

## Old data, new cognates: the case of the 'marker of alienable possession' in the Kamakã, Purí, and Krenák families

In Macro-Jê, cases of shared grammatical peculiarities play an essential role in corroborating hypotheses of genetic relationships. One of such “shared aberrancies” is a morpheme which signals indirect possession, initially described for Jê, Boróro, Maxakalí, and Kipeá (Rodrigues 1992, Ribeiro 2002). The present note describes the occurrence of likely cognates of this morpheme in three other families (Kamakã, Purí, and Krenák), illustrating the importance, for Macro-Jê historical linguistics, of fragmentary data from poorly-documented languages.

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The non-coastal area between northeastern São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, eastern Minas Gerais and southern Bahia presented, in the first centuries of the colonization of Brazil, a remarkable linguistic diversity (see Appendix). Spoken in this area were languages from four different families—Purí (Coroado), Krenák (Botocudo), Maxakalí, and Kamakã—, all of which are currently assumed to be part, on a more remote level, of the Macro-Jê stock (Rodrigues 1999). Under the impact of European colonization, however, most of these languages became extinct, having been documented only in short wordlists. Although the relationship between these languages and the Jê family (and, consequently, their inclusion in the Macro-Jê stock) is fairly consensual among scholars, comparative evidence has consisted mostly of a few lexical cognates, particularly in the case of the Purí and Kamakã families. Although that situation is steadily improving with Maxakalí, the only surviving language of its family, and Krenák, a moribund language intensively researched by Lucy Seki (cf. Seki 1984, 1990, 2002, 2004, etc.), the same cannot be expected with the other families, whose members are all extinct.

Given the small number of lexical cognates, cases of shared grammatical peculiarities, such as those uncovered by Aryon Rodrigues (1992, 2000), end up playing an essential role in corroborating hypotheses of genetic relationships. One of such “shared aberrancies” is a morpheme which signals indirect possession (which Rodrigues terms “marker of alienable possession”), initially described for Jê (\**j-õ*), Boróro (*-o*), Maxakalí (*yoŋ*), and Kipeá (*-u-*; Rodrigues 1992, Ribeiro 2002).<sup>2</sup> Of comparative value is not only the fact that a likely cognate occurs in all these languages. More importantly, the cognate morphemes share distributional peculiarities, not only occurring with lexemes of the same semantic types (such as nouns referring to items of material culture and elements of nature), but also revealing similarly-unusual lexicalization patterns. For instance, in both Kipeá (Karirí family) and Panará (Jê family), the root for 'fire' occurs in its citation form with a third-person prefix, thus behaving as an obligatorily-possessed root (1a, 2a). In order for it to occur with a “real,” semantic possessor, the alienating morpheme is required (1b, 2b). Such idiosyncrasy, involving likely cognate morphemes and shared by two geographically-distant languages, is a rather compelling indicator of genetic relationship (Ribeiro 2002:39).

(1) **Panará (Northern Jê)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>a.     <i>i-sí</i><br/>       3-fire<br/>       'fire'</p> | <p>b.     <i>s-õ-sí</i><br/>       3-POSS-fire<br/>       'his fire'</p> |
|---|--|

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<sup>2</sup> In my study on this topic, I analyze this morpheme as an “alienator” or *nominal applicative* (Ribeiro 2002), whose function is to alter the argument structure of a noun.

(2) **Kipeá (Kariri)**

- |    |                                 |    |  |
|----|---------------------------------|----|--|
| a. | <i>i-su</i><br>3-fire<br>'fire' | b. | <i>s-u-su</i><br>3-POSS-fire<br>'his fire' |
|----|---------------------------------|----|--|

Interestingly enough, however, Rodrigues' description, and my own study on the subject (Ribeiro 2002), failed to detect the existence of likely cognates of this alienating morpheme in three other Macro-Jê families—Kamakã, Purí, and Krenák. For the Kamakã family, only the first-person form of the morpheme (Masakarã *ingniung* 'mine', where <gn> represents [ɲ]; Martius 1867:148, Loukotka 1932:518) is documented, but its similarity (already pointed out by Guérios 1945 and Loukotka 1932) to forms in the other languages is rather straightforward (cf. Suyá *i-ɲ-õ*, Boróro *i-n-o*, etc.).<sup>3</sup> For the Purí family, only the first- and second-person forms were documented (Koropó *eign-yunhún* 'mine'; *nen-yunhún* 'yours'; Martius 1867:168; Loukotka 1937: 204, 213), but the fact that the corresponding free pronominal forms were also documented (cf. *eign* 'I', *nen* 'you') allows for an easy identification of the possessive morpheme.<sup>4</sup>

