

Split Ergativity and Complementary Distribution of NP's and Pronominal Affixes in Pemón (Cariban)¹

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Abstract

In the recent literature on Cariban languages a lot of attention has been dedicated to the comparison of these languages in terms of how they vary along the ergativity-nominativity axis. This paper describes split ergativity in Pemón, focussing on the difference between both agreement systems (ergative and nominative) in relation to the complementary distribution of pronominal affixes and phonologically full NP's. Within a clause in the ergative construction this complementary distribution holds strictly (as it also does within the nominal and postpositional phrases). In the nominative construction this restriction is relaxed. In the comparison of Cariban languages it is important to examine the connection between the various morpho-syntactic properties that make up a cluster of features characterising each language. This connection between ergativity and the complementary distribution of the various argument markers of the verb in Pemón seems to be one of such clusters.

Key words: Cariban, Pemón, ergativity, pronominal affixes

Ergatividad escindida y distribución complementaria de FNs y afijos pronominales en pemón (caribe)

Resumen

En la literatura reciente sobre las lenguas caribes se ha dedicado mucha atención a la comparación de estas lenguas en términos de cómo varían en el eje ergatividad-nominatividad. Este trabajo describe la ergatividad escindida en pemón, centrándose en la diferencia entre ambos sistemas de concordancia (ergativo y nominativo) en lo relativo a la distribución complementaria de afijos pronominales y frases nominales fonológicamente plenas. Dentro de una cláusula en construcción ergativa rige estrictamente esta distribución complementaria (al igual que lo hace dentro de las frases nominales y postposicionales). En la construcción nominativa esta restricción se relaja. En la comparación de las lenguas caribes es importante examinar la conexión entre las diversas propiedades morfosintácticas que configuran un grupo de rasgos que caracterizan a cada lengua. Esta conexión entre ergatividad y la distribución complementaria de los diferentes argumentos del verbo en pemón parecer ser uno de tales grupos.

Palabras clave: caribe, pemón, ergatividad, afijos pronominales

1. THE ERGATIVITY-NOMINATIVITY AXIS IN CARIBAN LANGUAGES

The purpose of this paper is to present structured data on the Taurepán dialect of Pemón spoken in Venezuela² which are highly relevant for the discussion of issues related to ergativity in Cariban languages (but see Souza Cruz 1995 for a phonological description of Brazilian Taurepán, perhaps a different language with the same name).

In the recent literature on Cariban languages a lot of attention has been dedicated to the comparison of these languages in terms of how

they vary along the ergativity-nominativity axis. This is the case, for example, of Franchetto (1990, 1994), Derbyshire (1994), and Gildea (1992). According to this general perspective, there are consistently ergative languages, consistently nominative languages, and languages which are somewhere in the middle. The consensus breaks when locating individual languages on a point of this axis, as a given language may be assigned various "degrees" of ergativity/nominativity by different researchers.

Also in the literature we encounter diachronic approaches which try to describe the direction of change, that is, whether ergativity is taken as the source or as the goal of change. In this sense, Derbyshire (1994) believes that the most ergative languages are also the most conservative ones, while Gildea (1992) holds the opposite point of view. Thus, for Derbyshire (1994) Makushi is one of the more conservative Cariban languages, Hixkaryana being one of the more innovative. Gildea (1992) assumes that it is the other way round. However, Derbyshire (1994) reinforces his argument by pointing out the similarities in certain subordination and nominalisation strategies between Cariban and Tupi-Guaranian languages. If these families are indeed genetically related, these similarities suggest that the ergative-absolutive pattern may indeed be in the common source of both language families.³

2. THE PLACE OF PEMÓN AND MAKUSHI ON THE ERGATIVITY AXIS

Locating an individual language on a given point of the ergativity-nominativity axis and the diachronic interpretation of this axis seem to be conceptually different concerns, even if we were to assume that there are principles favouring one direction over the other. In this sense, both Derbyshire (1994) and Gildea (1992) are in agreement when they state that Makushi exhibits a very consistent ergative-absolutive pattern that determines its position at the very extreme of the axis.⁴ The former writer makes the strong claim that:

Makushi has one of the most consistently ERGATIVE- ABSOLUTIVE patterns of agreement and nominal case marking that I have seen in any language of the world. Kuikúro is only slightly less consistent in its ERG-ABS patterns. I consider those two languages as being the most conservative in the

Cariban family, that is, they retain the older patterns in all or most of their constructions. (Derbyshire 1994:194).

