From possessive pronoun to emphatic determiner: ‘So’ in Mauritian Creole

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Abstract

This paper argues that at a particular stage in the genesis of Mauritian Creole (MC), the 3sg possessive pronoun so, inherited from the French son, was used as a definite determiner as well as a possessive pronoun. It was used when there was a need to single out a unique element in the discourse, or to introduce a new referent which was to become the focus of attention. So was mostly used with genitive constructions, where a phonologically null determiner, represented as δ, was equally grammatical, as shown in (1) and (2). In both instances, the modified NP is singular and [+definite]:

(1)  So frère ça mamzelle là (Baissac 1888:155)
    DET brother DEM girl SP
    The brother of this young girl
    "Le frère de la jeune fille" (Baissac 1888:154)

(2)  ène loulou dire δ mari ça femme là (Baissac 1888:157)
    a wolf tell husband DEM woman SP
    A wolf says to the husband of this woman
    "Un des loups dit au mari" (de cette femme) (Baissac 1888:156)

This use of the possessive pronoun form is not grammatical in French. However, I argue that, in the early creole, the genitive construction in fact licensed its use as a determiner, when a new referent was being introduced in the discourse. This use of so with genitive constructions is no longer grammatical in modern MC, but this particle continues to be used as an emphatic determiner, where it now modifies both singular and plural NPs.

1. Introduction

1.1 From French to creole

Early in the genesis of the creole, the French definite articles le/la incorporated into a large number of the nouns that they modified, e.g.:

- La table (the table) → latab (table)
- Le coeur (the heart) → leker (heart)
- Du sable ((some) sand) → disab (sand)

It seems that the French determiners, which serve to mark the semantic contrasts of (in)definiteness and singular vs. plural were not recognized as separate morphemes, but were taken to be an integral part of the nouns that they modified (Chaudenson 1981,
Baker 1984, Grant 1995, Strandquist, 2005). Not all nouns ended up with an incorporated article, but the French determiner system collapsed, and the immediate consequence was that, in the early creole, all nouns were bare, yielding ambiguous interpretations between [±definite] singular and [±definite] plural, as shown:

(3) *Papa, vous y'en a femme, ou bien vous tout cèler?* (Pitot 1805)
Father, do you have a wife, or are you on your own?
Papa, vous avez une femme, ou bien vous êtes tout seul?

(4) *Zène fille couri lacase léroi* (Baissac 1888:141)
The young girl runs to the king’s palace
"La jeune fille court au palais du roi" (Baissac 1888:140)

(5) *Loulous trouve ça la forêt là; qui zaute va faire?* (Baissac 1888:175)
The wolves find this forest; what will they do?
"Les loups rencontrent la forêt, que vont-ils faire?" (Baissac 1888:174)

(6) *Zotte mette éne bande coutirières dan louvraze:* They put a number of dressmakers to work:
"On met un régiment de couturières à l’ouvrage:

coude robes, coude cimises, (Baissac 1888:365)
sew dresse, sew shirt,
(they) sew dresses, (they) sew shirts,
elles cousent des robes, des chemises" (Baissac 1888:364)

- In (3), the bare noun *femme* is [−definite] singular
- In (4), the bare NPs *zène fille* and *lacase léroi* are [+definite] singular
- In (5), *loulous* is [+definite] plural
- In (6), *coutirières, robes, and cimises* are [−definite] plural

In the early creole, the interpretation of nouns must have been simply derived from the context. However, over a period of some 150 years, from the mid 18th century to the end of the 19th century, new functional items emerged to mark the semantic contrasts of (in)definite and singular vs. plural, namely:

- The singular indefinite determiner *enn*, derived from the French *un/une*. This morpheme occurs early in the 19th century, to unambiguously mark nouns as singular and [−definite].
- The post nominal specificity marker *la*, most likely derived from the French locative adverb *là* (here, there), also starts to occur around 1820.
- The plural marker *bann*, derived from the French *bande* ('group') does not grammaticalize until the end of the 19th century. This morpheme, which immediately precedes the nouns that it modifies, is unspecified for the feature [±definiteness].
However, modern MC continues to admit bare nouns in various syntactic configurations, yielding a variety of interpretations, as shown:

