

With respect to the exact meaning of this lexical item, it should be noted that multiple interpretations are possible beyond Sabino's (2012: 257) 'wise man'. The free translation as 'big man' in (1c) has been deliberately left vague, reflecting the ambiguity inherent in the word. De Josselin de Jong (1926: 83) prefers to translate it as *profeet* ('prophet'), which points in a religious

direction. It could be reasonable to interpret the *-nom* in *grotnom* (1c) in a generic sense, meaning 'a male person (not necessarily a family member)', and if 'big' is also understood more broadly, *grotnom* could perhaps refer to an imposing man of high social standing – possibly a religious figure – or alternatively, people or society at large passing judgment on the two sisters' choices/situation. Yet another possibility is a double entendre reading, interpreting the lyrics as more risqué. Soule (1993–2025) provides ample examples of songs in English Creole where similar words can be understood as referring to genitalia (in this case, male genitalia) or to sexual impropriety. A possible interpretation, then, is that the *grotnom* 'will know "it/them" (i.e. the sisters' genitalia)'. As noted by Van Sluijs (2017: 72), inanimate referents can be referred to by *di* regardless of number.

The item *sa* (1c) functions as a preverbal TMA marker, specifically as a future/irrealis marker. Etymologically, *sa* derives from Dutch *zal* ('shall; will') (Van Sluijs 2013: 269–270, 2017: 74), the infinitive form being *zullen* (cf. also De Josselin de Jong 1926: 99). This feature has been documented throughout the history of Carriols and is also found in various sources from the 18th century (for examples, cf. Robbe and Bakker 2024: 248). In 'Tweeshishi', *sa* appears before a lexical verb (1c), interpretable as *weet* ('know'), corresponding to Dutch *weten*, *kennen* (cf. De Josselin de Jong 1926: 107). However, like the earlier example of *me/wee*, due to its phonetic shape, the exact intended verb remains open to interpretation. Specifically, the verb may alternatively be analyzed as *fen* ('find'), also listed in De Josselin de Jong (1926: 80), but if so, this does not substantially alter the overall meaning of the sentence.

Also the last line of the song (1d) reveals a structure that, at the sentence level, differs from how a corresponding sentence would appear in uncreolized Dutch – both in terms of individual words and the overall analytic structure. Of primary interest in this line are the various forms that seem to be influenced by English or English Creole. For example, there is the copula form *bin*, which De Josselin de Jong (1926: 73) comments on, stating that it 'is the other form of *bi*, apparently often used instead of [another copula form] *wees*, under the influence of English *been*' (my translation); he provides further reference to Hesseling's (1905: 110) treatment of this topic. Another example is the last word, a verb, which sounds like the English verb *get*. Most likely, this represents an English (Creole) interference; the expected Carriols word for the meaning 'get' would be *kri* (Sabino 2012: 265), and *get* does not appear in De Josselin de Jong's (1926) texts. Another possibility is another scarcely documented verb which is *het* ('to have', based on a Dutch dialect form meaning 'has'). It is attested in the proverb *Kakerlach no het*

*recht na hoenerkot* ('Cockroaches have no rights in hencoops') (proverb 109 in Valls 1983).

To summarize, even with just these few lines available, we can, without necessarily claiming that this is a fully exhaustive picture, identify at least a handful of features with diagnostic value in terms of establishing that we are dealing with a basilectal creole language structure. This corresponds to the form of the language documented in De Josselin de Jong (1926), which is also reflected in later fieldwork material. These features are the following:

- a lexical item with a /CVCV/ structure
- a morphologically unmarked plural
- a preverbal particle *loo* used for progressive/habitual aspect
- an item analyzable as an indefinite article based on the numeral 'one'
- the word *grotnom*, reflecting compounding as a productive morphological process
- a preverbal particle *sa* used for future tense/irrealis mood

Regarding English (Creole) influence, for which there are several examples (possibly a form *wee*, and the use of *bin* and *get*, and perhaps further influence as well), this could be interpreted as suggesting that the song originated in the 19th century, when Carriols was increasingly influenced by English Creole (see e.g. Van Rossem and Van der Voort 1996: 231 ff.; Sabino 2012: 71 ff.; Bøegh and Bakker 2021). Naturally, it is also possible that Miss Clara, and later Ms. Benjamin, may have introduced some changes to the lyrics compared to an earlier version, and if that is the case, these were likely English in origin (in particular, *get* seems a likely candidate).