In a similar fashion, when classifying Cariban languages in terms of their dominant use of either Set I or Set II in independent clauses, Gildea (1992) proposes a three-way partition: Nominative Languages, using only Set I: Carib, Carijona, De'kwana, Hixkaryana, Tamanaco, Tiriyo, Waiwai, and Wayana; Ergative Languages, using only Set II: Kalapalo, Kapón, Kuikúro, Makushi, and Pemón; and Mixed Languages, using both Set I and Set II: Apalaí, Kari'ña, Panare, and Yukpa. Within the ergative group, he makes a further division between the northern group (Kapón, Makushi, and Pemón), in which exclusive use is made of the ergative system, and the southern group (Kalopalo and Kuikúro), in which a nominative variant of Set II is also used.

As we can see, both Derbyshire (1994) and Gildea (1992) are in agreement in stating that Makushi exhibits a very consistent ergative-absolutive pattern. Franchetto (1994) also points out the differences in morphological ergativity between Kuikúro and Makushi, while stressing the possibility of Makushi being in an intermediate position. Most writers also agree in considering Kapón (Akawaio and Patamona dialects), Pemón (Kamarakoto, Arekuna, and Taurepán dialects), and Makushi not only as languages belonging to the same sub-group, but also as very closely related languages, with a high degree of mutual intelligibility (Abbot 1991:23).

If we take into account that Makushi and Pemón belong to the same group (to the point of being mutually intelligible), and that Makushi is reputed to be the most consistent ergative language, we might feel tempted to assume that Pemón and Makushi are structurally very similar and that they should share common properties from the point of view of ergativity. There are, however, minor differences between Pemón, as described in Armellada (1943), Armellada and Olza (1994), and our own work; and Makushi, as described in Abbott (1991), praised in Gildea (1992:192) as "the clearest and most complete grammar to date for any [Cariban] Ergative Language". Some differences have to do with the phonology (eg Makushi has six vowels, while Pemón has seven), the morphology (eg Makushi has -u as the transitive subject suffix for first person singular, while Pemón has -Ø; conversely Makushi has -Ø as the transitive subject suffix for second person singular, while Pemón has -u),

the shape of a large number of lexical items (eg M: *era'ma* vs P: *ere'ma*), and the syntax (eg details of copular constructions). Another difference concerns the one discussed in the remainder of this paper: Pemón exhibits the property of having a split-ergativity system, apparently lacking in Makushi, which crucially separates both languages.

3. THE ERGATIVE CONSTRUCTION IN PEMÓN

Pemón transitive verbs have two arguments (subject and object) with the ergative marker *-ya* (or its phonologically conditioned allomorph *-da*) attached to the subject. As in Makushi, the transitive clause in Pemón has a basic OVS order, with a variant SOV. Both arguments (object and subject) can be formally expressed by: (a) a full noun phrase, (b) a free pronoun, and (c) a pronominal affix. Table 1 shows: (I) the free pronouns, (II) intransitive subject prefixes, (III) possessor prefixes, (IV) transitive object prefixes, and (V) transitive subject suffixes. For some person-number combinations, however, there are no pronominal affixes and thus only options (a, b) are available. Shaded cells indicate this situation:

Table 1
Pronominal affixes in Pemón

	Pronoun	S-subject	Possessor	Object	A-subject
1s	yuurö	∅-	u-	u-	∅-ya
2s	amörö	a-	a-	a-	-u-ya
3s	mö'rö	i-	i-	i-	-i-ya
12	yuurötokon	∅-V-kon	-to		
13	inna				
2p	amörönokon	a-V-kon	a-N-kon	a-V-kon	-u-ya-kon
3p	to'				

For those person-number combinations that do have pronominal affixes, nine logical possibilities arise and all of them obtain. Below we illustrate⁵ four of these combinations: [1] a transitive clause with both object and subject as full NP's, [2] a transitive clause with the object as a full NP and the subject as a suffix, [3] a transitive clause with object as a prefix and subject as a full NP, and [4] a transitive clause with both object

and subject as affixes. The rest of the combinations can be obtained by simply replacing the NP's with the appropriate 3s or 3p pronoun. For the first of these possibilities, the following constituents are assumed: [tawara kc]OBL. [Maicha'da]s [kaikuse]O [wö'pö]V.