(7) Ena lisyen dan lakaz
    have dog in house
    There are dogs in the house
    Il y a des chiens dans la maison

In this existential construction, which admits only indefinites (Milsark 1979), the bare NP *lisyen* is [−definite] plural. The other bare noun, *lakaz*, which is the complement of a preposition, is [+definite] singular. The definiteness feature is evidence that a null determiner (δ) projects, with the feature [+definite], and marks its complement NP accordingly. Thus, while the bare noun *lisyen* is an NP, the bare noun *lakaz* is a DP. It is a referential noun phrase, which, in the above context, must have a discourse antecedent, or be part of the shared knowledge of all discourse participants. Note that δ forces a singular interpretation of the noun.

The determinative use of *so* in the early creole occurs at a specific stage in the development of the determiner system, more precisely, in the second half of the 19th century, prior to the full grammaticalization of the plural marker *bann*. Its use is associated with the feature [+definite], and, like the null definite determiner δ, *so* also forces a singular interpretation of the noun.

1.2 Organization of this paper

In Section 2 I look at the determinative use of *so* in the early creole, and Section 3 compares the use of this morpheme to that of null δ, to determine what it brings to the interpretation of the noun phrase. Section 4 looks at the different environments that license the use of a definite determiner, in order to determine the difference between δ and so. Section 5 looks at the use of so in modern MC, where it is now only used as an emphatic determiner. Section 6 presents data from other languages of the world, where a possessive pronoun is used as a determiner and Section 7 concludes this paper.

2. So in the early creole

The first determinative use of the possessive pronoun appears in the first official imprint, in the creole language, of the Proclamation for the emancipation of the slaves in 1835, where it still has the French form, *son*:

(8) zautre tous va perdī son nom Esclaves (Nicolay, 1835)
    2PL all MOD lose DET name slaves
    You will all lose the name Slaves
    Vous perdrez tous le nom d’Esclaves

In the creole versions of the Bible (1888, 1892), the French definite article is translated as *so*, while Baissac (1888) consistently translates this creole particle into a definite article *le/la*, as shown in the following examples:
(9) & not will you name him John (lit: give him the name John)" (1955 Ch.I, l.13 p.1533)

(10) *it is not hard to guess what will happen
"Il n’est pas difficile de deviner ce qui doit arriver

(11) *the brother of this young girl
"Le frère de la jeune fille"

(12) *Pauline was the brother of Pauline, Pauline was the sister of Paulin
"Pauline était frère de Pauline, Pauline était soeur de Paulin" (Baissac 1888 :290)

It would not be possible in English or French to use the 3sg singular possessive pronoun in any of these contexts, as shown in (13) a., b. and c.:

(13) a. *his name John
   *son nom de John

b. *its end of my story
   *sa fin de mon histoire

c. *her brother of this girl
   *son frère de cette jeune fille

In modern MC, bare NPs would be grammatical in (10), (11) and (12), yielding the same singular [+definite] interpretation, namely:

(14) a. dan finisyon mo zistwar
   at the end of my story

b. frer sa mamzel la
   the brother of this young girl

c. Paulin ti frer Pauline, Paulin ti ser Paulin
   Pauline was the brother of Pauline, Pauline was the sister of Paulin
Given that null δ was performing a similar function of marking definiteness and singularity, what precisely does so bring to the interpretation of the noun phrase?

3. So versus the null determiner

The use of the 3sg possessive pronoun as a determiner has been documented in other languages of the world by Fraurud, who notes that its ‘essential semantic/pragmatic property has to do not with possessivity but with referentiality and, more specifically, with focus of attention’ (2001:260, italics in original). The reanalysis of the possessive in early MC seems to have equally been driven by pragmatic or discourse considerations, where its function was to single out a new referent in the discourse:

(15) E l’her là mem, comman zot sorti dan sinagog, zot vine avec Jac et Jan, dan la caz Simon é André. So bel.mér Simon, ti apré dormi, li malad avec la fièvr; (1888 :5)
And at that moment, as they came out of the synagogue, they entered with James and John into the house of Simon and Andrew. The mother in law of Simon was asleep, she was ill with fever;
"Et aussitôt, en sortant de la synagogue, il alla dans la maison de Simon et d’André avec Jacques et Jean. Or la belle-mère de Simon était au lit avec la fièvre," (1955 Ch.II, 1.29-30 p.1505)

The bel mér is the newly introduced individual, who becomes the focus of the narrative, as opposed to the other previously introduced characters. She is the one who is sick with fever, and who is about to be blessed by Jesus.

