

# Saramaccan

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## 1. Introduction

Saramaccan	
Autoglossonym	Saamáká Tóŋgɔ
Dutch	Saramakaans
English	Saramaccan
Number of speakers	ca. 50,000
Major lexifiers	English, Portuguese
Other contributing languages	Gbe, Dutch, KiKoongo, Wayana
Location	Suriname River and Saramacca River, Surinam.
Official language of Surinam	Dutch, Sranan (Tongo) is the lingua franca.

Saramaccan is a maroon creole language spoken in Surinam.<sup>1</sup>

Surinam is the smallest mainland South American country, with about 490,000 inhabitants according to the 2004 census.

In addition about 350,000 Surinamers live in the Netherlands.

It is one of the two creole languages that have resulted from the various bouts of marronage in Surinam

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<sup>1</sup> The official English name for this South American country is now Suriname, which is actually the Dutch name for the country. However, it has been known in English as Surinam for about 350 years, and as this spelling is long-established we will employ it here.

(Ndyuka being the other). Saramaccan dialects are spoken by the Saramaccan and Matawai tribes.

## **2. Sociohistorical background**

Surinam was first successfully colonized in 1651 by the English. In 1667 it was assigned to the Dutch by the treaty of Breda under which the Dutch gave up their claim to New York, and the English to Surinam.

Because of the lack of clear landward borders outside the coastal region, and the dense tropical forest, marronage was more successful in Surinam than in most other European colonies. We will not deal in detail with the long history of marronage in Surinam, but will concentrate on that which gave rise to the Saramaccan and Matawai<sup>2</sup>.

The study of the processes which gave rise to the creole languages of Surinam in particular is much facilitated by the particular and rapid succession of events. As far as the development of Saramaccan is concerned this is especially so.

A timetable of historical (and hypothesized linguistic) events relevant for Surinam is given below, based on work by Smith (2002, 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> The Matawai were formerly part of the Saramaccan tribe but broke away in the mid-1760s (Price 1983).

Table 1. Linguistically relevant events during the first 50 years of Surinam	
date	event
1651	settlement of Surinam by the English
ca. 1660	marronage of Jermes' group in the Para region
1660-1665	<i>Sranan creolized from Caribbean Plantation Pidgin English</i>
1665	Jewish settlers arrive from Cayenne <i>with Portuguese Creole-speaking slaves</i>
1667	Treaty of Breda by which Surinam was surrendered to the Dutch
1668	the effective beginning of the Dutch administration
1668-1675	80% of the English leave with around 1400 slaves
1675-1680	<i>partial relexification of Sranan with a Portuguese contact variety to Dju-Tongo (Jews' Language) on the Middle Suriname River plantations. Dju-Tongo can be equated with Proto-Saramaccan.</i>
1690-1695	the first mass escapes of slaves to form the Saramaccan tribe, in particular from Jewish plantations

NB. The hypothesized creole-relevant events are italicized.

Jerme's group of maroons escaped in the English period. They are recorded as attacking plantations in the Para region (de Beet & Sterman 1980). Later they settled on the Coppename River, 60 miles to the west of the Para plantation area. There a peace treaty was signed by the Dutch with them in 1684/1685. According to de Beet & Sterman, Jerme's group was known in the 18th century as the *Free Negroes of the Coppename* or *Karboegers*. They are now represented by the Western Caribs of Surinam. These are known as the *Arëiripōno* or *Muraato*. The first of these terms means 'one who is at the west'; the second is the Carib version of Portuguese 'mulatto', referring to the mixed Carib-African heritage of this group. The important point here is that this group speak/spoke an Amerindian language and not

a creole. This suggests that Sranan had not developed at this point.

Why should Sranan be formed in the early 1660's? The problem is that both Sranan and Dju-Tongo<sup>3</sup> have to come into existence before Dju-Tongo can be taken into the tropical forest in the period from 1690 on as the language. Placing the formation of Sranan in 1660-65, and Dju-Tongo in 1675-80 seems to be the solution to the dating of these linguistic events that is least problematic. Both linguistic events were drastic in nature and must have taken place in succession, to judge by the evidence of the Sranan-like linguistic aspects in Saramaccan.

The Portuguese Jewish immigration in 1665 (and also in 1667) cannot be separated from the very significant nature of the Portuguese elements in Saramaccan. Price (1983) links the formation of the Saramaccan Maroon tribe to the Portuguese Jewish-owned plantations around Joden Savannah, the Jewish centre on the Middle Suriname River. Direct evidence for this can be seen in the names of important Saramaccan clans such as the Matjáú and Nasí, which are derived from the surnames of Portuguese Jewish plantation-owners (in this case Machado and Nassy). That the Portuguese arrived from Cayenne with some slaves is argued for in Smith (1999). The nature of the deep lexical influence of Portuguese on Saramaccan supports the hypothesis that the Portuguese Jews had brought some Portuguese Creole-speaking slaves with them.

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<sup>3</sup> Due to lack of space, we cannot dwell further on the reasons for equating Dju-Tongo and (Proto-)Saramaccan. Note that the "Portuguese" proverbs in Wuulschlägel (1856) are in Creole Portuguese and not in Dju-Tongo.

In 1667 the Treaty of Breda was signed which confirmed the Dutch occupation of Surinam and the English occupation of New York. By 1668 the Dutch were firmly in control. This heralded in a period lasting to 1675 during which most of the English left Surinam, taking 1400 or so slaves with them. In previous work the retention of a form of English (if Sranan is regarded as such) after 1675 has sometimes been regarded as problematic. In Smith (2009) this is explained by the probability that koiné English was known to a significant proportion of the slave population till at least 1684. This we hypothesize was not their first language, a role filled by the previously creolized Sranan. See Smith (2009) for more on this topic.