[1]

Tawara ke Maicha'da kaikuse wö'pö.
 tawara ke Maicha'-ya kaikuse wo -'pö
 knife with Maicha'-ERG tiger kill-PAST
 Maicha' killed the tiger with a knife.

[2]

Tawara ke kaikuse wö'pöiya.
 tawara ke kaikuse wo -'pö -i -ya
 knife with tiger kill-PAST-3s-ERG
 He killed the tiger with a knife.

[3]

Tawara ke Maicha'da iwö'pö.
 Tawara ke Maicha'-ya i -wö -'pö
 knife with Maicha'-ERG 3s-kill-PAST
 Maicha' killed it with a knife.

[4]

Tawara ke iwö'pöiya.
 Tawara ke i -wö -'pö -i -ya
 knife with 3s-kill-PAST-3s-ERG
 He killed it with a knife.

The intransitive clause in Pemón has a strict SV order. The only argument (subject) can also be formally expressed by: (a) a full noun phrase, (b) a free pronoun, and (c) a pronominal affix. Again, for some person-number combinations, there are no pronominal affixes and thus only options (a, b) are available. For those person-number combinations that do have pronominal affixes, three logical possibilities arise and all of them obtain. Below we illustrate two of these combinations, again bearing in mind that the rest can be obtained by simply replacing the NP with the appropriate third person pronoun. In [5] we have an intransitive clause with the subject as a full NP, while in [6] we have an intransitive with the subject as an affix. For the first of these possibilities, the

following constituents are assumed: [tawara ke]_{OBL} [Maicha's]
[e'wõ'põ] v

[5]

Tawara ke Maicha' e'wõ'põ.
tawara ke Maicha' es -wõ -'põ
knife with Maicha' DTR-kill-PAST
Maicha' killed himself with a knife.

[6]

Tawara ke iye'wõ'põ.
tawara ke i -es -wõ -'põ
knife with 3s-DTR-kill-PAST
He killed himself with a knife.

Thus, all arguments of the Pemón verb, whether transitive or intransitive, can be formally expressed by: (a) a full noun phrase, (b) a free pronoun, and (c) a pronominal affix.

4. THE COMPLEMENTARY DISTRIBUTION OF NP'S AND PRONOMINAL AFFIXES IN THE ERGATIVE CONSTRUCTION

The expression of the arguments of the verb by means of these three formal means (a full noun phrase, a free pronoun, and a pronominal affix) is not unrestricted. When any of them is used, the other two are precluded, that is, they are in complementary distribution. We shall label this restriction as *NP/Pronominal Affix Complementarity*. This complementary distribution holds for all types of arguments: both subjects and objects of transitive clauses, as well as subjects of intransitive clauses, exhibit the same complementarity. In [7-9] we illustrate disallowed forms (doubled arguments are within squares):

[7]

*Tawara ke Maicha'da kaikuse iwõ'põ.
tawara ke Maicha'ya [kaikuse] [] -wõ -'põ
knife with Maicha'-ERG tiger 3s-kill-PAST
Maicha' killed the tiger with a knife.

[8]

*Tawara ke Maicha'da iwó'póiya.
 tawara ke Maicha'-ya i -wó -'pó -[i] -ya
 knife with Maicha'-ERG 3s-kill-PAST-3s-ERG
 Maicha' killed it with a knife.

[9]

*Tawara ke Maicha' iye'wó'pó.
 tawara ke Maicha' [i] -es -wó -'pó
 knife with Maicha' 3s-DTR-kill-PAST
 Maicha' killed himself with a knife.