### 3.3 The song within the broader context of Carriols documentation

Due to the large amount of written material, it is possible to study the diachrony of Carriols in meticulous detail. While there is no shortage of sources containing textual evidence on the structural history of the language, most of these were not written by native speakers, which may raise questions about the nature of the texts, particularly regarding the extent to which they are influenced by prescriptivism. In this light, it is relevant to explore how 'Twee Shishi' compares to other preserved Carriols songs, both religious and secular.

'Twee Shishi' occupies a special place in the documented Carriols song canon. Beyond being an audio recording rather than a written text, its use of Carriols in the context of bamboula contrasts with most other surviving Virgin Islands songs, the large majority of which are linked to missionary

work in the 18th and 19th centuries. These religious songs are hymns and differ starkly from 'Twee Shishi' in both content and purpose. The hymns typically focus on worship and devotion and were often documented by European missionary translators whose work reflects a language style less directly comparable to everyday speech. As a case in point, Oldendorp (2000: 700) comments that the Moravians deliberately used German-inspired passive constructions to (in their view) more adequately express matters of spiritual life; and while the enslaved understood passive constructions (e.g. the auxiliary verbs *woord/woor* or *wees* followed by the past participle of German or Dutch verbs), they did not use them in everyday discourse (cf. Stein 2024: 190–192). This can be ascertained with a high degree of confidence as passives are absent from the basilect (Van Sluijs 2017: 78). Magens (1770: 19) comments that passives '[b]ruges sielden i det Creolske' ('are rarely used in the Creole'), but then proceeds to spend almost four pages on passive constructions. In contrast, secular songs engage with non-religious themes, including daily life and social issues, and thus use more everyday vocabulary – not (as strongly) influenced by prescriptivism.

From the Danish West Indian missionary creolistic tradition comes, among other things, a large collection of hymns numbering in the hundreds. Excerpts are presented in Van Rossem and Van der Voort (1996: 93 ff.). Together with translations of Bible texts (for examples, see Van Rossem and Van der Voort 1996: 119 ff.), these hymns are examples of texts where the depiction of Carriols differs the most from the language in 'Twee Shishi'. For illustration, a representative example in the form of the first lines of a hymn from the Danish Lutherans, originally published in an 1823 *Creol Psalm-Buk* ('Creole Psalm Book'), reprinted in Van Rossem and Van der Voort (1996: 114–117), is presented with glossing and a free translation in (2).

- (2) a. Wa mi bin blie,  
       what 1.SG COP happy  
       'What I am happy [about]'
- b. O Jesu! mi ka doop  
       o Jesus 1.SG PRF baptize  
       'O Jesus! I have been baptized'
- c. En ka kom vrie yt van die Slaverie  
       and PRF come free out of DET slavery  
       'And have become free from the slavery'
- d. Door die saelig Gloov en Hoop;  
       through DET blessed belief and hope  
       'Through the blessed belief and hope'

- e. Door die Waeter mi ka skoon,  
 through DET water 1.SG PRF clean  
 ‘Through the water I have been cleaned’
- f. Krieg Pardoon,  
 get pardon  
 ‘Gotten forgiveness’
- g. En ons ka maek Kontragt  
 and 1.PL PRF make contract  
 ‘And we have made a contract’
- h. Na Jesu Bluet en Kragt;  
 LOC Jesus blood and strength/power  
 ‘In Jesus’ blood and power’

The overall impression is that the language in this hymn differs clearly from that in ‘Twee Shishi’, for example, in terms of a number of the words used (not found in the basilect) and their specific (orthographic) forms. Moreover, the particle *ka*, which functions as a preverbal perfect marker (e.g. 2c, g), is used to form sentences that read as passives, as evidenced in (2b, e). This construction is also touched upon by Oldendorp (2000: 700). The item *na* (2h) is an all-purpose locative element/preposition, which Van Rossem (2017: 157 ff.) discusses as a shibboleth for genuine Carriols. Thus, although the language in this hymn is quite different from that in ‘Twee Shishi’, it is still a reflection of Carriols.