We are fortunate in possessing poll-tax returns for 1684 and 1695. Arends (1995) supplies figures for slave imports which show that 9768 slaves were imported between 1685 and 1695. However the slave population only grew from about 3650 to 5100 in this period (allowing for 10% tax evasion (cf. Postma 1990)). Allowing for births and deaths the second figure should have been around 11,350. We are faced with a shortfall of more than half the slave population, in a period that overlaps with that claimed by Price (1983) to be the formative period of the Saramaccan tribe by marronage - 1690-1710 (Smith 2009). This represents proof of an event that is little short of cataclysmic, and supports Price's interpretation of the archival and Saramaccan traditional-historical evidence of the foundation of the Saramaccan tribe.

### 3. Sociolinguistic situation

The sociolinguistic situation of Saramaccan at the present is unclear. A significant part of the population has moved away from the original maroon settlements on the Suriname River to the following three main locations for different reasons: Paramaribo, the capital of Surinam, for reasons of employment, and as a refuge from the civil war; French Guiana also as a refuge because of the war; and the Netherlands as an emigrant destination.

The numbers of speakers of Saramaccan involved in these various situations are unclear. The figures from the 2004 Surinam census tell us that Maroon languages are spoken as the first language in 18,797 households. The total number of maroons in Surinam was 72,553. Ethnologue (Lewis 2009) gives the number of speakers of Saramaccan as 24,000 (SIL estimate 1995). However since the numbers of speakers of Saramaccan (including Saramaccan (Saamaka and Matawai) and Ndyuka (including Ndyuka, Paramaccan (Paamaka), Aluku and Kwinti) are usually stated to be about the same, we can reasonably estimate the total number of speakers of Saramaccan in Surinam to be around 36,000. Ethnologue gives 3000 as the number of speakers in French Guiana. Choenni & Harmsen (2007) estimate the number of first and second generation maroons in the Netherlands to be 35,000. Of these probably at least 10,000 can be assumed to be speakers of Saramaccan, giving a total number of speakers of at least 50,000.

Little work has been done on internal variation in Saramaccan. Upriver and downriver dialects can be distinguished, as well as a separate Matawai dialect spoken on the Saramacca River.

#### 4. Phonology

Saramaccan has seven vowels in a classic triangular system, including close-mid and open-mid vowels. The vowels can all occur short, long and over-long, with respectively one, two and three morae respectively. All vowels can also occur in nasalized form.

Table 2. Vowels

	<i>front</i>	<i>central</i>	<i>back</i>
<i>close</i>	i		u
<i>close-mid</i>	e		o
<i>open-mid</i>	ɛ		ɔ
<i>open</i>		a	

(1) gives examples of the vowel contrast in monomoraic non-nasalized context:

- (1) /i/    *sî*    ‘see’  
       /e/    *té*    ‘time’  
       /ɛ/    *dé*    ‘there’  
       /a/    *fá*    ‘how’  
       /ɔ/    *fɔ*    ‘for’  
       /o/    *gó*    ‘go’  
       /u/    *tú*    ‘two’

The consonant system is one where there is apparently dialect variation within Saramaccan. Some dialects appear not to distinguish the labiovelars (/kw/ etc.) from the labial-velars (/kp/ etc.), realizing both types as labial-velars. The distinction can be demonstrated, however, to have existed for more than two hundred years and therefore it is likely always to have been present for some speakers.

A phoneme /hw/ is recognized in a few items like /ahwámáun/ ‘shoulder’.

Table 3. **Consonants**

		<i>labial</i>	<i>alveolar</i>	<i>palatal</i>	<i>velar</i>	<i>labio-velar</i>	<i>labial-velar</i>	<i>glottal</i>
<i>plosive</i>	<i>unvoiced</i>	p	t	tj	k	kw	kp	
	<i>voiced</i>	b	d	dj	g	gw	gb	
<i>implosive</i>		ɓ	ɗ					
<i>nasal</i>		m	n	nj				
<i>fricative</i>	<i>unvoiced</i>	f	s			hw		h
	<i>voiced</i>	v	z					
<i>lateral</i>			l					
<i>glide</i>				j		w		

Some analysts treat the combinations /mb/, /nd/ and so on as “pre-nasalized” phonemes. This analysis lacks supporting evidence, and it is unnecessary to regard these combinations as anything but clusters. A recent discovery (Haabo 2002) is that Saramaccan distinguishes implosive stop phonemes /ɓ, ɗ/ from ordinary voiced stops. For example, compare the two forms /baí/ ‘buddy’ and /ɓaí/ ‘to brush’.



Saramaccan has been demonstrated by Good (2004) to have a split tone/accent system. In general, polysyllabic words of European (English, Portuguese, Dutch) origin contain a lexical marking for accent. The accented mora (and under certain circumstances, the mora following) is realized with a high tone. Polysyllabic words taken from African (and Amerindian) languages usually have a tone specified on every mora. The non-high tones in “European” words have *changeable* tones. By default they are assigned a low tone. However, a phenomenon called *plateauing* acts to raise such non-high tones to high in certain phrasal contexts when they are situated between two high tones in adjacent words. This makes clear that these changeable tones are not underlyingly specified, and that “European” words only bear a single accent-specification. In contrast, low tones in “African” words are never affected by plateauing, thereby demonstrating that their tones are lexically specified.

Additionally, “European” words display diagnostics associated with stress systems. These are a) the deletion of certain unaccented monomoraic syllables in fast speech, b) the lengthening of accented vowels in accented syllables under emphasis, and c) a general increase of perceptual prominence of accented syllables. “African” words do not display such properties. There is no deletion of syllables in fast speech, and emphasis will tend to lengthen all syllables in a word.

In what follows, we will in general avoid specifying tones in Saramaccan examples in order to avoid confusion.