Note that in the French text, the clause is introduced by or, a discourse marker, which is defined as: ‘Marquant un moment particulier d’une durée ou d’un raisonnement’ (‘marking a particular moment in a duration or an argument’) (Robert 1972). It serves to introduce a contrasting viewpoint in an argument, for which the translator has chosen the particle so.

The notion of contrastive focus is also implied in the following example:

(16) Maismoi éne vié doumounde, so fille léroi zène zène.
(Baissac, 1888: 53)
But 1SG a old person, DET daughter king young young
But I am an old person, (whereas) the king’s daughter is quite young.
"Mais je suis vieux et la princesse est jeune." (Baissac 1888 :52)

A bare NP in (16) could be interpreted as singular or plural. The presence of so eliminates all ambiguity by picking our a single daughter of the king; it also serves to emphasize the contrast in age between the princess and the narrator, who, in scheming to save his life, must make believe that he is much too old to marry her.

As early as 1880 Baissac identified this emphatic use of so, and claimed that: ‘So est en réalité le seul adjectif possessif. Il a en créole un emploi emphatique assez original.’ (1880:14) (So is in fact the only possessive adjective. It has in creole quite an original emphatic use). He gives the following example, with the French equivalent, where he has translated so as the definite article le/la:
Once again, so places emphasis on its complement NP while also encoding a notion of contrast, here between the male and female of the species cardinal.

However, the fact remains that pragmatics alone cannot justify the use of the possessor as determiner, such use must also be grammatical. What is interesting about the determinative use of so in the early creole is that it always occurs with genitive constructions, and I propose that such constructions were in fact able to license the determinative use of this particle.

4. The use of a definite article

A necessary and sufficient condition of the use of the definite article is for the hearer to be able to identify some set of elements in discourse, and to locate a referent in it. When a definite NP is first introduced, it relies on the context for its interpretation, which can be provided either by a discourse antecedent, or in the form of an associative relationship with a discourse antecedent. When there is a discourse antecedent, the definite article has ‘direct anaphoric’ use, e.g. ‘a book…the book’. When there is no discourse antecedent, there must be a 'trigger' (Hawkins 1978) to license the use of the definite article, in which case, it has 'associative anaphoric' use, as in a book: the author, where book is the trigger which licenses the use of the definite article with the NP author.

In the case of 'direct anaphora' the antecedent of the definite NP must be relatively close in the discourse. In the case of ‘associative anaphora’, where there is no discourse antecedent, the use of the definite article is licensed by shared knowledge of the relationship between the newly mentioned NP and its ‘trigger’.

In MC, as in English and French, a new referent is introduced in the discourse by the indefinite article éne, equivalent of a/an and French un/une, from which it is derived:

"Le mâle du cardinal est rouge, la femelle jaunâtre"
come back home, ring the golden bell; but this diamond bell, you hear me, never never ring, except if you are in terrible danger.

