

A new look at the Portuguese element in Saramaccan

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Abstract

This article contains what is possibly the most accurate wordlist of Portuguese-derived items in Saramaccan (a creole language spoken in the interior of Suriname) produced so far, and attempts to establish the proportions of Portuguese – versus English-derived words – in this language. We believe that the results are very striking when the lexical category of the items concerned is taken into account. These observations are then analysed in the light of a possible scenario of the formation of Saramaccan involving the partial relexification of an earlier form of Sranan (the English-lexifier creole of the coast of Suriname) with Portuguese and/or a Portuguese-based Creole.

1. Introduction

This article deals with that section of the Saramaccan lexicon which is derived from Portuguese. One of the main contributions it makes to the study of this language is to provide the scientific community with an as accurate as possible listing of the Portuguese elements in Saramaccan. Frequently one comes across misattributions by linguists of words in this language to Portuguese, Dutch or English. Hopefully, this article will provide a partial corrective for this.

Saramaccan is an English-based Creole language spoken in part of the interior of Suriname by the descendants of African slaves who fled from the colonial plantations in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Despite the relatively small number of speakers (in excess of 30,000), this Creole has received a great deal of attention from creolists, not least because of the sizable Portuguese element in its lexicon. This has been calculated, in terms of the Swadesh list, to be around 35% of the basic vocabulary (Smith 1987), whereas English accounts for about 50%. The proportion of Portuguese items in the other Surinamese Creoles, Sranan and Ndjuka, is much lower.

Even though many other questions concerning Saramaccan have been hotly debated, the mixed character of its lexicon alone would be enough to make this language of great interest for linguists. In fact, very few other Creole languages are comparable to Saramaccan in this respect. Other cases would include Berbice Dutch and the various forms of Chabacano in the Philippines. These latter cases, however, are interpreted as cases of mixing between a superstrate and a substrate language, whereas in the case of Saramaccan both Portuguese and English would normally be seen as superstrates. One of the striking characteristics of all these creoles is that even their function words are of mixed origin. In addition, it is often difficult to predict which part of the lexicon will be derived from each language.

2. Previous work on the Portuguese element in Saramaccan

The Portuguese element in Saramaccan has been the object of study for a respectable period already. The first systematic study was carried out by Hugo Schuchardt in 1914, who set out some of the subsequent lines of research, particularly on the origin of this element. Another influential piece of work was Voorhoeve (1973), which also addressed the question of the formation of Saramaccan with particular reference to the Portuguese-based part of its lexicon. Smith (1987) is a very detailed look at the relations among the Creoles of Suriname and deals extensively with the Portuguese-based lexicon, not only in terms of its origin, but also in terms of its phonology. More recently, Cardoso (2003) has focused on the processes of change involved in the Portuguese element in the language.

Of all the work done on the subject, the ones that come closest to taking a global view on the Portuguese-derived lexicon of Saramaccan are perhaps Cardoso (2003), Schuchardt (1914) and Smith (1987). The other lexical analyses extant typically take as their point of departure either the Swadesh list (e.g. Voorhoeve 1973; Aceto 1997), or a specific source (e.g. Perl 2000), or a sub-sample of words selected for methodological reasons (e.g. Huttar 1989; also Voorhoeve 1973). The present compilation, included as an appendix, is therefore the most exhaustive to date, and will hopefully be useful as a starting-point for future analyses.

3. Explanations for the Portuguese element in Saramaccan

The origin of the Portuguese element in Saramaccan remains somewhat puzzling. From the very early studies on this issue on, competing theories have been proposed to explain the presence of such a significant Portuguese element in this language. In the interests of space we will not recapitulate the long history of this debate, just mention two recent hypotheses.

The first of these was proposed by Goodman (1987). He postulated that the Portuguese element was the result of the diffusion of a Portuguese-based Creole across the Caribbean following the emigration of the Sephardic Jews and their slaves from Brazil in 1654, when the Dutch colony of Pernambuco was lost. This theory was adopted by Smith (1987), who assumed that the English-based Sranan came into contact with some form of Portuguese on the Jewish-owned plantations on the middle Suriname River from the late 1660's on. A process of partial relexification of Sranan towards Portuguese ensued, giving rise to Dju-Tongo ('Jew-language') by about 1680. Dju-Tongo was the language the runaway slaves took to the bush to become Saramaccan.

Recently, two separate studies (Arends 1999; Ladhams 1999) challenged this hypothesis, based on their analysis of historical documents. They claimed that the number of slaves brought from Brazil, if any, must have been too small to account for the Portuguese items in Saramaccan. In reaction to this, Smith (1999) argued firstly that a scenario by which a group of Portuguese Jews and their slaves moved first to Cayenne after the fall of the Dutch colony in 1654, and then on to Suriname in 1665, was possible. Secondly he pointed out that there was an account of a "new language" sounding very much like a creole, which was spoken in the large Pernambucan maroon settlement of Palmares. Thirdly he highlighted a number of phonological features only affecting the *Portuguese* items in Saramaccan that could be explained as due to Kikongo influence, and suggesting that these items had a separate history.

4. Proportion of Portuguese words in Saramaccan

As a result of our new look at the Portuguese words in Saramaccan (of all periods), we have identified 377 fairly certain etyma, plus a few others which are less certain but still possible. This is a clear advance on the 347 claimed by Smith (1999). We suspect that the true number of Portuguese words will eventually probably approach 400.

Some of these words only occur in the 18th century sources for Saramaccan (Schumann 1778; Riemer 1779-80). Others appear only in modern sources, but, since there has been no contact between Portuguese and Saramaccan until the modern incursions from Brazil of gold-prospectors and others, it is safe to say that they must have been present in earlier Saramaccan, but have gone unnoticed. There are also a few words occurring only in modern Saramaccan, but which do appear earlier in Sranan. Some of these items may conceivably be loans in Saramaccan. As Smith (1999) points out, Sranan has 113 words of Portuguese origin, of which nearly half are unique to Sranan among the Suriname creoles, reflecting at least partly the urban Jewish culture of Paramaribo, the capital.