The various sources consulted are inconsistent in their marking of tone. In addition, the plateauing tone sandhi described above means that many words can appear with up to three different tone patterns in sentences. We make an exception for high-toned ideophones which are not subject to tone sandhi. We have normalized the transcriptions of phonemes in individual words according to Haabo (2002), with the exception of his use of /y/ for IPA /j/. In the APiCS questionnaire itself, however, we quote examples as they occur in their sources.

A remark requires to be made with reference to the Interlinear Morpheme Translation (IMT) glosses used for some Tense-Mood-Aspect particles. The IMT-abbreviations employed suggest fixed interpretations. In fact these vary according to the context and the aktionsart of the accompanying verb. In particular this concerns *ta* IPFV (imperfective), *o* IRR (irrealis), and *bi* PST (past). The interpretations given here are only meant as catch-all approximations.

## 5. Noun phrase

### *5.1 Bare nouns versus determined nouns*

Like in many creoles, the Saramaccan noun phrase can consist of a just a bare noun in argument position such as *faka* ‘knife’ in (2a), or a determined noun such as *ogifou* ‘owl’ in (2b).

- (2) a. *Mi koti en ku faka.*  
 1SG cut 3SG with knife  
 'I cut it with a knife.' (Rountree 1992)
- b. *A kε fa=a kisi di ogi-fou a matu.*  
 3SG.SBJ want for=3SG.SBJ catch DEF.SG evil-bird LOC jungle  
 'S/he wants him to catch the owl in the jungle.' (adapted from Byrne 1987: 138).

In example (2b) *di* picks up a discourse-anaphoric referent. As such it is commonly assumed to function in a way similar to definite determiners in English. Other elements in Saramaccan that function as determiners are the singular indefinite element *wan* and the plural marker *dεe*, also corresponding to the third person plural pronoun (3a-b).

- (3) a. *wan hanse mujεε*  
 INDF /one pretty woman  
 'one pretty woman'
- b. *dεe hanse mujεε*  
 DEF.PL pretty woman  
 'the pretty women'

## 5.2 Nominal modifiers

The Saramaccan noun phrase displays both prenominal and postnominal modifiers. According to Rountree (1992), prenominal modifiers display the following sequencing in (4a), as illustrated by the examples in (4b-c) adapted from Rountree (1992). As these examples show, the slot for adjectives may involve distinct subclasses of adjectives:

- (4) a. Quantifier > Article > Numeral > Adjective > NOUN
- b. *hii dee gaan boto*  
 all DEF.PL big boat  
 ‘all the big boats’
- c. *di wan kodo langa pende bosooko*  
 DEF.SG one single long coloured sweater  
 ‘the one single long coloured sweater’
- d. *di hanse Saamaka mujee*  
 DEF.SG pretty Saramaccan woman  
 ‘the pretty Saramaccan woman’

Postnominal modifiers include possessives and relative clauses:

- (5) a. *di hanse mujee u mi seei*  
 DEF.SG pretty woman for 1SG self  
 ‘my pretty wife’
- b. *di boto di i si de*  
 DEF.SG boat REL 2SG see there  
 ‘the boat that you see there’

An interesting property of the Saramaccan noun phrase that we see in example (5a) is the usage of the reflexive marker *seei* ‘self’ as a marker of emphasis, or as a focusing device (Veenstra 1996: 43-44). This example reminds us of English examples such as “*I was so annoyed I decided to talk to the*

*director himself*". A major difference, however, is that in Saramaccan the pronoun cannot be part of the focusing device.

Saramaccan noun phrases can also occur as predicate as in the following example:

- (6) *Sambili da womi.*  
Sambili IDENTITY.COP man  
'Sambili is a man.'

### ***5.3 Reduplicated verbal adjectives***

Sometimes, noun modification involves reduplicated verbal adjectives. These can only occur prenominally:

- (7) *di lai-lai goni*  
DEF.SG load-ADJR gun  
'the loaded gun' (Bakker 1987: 25)

Prenominal reduplicated verbal adjectives have a resultative reading (see also Aboh 2007).

### ***5.4 Possessive constructions***

In addition to using possessive pronouns as in (8a) the Saramaccan typical possessive constructions involves the preposition *fu/u* which relates the possessee to the possessor

as indicated in (8b). The latter can also occur prenominally, as in (8c):

- (8) a. *mi mujεε*  
 1SG woman  
 ‘my wife’
- b. *di mujεε u mi*  
 DEF.SG woman for 1SG  
 ‘my wife’
- c. *di fi=i buku*  
 DEF.SG for=2SG book  
 ‘that (particular one) of your books’

### 5.5 Pronominal system

Table 4 summarizes the Saramaccan pronouns. Veenstra (1996) presents a detailed microcomparative discussion of the pronominal systems in Saramaccan dialects (Upriver, Downriver, Gaánse (village)). As this table shows, Saramaccan has two sets of pronouns: weak forms which cannot be used in isolation (i.e. as answer to a question) and strong (or independent) forms which can. These forms can also appear in topic and focus constructions. When this happens the order of occurrence is always [strong-weak] and the reverse order [\*weak-strong] is ungrammatical (Veenstra 1996). This contrast indicates that the weak forms depend on the syntactic context in which they occur. This is further supported by the fact that the weak forms can amalgamate

with the negative marker resulting in the the forms *ma* [1sg], *ja* [2sg], *an* [3sg], *wa* [1pl], *wan* [2pl] (Rountree 1992). The only form that does not show variation is the third person plural which is *de* in all contexts.