This complementarity holds for all person-number combinations, as seen in the various possible ways of rendering 'he kisses you' [10a] and 'you kiss me' [10b]:

[10]

(a) 'he kisses you'

apichu'kaiya
 a -pichu'ka-i -ya
 2s-kiss -3s-ERG

apichu'ka mǎ'róda
 a -pichu'ka mǎ'rǎ -ya
 2s-kiss PRO:3s-ERG

amǎrǎ pichu'kaiya
 amǎrǎ pichu'ka-i -ya
 PRO:2s kiss -3s-ERG

amǎrǎ pichu'ka mǎ'róda
 amǎrǎ pichu'ka mǎ'rǎ -ya
 PRO:2s kiss PRO:3s-ERG

*amǎrǎ apichu'kaiya
amǎrǎ [a] -pichu'ka-i -ya
 PRO:2s 2s-kiss -3s-ERG

(b) 'you kiss me'

upichu'kauya
 u -pichu'ka-u -ya
 1s-kiss -2s-ERG

upichu'ka amǎrǎda
 u -pichu'ka amǎrǎ -ya
 1s-kiss PRO:2s-ERG

yuurǎ pichu'kauya
 yuurǎ pichu'ka-u -ya
 PRO:1s kiss -2s-ERG

yuurǎ pichu'ka amǎrǎda
 yuurǎ pichu'ka amǎrǎ -ya
 PRO:1s kiss PRO:2s-ERG

*yuurǎ upichu'kauya
yuurǎ [u] -pichu'ka-u -ya
 PRO:1s 1s-kiss -2s-ERG

This NP/Pronominal Affix Complementarity in Pémón is not restricted to the arguments of the verb at the clause level. It also holds at the phrase level when expressing nominal possession, as the possessor can be formally expressed as: (a) a full noun phrase, (b) a free pronoun,

and (c) a pronominal affix. These various possible ways of expressing the possessor are illustrated in [11a, b]:

[11]

(a) 'your bag'

amóro pakararú	apakararú	*amóro	apakararú
amóro pakara-rú	a -pakara-rú	<u>amóro</u>	<u>a</u> -pakara-rú
PRO:2s bag -POSS	2s-bag -POSS	PRO:2s	2s-bag -POSS

(b) 'Antonio's bag'

Antonio pakararú	*Antonio ipakararú
Antonio pakara-rú	<u>Antonio</u> <u>i</u> -pakara-rú
Antonio bag -POSS	Antonio 3s-bag -POSS

In a similar fashion, postpositional phrases also exhibit NP/Pronominal Affix Complementarity, because the term of the postposition can also be formally expressed as: (a) a full noun phrase, (b) a free pronoun, and (c) a pronominal affix, as shown in [12]. However, only some forty postpositions can really be inflected for person-number, while some thirty postpositions idiosyncratically cannot.

[12]

'after me'	upókoro	OR	youró pokoro
'after you'	apokoro	OR	amóro pokoro
'after him'	ipokoro	OR	mó'ró pokoro
'after Antonio'	Antonio pokoro	BUT	* <u>Antonio</u> <u>i</u> pokoro

In Table 2 we offer a comprehensive paradigm with all the forms in the present tense (no aspect or tense markers) of the transitive verb *wó* 'kill, hurt'. Each of the sub-tables refers to one of the four logical possibilities of the use of NP's versus affixes for expression of the arguments. In the first sub-table both objects and subjects are affixes. In the second sub-table objects are prefixes and subjects are free pronouns (as given in Table 1). In the third sub-table objects are free pronouns and subjects are suffixes. In the fourth sub-table both objects and subjects are free pronouns. Within each sub-table all the possible person-number combinations are given. Any third person pronoun can be replaced by a full NP. Shaded cells indicate that reflexive forms of transitive verbs which are disallowed (reflexives need a detransitiviser prefix on the verb: *es- ~ et- ~ e'-*).⁶ Thus, for any transitive verb with both subject and object in the third person (singular or plural), only a non reflexive