4.1. Portuguese 'basic' vocabulary and function words in Saramaccan

Smith (1987) makes the claim that Saramaccan is basically an English-lexifier creole partly relexified to Portuguese, or to a Portuguese creole. Apart from the broad agreements among the creoles of Suriname in terms of morphosyntax, the basic lexicon of Saramaccan is more English than Portuguese, as we have noted above. In terms of a Swadesh 200-word count, Smith (1987) found the following percentages for Saramaccan and Sranan.

	English	Portuguese	Dutch	African
Sranan	77.1%	3.7%	18.0%	1.6%
Saramaccan	49.9%	34.9%	10.5%	4.7%

Table 1: etymological origin of Sranan and Saramaccan basic vocabulary (from Smith, 1987).

These percentages show two things. While the largest proportion of basic vocabulary is of English origin, a very substantial proportion – more than a third – is from Portuguese. The influence of Portuguese on the *basic* vocabulary is therefore pretty solid.

Smith (1987) also provides a similar count on the percentages of function words – taking all types of function word into consideration. The results are as follows:

	English	Portuguese	Dutch	African
Sranan	80.4%	1.5%	15.9%	2.2%
Saramaccan	62.8%	16.0%	14.5%	6.8%

Table 1: etymological origin of Sranan and Saramaccan function words, (from Smith, 1987).

In this count, only one language appears to be a major provider of function words – English. The role of Portuguese is here much reduced, to about the same level of influence that Dutch has on the function words of both creoles. However, it remains noteworthy that, whether we take the Swadesh basic 200-word list into account, or the totality of function words, the influence of Portuguese remains roughly *ten times as large* on Saramaccan as it is on Sranan. Note also that the Dutch influence can be assumed to be more recent than that of Portuguese.

These figures from function words seemed to suggest the correctness of Smith's relexification hypothesis, as one would expect a much slower replacement of English-derived items by Portuguese ones among function words.

5. Proportion of Portuguese and English words over the lexical categories of Saramaccan.

We have calculated the proportion of nouns, verbs, and adjectives of Portuguese and English origin in the Saramaccan lexicon, as it is now available. A caveat which should be expressed is that there is still no complete word-list of modern Saramaccan. The sources used are Donicie & Voorhoeve (1963), De Groot (1981), and Rountree, Asodanoe & Glock (2000). In none of these are all the Portuguese-derived words to be found, and each of them contains items that appear in neither of the other two sources. For 18th century Saramaccan we have used Schumann (1778), Riemer (1779-80), which is a near identical copy, and Wietz (1805).

A few methodological preliminaries should be stated. We have basically restricted our examination to monomorphemic items. However we have also taken account of items that were complex in terms of English or Portuguese, but which contained one root plus a cranberry morph as far as Saramaccan was concerned. In terms of the English items, in a number of cases a Dutch etymology would strictly speaking have been an option. By and large these items are old in Saramaccan and appear in 18th century sources, where by and large Dutch words tend to be rare. We presume that in most such cases the English derivation is the correct one.

5.1. Nouns

We have identified 355 nouns that satisfied the above requirements. To our surprise, the proportion that was revealed was 50-50. 176 nouns were of Portuguese origin, and 179 of English origin. If we recall that 'basic' vocabulary was more English than Portuguese, then Portuguese must dominate in more non-basic concepts. This is of course what would be expected if Portuguese was the relexifying language. The more basic a concept the more resistant it would be to replacement.

5.2. Adjectives

We have identified 78 adjectives of Portuguese or English origin. Here the proportion was quite different. 27 adjectives were of Portuguese origin, and 51 of English origin. So, twice as many adjectives were of English origin as were of Portuguese origin. As such, this is not particularly startling. Nouns are assumed to be more easily borrowed than other word-categories, so we would expect a higher proportion of replacement among nouns than among adjectives. Now, of course, relexification and borrowing cannot be identified as linguistic processes, but they are both types of lexical replacement, and one would expect that what is more easily borrowed is also more easily relexified.

5.3. Verbs

The real surprise came with the verb count. We identified 275 verbs of English or Portuguese origin in Saramaccan. Of these no fewer than 154 turned out to be Portuguese (56%) while only 121 were of English origin (44%). It is certainly quite unexpected that such a high proportion of verbs should be of Portuguese origin. In most cases of large-scale borrowing, nouns are more easily borrowed than verbs. In some languages verbs can only be borrowed if a special derivational suffix is added to the verb stem. An example of this would be Chinese verbs borrowed into Tungusic languages like Manchu and Orochen.

Matthias Perl (2000) provides an analysis of the verbs in Saramaccan based on Riemer's wordlist (1779), and comes to the conclusion, apparently similar to ours, that there are more verbs with a clear Portuguese origin than verbs with an English origin – 122 to 111. Note that we only examined items that were verbs in the source languages, whereas Perl proceeds from the verbs *of Saramaccan* itself. Perl in fact omitted a number of verbs, and misetymologized others, so that in truth the origins of the English and Portuguese verbs in his analysis come out as more or less equal. Applying our methodology to Riemer's list, and taking only English and Portuguese source-language verbs into account, gives us the figures of 116 English verbs and 113 Portuguese ones. Riemer's list cannot be used to prove the dominance of Portuguese over English.

Why should nouns and verbs exhibit such different behaviours? Inasmuch as Saramaccan can be regarded as mixed in some sense, is it useful to refer to other cases of mixed languages with skewing as between numbers of nouns and verbs? The classic case is Michif (Bakker, 1997). Here the languages concerned are French (nearly all nouns) and the Algonquian Ojibway and Cree (nearly all verbs). Algonquian languages have extremely complex verbal morphology – so that we can say that much of the morphosyntax is expressed through the verbal system. This does not seem to be directly relevant to our case, however.