Table 4. **Personal pronouns and adnominal possessives**

	subject	object	independent pronouns	adnominal possessives
1SG	<i>mi</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>mi</i>
2SG	<i>i</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>ju</i>	<i>ju</i>
3SG	<i>a</i>	<i>en</i>	<i>ben</i>	<i>ben</i>
1PL	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>wi</i>	<i>wi</i>
2PL	<i>unu</i>	<i>unu</i>	<i>unu</i>	<i>unu</i>
3PL	<i>de</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>de</i>

Finally, Saramaccan has relative pronouns *di* ('that, who, which': singular), *dee* ('that, who, which': plural), *te* ('when'), *ka* ('where'), and *fa* ('how'). The *di* versus *dee* opposition presents us with a contrast that would seem unexpected if one adheres to the commonly assumed notion of creolization where contextual phenomena such as agreement are lost (e.g. Bickerton 1981, and much related work). Indeed Saramaccan displays agreement between the relative head noun and the relative pronoun as well. Given this, the various subtle contrasts we observe in the Saramaccan nominal system raises the question of whether similar phenomena might have gone unnoticed in other creoles as well.

## 5.6 Prepositional phrases

Saramaccan prepositional phrases are rather similar to those found in English, and head-initial languages in general. Thus prepositional phrases are introduced by prepositions which encode notions such as benefactive, locative, direction, and instrument. Example (9) illustrates some of these prepositions.

- (9) a. *Mi paka u di boto noo.*  
1SG pay for DEF.SG boat only  
'I paid for the boat only.'
- b. *de koti en ku ufangi.*  
DEF.PL cut 3SG with machete  
'They cut it with a machete.'
- c. *de butε=en a di tafa liba.*  
DEF.PL put=3SG LOC DEF.SG table above  
'They put it on the table'

Example (9c) is indicative of the fact that Saramaccan involves complex adpositions that circumvent the Ground. This pattern corresponds to the one found in the Gbe languages as well (Aboh 2005).

## 6. Verb phrase

The Saramaccan verb phrase involves various classes of verbs which can be distinguished both in terms of their valency and aspect specifications (i.e. Aktionsart). Verbs in Saramaccan



obey the traditional distinction in terms of transitivity. Example (10a) illustrates an intransitive verb, (10b) a transitive verb, and (10c) a ditransitive verb (see Rountree 1992, Veenstra 1996).

- (10) a. *kule*            ‘run’  
      b. *suti*            ‘shoot’  
      c. *da*             ‘give’

As is the case in many creoles (and in West African languages) these verbs appear to be sensitive to the features ‘stative’ versus ‘eventive’. As the examples in (11) show, an eventive verb that is not marked for tense or aspect is interpreted as perfective, while a stative verb in the same context is construed in present.

- (11) a. *Mi waka.*  
      1SG walk  
      ‘I have walked.’ [But not \*I walk or \*I’m walking.] (Veenstra 1996)  
      b. *Mi siki.*  
      1SG sick  
      ‘I am sick.’ [But not \*I was sick.]

A similar asymmetry is normally observed when these verbs are combined with tense and aspect markers. Indeed, an eventive verb combined with the past tense marker is normally interpreted in isolation as a past of the past, while a stative verb with the same marker is normally interpreted in

isolation as a simple past tense. In running texts things may differ.

- (12) a. *Mi bi waka.*  
1SG PST walk  
'I had walked.'
- b. *Mi bi siki.*  
1SG PST sick  
'I was sick.' [Not \*I had been sick.]

Interestingly, tense, mood, and aspect markers can combine with the verb to form more complex expressions.

- (13) *A bi o sa ta wooko.*  
3SG PST IRR POT ASP work  
'He could have worked.' [lit. He could have been able to work.] (Veenstra 1996: 20)

These markers and lexical aspects will be summarized in greater detail in Table 5:

Table 5. Tense-Aspect-Mood marking

<i>name</i>	<i>marker</i>	<i>Aktionsart</i>	<i>interpretation</i>
Present	∅	stative	present state
Perfective	∅	non-stative	perfective
Imperfective	<i>ta</i>	stative	continuous/habitual/inchoative
		activity	progressive/habitual
		accomplishment	progressive/habitual
		achievement	habitual/inchoative
Past	<i>bi</i> <sup>4</sup>	stative	past state
		non-stative	past-before-past
Irrealis	<i>o</i>	[irrelevant]	prediction/intention
		stative	assumptive epistemic > present time
		non-stative	assumptive epistemic > past time
Potential	<i>sa</i>	[irrelevant]	(cap)ability/permissive/speculative epistemic
Necessity	<i>musu</i>	[irrelevant]	obligation/deductive epistemic

In addition, there are a number of secondary aspect/modal constructions. A number of these are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Secondary Aspect-Modality marking			
<i>name</i>	<i>complex predicate</i>	<i>lexical/auxiliary verb</i>	<i>source</i>
Habitual aspect	<i>lo u</i>	<i>lobi</i>	'to love'
Completive aspect	<i>kaba fu</i>	<i>kaba</i>	'to finish'
Inceptive aspect	<i>bigi fu</i>	<i>bigi</i>	'to begin'
Necessity	<i>musu fu</i>	<i>musu</i>	'must'
Mental capability	<i>sa u</i>	<i>sabi</i>	'to know'
Obligative	<i>a(bi) fu</i>	<i>abi</i>	'to have'

<sup>4</sup> For an alternative view see Van de Vate (In Prog.).

As in many other Atlantic creoles, it is not easy to distinguish between stative verbs and adjectives in Saramaccan. It is possible however, to change a verb into an adjective by reduplicating it. These reduplicated forms are real adjectives, for the following reasons.

First, they can be used attributively, as in (14), as well as predicatively with the copula *dε*, as in (15):

(14) a. *di fatu-fatu womi*  
 DEF.SG fat-ADJR man  
 ‘the fat man’ (NOT: ‘the very fat man’)

b. *di wipi-wipi womi*  
 DEF.SG whip-ADJR man  
 ‘the whipped man’

(15) a. *di womi dε naki-naki.*  
 DEF.SG man COP beat-ADJR  
 ‘The man has been beaten (is in a beaten state).’

b. *di goonliba dε lontu-lontu.*  
 DEF.SG earth COP round-ADJR  
 ‘The earth is round.’