"Il y avait une fois, un jeune homme qui avait épousé une jeune fille. Comme il devait aller travailler dans un champs de cannes assez éloigné de sa case, il donna à sa femme quatre cloches: une cloche de cuivre, une cloche d’argent, une cloche d’or et une cloche de diamant. Puis il dit: “Ecoute-moi bien. Quand tu voudras me voir revenir à la maison pour me dire quelque chose, tu sonneras la cloche de cuivre; quand tu seras pressée, sonne la cloche d’argent; si tu as vraiment besoin de moi sonne la cloche d’or; mais pour cette cloche en diamant, ne la sonne jamais que si quelque danger terrible te menace.” Baissac 1888 :180)

In the above text, every new concept is introduced by éne. The indefinite singular article picks out a specific individual from a potentially larger set. With every subsequent mention of the noun that refers to a previously mentioned object, English uses the definite article the, French uses the equivalent le/la, while MC has bare nouns. The noun phrases la cloche de cuivre, la cloche d’argent, la cloche d’or, are nevertheless referential expressions. They are definite in that they have a ‘strong’ discourse antecedent, and they refer to the only member of a relevant set, introduced by the indefinite singular article éne. The null determiner in MC thus behaves like the English and French definite article when used in direct anaphora.

The environment in which the determinative use of so occurs in 19th century MC, is with genitive constructions, which Hawkins (1978:139) defines as ‘associative clauses’ because they incorporate both the trigger and the associate. Genitives function just like relative clauses in that they enable the hearer to first identify and then locate the referent in the appropriate shared set of objects. While, for example, the noun phrase the end is meaningless on its own as a new referent in a discourse, the noun phrase the end of my story is grammatical because the modifying clause of my story turns the noun phrase the end into a referential expression, thus licensing the use of the definite article.

However, these very genitive constructions that licensed the determinative use of so have been analyzed as misconstrued genitives, which marked a transition between two types of genitive constructions that co-exist in MC (Syea 1994), namely:

**Type A**

(19) Sapo mo papa
hat 1SG.POSS father
My father’s hat
Le chapeau de mon père

**Type B**

(20) Mo papa so sapo
1SG.POSS father 3SG.POSS hat
My father’s hat
Le chapeau de mon père
While Type A is derived from the French (minus the definite article *le* and the preposition *de*), Type B patterns with West African possessive constructions, namely Twi and Ewe, as well as those of Hindi and Bhojpuri, all substrate languages. Syea analysed *so* in (10), repeated here as (21), as a possessive pronoun, co-indexed with the NP *zistoire*:

(21) \[so_{i} \text{ finition} \_k \text{ mo} \_j \text{ zistoire} \_i \text{ e} \_k\]
\[3SG.POSS_{i} \text{ end} \_k \text{ 1SG.POSS story} \_i \text{ e} \_k\]

*its end of my story
*sa fin de mon histoire

He claims that such constructions eventually disappeared because they were at odds with universal principles of grammar. However, if *so* is analysed as a definite determiner, and not as a co-referential pronoun in the way assumed in (21), then binding violations do not occur.

Furthermore, if *so* is to be analysed as a possessive pronoun co-indexed with its complement NP, one would also expect to find examples with the well established plural form of the possessor, *zaute/zotte* (their), such as:

(22) *Zaute lezos tout zanimaux
*their bones all animals

But there are no such uses of the plural form of the possessive pronoun in any of the 19th century texts. Baissac, for example, consistently uses only Type A genitives as in (23):

(23) *lézos tout zanimaux qui tigue là fine manzé* (Baissac 1888:381)
bones all animals COMP tiger SPTNS eat
"les ossements des animaux qu'avait dévorés le tigre" (Baissac 1888:380)

When this author uses what looks like a Type B genitive, it is in fact a tensed clause, minus the copula:

(24) *Mais Zeanne son pitit!*
But Jeanne 3SG.POSS child!
But Jeanne is her daughter!
"Mais Jeanne est sa fille!" (Baissac 1888:94)
≠but Jeanne’s daughter
≠mais la fille de Jeanne

I suggested, in Section 1, that the determinative use of *so* was motivated by changes that were occurring at a particular stage of the development of the new determiner system. While *so* functions like a definite determiner, its use may have also been motivated by the need to mark singularity. Its use is very frequent in the second half of the 19th century, prior to the full grammaticalization of the plural marker *bann*. Ppà Lindor’s folk tales abound with examples of *so*, which Baissac (1888) consistently translates as a singular definite article *le/la*, but there is only one single occurrence of the plural marker in all of these 28 tales, namely.
This suggests that this morpheme had not fully grammaticalized at that time. In Baissac’s texts, bare nouns can be either [+definite] singular, e.g. lacloce couivre in example (18), [+definite] plural, like loulous in example (5), and [–definite] plural, like robes in example (6). It is thus quite likely that his determinative use of so served the grammatical function of unambiguously marking singularity and definiteness, as well as the pragmatic function of singling out a unique individual in the discourse for clear interpretation.