6. Mixed creoles and function words

In the only other 'mixed creole' in the Atlantic area, Berbice Dutch, the proportions of Dutch and Eastern Ijo basic vocabulary are roughly similar to those holding between English and Portuguese in the Saramaccan case. Here too the 'minority' language is much less evident in its presence in function words. However, there are very striking differences. Berbice Dutch displays striking substrate influence in the morphosyntax, while there is no apparent "Portuguese" influence in the case of Saramaccan (there is influence from the substrate language Fon). There is also no reason for considering Portuguese to be a substrate language of Saramaccan – or is there? The problem is that when we talk about Portuguese in the Saramaccan context we do not really know what we are talking about: either a form of Portuguese, or a Portuguese creole

or both. Smith (1999), as mentioned above, shows evidence of Portuguese forms displaying Kikongo phonological influence, which could point to a creolized form of Portuguese. If the Portuguese element was brought into Sranan via a Portuguese Creole, the combination resulting in Dju-Tongo/Saramaccan, we may be allowed to regard this Portuguese element as substratal, and the Sranan element as superstratal.

7. /payman/ vs /pakamentu/

A very striking parallel between Sranan and Saramaccan concerns the non-productive derivational relationship between nouns with the basic meaning of ‘payment’ and verbs with the basic meaning of ‘pay’ in the two languages. Such derivational pairs are very rare, and can be counted on the fingers of two hands in both languages. The fact that an English-derived version occurs in Sranan, and the corresponding Portuguese-derived one in Saramaccan, is clear testimony to the intimate historical relations between these two languages.

Payment is clearly a very important concept in a plantation economy system. We have then a perfect correspondence in the following:

<u>English</u>	<u>Sranan</u>	<u>Saramaccan</u>	<u>Portuguese</u>
pay	/pay/	/paká/	pagar
pay-ment	/pay-man/	/paka-mentu/	paga-mento

This cannot be regarded as coincidental. The fact that such relationships are extremely rare in both languages rules chance out completely in our opinion. This must almost certainly be the result of relexification. The evidence presented in previous sections, together with the fact that Portuguese was introduced later into Suriname than English (1665 against 1651) makes a strong case for the hypothesis that Portuguese (creole?) was relexifying an early form of Sranan.

8. Conclusion

In order to perform the analyses in this paper, we have constructed what we believe is the most complete word list of the Portuguese-derived lexemes in Saramaccan produced so far. This is not a trivial task, given the misattributions that have been made in the past. It is essential that, before such partial lexica are employed to argue for or against some hypotheses concerning the development of Saramaccan, the lists utilized are at least accurate. We feel confident in claiming that this list is in fact the most accurate produced so far.

Based on this data, several word counts were carried out which made it possible to note that, whereas Portuguese is less influential than English in

respect of Saramaccan's basic vocabulary, and much less so with respect to its function words and adjectives, the situation is different with regard to nouns and verbs. In fact, it was observed that Portuguese accounts for as many nouns as English, and it is actually predominant in providing its verbs. These observations, though surprising, still fit into a scenario of Portuguese, or at least a restructured variety of Portuguese, relexifying an early English-based creole.

Finally, attention was drawn to the case of a Saramaccan word that retains a Portuguese derivational morpheme (an extremely rare case), which has an equally rare English-derived correspondent in Sranan. It was suggested that this striking correspondence may support the hypothesis of relexification towards Portuguese.

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APPENDIX

The Portuguese-based lexicon of Saramaccan

Late 18th century	20th century	Etymology
-abra (tree)	-ába (tree)	Pt. árvore tree
adjossi good-bye	adjoósi good-bye	Pt. adeus? good-bye Sp. adiós?
adjudâ enema		Pt. ajuda help
	afaángu excrement	Pt. frago excrement
agúja sewing needle	agúja needle	Pt. agulha needle
akì here, hither	akí here	Pt. aqui here
alá there, thither	alá/aá there, thither	Pt. alá there
alátu rat	alátu rat, mouse	Pt. rato mouse
amaija tomorrow	amanjá tomorrow	Pt. amanhã tomorrow
	anatría vermicelli	Pt. aletria vermicelli
aneru ring for a person's finger	andélu ring	Pt. anel ring
	apaní smack on the head to signal the beginning of a child's fight	Pt. apanhar to catch, to be hit

Late 18th century	20th century	Etymology
apè upright, perpendicular		Pt. a pé on foot
assìa heartburn		Pt. azia heartburn
	awáa now, as ever	Pt. agora now, at present Braz. agoa
awwò grandparents, grandmother, grandfather, ancestors	avó grandparents	Pt. avó? avò? avós? grandmother/grandfather/grandparents
	baasia watermelon	Pt. melancia watermelon
	babá to ooze mucus, to drool, saliva	Pt. babar to drool
baijà to dance	bajá/banjá/ bandjá to dance	Pt. bailar to dance by-form balhar (?)
	bakajáu codfish	Pt. bacalhau codfish
bála bullet, lead		Pt. bala bullet
bali/bari to sweep, to empty	baí to sweep	Pt. varrer to sweep
bali/bari barrel	balí barrel	Pt. barril barrel
banda bank (of a river)	bánda bank (of a river), side	Pt. banda side
banna to dangle, to swing to and fro		Pt. abanar to fan
barika belly	baíka belly	Pt. barriga belly
	basío low river	Pt. baixio shoal
bassorre broom	basóó broom	Pt. vassoura broom

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
bassia	to bend down, to degrade, to descend	baziá	to descend	Pt. baixar	to lower, to descend
basu/bâsu	underneath, low, lower bush	básu	underneath, under	Pt. (de)baixo	underneath
bâsu	spleen	básu	spleen of an animal	Pt. baço	spleen
		batí	to hit, to hit the clothes against sth. to wash them	Pt. bater/batido	to hit/hit
bebé/bebèh	to drink	bebé	to drink, to suck a liquid	Pt. beber	to drink
besîh	to cloth, to dress	bisí	to wear, to dress	Pt. vestir	to wear, to dress
bilá	to turn back/around, to turn, to change	biá	to turn, to turn around	Pt. virar	to turn
bíngo	navel	bíngo	navel	Pt. umbigo	navel
bítju/pitju	worm, vermin	bítju	worm	Pt. bicho	worm, animal
bláku	cave, hole	baaku	hole, a well, opening	Pt. buraco	hole
boà	to fly	buá	to fly	Pt. voar	to fly
bomba	pigeon	pomba	pigeon	Pt. pomba	pigeon
brassa	to embrace, to grasp	baasá	to embrace	Pt. abraçar	to embrace
bringa	to strive, to rush, to hurry	biingá	to strive, to hurry, hurry, hurried	Pt. obrigar/do?	to force
brukà	to hatch, to peel, to break open	buuká	to peel	Pt. esburgar/esbrugar	to peel
brusseh	to hate, to dislike, to be strict	buusé	to hate, not to stand	Pt. aborrecer	to dislike