In addition to the reduplicated forms, only *bunu* ‘good’ may appear with *dε*, but not other items that would normally be translated as adjectives in English. For this reason such items used predicatively are assumed to be stative verbs too. In their prenominal use we assume that they **are** adjectives - note that the reduplicated forms may also occur prenominally.

Second, in contrast with the non-reduplicated “adjectivoids“, these reduplicated forms cannot receive tense or aspect marking:

- (16) a. *dí miii ta bigi.*  
DEF.SG child IPFV big  
‘The child is getting big’
- b. *\*dí miii ta bigi-bigi.*  
DEF.SG child IPFV big-ADJ

Third, the copula is compulsory with the reduplicated forms, while it is ungrammatical with the unreduplicated forms:

- (17) a. *dí miii dε naki-naki.*  
DEF.SG child COP beat-ADJ  
‘The child has been beaten.’ (i.e. He is now in a beaten state.)
- b. *\*dí miii naki-naki.*  
DEF.SG child beat-ADJ
- c. *\*dí miii dε naki.*  
DEF.SG child COP beat
- d. *dí miii naki.*  
DEF.SG child beat  
‘The child was/has been beaten.’

Furthermore, verbs can be fronted for contrastive emphasis (focussing). A copy of the verb is obligatorily left in the original position. This is usually referred to as the **predicate cleft** construction:

- (18) a. *Naki di womi naki di miii.*  
 beat DEF.SG man beat DEF.SG child  
 ‘The man **beat** the child.’ (i.e. He did not caress him.)
- b. \**Naki di womi di miii.*  
 beat DEF.SG man DEF.SG child

Reduplicated forms, however, cannot leave a copy of the verb behind.

- (19) a. \**lontu-lontu di goonliba dε lontu-lontu*  
 round-ADJ DEF.SG earth COP round- ADJ
- b. *lontu-lontu di goonliba dε.*  
 round-ADJ DEF.SG earth COP  
 ‘The earth is round.’

The reduplicated forms can be fronted, but without leaving a copy behind. This movement is more like the kind of fronting which is possible with NPs, PPs, and adverbial phrases, but different from verb fronting (predicate cleft).

To sum up, we might say that these reduplicated forms display a distribution typical of adjectives (predicative and attributive use, obligatoriness of copula), while they have few of the diagnostic features of verbs in Saramaccan (no copying, no tense marking, no objects). We may conclude then that adjectives are derived from verbs by reduplication.

## 7. Simple sentences

With the exception of imperatives, simple sentences in Saramaccan consist of a lexical verb and its arguments. As illustrated by example (13), the verb can combine with various tense and aspect markers. The sequencing of these markers is as in (20a), illustrated by (20b), the negative counterpart of (13):

- (20) a. Subject-negation-tense-modality-aspect-verb-object-adjunct
- b. *An bi o sa ta wooko.*  
3SG.NEG PST IRR POT IPFV work  
'He could not have worked.' [Lit. He could not have been able to work]  
(Veenstra 1996: 20)

It appears from this example and all examples discussed in previous sections that Saramaccan is an SVO language. Simple sentences sometimes involve serial verb constructions as illustrated by the following sentences from Veenstra (1996: 107):

- (21) a. *Mi ta waka ko a mi pisi.*  
1SG IPFV walk come LOC 1SG yard  
'I am walking to my yard.'
- b. *A ta tei pau naki ben.*  
3SG IPFV take stick hit 3SG  
'S/he is hitting him with a stick.'

- c. *A ta suti hen kii.*  
 3SG IPFV shoot 3SG kill  
 ‘He is shooting her dead.’

Simple sentences also include copular clauses. Saramaccan has two forms of the copula: *dε* and *da*. *dε* has a verbal status, while *da* has a pronominal status. Two arguments for this distinction derive from the distribution of TMA-markers and subject pronouns in copular sentences (see below). The two forms are not mutually exclusive in their combinatory possibilities as both may occur with NP-complements. However, only *dε* may occur with PP and AP-complements:

- (22) a. *Etnel dε/da wan malenge-ma.*  
 Etnel COP/IDENTITY.COP one lazy-AGT  
 ‘Etnel is a lazy cat.’
- b. *Valerie dε/\*da n’ɛn wosu.*  
 Valerie COP/IDENTITY.COP LOC-3SG house  
 ‘Valerie is in his house.’
- c. *Kone dε/\*da siki-siki.*  
 Kone COP/IDENTITY.COP sick-ADJ  
 ‘Kone is sick.’

TMA-marking is only possible with *dε*, not with *da*. This suggests the non-verbal status of the latter copula, since TMA-markers only occur before verbal elements:



- (23) a. *Etnel bi/o dε wan malenge-ma.*  
 Etnel PST/IRR COP one lazy-MA  
 ‘Etnel was/will be a lazy cat’
- b. *\*Etnel bi/o da malenge-ma.*  
 Etnel PST/IRR IDENTITY.COP lazy-MA

Negation occurs before *dε* as with regular verbs, but in the case of *da* a contracted form surfaces, i.e. *na*.

- (24) a. *M=e<sup>5</sup> dε siki-siki.*  
 1SG=NEG COP sick-ADJR  
 ‘I am not sick.’
- b. *Mi n=a wan malenge-ma.*  
 1SG NEG=IDENTITY.COP one lazy-AGT  
 ‘I am not a lazy cat.’
- c. *\*m=e da wan malenge-ma*  
 1SG=NEG IDENTITY.COP one lazy-AGT

With *da* the order of the two NPs can be reversed, unlike with *dε*. If one of the NPs is pronominalized, the pronoun has to be the first NP.