In contrast, songs with secular content are ‘quite rare’, as Van Rossem and Van der Voort (1996: 224) observe. This is especially true for songs from the early period of documentation. As noted by Sensbach (2005: 88–89), respect for non-European culture was rather limited, as evidenced by the missionaries’ constant attempts to eradicate any expression of African culture. However, one such song that reflects an aspect of life beyond the religious sphere, is a 1780s ‘Farewell Song’ attributed to a runaway. It is apparently the only preserved song of its kind. It was originally published as part of a piece by a Danish observer, J.C. Schmidt (1788) in the periodical *Samleren* (‘The Collector’). According to Schmidt, the song was from St. Croix. It can be found reprinted and translated in Van Rossem and Van der Voort (1996: 224–226). The song is presented with a glossing and free translation in (3).

- (3) a. Adjo my Mester Neeger, e-Samja!  
 goodbye 1.SG master Black.person I.unhappy.one  
 ‘Farewell my slave driver, I unhappy one’

- b. Da lob my lo lob, e-Samja  
 EMPH go 1.SG ASP go I.unhappy.one  
 'I am going to leave, I unhappy one'
- c. My nöy kan hau di uit mer, e-Samja  
 1.SG never can hold 3.INAN/DET out more I.unhappy.one  
 'I can't stand it/this anymore, I unhappy one'
- d. Di Blanco no frey, e-Samja  
 DET white NEG good I.unhappy.one  
 'The/these whites are not good, I unhappy one'
- e. Adjo my Syssie, e-Samja  
 goodbye 1.SG sister I.unhappy.one  
 'Farewell my sister, I unhappy one'
- f. Van Dag du Mandag, e-Samja  
 today EMPH Monday I.unhappy.one  
 'Today it is Monday, I unhappy one'
- g. Adjo my Mama, e-Samja  
 goodbye 1.SG mother I.unhappy.one  
 'Farewell my mother, I unhappy one'
- h. Da lob my lo lob, e-Samja  
 EMPH go 1.SG ASP go I.unhappy.one  
 'I am going to leave, I unhappy one'
- i. Adjo my beer Maade, e-Samja  
 goodbye 1.SG bed friend.PL I.unhappy.one  
 'Farewell my fellows (lit. "bedfriends"), I unhappy one'
- j. Adjo my gud Friende, e-Samja  
 goodbye 1.SG good friend.PL I.unhappy.one  
 'Farewell my good friends, I unhappy one'
- k. Adjo my Tata, e-Samja  
 goodbye 1.SG father I.unhappy.one  
 'Farewell my father, I unhappy one'
- l. Di Land no Frey, e-Samja  
 DET Land NEG good I.unhappy.one  
 'This country isn't good, I unhappy one'
- m. Adjo my Viefe, e-Samja  
 goodbye 1.SG wife I.unhappy.one  
 'Farewell my wife, I unhappy one'
- n. Lef frey met my Mama, e-Samja  
 live good with 1.SG mother I.unhappy.one  
 'Live well with my mother, I unhappy one'

- o. Dünk op my altyt, e-Samja  
 think on 1.SG always I.unhappy.one  
 ‘Always think about me, I unhappy one’
- p. My nu sae ferjet jou, e-Samja  
 1.SG NEG FUT forget 2.SG I.unhappy.one  
 ‘I will not forget you, I unhappy one’

There are clear similarities between this song and ‘Twee Shishi’ in terms of linguistic structure. The orthography more closely reflects the spoken language than, for example, was the case with the hymn in (2). Moreover, the vocabulary appears more colloquial. It is reasonable to interpret *e-Samja!*, which appears at the end of each line, as customary in call-and-response pattern singing. One distinctly basilectal feature (cf. Bartens 2013: 127; APiCS feature 105) is the verb-focusing construction *Da lob my lo lob* (‘I am going to leave’) (3h), where the verb is doubled for focus, with the copy placed at the front of the sentence and preceded by a focus particle. However, because this song exists only in transcription, it is impossible to determine with certainty to what extent it was transcribed exactly as heard or with some liberties taken or errors made by Schmidt, and thus difficult to compare directly to the sound recording of ‘Twee Shishi’. Compared to later sources, several of Schmidt’s forms or spellings stand out, examples including <my> for *mi* (‘I; me; my’) (e.g. 3a); <lob> for *loo* (‘to go’) (e.g. 3b); <nöy> for *nooit* (‘never’) (e.g. 3c); <Syssie> for *shishi* /ʃiʃi/ (‘sister’) (3e); <Viefe> for *wif* (‘wife’) (3m); <Dünk> for *dīngk* /dɪŋk/ (‘to think’) (3o); <altyt> for *altit* (‘always’) (3o); and <sae> for future *sa* (3p).