Table 2
Paradigm of the transitive verb *wō* 'kill, hurt' in the present tense

OB			
SU			
1s		a-wō-Ń-da	i-wō-Ń-da
2s	u-wō-u-ya		i-wō-u-ya
3s	u-wō-i-ya	a-wō-i-ya	i-wō-i-ya
1p			i-wō-Ń-kon (*-da)
2p	u-wō-u-ya-kon		i-wō-u-ya-kon
3p			
1s		a-wō yuurō-da	i-wō yuurō-da
2s	u-wō amōrō-da		i-wō amōrō-da
3s	u-wō mō'rō-da	a-wō mō'rō-da	i-wō mō'rō-da
1p			i-wō yuurō-to-kon-da
2p	u-wō amōrō-kon-da		i-wō amōrō-kon-da
3p	u-wō to'-da	a-wō to'-da	i-wō to'-da
1s		amōrō wō-Ń-da	mō'rō wō-Ń-da
2s	yuurō wō-u-ya		mō'rō wō-u-ya
3s	yuurō wō-i-ya	amōrō wō-i-ya	mō'rō wō-i-ya
1p			mō'rō wō-Ń-kon (*-da)
2p	yuurō wō-u-ya-kon		mō'rō wō-u-ya-kon
3p			
1s		amōrō wō yuurō-da	mō'rō wō yuurō-da
2s	yuurō wō amōrō-da		mō'rō wō amōrō-da
3s	yuurō wō mō'rō-da	amōrō wō mō'rō-da	mō'rō wō mō'rō-da
1p			mō'rō wō yuurō-to-kon-da
2p	yuurō wō amōrō-kon-da		mō'rō wō amōrō-kon-da
3p	yuurō wō to'-da	amōrō wō to'-da	mō'rō wō to'-da

Table 2 (Cont.)

Paradigm of the transitive verb *wō* 'kill, hurt' in the present tense

1p	2p	3p	3p
		a-wō-Ø kon-da	
		a-wō-i-ya-kon	
		a-wō-kon yunro-da	
		a-wō-kon mo'ro-da	
		a-wō-kon utra-da	
		a-wō-kon to'-da	
		inoro-kon wō-Ø-da	to' wō-Ø-da
	inna wō-u-ya		to' wō-u-ya
yunro-to-kon wō-i-ya	inna wō-i-ya	anoro-kon wō-i-ya	to' wō-i-ya
			to' wō-Ø-kon (*-da)
	inna wō-u-ya-kon		to' wō-u-ya-kon
		anoro-kon wō yunro-da	to' wō yunro da
	itra wō anoro-da		to' wō anoro-da
yunro-to-kon wō mo'ro-da	ijpa wō mo'ro-da	anoro-kon wō mo'ro-da	to' wō mo'ro-da
			to' wō yunro-to-kon-da
		anoro-kon wō inna-da	to' wō inna-da
	inna wō anoro-kon-da		to' wō anoro-kon-da
yunro-to-kon wō to'-da	inna wō to'-da	anoro-kon wō to'-da	to' wō to'-da

interpretation is allowed (*They_i killed them_j*, not *They killed themselves*). Blank cells indicate that for some legal person-number combinations no affixes are available (being expressed only as pronouns or NP's). The ergative marker *-ya* (variant *-da*) attaches to the subject, regardless of its formal expression (suffix, pronoun, full NP). A \emptyset indicates the lack of realisation of the 1s SUB suffix. A plural suffix *-kon*, alone or together with *-no* and/or *-to*, shows up in certain forms.

5. THE NOMINATIVE CONSTRUCTION IN PEMÓN

In the past tense, we can find pairs of transitive sentences like the ones in [13-18]. The sentences in the left column are in the ergative construction dealt with above, with the object expressed as a full NP and the subject expressed as a zero suffix (first person singular) directly followed by the ergative marker *-ya*. The sentences in the right column are in a nominative construction, with the object also expressed as a full NP, but now the subject is expressed as a prefix *s-* (first person singular) and the ergative marker *-ya* is absent. The difference in meaning is that those in the left column are in a past tense form used to express an event that took place the previous day or some time before that, while those in the right column are in an approximate past tense which is very close to the time of the utterance.

[13]

Mesa koneka'pöda.
mesa koneka-'pö - \emptyset -ya
table make -PAST-1s-ERG
I made the table

Mesa sokonekai.
mesa s-koneka-i
table 1-make -IND
I made the table

[14]

Paruru aimuku'pöda.
paruru aimuku-'pö - \emptyset -ya
banana pick -PAST-1s-ERG
I picked up the banana

Paruru saimukoi.
paruru s-aimuku-i
banana 1-pick -IND
I picked up the banana.