- (25) a. *Asondone da/dε Feledi mujεε.*  
 Asondone IDENTITY.COP/COP Freddy woman  
 ‘Asondone is Freddy’s wife.’
- b. *Feledi mujεε da/\*dε Asondone.*  
 Freddy woman IDENTITY.COP/\*COP Asondone  
 ‘Freddy’s wife is Asondone.’

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<sup>5</sup> *M=e* is a dialect variant of *m=a*.

- c. *Hɛn da Feledi mujɛɛ.*  
 3SG IDENTITY.COP Freddy woman  
 ‘She is Freddy’s wife.’
- d. \**Feledi mujɛɛ da hɛn.*  
 Freddy woman IDENTITY.COP 3SG

The form of subject pronouns in copular sentences can also be used as evidence for the different status of the two copulas. With *da* the subject can only be the strong pronominal form. In case of *dɛ* it can be either:

- (26) a. \**A/hɛn da wan bunu sonɔi.*  
 3SG IDENTITY.COP one good thing  
 ‘That is a good thing.’
- b. *A/hɛn dɛ wan bunu sonɔi.*  
 3SG COP one good thing  
 ‘It is a good thing.’

In sum, Saramaccan exhibits two copular constructions with quite striking differences that suggest both a different categorial status for the “copula” and different developmental paths for the two constructions.

## 8. Complex sentences

Various complex sentences can be found in Saramaccan. In this grammar sketch, we only limit ourselves to relative clauses and subordinate complement clauses. As mentioned in §5.5. Saramaccan involves a wide range of relative

pronouns that can be used to form relative clauses. Such clauses can be headed or headless as indicated in (27a) and (27b), respectively (Rountree 1992: 18, 19):

- (27) a. *di womi di ta wooko aki, hen da mi en.*  
 DEF.SG man REL IPFV work here 3SG gave 1SG 3SG  
 ‘The man who works here, he gave it to me.’
- b. *de go ka de bi diki di baaku.*  
 3PL go LOC.REL 3PL PST dug DEF.SG hole  
 ‘They went where they had dug the hole.’

Embedded complement clauses can be non-finite or finite clauses as we can see in (28)

- (28) a. *de si di fisi go a liba wata.*  
 3PL see DEF.SG fish go LOC top water  
 ‘They saw the fish go to the top of the water.’
- b. *Mi sabi taa j=a o gangan mi.*  
 1SG know that you=NEG IRR deceive 1SG  
 ‘I know that you will not deceive me.’

While there is no verbal morphological distinction between non-finite versus finite forms, this distinction has been argued to be irrelevant for creole languages in general (Dijkhof & Mufwene 1989). Veenstra (1994), however, shows that examples like (28a), which lacks the complementizer, involve the embedding of a non-finite clause. On the other hand, (28b) with two distinct subjects

and an intervening complementizer corresponds to a finite context. The distinction between finite and non-finite complements of perception verbs involves the simultaneity of the events as expressed by the two verbs. When the complement is finite, in which case a tense marker can occur on the embedded verb, the events are non-simultaneous. Furthermore, the finite complementizer *táa* is (optionally) present. Thus, in (29a) the moment of seeing is not at the same time as the moment of sleeping. In (29b), on the other hand, both events take place at the same time. The tense marker cannot occur on the second verb and the finite complementizer is obligatorily absent. In this case only aspect can be (optionally) marked on the embedded verb:

- (29) a. *Mi si taa a bi duumi.* [Full complement]  
 1SG see that 3SG PST sleep  
 ‘I saw that he had slept.’
- b. *Mi si (\*taa) a ta duumi.* [Bare complement]  
 1SG see (\*that) 3SG IPFV sleep  
 ‘I saw him sleeping.’

Additional evidence has been presented in Veenstra (1994). Based on the distribution of time adverbs, the non-availability of tense and negation, and the object-like properties of the embedded subject with respect to binding, negation, quantification, and their interaction, it is shown that in the case of bare complements we are dealing with a

non-finite clausal complement selected by the verb of perception.

Embedded complement clauses can be introduced by two complementizers, a declarative complementizer *taa*, derived from a verb meaning ‘say/talk/tell’ which cannot be used with a verb which requires an irrealis complement clause, and a so-called “subjunctive” complementizer *fu*, which is derived from the preposition meaning ‘for’ in the European lexifier language, and cannot be used with verbs like *know*, which demand a “realis” interpretation of their complement:

- (30) a. *A sabi taal/\*fu di womi bi hondi di pingo.*  
 3SG know that/for DEF.SG man PST hunt DEF.SG pig  
 ‘He knows that the man hunted the pig.’ (Byrne 1987: 148)
- b. *A ke faal/\*taa kisi di ogifou a matu.*  
 3SG want for=3SG/that catch DEF.SG owl LOC jungle  
 ‘He wants him to catch the owl in the jungle.’ (Byrne 1987: 138)

If the matrix verb is compatible with both a realized and an unrealized sentential complement, then both complementizers are possible:

- (31) a. *A taki taa di mujεε bi go a di keiki.*  
 3SG say that DEF.SG woman PST go LOC DEF.SG church  
 ‘He said that the woman had gone to the church.’
- b. *A bi taki f=εn kule.*  
 3SG PST talk for=3SG run  
 ‘He told him to run.’ (warning)

The choice of the complementizer affects the interpretation of the embedded clause. If the “declarative” complementizer *taa* is used, the embedded clause (more precisely, the propositional content of the embedded clause) can either be interpreted as realised or unrealised. If, on the other hand, the “irrealis” complementizer *fu* is used, then the implication is that the event described in the embedded clause did not happen:

- (32) a. *A dε fanɔɔdu fu di womi bi wooko a di wosu.*  
 3SG COP important for DEF.SG man PST work LOC DEF.SG house  
 ‘It was important for the man to work in the house (but he probably didn’t).’
- b. *A dε fanɔɔdu taa di sembe bi go a matu.*  
 3SG COP important that DEF.SG person PST go LOC jungle  
 ‘It was important that the person had gone into the jungle (and he probably did).’