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
búja/buija	to fight, fight, to diminish	búja	to fight, to argue	Pt. bulha	fight
búka	mouth, jaws, beak, word, speech, tip, blade of knife, mouth of river	búka	mouth, news, word, beginning	Pt. boca	mouth
		bulí	to move, to shake	Pt. bulir	to move
bulja	to stay, to hesitate, to hinder, to stir	buujá	to remain, to stay	Pt. embrulhar	to wrap, also to hinder
		bulíki	donkey	Pt. burrico	donkey
buníta	to be beautiful			Pt. bonita	beautiful
bunn	good	búnu	good, easy, dear, blessing	Pt. bom	good
canta	to sing, the singing, song, verse	kandá	to sing, song, (rooster's) crow	Pt. cantar	to sing
		kónda	beads (on string)	Pt. conta	reckoning, count, bead (on a rosary)
condá/kondá	to count, to tell (a tale)	kondá	to tell (a tale)	Pt. contar	to count, to tell (a tale)
cóntu/kóntu	story, gossip	kóntu	story	Pt. conto	story
dá	to give	dá	to give	Pt. dar	to give
dedia	during the day, day (as opposed to night)	didía	during the day, daylight	Pt. de dia	daytime
dindra	to enter	dendá/ dendáa	to enter	Pt. entrar	to enter
dindru	inside	déndu	inside	Pt. dentro	inside
diabo	devil			Pt. diabo	devil

Late 18th century	20th century	Etymology
	dimbolí to slander, to provoke	Pt. demolir to demolish
	diiná to have a bowel movement	Pt. drenar to drain
dissà to let go, to leave, to abandon, to stop work	disá to let go, to free	Pt. deixar to let, to leave
djarali garden	djaai bathing-place for women	Pt. jardim garden
djurà to swear an oath, oath	djulá to swear an oath, to assure	Pt. jurar to swear an oath
djumbu tin, lead (sometimes silver)	tjúmbu lead, bullet	Pt. chumbo lead
domingo day following the <i>grang sabba</i> , friday	dimíngo Friday	Pt. domingo Sunday
dretta to melt, to liquefy		Pt. derreter to melt
drummi to sleep, to lie, sleep, to be sleepy	duumí to sleep, to be sleepy	Pt. dormir to sleep
dua two		Pt. duas two
dubla to fold, to wind	dubá to fold	Pt. dobrar to fold, to bend
fadda/faddá to find something disgusting	fadá to bore	Pt. enfadar to bore
fakka knife, to cut something with a knife	fáka knife	Pt. faca knife
fakkinja jack-knife		Pt. faquinha small knife
	fáma object of gossip and laughter	Pt. fama good name
fanniya flour, all kinds of fine dust	fanía flour, dust	Pt. farinha flour

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
fassi	to spin (cotton)	fasí	to spin (cotton)	Pt. fazer	to do
febre	fever	fébe	fever	Pt. febre	fever
feru	iron, steel	félu	iron	Pt. ferro	iron
fiá	discourse, to argue	fiá	to argue	Pt. porfiar	to argue
fiá	to have faith, to trust	fiá-fiá	trustworthy	Pt. fiar	to trust
		figí	to cook or fry in oil	Pt. frigir	to fry
fikka	to be left, to stay, to miss, to leave	fiká	to leave, to be left, to stay	Pt. ficar	to stay
fineti	pin	finéta	big crochet needle	Pt. alfinete	pin
finga	to hit something on something	fingá	to hold, to hurt, to string	Pt. fincar	to stick, as a pin in flesh
		fínu	thin, fine	Pt. fino	narrow, thin
fio	hammock string	fíio	hammock string	Pt. fio	string
fitjá	to tighten, to narrow	fitjá	tight, narrow	Pt. fechar	to close/closed
flattà	to lack, to miss, to be insufficient, wrongdoing, the lack	faatá	to miss, to have need	Pt. faltar	to miss, to be missing
flamma	flame			Pt. flama	flame
foli/floro/ fro	flower	foló	flower	Pt. flor	flower
		fóogo	exclamation for when the fire threatens to die out	Pt. fogo	fire
franja	tuft	faándja	tuft, raffia	Pt. franja	fringe

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
frebbèh	to simmer, to cook, to boil, to be wild	febé	to cook, to boil	Pt. ferver	to boil
frigà	to rub	feegá	to rub, to polish	Pt. esfregar	to rub
fruta	fruit	fuúta	fruit of a tree or plant	Pt. fruta	fruit
fulá	to run through, to pierce, to dig (a hole)	fulá	to have a hole, to dig a hole, to drill	Pt. furar	to pierce
fundam	depth in the water	fundá	depth in the water	Pt. fundão	depth in the water
fundu	deep, to be deep, thoroughly	fundu	deep	Pt. fundo	deep
fúngu	tinder, sponge	fúngu	tree fungus	Pt. fungo	fungus
fussih	to flee, to escape, to withdraw	fusí	to flee, to float (on the current)	Pt. fugir fu^xhir (dial.)	to flee
gabiàm	big prey bird, indigenous eagle	gabián	prey bird, hawk	Pt. gavião	hawk
gaija	to deceive, deceit	ganjá	to deceive	Pt. enganar Gal. enganhar	to deceive
gáku	stutter	ngáku	stutter	Pt. gago	stuttering
gambossa	kinship term between women who share the same husband	kambósa	kinship term between women who share the same husband	Pt. comborça	concubine, mistress
gamja/ gammia	place, space, spot, room	kamía	place, space, spot, room	Pt. caminho	road, way