The additional examples of secular song lyrics in Carriols originate from the later period of documentation. The majority of the material is found in De Josselin de Jong (1926). For example, there is a nursery rhyme, ‘Dri Blin Mushi’ (‘Three Blind Mice’) (p. 63), which was also documented a decade later, in 1936, in field notes from St. Croix collected by Frank G. Nelson (Nelson 1936; Den Besten and Van Rossem 2013; Van Rossem 2017: 251 ff.). Importantly, there are also a number of so-called ‘story-house songs’ and ‘story(-house) dances’ (De Josselin de Jong 1926: 7). Van Rossem (2024) presents information from the anthropologist’s field diary about a March day in 1923 on St. John, when he found himself as an audience member at a gathering where elderly individuals performed a ‘story’ song and dance seemingly arranged for him. He describes this event in terms similar to descriptions of bamboula:

[N]ews of my presence had apparently reached other neighbors. At least it didn’t take long before a crowd of both sexes and various ages gathered around us. [Henry] Roberts [Carriols speaker from St. John, b. 1863 – KFB],

together with an old woman, started performing one of the old 'jokes', which involved a lot of singing and ended in a phallic dance – much to the amusement of the audience. (De Josselin de Jong 1922–1923: 86–87, translation from Dutch by Van Rossem 2024: 36)

The song related to the 'phallic dance' was recorded as text LXXXIX in De Josselin de Jong (1926: 63). It is reproduced with a free translation in Van Rossem (2024: 37–38). In the song, a lady tells her maid (Maria) to watch out for an old man who, as the song progresses, gets closer and closer, eventually reaching the lady's bed. She accepts this step by step, and in the end, she exclaims, *O, ju du mi di, a fa ju di bi!* ('O, you do it to me, it is yours!'). An excerpt is presented in (4).

- (4) a. Maria! Ali frou!  
 Maria hello madam  
 'Maria! Hello, madam!'
- b. Ju kan sē di hou man, am kan ko kan  
 2.SG can tell DET old man 3.SG can come against  
 di bere,  
 DET bed  
 'You can tell the old man, he can come next to the bed,'
- c. bot pasó am take enestā gut!  
 but watch.out 3.SG take any thing  
 'but watch out if he touches (lit. "takes") something!'
- d. Maria! Ali frou!  
 Maria hello madam  
 'Maria! Hello, madam!'
- e. Ju kan sē di hou man, am kan ko bo di  
 2.SG can tell DET old man 3.SG can come on DET  
 bere,  
 bed  
 'You can tell the old man, he can come on the bed,'
- f. bot paso am take mi bil!  
 but watch.out 3.SG take 1.SG thigh/buttock  
 'but watch out if he touches my thigh/buttock!'
- g. Maria! Ali frou!  
 Maria hello madam  
 'Maria! Hello, madam!'

- h. Sē di hou man, am kan risóp mi saja,  
 tell DET old man 3.SG can raise.up 1.SG dress  
 ‘Tell the old man, he can pull up my dress,’
- i. bot pasé am take mi bil!  
 but watch.out 3.SG take 1.SG thigh/buttock  
 ‘but watch out if he touches my thigh/buttock!’

The song shows similarity to ‘Twee Shishi’ in terms of the style of content. Moreover, as already covered in Section 3.2, the language documented in De Josselin de Jong (1926) is structurally closely aligned with that in ‘Twee Shishi’.

Considering the documentation of Carriols cited above, ‘Twee Shishi’ is notable for capturing the language in a relaxed informal setting for the purpose of Soule’s documentation of local music traditions; the song was spontaneously volunteered by Ms. Benjamin and was not intended for proselytizing, research, or any purpose. Moreover, it is unique among other preserved audio material. There are a couple of very short additional samples in the Soule Archive; for example, in another recording, Ms. Benjamin recites a few words from the previously mentioned ‘Dri Blin Mushi’ (cf. Soule 2014: 383). Beyond this, only a few recordings of the spoken language are known to exist, specifically those made of Mrs. Alice Stevens in the 1980s (Sprauve 1984, 1985; supplementary materials to Sabino 2012). These recordings reflect the language in its ‘last stage’ (Van Rossem and Van der Voort 1996: 265) and were made in the comparatively formal setting of structured interviews involving translation exercises. There are no known audio recordings of hymns, religious material, or any other sung or spoken content from before the language became extinct.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