Furthermore, the two complementizers are not mutually exclusive (cf. Wijnen & Alleyne 1987, Veenstra 1996):

- (33) *I taki taa fa=a naki di dagu.*  
 2SG say that for=3SG hit DEF.SG dog  
 ‘You told him to hit the dog.’ (Veenstra 1996: 156)

A difference between the complementizers is that *taa* can be optionally left out, but this is not the case with *fu*. This is presumably due to the fact that *fu* is involved in clause-typing (marking it as “non-realized”), whereas *taa* is not (and,

therefore, the clause introduced by *taa* can receive a “realized” as well as a “non-realized” interpretation).

## 9. Other features

Ideophones are words used to modulate more closely the meanings of verbs and adjectives. They are partly onomatopoeic, and particular ideophones can only be used with particular words. They are also sometimes referred to as ‘phonaesthetic words’. They can be most closely identified with adverbs as a category. An example with two ideophones is given below:

- (34) *A bi djombo viiin te a wáta djuubu.*  
3SG PST jump quickly till in water splash  
‘He jumped quickly, splash in the water.’

Ideophones are selected by particular verbs. They demarcate the right edge of the VP (cf. Rountree 1992, Veenstra 2003):

- (35) a. *A naki hen gboo-gboo.*  
3SG hit 3SG IDEO  
‘He hit him really hard.’  
b. *\*A kii hen gboo-gboo.*  
3SG kill 3SG IDEO

Ideophones can only be selected by full lexical verbs and not by aspectual verbs, as shown by the following contrast:

- (36) a. *de kaba kée u feifi di wosu.*  
 3PL finish IDEO for paint DEF.SG house  
 ‘They have finished (completely) painting the house.’
- b. *\*de kaba kée feifi di wosu.*  
 3PL finish IDEO paint DEF.SG house

In (36a) the lexical verb *kaba* selects for a complement introduced by the complementizer *fu*, and can be accompanied by an ideophone (*kée*). If, on the other hand, the complementizer (*f*)*u* is absent, *kaba* has been reanalyzed as an aspectual verb, and, as such, is part of the INFL complex. Generated in this position, it cannot longer support its ideophone *kée* anymore (cf. Rountree 1992).

Ideophones can be used in determining the structure of certain constructions. In serial verb constructions, for instance, the ideophone selected by the first verb appears after the object, indicating that there is a (right) VP-edge between the object and the second verb:

- (37) a. *a naki hen gboo-gboo kii.*  
 3SG hit 3SG IDEO kill  
 ‘She struck him dead with really hard blows.’
- b. *\*a naki gboo-gboo hen kii.*  
 3SG hit IDEO 3SG kill

This shows basically two things: (i) the first verb in a serial verb construction is a full lexical verb; (ii) serial verb



constructions minimally consist of two VPs, and the object in between the verbs belongs to the first one.

Ideophones are a common feature in the languages of West Africa. Some parallel examples from Saramaccan and Yoruba, as one example of a West African language:

- (38) a. 'It is snow-white.'  
Saramaccan: a weti *fáán*  
Yoruba: o funfun *láúláú* (Rowlands 1979: 146)
- b. 'It is crimson.'  
Saramaccan: a *bε njaa*  
Yoruba: ó pupa *fòò*

Not only are ideophones a rather typical African grammatical category, sometimes the phonological form is identical to the ideophone or the normal word for the same feature in the relevant African donor language. Saramaccan *fáán* (intensifier for 'white'), for example, may well be related to Gbe (Ewe) *fáá*.

Secondary predication constructions can be divided into three classes (e.g. Hoekstra 1988). The factor that differentiates the classes is whether the secondary predicate is contained in a complement of the higher predicate or not.

The class in which the secondary predicate is in the selected complement of the higher verb occurs with the cognition verbs like *fendi* 'consider', perception verbs, and causative verbs:

- (39) a. *mi fendi hen wan bambuu sembe* [cognition V]  
 1SG find 3SG INDEF.SG good person  
 ‘I consider him a good person.’
- b. *mi si hen a di djai* [perception V]  
 1SG see 3SG LOC DEF.SG garden  
 ‘I saw him in the garden.’
- c. *di bia daan mbei hen wai-wai.* [causative V]  
 DEF.SG much rum make 3SG happy-ADJ  
 ‘The whole heap of rum made him happy.’

As can be seen from these examples, there is, in principle no categorial restriction on the secondary predicate. In (40a) it is an NP, in (40b) a PP and in (40c) an AP.

The secondary predicate can also verbal in nature:

- (40) a. *de fendi di womi libi.*  
 3PL find DEF.SG man live  
 ‘They found the man alive.’
- b. *mi jei di mujεε-mii fan ku di piki wan.*  
 1SG hear DEF.SG woman-child talk with DEF.SG small one  
 ‘I heard the girl talk with the smaller one.’
- c. *di kai u di tjuba mbei hen uwii munja toona ko bε.*  
 DEF.SG fall for DEF.SG rain make 3 SG hair wet turn come red  
 ‘The rainfall made her hair wet and turn red.’

The class of non-selected secondary predicates can be divided into two types: (i) subject depictive; (ii) object depictive.

Subject depictives denote a property attributed to the subject.

Object depictives denote a property attributed to the object:

- (41) a. *a bi kule kumutu a di wosu penepene* [subject depictive]  
3SG TNS run come.out LOC DEF.SG house naked  
'She came running out of the house naked.'
- b. *a ta njan di gwamba dεε-dεε.* [object depictive]  
3SG IPFV eat DEF.SG meat dry-ADJ  
'He is eating the meat dry.'