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology
		gangá	device of sticks to carry heavy loads	Pt. canga yoke
gannia	chicken	ganía	chicken	Pt. galinha chicken
gassà	worn out, shabby, blunt	gasá-gasá	old, worn out	Pt. gastar wear out
gawwà	to praise	gafá	to praise	Pt. gabar to praise, to boast
		gééja, geéia	gills, uvula	Pt. guelra gill(s)
glua/grua	fresh, raw, unripe	kúa	fresh, raw, unripe	Pt. crua raw
glunja	to grumble, to gossip behind the person's back	guunjá	to gossip behind the person's back	Pt. caluniar to slander
goma	paste of cassava flour with cassava juice	góma	sediment of cassava flour, paste	Pt. goma gum
goto	ditch, gutter	góto/ngóto	ditch, gutter	Pt. esgoto (Eng. gutter?) sewer, gutter Sran. gótro)
grandi	to be older, older	gaáandi	old, respectable, honour	Pt. grande big
grang	big	gaán	big	Pt. grã big
grangánda	neck, gullet, throat	gangáa	neck	Pt. garganta throat
grangkassa	barn, house without walls	gangása, gaangása	open camp	Pt. grã-casa big house
gressi	to grow, to increase			Pt. crescer to grow
grità	to groan, to foam	giitá	to groan	Pt. gritar to scream
grossu	big, especially fruits			Pt. grosso thick
gulí	to swallow, to devour	gulí	to swallow	Pt. engolir to swallow
		gumbitá	to vomit	Pt. vomitar to vomit

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
hansa	wing	hanza	wing	Pt. asa	wing
haswa	to fight	hásua/ásua	to fight, to compete	Pt. assuar	to insult, to rouse
hia	island			Pt. ilha	island
hunja	nails, claws, to scratch with nails or claws	húnja	nail, claw, scratch	Pt. unha	nail
jabri	to open, to be open, to uncover	jabí/jabí	to open	Pt. abrir	to open
jassà	to fry, to roast, to bake, to fry at the fire, to burn a boat to make it bigger	jasá	to roast, to bake, to burn a boat to make it bigger	Pt. assar	to roast
jinda	still, yet			Pt. ainda, inda	still, yet
		ká	where [rel. loc.]	Pt. cá	here
		kaa (cf. kaba)	already	Pt. acabar	to finish
		kaabíta	goat	Pt. cabrita	small goat
kaba (cf. kaa)	to finish, to complete, done, Enough!, and, but, already	kaba (cf. kaa)	to complete, to stop, to end	Pt. acabar	to finish
kabugru	Coppename nation, built by Negroes and Indians	kabúgu	person of mixed blood, mulatto	Pt. caboclo	half-breed (white and indian)
kadjù	indigenous plant	kadjú	fruit tree, cashew	Pt. cajú	cashew
		kadósu	clan-name	Pt. Cardoso	(a family name)

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
kaí	to fall, to happen, to occur, to start a work	kaí	to fall, to happen, to be located	Pt. cair	to fall
		káita	card	Pt. carta	card
kakkà	faeces, manure, to defecate, ugly	kaká	to defecate	Pt. cagar	to defecate
		kambó	mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, to play co-wife [Price]	Pt. comborça	concubine, mistress
kamissa	masculine clothing to cover the genitals	kamisa	tissue covering the waist of men	Pt. camisa	shirt
kamma	reed sleeping mat, bed	káma	sleeping mat	Pt. cama	bed
kandêa	light, burning resin for illumination			Pt. candeia	lamp
		kanja	to disturb, to be difficult	Pt. acanhar	to restrain, to make ashamed
		kanú	cannon	Pt. canhão	cannon
		kapadu	retarded, castrated, kind of pig	Pt. capado	castrated
kappewirri	young bush that shot up again	kapée	new bush	Pt. capoeira	field taken over by bush again
		kasóó	metal pan (often used to drink)	Pt. caçoulo	clay pot
kassika/ kakkisa	bark, skin, leather, shell, sheath	kákisa	bark, skin	Pt. casca	bark, skin (not animal)
kassínja	small hut to spend the night in the bush	kazían	temporary camp	Pt. casinha	small house

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology
		kasitúu	clan-name	Pt. Castilho (a family name)
katharrha	catarrh, a cold	katáu/katáo	a cold	Pt. catarro catarrh
kattibo	slave	katíbo	slavery, slave	Pt. cativo prisoner, slave
		katjó	dog's name	Pt. cachorro puppy, dog
keh	to want, to desire	ké	to want	Pt. quer wants
kéndi	hot, to be hot, heat	kéndi	hot, warm	Pt. quente hot
kiljà	to raise, to care for	kiiá	to cultivate, to raise	Pt. criar to raise
ko	with, and	ku	with, and, or	Pt. com with
koa	lye			Pt. côa filtering
komé	to eat, to dine	komé	to eat	Pt. comer to eat
kónda	coral	kónda	necklace	Pt. conta bead
kotántu kontantu	very much 1780			Pt. contanto com tanto? provided that
krabbatu	tick, insect that sucks blood	kaapátu	blood-sucking insect, tick	Pt. carrapato tick
krabûka	to shut up	ka búka		Pt. cala(r) a boca shut your mouth!
kramaù	dead coals	kaabán, koobán	coal	Pt. carvão coal
krapussa	hat, cap, anything to cover the head	kaapúsa	hat	Pt. carapuça cap
kreôl	everything born or raised in Suriname	kióo/kijóo	boy	Pt. crioulo creole
krokka	to slip, to be slippery	koogá/	to slip, slippery	Pt. escorregar to slip