For Krenák, luckily enough, a cognate of this morpheme, *nhuck* [ɲuk], was actually documented in its syntactic context (Ehrenreich 1896:625, Loukotka 1955:123).<sup>5</sup> As in the other families, a body-part term such as 'flesh' (*nhick* [ɲik]) is immediately preceded by its possessor (3a), whereas a material culture term such as *carapok* 'ax' is indirectly possessed, via the alienating morpheme *nhuck* (3b).<sup>6</sup>

- |        |   |    |   |
|--------|---|----|---|
| (3) a. | kureck nhick<br>pig flesh<br>'pig meat' | b. | José <b>nhuck</b> carapok<br>José <b>POSS</b> ax<br>'José's ax' |
|--------|---|----|---|

The similarities between the possessive constructions above and equivalent constructions in other Macro-Jê languages—as illustrated below by data from Panará (Dourado 1997), a Jê language—are remarkable:

- |        |   |                                       |    |                                   |   |
|--------|---|---------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|---|
| (4) a. | <i>kowtita</i><br>chicken<br>'chicken meat' | <i>y-ĩ</i><br>REL <sup>7</sup> -flesh | b. | tɛseya<br>T.<br>'Teseya's garden' | <i>y-õ</i><br><b>REL-POSS</b><br>garden |
|--------|---|---------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|---|

In sum, likely cognates of the Jê alienating morpheme *\*j-õ* were documented in all four language families situated between southern Bahia and northeastern São Paulo (and not only Maxakalí, as previously thought). As these notes hopefully show, the limited, fragmentary nature of the available data on most eastern Macro-Jê languages should not discourage the comparative linguist; on the

<sup>3</sup> For recent surveys of the available data, with reconstruction attempts, see Martins (2007), for the Kamakã family, and Silva Neto (2007), for the Purí family.

<sup>4</sup> A possible cognate of this morpheme was also documented for Coroado, another Purí language: *tijuanhum* 'yours' (Martius 1867:207).

<sup>5</sup> The relevant data were originally published by Guido Marlière, one of the earliest sources on this language, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>6</sup> That Krenák *ɲuk* and Jê *\*j-õ* are cognates is thoroughly corroborated by the phonological correspondences detected thus far: e.g. Krenák *ɲik* 'flesh' :: Proto-Jê *\*j-ĩ*, Krenák *nuk* 'negation' :: Proto-Jê *\*tõ*, etc.; for additional correspondences between Jê and Krenák, see Seki (2002). Data provided by Lucy Seki (personal communication, March 2007) suggest that relics of this morpheme still occur as part of possessive pronouns in contemporary Krenák (e.g., *ɲ-ɲuk tfoɲat* 'my bow', etc.).

<sup>7</sup> This morpheme, a linking prefix termed "relational prefix" by Rodrigues (2000), is a widespread feature in the Macro-Jê stock. In a few languages, it occurs fossilized, being synchronically analyzable as part of the stem.

contrary, the more limited the data, in both number and quality, the more thorough should be their analysis. When carefully analyzed, such data may still yield precious new insights into the linguistic past of a vast and little-known area of eastern Brazil.<sup>8</sup>