In these examples the secondary predicates are both headed by an adjective (as can be seen from the reduplication: see above). Nouns can also head the secondary predicate, as is shown in the following example of a subject depictive:

- (42) *a ta luku mi ogi-wojo.* [subject depictive]  
3SG IPFV look 1SG evil-eye  
'She looks at me angrily.'

Verbs and prepositions cannot head the secondary predicate in depictives (subject- as well as object-oriented ones).

In addition to the selected and non-selected (secondary) predicates, we have secondary predication constructions with a resultative interpretation. Resultatives are realized either with the addition of a full clause, introduced by the preposition *te* 'until/till', or as serial verb constructions. Thus, a typical resultative like 'I painted the house red' is rendered as follows:

- (43) a. *Mi feift di wosu te a ko be.*  
 1SG paint DEF.SG house until 3SG come red  
 ‘I painted the house red.’
- b. *Mi feift di wosu ko be.*  
 1SG paint DEF.SG house come red  
 ‘I painted the house red.’

The first instance one cannot strictly speaking identify as a case of secondary predication, since the added full clause (*te a ko be* in (44a)) does not function as a secondary predicate.

The Saramaccan counterpart of run-of-the-mill resultatives, exemplified here by particle-verb constructions, are, almost without exception, realized as serial verb constructions:

- (44) a. *Mi o naki konko-tatai go a BOG.*  
 1SG IRR hit gossip-rope go LOC BOG  
 ‘I shall call up the BOG.’
- b. *de jaka hen puu.*  
 3PL chase 3SG remove  
 ‘They chased him away.’
- c. *disa hen buta!*  
 leave 3SG put  
 ‘Put it down!’

Veenstra (1996) found only three examples of resultatives involving a secondary predicate headed by a preposition. It is

not clear whether this constitutes a normal pattern for expressing resultative secondary predication constructions, however. Nouns and adjectives cannot head the secondary predicate in resultatives. Schematically, we have the following situation in Saramaccan:

(45)		selected	non-selected	resultative
	secondary predicate	N/A/P/V	N/A/*P/*V	*N/*A/(*)P/V

Resultatives and the equivalents of particle-verb constructions in non-serializing languages are primarily expressed by means of serial verb constructions in Saramaccan.

## 10. Glossed Text

The following text excerpt is part of a traditional story. In this story, water is hidden under a rock. All the birds are invited to try to break the rock, but nobody succeeds. Then the woodpecker shows up. This fragment is taken from Anon. 1982:

(1) *Hɛn totomboti taa wɛ a o ɖu luku tu*  
 then woodpecker said well he IRR do look too  
 ‘Then the woodpecker said that he would try too.’

(2) *Gaama, mi o go naki luku.*  
 Granman, 1SG IRR go hit look  
 ‘Chief, I am going to try to hit it.’

- (3) *Hen dee otowan taki taa:*  
 then DEF.PL other say that  
 ‘Then the others said.’
- (4) *Ku un-buka, i langa bakabedi di ku di gaan taku fi-i de?*  
 with which-beak, 2SG long back-head REL with DEF.SG big ugliness for=2SG there  
 ‘With what beak, you long back-of-the-head, with your great ugliness?’
- (5) *Um-fa a du ufo i sa booko en?*  
 which-fashion 3SG does before 2SG POT break 3SG  
 ‘How are you going to break it?’
- (6) *U tuu we... luku di bigi de ku mi, woko.*  
 1PL all FOC look DEF.SG bigness there with 1SG, woko  
 ‘All of us [have tried] ... look how big I, Woko, am.’
- (7) *Gbanini taa: ``We luku mi. Un totomboti?*  
 Hawk say well look 1SG. Which woodpecker  
 ‘The hawk said: ‘‘Well, look at me [how big I am]. Which woodpecker [is going to try such a thing]?’
- (8) *Hen totomboti waka te ko dou.*  
 then woodpecker walk till come arrive  
 ‘Then the woodpecker walked out there.’
- (9) *Hen a tjoko di sitonu kookookoo.*  
 then 3SG stab DEF.SG rock IDEO  
 ‘Then he pecked at the rock. Peck! Peck! Peck!’

(10) *Hen a waka go seeka taampu.*  
then 3SG walk go arrange stand

‘Then he walked to [another place] and got himself ready.’

[The woodpecker finally succeeds in breaking the rock, and thus provides water for all the birds. However, since that time the woodpecker has not been able to stop pecking at things.]

(11) *Hen a taa an sa disa soni u naki moon.*  
then 3SG say 3SG.NEG POT quit thing for knock more

‘After that, he said that he can’t stop hitting any more.’

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## References

### *Grammars*

There are no major grammars available, only a valuable grammar sketch by Catherine Rountree (1992). Another less technical manuscript sketch is Haabo (2002).

### *Dictionaries*

A preliminary wordlist was Donicie & Voorhoeve (1963).

De Groot (1977) is a dictionary where each entry is richly illustrated with sentences exemplifying usage (the most important informant in De Groot was from the village Nye Lombe in the Basu-se region, therefore the variety he describes can be classified as the Basu-se dialect).

Two good online dictionaries are available: A Saramaccan-English Interactive Dictionary at <http://www.sil.org/americas/suriname/Saramaccan/English/SaramEngDictIndex.html>, and a Saramaccan-Dutch interactive dictionary at <http://www.saamaka.com/>. The first is based on the dictionaries produced by the Summer Institute of Linguistics: Glock (1996) and Rountree, Asodanoe & Glock (2000). The second is based on the manuscript wordlist by Haabo (2002), a native speaker.

### ***Texts/Corpora***

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