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology
		akoogá	rough, unlevel ground	
ku	buttocks, back part of things	kú	vagina, buttocks	Pt. cú buttocks
kuà	to sieve	kuá koowá	sift out dirt skim off	Pt. coar to filter
kubri	to cover	tjubí	to hide	Pt. cobrir X Eng. kivver to cover
kuja	bowl of calabash	kúja	calabash (tree and fruit)	Pt. cuia [Braz.] calabash
kujade	brother-in-law			Pt. cunhado brother-in-law
kujeh	to choose, to select			Pt. escolher to choose
kujeri	spoon	kujéε	spoon	Pt. colher spoon
kulá	to cure, to heal	kulá	to tend, to cure, bandage	Pt. curar to heal
kuleh	to run, to float	kulé	to run, to stream	Pt. correr to run
kuleh	to run out, to leak	kulé	to leak	Pt. escorrer to leak
kumma	just as	kuma	just as	Pt. coma as
kunja	wedge	kúnja	wedge	Pt. cunha wedge
kussuma	to be used to, to have the habit of	kusumá	to be on good terms, to be intimate	Pt. costumar acostumar to have the habit of to be familiar with
kussumîh	to lament, to complain, to be sorry	kusumí	to be depressed, to worry	Pt. consumir(-se) to worry
kussima	[1805]			
kwatriwójo	marsupial rat	kpátiwójo	opossum	Pt. quadri-/quatro + four- + eye olho
kwefa	sewn cap	kpéfa/kpéfa	baby cap	Pt. coifa cap

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
labo	tail	lábu	tail	Pt. rabo	tail
lalá	to rub, to crush	lalà	to crush, to grate	Pt. ralar	to grate
lálu	grater	lálu	grater	Pt. ralo	grater
		lánza	spear	Pt. lança	spear
lassarà	to writhe on the floor with distress or pain			Pt. (di)lacerar	to writhe in pain
		lásu	loop	Pt. laço	loop
latja	to split, to be split, crack, gap	latjá	to crack, to separate, to tear	Pt. rachar	to crack
lefángi	axe, sabre	ufángi	machete	Pt. alfanje	scimitar, sabre
lembèh	to lick	lembé	to lick, to sprinkle	Pt. lamber lember [pop.]	to lick
		lenguwá	wilt	Pt. languir X minguar	languish lessen, wilt
lensu	handkerchief			Pt. lenço	handkerchief
		léun	lion	Pt. leão	lion
líba	sky, over, above	líba	moon, sky, over, above	Pt. (ar)riba	up
líma	file	líma	file	Pt. lima	file
límba	to clean	límbá	to clean, to weed, to prune	Pt. limpar	to clean
límbò	pure, clear, light, plain	límbò	clean, shining, clear	Pt. limpo	clean
línsu/liso	smooth, polished	línsò	slippery, smooth	Pt. liso	smooth
líò	river	líò	river	Pt. rio	river
lolá	to roll, to writhe			Pt. rolar	to roll

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
lólo	roll	lólu	roll	Pt. rolo	roll
				Du. rol?	roll
lonje/longi	far, for a long time	lóngi	far, for a long time	Pt. longe	far
luluntu	round			Pt. redondo	round
				X Du. rond	round
lungà	to snore	lonká	to snore, to purr	Pt. roncar	to snore, to roar
ma	but, only	ma	but	Pt. mas? Du. maar?	but
		maaká (cf. marka)	to mark, to measure, to aim	Pt. marcar	to mark
mái	vocative for mother-in-law	mái	vocative for mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, niece, sister-in-law	Pt. mãe	mother
makáku	small monkey, grey or brown	makáku	kind of monkey	Pt. macaco	monkey [originally Kikongo]
makkisa/massika	to grind, to squash, to crush	makisá/masiká	to squash, to crush	Pt. machucar (X Pt. mastigar)	to pound, crush to chew)
malà	to whet, to sharpen	maá	to whet, to sharpen	Pt. amolar	to whet
mamáu	papaya tree and fruit	mamáu	papaya	Pt. mamão	papaya
mamma-dosso	fruit from a tree	maamadósu	kind of tree and fruit	Pt. mamão-doce	sweet-papaya
mammantem	early in the morning	mámaté	morning, dawn, in the morning	Pt. manhã (Eng. morning?) + Eng. time	morning
manda	to send	mandá	to send	Pt. mandar	to send
		mandjá	stained	Pt. manchar	to stain

Late 18th century	20th century	Etymology
	manjá to bore, weary	Pt. maçar to bother, bore (fig.)
mandru ripe, strong	mandú ripe	Pt. maduro ripe
mangru thin	mángu thin	Pt. magro thin
marka/marki to measure, mark, border, (cf. <i>maaká</i>) accent	maáka mark, signal, example, border	Pt. marca mark Eng mark?
markudjà a tasty fruit	makudjá passion-fruit	Pt. maracujá passion-fruit
	mateéa/ matééa slimy snail track, streaked stains, spray	Pt. matéria matter
matjaru axe	matjáu axe	Pt. machado axe
matu forest, bush	mátu forest, bush	Pt. mato forest, bush
máu arm, hand, forelegs of four-legged animals, branch, twig	máu/máun hand, arm, foreleg of animals	Pt. mão hand
meija stockings		Pt. meia sock
metteh to be friendly with	meté to meddle with	Pt. meter-se com to meddle with to be friendly with
minini child, anything that is young	miíi child	Pt. menino/a child
minja to urinate	miíndjá/ minján to urinate	Pt. mijar to urinate
	mindí to lie, make up, accuse wrongly	Pt. mentir to lie
mitíra to lie, lie		Pt. mentira lie
moli/molli soft, to be soft	mói soft, cooked	Pt. mole soft, limp