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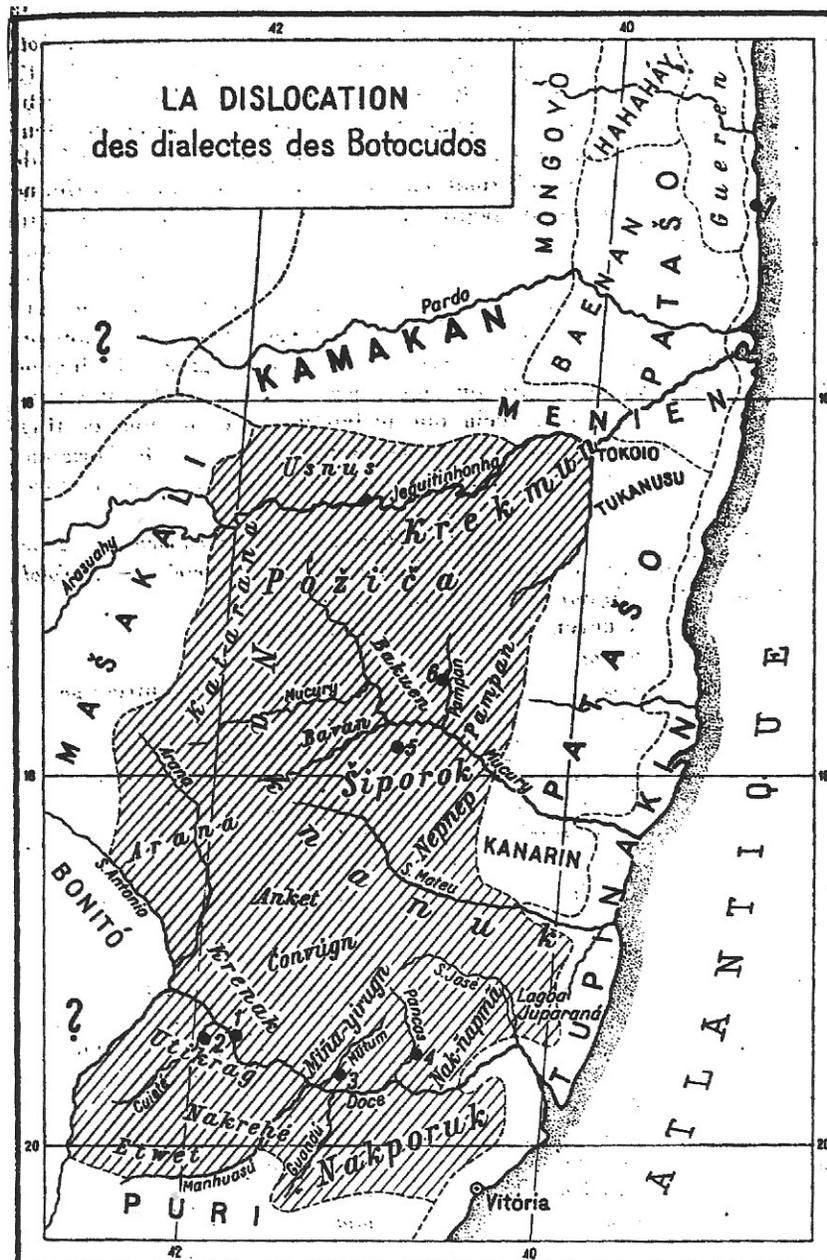
<sup>8</sup> Pataxó, an extinct Maxakali language once spoken in southern Bahia (Loukotka 1931, Urban 1995), provides another illustrative example on the importance, for comparative purposes, of fragmentary data from extinct languages. As examples (1) and (2) suggest, the root for 'fire' in Proto-Macro-Jê was probably monosyllabic (cf. Proto-Jê \*sɨ), as I proposed in an earlier work (Ribeiro 2003). In many languages, however, the root occurs with added fossilized morphological elements. That is the case in most Jê languages (Suyá *kusi*, Timbira *kuhi*, Xerente *kuzá*) and in Maxakali, the only extant language of its family (*kuxap* 'fire'; Popovich & Popovich 2005:35; cf. also Kapoxó *kescham*; Martius 1867:171). Closely-related Pataxó, however, preserved a more conservative form, without the initial syllable: *tʃahab* 'fire' (Meader 1978:46). Besides corroborating my hypothesis on the likely shape of the proto-root for 'fire', the Pataxó word (documented in a wordlist obtained in the 1960s from one of the last semi-speakers of the language) illustrates well a bimoraic minimality constraint also found in Maxakali and in languages of other Macro-Jê families (such as Karajá): in order for it to occur by itself, a monomoraic stem undergoes lengthening (\**tʃab* > *tʃahab*). Araújo (2000) analyzes examples such as this as a matter of "truncation," but, from a historical point of view, it seems clear that the exact opposite is at play. The Pataxó example demonstrates that, in Proto-Maxakali, (a) the root for 'fire' was still morphologically-independent and (b) a bimoraic minimality constraint was already present.

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## Appendix

Map of the territories inhabited by the Botocudo (Krenák) tribes (comprising southeastern Bahia, eastern Minas Gerais, and most of the present-day State of Espírito Santo), with surrounding tribes of the Purí, Kamakã, and Maxakalí families (*apud* Loukotka 1955). Also a member of the Krenák family, Guerén is shown separately, to the north.



## **Errata**

Added on October 7, 2010

p. 2, footnote 5:

- Guido Marlière's name was misspelled as *Marliére*

p. 3, footnote 8, and References:

- The reference to Loukotka (1931) is incorrect; the author meant to refer to Loukotka (1939):

Loukotka, Chestmír. 1939. A língua dos Patachos. *Revista do Arquivo Municipal*, vol. 55, p. 5-15. São Paulo: Departamento de Cultura.