

Outline of the book

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/cll.52.outline>

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Pages xxvii–xxix of

**Language and Slavery: A social and linguistic history of the
Suriname creoles**

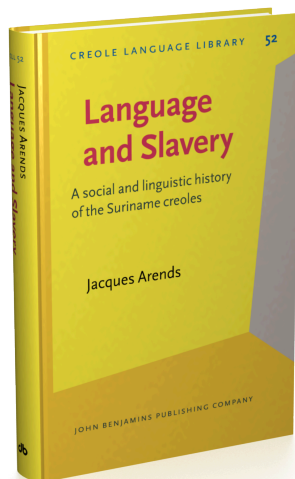
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[Creole Language Library, 52] 2017. xxix, 463 pp.

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The Surinamese creole languages enjoy the notable status of being the best-documented creoles in the earlier stages of their development, albeit that the initial written documentation of the two main languages, Sranantongo (henceforth Sranan) and Saramaccan, was mainly by the hand of non-native speakers. For this reason much scholarship exists on the diachrony of these two languages while synchronic variation at any given period of time is lacking for precisely the same reason. This book aims to shed new light on and address the various questions that have arisen regarding the genesis and development of these Surinamese languages.

The contribution of the present book is to give an in-depth synthesis of previous scholarship on not only the linguistic history of the Surinamese creole languages, but also to re-visit the sociohistorical developments pertinent to the formation and growth of these languages. Much previous scholarship has not only been based on erroneous historical-demographic evidence but also the period before colonization by the English in 1651 has been largely ignored even though there is sufficient historical evidence of European settlements before that date and no convincing evidence of an absence of African slaves. Given that Captain Marshall attempted settlement in Suriname in 1630 it is likely that he took African slaves with him since slaves were already present in Barbados from the mid-1620s. This bone of contention among creolists and historians alike is dealt with here giving strong evidence for including the period 1630–1651 in an analysis of the developments ensuing in Suriname in the colonial period. This book also includes in its deliberations areas beyond the borders of Suriname, namely Brazil and the Greater Guyana area showing how the 150 years prior to settlement in Suriname were forerunners of developments in Suriname.

This book starts with an overview of the history of Suriname as a creole society within the larger historical context, including the previously ignored early settlements, and leads up to a concise overview of the most relevant theories, hypotheses and questions in creole studies, one of which remains creole genesis.

Chapter 2 starts out with the claim that the formation of the Surinamese creoles may go further back than the generally accepted mid-seventeenth century, to a period prior to colonization. This the author refers to as the ‘pre-history’ of the Surinamese creoles. He walks us through the early settlements, the English period,

the arrival of Sephardic Jews, and the early years of Dutch colonization leading up to the English exodus, the turbulent years of transition from English to Dutch rule which resulted in the Amerindian war (1678–1686) and early marronage which led to the formation of the Saramaka Maroons and their language. Given the historical relationship between Sranan and Saramaccan, any hypothesized dating of the formation of Saramaccan has direct repercussions for the reconstruction of creole genesis in Suriname. Thus the author scrutinizes the empirical evidence used notably by Richard Price (1976, 1983, 1990) to form his claims for the earliest date of 1690 as the formation of the Saramaka Maroons – and by extension their language – rather than the 1640s during Captain Marshall’s second settlement, which is corroborated by Saramaccan oral traditions.

Chapter 3 seeks to address an issue that is generally ignored by creolists, namely the social and demographic factors that played a role in the formation of the creole languages. Besides offering a wealth of detailed demographics, the author shows that internal social stratification favored linguistic differentiation, whereas an external social network favored linguistic homogenization. In Chapter 4 the author zooms in on language variation and linguistic repertoires in the pre-Emancipation era, giving an all-encompassing sociolinguistic overview of the early colony, showing how ethnicity, language attitude, religion and location (urban versus plantation) had an effect on by whom and how Sranan was spoken.

Chapter 5 then discusses the linguistic data gleaned from texts from the pre-1800 period, namely some miscellaneous texts (1667–1763) and those of Herlein (1718), Nepveu (1770), Van Dyk (c1765) and Stedman (1790). Some of these texts, which include court transcriptions and dialogues, constitute the earliest written sources for Sranan, better known as Suriname Plantation Creole. The author also looks in detail at some features of Herlein’s Sranan texts that are indicative of a pre-creole stage of that language.

Chapters 6 and 7 offer the reader a wealth of dated and annotated textual data, including both oral and written texts, carefully chosen to represent different genres and stages of the Surinamese creole languages, Sranan, Ndyuka, and Saramaccan. The oral texts in Chapter 6 include mainly songs but also *odos* ‘proverb-like sayings’ and some examples of *Anansi tori* ‘folktales’. Chapter 7 comprises written texts that belong to the oldest specimens known for the Surinamese creoles. Those texts discussed earlier in Chapter 5 are given here in full, with complete biographical data of the authors where possible. The written texts in Chapter 7 constitute two different types of textual data, namely secular texts and religious texts. The ‘texts’ include lists of single words found embedded in published work, for example, words used in Aphra Behn’s 1688 novel *Oroonoko, or the royal slave*, as well as full dialogues (Herlein 1718) and full transcriptions of, for example, the Saramaka

Peace Treaty in Sranan (1762) and the Saramaka Maroon Letters. With the aim to facilitate future researchers on the creole languages of Suriname, the author has kept the transcriptions of these texts true to the original so that they can be used without bias. It was the author's wish that research, linguistic and otherwise, on the creole languages in Suriname will continue.

Eithne Carlin
March 2016