However, while so had been reanalyzed as a determiner in early MC, it retained its original meaning as a possessive pronoun, and continued to be used just like the other possessives mo, to, nu, zot (my, your, our, your/their), as in so mari (her husband), so léquér (his/her heart), so lébras (his/her arm).

5. So in modern MC

These possessive pronouns also continue to be used in modern MC, exactly as in the early creole, and both Type A and Type B genitives still continue to co-exist. However, genitive constructions with so as a determiner are no longer grammatical:

(26) *So sapo mo papa
*DET hat 1SG.POSS father

This change correlates with the grammaticalization of the other determiner elements, which are now able to express, without redundancy, all the semantic features that could no longer be expressed following the collapse of the French determiner system. The default interpretation for bare nouns in modern MC is [–definite] plural, as in the existential construction (7) repeated here as (27):

(27) Ena lisyen dan lakaz
have dog in house
There are dogs in the house
Il y a des chiens dans la maison

While [–definite] singular is marked by enn:

(28) Ena enn lisyen dan lakaz
have a dog in house
There is a dog in the house
Il y a un chien dans la maison

A bare noun receives a [+definite] singular interpretation only when referentiality is retrieved from the context, i.e. either when the NP has a discourse antecedent, or when it is qualified by a relative clause or modified by a genitive, as in:
(29) **Sapo mo papa**
    hat 1SG.POSS father
    My father's hat
    Le chapeau de mon père

The prenominal plural marker *bann* eliminates all ambiguity with regard to a singular or plural interpretation, as in:

(30) **Bann sapo mo papa**
    PLU hat 1.SG.POSS father
    My father's hats
    Les chapeaux de mon père

The determinative use of *so* disappears with grammaticalization of *bann* towards the end of the 19th century. However, the use of this particle to mark emphasis in discourse persists in modern MC, where it is showing up in phrases without an overt modifier:

(31) **Sa travay la enn travay lesuf.**
    DEM job SP a job stamina.
    This job is one that requires stamina.
    Ce travail est un travail de souffle (qui réclame du souffle).

    **So premye kiksoz ki u bisin dan sa travay la, lesuf**
    (1980:7)
    DET first thing COMP 2PL need in DEM job DEF stamina
    The first thing that you need in this job is stamina
    La première chose dont vous avez besoin dans ce travail, c’est du souffle.

A bare noun, though grammatical, would fail to emphasize that the first and foremost requirement for this very difficult job is plenty of stamina.

Although *so* continues to be used in MC to express possession, there is evidence that it has totally lost its original 'associative' anaphoric meaning when used as a determiner. While *so* is the singular form of the possessive, it is used in (34) and (35) with plural NPs:

(32) **Me, mem avan solda reysi grinp sa montayn si difisil la, sef tribi donn lord so disip mont ziska enn ros pli lao ki tu ros laba, e li obliz sot, enn apre lot, mem so zanfan, mem so vye dimunn, mem so mama tibaba dan lebra, li obliz zot tu zet zot lekor depi lor sa ros la ver enn lamor serten anba.** (Moss 2000:5)
But, even before the soldiers had completed the arduous ascent, the chieftain ordered his followers up to the highest cliffs on the rock, and forced them, one by one, even the children and old people, and mothers with their babies, to throw themselves off the rock to their certain deaths below. (Author’s translation)
    Mais, même avant que les soldats aient réussi à grimper cette montagne si escarpée, le chef de la tribu donna l’ordre à ses disciples de monter jusqu’au rocher le plus haut là bas, et il les obligea, l’un après l’autre, même les enfants, même les vieilles personnes, même les mères avec leurs bébés dans les bras, il les obligea tous de se jeter du rocher vers une mort certaine en bas.
In a modern society, everyone, the young like the old, the women like the men, need to be literate.