This article has examined a 1980 recording of the song ‘Twee Shishi’ in Carriols, which was closely associated with the bamboula tradition. The song likely dates from before or around 1848 when bamboula flourished. Moreover, given its original purpose – to tell the story of the two sisters who were living with the same man – it would have made the most sense to use the most common everyday language rather than one already in decline. This supports a dating to the 1830s or earlier when Carriols was still widely spoken. By the time slavery ended in 1848, most Virgin Islanders had already abandoned Carriols, associating it with slavery and replaced it with English

(Creole) associated with freedom and the future – a shift already underway for decades (Sabino 2012: 71 ff.). For example, by 1839, when schooling for enslaved children became free and compulsory – and was conducted in Carriols and English – reports indicate that many children had to learn Carriols as a foreign language (e.g. Larsen 1950: 159). Meanwhile, in the early 1800s, newspaper advertisements in Carriols apparently had served as effective reminders of religious instruction (Bøegh et al. 2022: 104–106).

Linguistically, the song aligns with 20th-century Carriols, challenging assumptions that earlier Carriols necessarily was more Dutch-like. Instead, this suggests that the basilect, as later documented by De Josselin de Jong (1926) and subsequent fieldworkers, already existed in a similar form when 'Twee Shishi' was first performed. Rather than gradually developing away from a more Dutch-like form, the linguistic evidence indicates that the basilect was part of the Virgin Islands' linguistic repertoire during the early documentation period. Since little material from the colonized population has been preserved and the reliability of surviving textual sources – most of which were recorded by European observers – can be difficult to ascertain, the discovery of 'Twee Shishi' thus represents a step toward a clearer understanding of Carriols' documentary and (socio)linguistic history.

MaryJane Soule's interview with Ms. Benjamin and Ms. Venzen contains, as far as is known, the only surviving audio recording of a secular song in Carriols – a language unique to the three Virgin Islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix. The recording adds another brick to the documentation of Carriols, revealing yet another facet of its everyday use. The song was part of the bamboula tradition particular to the Virgin Islands, emphasizing the African influence on the local Creole culture. Also unique in the larger Caribbean context is the emphasis on female performers. In this way, 'Twee Shishi' represents an intersection of several unique chapters of Caribbean, African, and European – including Dutch – linguistic and cultural history, distilled into a few short verses and performed for the occasion on that February day in 1980.

## Abbreviations in glosses

1, First person; 2, Second person; 3, Third person; ASP, Aspect; COP, Copula; DET, Determiner; EMPH, Emphatic; FUT, Future; INAN, Inanimate; INDF, Indefinite; LOC, Locative; NEG, Negation; PL, Plural; PRF, Perfect; SG, Singular.

## Notes

1. It is remarkable that the song, about two sisters, was also passed down by two sisters (Miss Clara's daughters), though they are not the same sisters.
2. <https://hdl.handle.net/1839/934930cd-1b14-41de-b7d4-7a17da8f0874>, accessed 30 May 2025.
3. The festival of Saturn took place in December in ancient Rome. It was a period of widespread merrymaking, including food and gift-giving, with social roles temporarily overturned.
4. For an interview with Stanley Jacobs published by the American National Endowment for the Arts, see <https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/stanley-jacobs>, accessed 30 May 2025.
5. One excellent recording of the St. Thomas bamboula, captured in 1954, has been published on several Folkways albums. This recording is available online on the Smithsonian Institution's Folkways Recordings site: <https://folkways.si.edu/bamboula-dance-drums/african-american-music-world/track/smithsonian>, accessed 30 May 2025. It is difficult to hear which language is being used in the recording.
6. <https://open.spotify.com/track/1pyIfy8p05ZXQZcGb4ozeO?si=2f6a2884d1494353&nd=1&dlsi=a1bof3be8e594676>, accessed 30 May 2025.
7. <https://youtu.be/Sgoz61qm-6U?si=zg-lJluRPeqH9F4N>, accessed 30 May 2025.
8. <https://nwr-site-liner-notes.s3.amazonaws.com/80427.pdf>, accessed 30 May 2025.
9. <https://www.newworldrecords.org/products/zoop-zoop-zoop>, accessed 30 May 2025.
10. <https://lccn.loc.gov/2014655298>, accessed 30 May 2025.
11. In recent years, revitalization efforts involving a team of linguists together with local cultural advocates and musicians have resulted in a number of performances of Carriols hymns in churches: <https://diecreoltaal.com/2021/12/19/old-hymn-in-recent-concert/>, accessed 30 May 2025.

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