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
muffina	wretched, pitiful	mofina	wretched	Pt. mofina	wretched
		mónimo	marble [loan from Sranan <i>mor(i)mo?</i>]	Pt. mármore	marble
muija	to be wet, to be damp, to wet	munjá	wet, to be wet, to wet	Pt. molhar	to wet
mujêre/ mojêre	woman	mujée	woman	Pt. mulher	woman
mulêh	to die			Pt. morrer	to die
mundu	world	mundu	world	Pt. mundo	world
munga	to bang against something	muunga	to hurt oneself, to wound oneself	Pt. amolgar	to hurt/to groan/to flatten, to crush
mussula	to bow in reverence	musulá	to cross legs, run zigzag to make fool of someone	Pt. mostrar-se	to show off, make a public appearance
				Pt. misturar	to mix
naséh/nasi	to germinate, to bloom	nasí	to grow, to be born	Pt. nascer	to be born
		ndjaká	part of a raft, to place it	Pt. jangada	raft
		ngátu	kleptomaniac	Pt. gatuno	thief
ninga	to contest, to refuse, to deny	niingá	to refuse	Pt. negar	to deny, to refuse
oijo	eye, bud, crumb, drop	ójo/wójo	eye	Pt. olho	eye
ómi	man, something masculine	ómi/wómi	man	Pt. homem	man
		ópio	poison, black magic	Pt. ópio	opium
otro/otre/ oter	other, second, different	óto	other	Pt. outro	other

Late 18th century	20th century	Etymology
	paátu wooden plate	Pt. prato plate
paggamentu debts	pakamentu/ pakamétu debts	Pt. pagamento payment
pái father-in-law, old man	pái vocative for father-in-law, son-in-law, older brother- in-law	Pt. pai father
pakka to pay, to return	paká to pay, to give as a present	Pt. pagar to pay
pali to procreate, to give birth, to bear fruit	pali/pái to give birth, to bear fruit	Pt. parir to give birth
panja to touch	panjá to catch, to take	Pt. apanhar to catch
panta to frighten	pantá to be shocked, to frighten, to fear	Pt. espantar to frighten, to startle
pantría calves of the leg	pantéa calves of the leg	Pt. panturrilha calves of the leg
pappa mash, porridge	pápa porridge	Pt. papa porridge
	papáda a disease that provokes swelling of the face	Pt. papada double chin, dewlap
pappià bawling	papiá to chatter	Pt. pappear to chatter
pappo crop	pápu/pápi crop	Pt. papo crop
parrasarra tree from which stockades are made	paazáa type of palm	Pt. paliçada stockade/palisander
passà to walk past	pasá to go by	Pt. passar to pass
passamau! astounding		Pt. pasmão person surprised at everything

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
passià	to take a walk, to walk to and fro			Pt. passear	to take a walk
patatta	potato	batáta	potato	Pt. batata	potato
pattupattu	duck	patu-pátu	duck	Pt. pato	duck
páu	tree, bar, stick, handle, stalk	páu	tree, stick, post, stalk, frame, wooden	Pt. pau	stick
		peesénti	gift	Pt. presente	gift
pekka	to stick to, to get caught	peká/peeká	to be stuck, to stick to, to nail, to fasten	Pt. pegar	to stick to, to hold
pellula	pearl, coral			Pt. pérola	pearl
penna	trouble, distress, to be troubled, to torment	pená	to disgrace, disgrace, to miss, to feel sorry, to insist, to reproach	Pt. penar	to suffer, to trouble
penti	comb, to comb	pénti	comb	Pt. pente	comb
petra	stone			Pt. pedra	stone
		pidí	to ask for, to implore	Pt. pedir	to ask for
pikin	small, a bit	pikí	small, young, little, a bit	Pt. pequeno/pequena	small
pikkado	sin	pikádu	incest, sin, doom, spirit that haunts the liars (capitalised)	Pt. pecado	sin
pinna	type of leaf, type of arrow	pína	arrow with two blades	Pt. pena	feather
pioiyo	fowl-louse	pióyo	fowl-louse	Pt. piolho	louse
		pípa	pipe (cask for liquids)	Pt. pipa	pipe (cask for liquids)

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
plakkeh	electric eel	polaké	electric eel	Pt. puraquê	electric eel [Braz.]
planta/ pranta	plants, to plant	paandí	to plant	Pt. plantar X Eng. plant	to plant to plant
plati/prati	to share, to separate	paatí	to share, to separate	Pt. partir	to break
plênia	fat fish with human-like teeth	peénja	piranha	Pt. piranha	piranha
pluma	feather, fur	puúma	feather, body hair	Pt. pluma	feather
		puumá	shed fur	Pt. de(s)plumar	pluck
pobri	poor, wretched	pobri		Pt. pobre	poor
poli	be able, have strength			Pt. pode [3sg]	can
		pómpa	proW and stern of a boat	Pt. popa	stern of a boat
pondri	to rot, to decompose	póndi	to go bad, to rot	Pt. podre	rotten
pontà	to aim at			Pt. apontar	to point, to aim at
		pónta	point, top of tree	Pt. ponta	point, extremity
possínja	very powerful poison	poozian	poison	Pt. peçonha	poison
		potigé	portuguese	Pt. português? Eng. portuguese?	Portuguese
praija	to scatter, to spill	paajá	to scatter, spread	Pt. esparralhar	to scatter
pregu	nail	peégu	nail	Pt. prego	nail
pretta	to press, to squeeze	peetá	to press, to oppress	Pt. apertar	to squeeze
prikittu	type of small parrot	piikútu	type of small parrot	Pt. periquito	parakeet
proba	gunpowder	poóba	gunpowder	Pt. pólvora	gunpowder

Late 18th century	20th century	Etymology
probá to try, to experiment	poobá to try, to risk	Pt. provar to taste, to try
	pululú air bubbles in the water	Pt. pulular to boil
	púta prostitute	Pt. puta whore
putta to put down, to decide, to fix	butá to put, to place	Pt. botar to put
	sá to be able to	Pt. saber to know Eng. savvy?
	saadíán kind of fish	Pt. sardinha sardine
	saagá to salt	Pt. salgar to salt
	sabá day of rest, week	Pt. sabá Sabbath [Jewish]
sabi to know something/someone	sábi to know, to understand, to remember, knowledge	Pt. sabe know [3sg] Eng. savvy?
sai is, are	saí to be, to be located, stay	Pt. sair to come out, go out, appear, become
saija woman dress	sája type of clothing for women	Pt. saia skirt
sakku bag	sáku bag	Pt. saco bag
sakkuli to shake, to thresh, to fall out	sakpí to shake, to thresh	Pt. sacudir to shake
sangla to bleed a vein	sangá nose blood, bloody nose	Pt. sangrar to bleed
sangri blood		Pt. sangue blood Sp. sangre?
santa holy, saint		Pt. santa holy, saint
sappatu shoes	saapátu shoe	Pt. sapato shoe