Dans une société moderne, tout le monde, les jeunes comme les vieux, les femmes comme les hommes, doivent savoir lire et écrire.

The narrators have chosen so to emphasize, in (34), the tragic fact everybody, even the children, the old people and the mothers with young babies had to throw themselves over a cliff to their certain death, and in (35) where everyone without exception, the young as well as the old, the women as well as the men, should be literate. In the latter case, so also encodes a notion of contrastive focus between young and old, and men and women.

6. The use of possessive pronouns as determiners

Fraurud (2001) has documented a number of the world’s languages where the possessive, or 3sg suffixes, are used ‘determinatively, as ‘definite articles’ or instead of definite articles, as in the following examples:

(34) Ver -as lim j- is silema n’in (Komi, Uralic)
Forest-INESS:POSS.3SG snow-POSS.SG melted already
In the forest the snow melted already (Fraurud 2001: 248)

(35) Düş-tü -m. Sonra-sı -ni bil- me -m (Turkish)
Fall-PAST-1SG after-POSS. 3SG-ACC know-NEG-1SG
I fell. I don’t know what happened after (that)’ (lit: ‘its after’, ‘the after of it’) (Fraurud 2001:261)

Himmelmann (2001) claims that 'There is evidence that in several languages possessive pronouns can be used well beyond the typical contexts of use for possessive pronouns. This is particularly clear in instances where there is no antecedent for the pronoun,' as in the following example from Indonesian:

(36) karena sungai-nya keruh
because river - 3SG muddy
because the river was muddy (Himmelmann, 2001: 839)

He notes that 'The river referred to here is the river known to everybody in the speech community' but it is clear that there is no possessor for the river and that the possessive pronoun is used as a definite determiner. Himmelmann comments that in none of the above languages (Uralic, Turkish and Indonesian) does 'it appear that the use of a possessive pronoun is obligatory in all ...definite or specific contexts.' (2001: 839) The determinative use of the possessive pronoun is similarly optional in modern MC:

(37) Enn nui damour dan zot nik damour, apré so landémain matin, pou pétu dézéné. (Maingard 2000:23) (literally ‘its next morning’)
A night of love in their love nest, and the next morning, for breakfast,…
Une nuit d’amour dans leur nid d’amour, ensuite, le lendemain matin, pour le petit déjeuner….
However, the ‘next morning’ in the narrative happens to be a decisive moment in the story, which the author has chosen to emphasize this fact by using *so*, and thus draw the attention of the hearer to that tragic moment in time.

7. Conclusion

Fraurud suggests that it may well be that the ‘lack of articles in a language is something that it will strive to make amends for, either by developing articles or by using some other means for signalling definiteness’ (2001:262). She does not necessarily agree with this statement, on the grounds that many languages do not have articles, but still have the means to express definiteness either through word order, or specific morphemes, other than articles. This was not the case with the early creole. MC retained the strict SVO word order of its superstrate, but lost the French determiners, and all inflectional morphology.

I assume the features (in)definiteness, singularity and plurality to be universal semantic notions that must find expression in natural language, and which manifest morphosyntactic reflexes in the grammar. The determinative use of the possessive pronoun in 19th century MC seems to have been motivated by both grammatical and pragmatic considerations. It occurred when the process of grammaticalization of the new determiners was not yet complete, and when the language lacked a complete array of tools to express the semantic contrasts of [+definiteness] and [+plurality]. Prior to the grammaticalization of the plural marker *bann, so* was reanalyzed as a [+definite] determiner, and like the null δ, it forced a singular interpretation of its complement NP. Thus, it picked out a unique referent in the discourse, that needed emphasis for clear interpretation. Its use became redundant following the grammaticalization of the plural marker *bann*. In modern MC, *so* continues to be used as a marker of emphasis in discourse, when such emphasis cannot be succinctly expressed by other morphosyntactic means.

In the context of the creolization debate, which seeks to determine the factors that bring about the changes in the new language, the question remains: what motivated the emergence of a new determiner system in MC? The role of the superstrate is significant, given that most of the lexicon is derived from French, as is SVO word order. Neither can the role of substrate languages be denied, for it was the substrate languages' template that drove the new speakers to reanalyse the French articles as an integral part of the nouns they modified, perhaps similar to Bantu noun classifiers (Baker 1984, Strandquist 2005). The ensuing emergence of a null δ, and the grammaticalization of *la, enn, and bann* to compensate for the inability of the new language to express all the semantic contrasts that were expressed by the French determiner system, may well be the manifestation of ‘internal’ language change driven by universal principles of grammar.

Texts

Anon. 1888 *L’Évangil selon S. Marc* (dan langaz créol Maurice) British and Foreign Bible Society London.

Anon. 1892 *L’Évangil selon Sén Luk* (dan langaz créol Maurice) British and Foreign Bible Society London.

Anon. (ed.) 1980 *Bord la mer* Port-Louis Harbour and Docks Workers Union (PLHDWU) Port Louis, Mauritius.


Nicolay M 1835 *Proclamation pour noirs esclaves dans Maurice. Traduction en langue creole.* Port Louis, Mauritius Archives.

**References**

Baissac 1880 *Étude sur le patois créole Mauricien* Imprimerie Berger Levrault Nancy.


**Notes**

1 This analysis forms part of a larger project on the emergence of the determiner system in Mauritian Creole.

2 Most of my MC examples will be glossed as follows: MC on the top line, 2nd line is morpheme-by-morpheme gloss in English, 3rd line is a Standard English translation equivalent, 4th line is a standard French equivalent. In the case of long quotes, I will provide only a 'block' translation.

For all the quotations from Baissac (1888), I provide his own translation of the creole tales that were recounted to him by old ‘Ppà Lindor’.

A list of abbreviations appears at the end of this paper.
Determiners also serve to mark gender in French, but this is not relevant to my analysis as gender is not a grammatical feature of nouns in MC.

In all the examples, there are a number of words with full stops, e.g. *y.en.a, la.forêt*, etc. which indicate that these morphemes had fused, but, in the early texts, they were still written separately, as in French.

The noun is in the plural, but the final *s* would be silent, as in French.

Languages include, among others, the Semitic language Amharic, Komi, Udmurt, Turkish and Yucatec Maya. For a list of references see Fraurud (2001)

The following examples are from Syea (1994):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twi</th>
<th>Ewe</th>
<th>Bhojpuri</th>
<th>Hindi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ata ne na</td>
<td>Ale fe afo</td>
<td>Tor burbia ke hal</td>
<td>Ap ki patniki shiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ata his mother</td>
<td>Sheep its foot</td>
<td>Your wife her condition</td>
<td>Your wife her condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ata’s mother</td>
<td>Sheep’s foot</td>
<td>Your wife’s health</td>
<td>Your wife’s health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tales were recounted by an old slave, Ppâ Lindor. They were transcribed by Baissac, who translated them into French.

In a separate paper (forthcoming), I propose that the null definite determiner *δ* selects Num(ber)P, as opposed to NP. The head of Num is singular by default, and *bann* is the phonological expression of the feature [+plural] associated with the Number node. *Bann* and cardinal numerals are in complementary distribution. Thus, *δ + N* is [+definite] singular and *δ + bann + N* is [+definite] plural.

Future research is required to determine if it was the phonological template or otherwise.

## Abbreviations

1.PL - 1\textsuperscript{st} person plural pronoun
2.PL - 2\textsuperscript{nd} person plural pronoun
3.PL - 3\textsuperscript{rd} person plural pronoun
1.SG - 1\textsuperscript{st} person singular pronoun
2.SG - 2\textsuperscript{nd} person singular pronoun
3.SG - 3\textsuperscript{rd} person singular pronoun
COMP - Complementizer
DEF - Definite
DEM - Demonstrative
DET - Determiner
DP - Determiner Phrase
MC - Mauritian Creole
MOD - Modal
NEG - Negative
NP - Noun Phrase
NumP - Number Phrase
PLU - Plural
POSS - Possessive
SP - Specificity
TNS - Tense