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
sarrakássa	front part of house	sákássa	living-room	Pt. sala + Casa	room + house
		sawá	to wash, to rinse	Pt. enxaguar	to rinse
		sédu	cedar	Pt. cedro	cedar
		sémbe-/sémpe-	sémbe-té: much time	Pt. sempre	always
sendèh	to shine, to light	sendé	to shine, to light	Pt. acender	to light
sikáda/skada	stairs, ladder, steps of stairs	sikáda	stair, ladder	Pt. escada	stair, ladder
sindà	to sit	sindó	to sit	Pt. sentar X Eng. sit down	to sit
sinja	ashes, dust	síndja	ashes	Pt. cinza	ashes
		síndjápéétu	hardwood tree used for making boats	Pt. cinza + preta	ashes black
sínta	strap, girth	sínta	to strap, strap	Pt. cinta	strap
		sintí	to have an intuition, hear a little bit about sth.	Pt. sentir	to know, be conscious of
		sipajólu (-kónde)	spanish(-country): Spain	Pt. espanhol(+ country)	Spanish
sipéi	mirror	sipéi/sipé	mirror	Pt. espelho	mirror
siprà	dandruff			Pt. erisipela	facial disease marked by inflammatory redness of skin
sirká	to prepare, furnish	seeká	to prepare, arrange, care for	Pt. cercar	to enclose, surround, tighten

Late 18th century	20th century	Etymology
sreka tiger trap		Pt. cerca fence, enclosure
sitanja silver	sítanja steel	Pt. estanho tin
sombra shadow	sómba shadow	Pt. sombra shadow
sonsu/sunju dirty	súndju dirty	Pt. sujo dirty
suá to sweat, sweat	suá to sweat, sweat	Pt. suor to sweat
subí to climb	subí to climb	Pt. subir to climb
	súki sugar	Pt. açúcar sugar [pop. form]
	sukuáti cocoa	Pt. chocolate chocolate
	sukúma scum [loan from Sranan?]	Pt. espuma foam, scum
sukru dark	zugúu dark	Pt. escuro dark
sukupí to spit		Pt. cuspir to spit escupir [vulgar form]
sundà/suntà to collect, to gather, to pile	zuntá to gather	Pt. juntar to gather
sundu/suntu close, together	zúntu close	Pt. junto close
sunja/sonja dream, to dream	sunjá dream, to dream	Pt. sonhar to dream
supla to wait		Pt. esperar to wait
	tabáku tobacco	Pt. tabaco tobacco
tampa lid	tampá lid	Pt. tampão lid
tantu much, very much	tántu very much	Pt. tanto so much
tappa to cover, to be covered, to block, to lock, to muffle	tapá to close, to cover, to stop	Pt. tapar to cover

Late 18th century		20th century		Etymology	
tchimà	to burn, to cremate	tjumá	to burn, to cremate	Pt. queimar	to burn
teh	until, if, because, since	té	until	Pt. até	until
		temekú	to insist	Pt. teimar com	to insist with
tenteh	to stretch, to extend	tendé	to stretch, to extend	Pt. (es)tender	to stretch, to extend
téla/téra	land (as opposed to water)	téla	land, bank	Pt. terra	land
télu	total	télu	whole, all	Pt. inteiro	whole
teréjah	star	teéa	star	Pt. estrela	star
tía	cousin, aunt	tía	vocative for adult women, or mother-in-law	Pt. tia	aunt
		típa	tripe, intestine	Pt. tripa	tripe
tirà	to pull, to tear, to take away, to empty			Pt. tirar	to take
tío	uncle	tío	mother's brother, respectful vocative for all men	Pt. tio	uncle
		tjaka	pustules	Pt. chaga	pustules
tjemeh	to croak, to pant, to whimper, to sigh	djemé	to sigh, to moan	Pt. gemer	to moan
		tjiká	(to be) enough, to be in a position to, to be able to	Pt. chegar	to be enough
tjuba/tchuba	rain	tjúba	rain	Pt. chuva	rain
		tjupá	to suck (not a liquid)	Pt. chupar	to suck
		tolá	damage by fire	Pt. torrar	to toast, to brown

Late 18th century	20th century	Etymology
	tómbi to topple, to pour out	Pt. tombe/ar topple/to topple
	tónka pod fruit	Pt. tonca type of bean
	tónto to limp, to walk haltingly	Pt. tonto dizzy, foolish
trebessà to cut, to cross, widthways	tobesá crooked, twisted	Pt. atravessar to cross atravessado across
tremeh to tremble, to shake	teemé to tremble, to shake	Pt. tremer to tremble, to shake
trokka/tokka to exchange, to change, to mix	tooká to exchange, to change, to alter	Pt. trocar to exchange, to mix
tronna to go back, to return	tooná to go back, to return	Pt. tornar to go back, to return
trotto left, crooked	toóto left	Pt. torto crooked
trussa to twist a rope	toosá crooked, twisted	Pt. torcer to twist
tule/tulu all	túu all	Pt. tudo all
	tuká to throw against, to collide	Pt. tocar to touch
tummà to take	tumá to take, also with a sexual meaning	Pt. tomar to take
	vèntu wind	Pt. vento wind
walla thin rod, whip		Pt. vara rod
wedja envy, resentment, to envy	fedjá jealous	Pt. invejar to envy
wiwo alive	vívo alive	Pt. vivo alive
wóbo/hóbo eggs	óbo/wóbo egg	Pt. ovo egg
zikka come		Pt. chegar to arrive