[15]

Kareta da'nüpu'pöda.
kareta a'nüpu-'pö - \emptyset -ya
paper burn -PAST-1s-ERG
I burned the book

Kareta sa'nüpoi.
kareta s-a'nüpu-i
paper 1-burn -IND
I burned the book

[16]

Ma'non píchu'ka'póda.
 ma'non píchu'ka-'pó -Ø -ya
 girl kiss -PAST-1s-ERG
 I kissed the girl

Ma'non chipichu'kai.
 ma'non s-píchu'ka-i
 girl 1-kiss -IND
 I kissed the girl

[17]

Pon koka'póda.
 pon koka-'pó -Ø -ya
 dress wash-PAST-1s-ERG
 I washed the clothes

Pon sokokai.
 pon s-koka-i
 dress 1-wash-IND
 I washed the clothes

[18]

Uyun yu'nato'póda.
 u -y un u'nató-'pó -Ø -ya
 1s-A-father bury -PAST-1s-ERG
 I buried my father

Uyun su'natái.
 u -y-un s-u'nató-i
 1s-A-father 1-bury -IND
 I buried my father

We can infer that this prefix *s-* refers to the subject from the fact that in intransitive verbs there is no prefix in the first person singular (Cf Table 1 above) in both types of construction, as seen in [19, 20]:

[19]

Yuuró e'múnka'po.
 yuuró es -múnka-'pó
 PRO:1s DTR-bleed-PAST
 I bled

Yuuró e'múnkai.
 yuuró es -múnka-i
 PRO:1s DTR-bleed -IND
 I bled

[20]

Wu' tópai u'tó'pó.
 wu' tópai u'tó -'pó
 hill from descend-PAST
 I came down from the hill

Wu' tópai u'tói.
 wu' tópai u'tó -i
 hill from descend-IND
 I came down from the hill

However, one of the most interesting features of this construction is the fact that structurally identical forms with prefixes for 2nd or 3rd person cannot be used in statements, but only as questions ('Did you/he make the table?') or as deprecatives, ie polite imperatives ('Will you make the table?'/ 'Let him make the table!'). This is not the case in the ergative construction, which can function either in statements or in questions, as seen in the left column of [21-36]. The corresponding sentences in the nominative construction given in the right column of

[21-36] have been glossed in the interrogative, but deprecativ glosses are also possible for each of them, given the right intonation:

[21]

Mesa koneka'pōuya.
mesa koneka-'pō -u -ya
table make -PAST-2s-ERG
You made the table

Mesa nokonekai?
mesa m-koneka-i
table 2-make -IND
Did you make the table?

[22]

Mesa koneka'pōiya.
mesa koneka-'pō -i -ya
table make -PAST-3s-ERG
He made the table

Mesa nokonekai?
mesa n-koneka-i
table 3-make -IND
Did he make the table?

[23]

Paruru aimuku'pōuya.
paruru aimuku-'pō -u -ya
banana pick -PAST-2s-ERG
You picked up the banana
banana?

Paruru maimukui?
paruru m-aimuku-i
banana 2-pick -IND
Did you pick up the
banana?

[24]

Paruru aimuku'pōiya.
paruru aimuku-'pō -i -ya
banana pick -PAST-3s-ERG
He picked up the banana
banana?

Paruru naimukui?
paruru n-aimuku-i
banana 3-pick -IND
Did he pick up the
banana?

[25]

Kareta da'nōpō'pōuya.
kareta a'nōpō-'pō -u -ya
paper burn -PAST-2s-ERG
You burned the book

Kareta ma'nōpui?
kareta m-a'nōpō-i
paper 2-burn -IND
Did you burn the book?

[26]

Kareta da'nōpō'pōiya.
kareta a'nōpō-'pō -i -ya
paper burn -PAST-3s-ERG
He burned the book

Kareta na'nōpōi?
kareta n-a'nōpō-i
paper 3-burn -IND
Did he burn the book?

[27]

Ma'non pīchu'ka'pōuya.
ma'non pīchu'ka-'pō -u -ya
girl kiss -PAST-2s-ERG
You kissed the girl

Ma'non mīpīchu'kai?
ma'non m-pīchu'ka-i
girl 2 kiss -IND
Did you kiss the girl?

[28]

Ma'non pīchu'ka'pōiya.
ma'non pīchu'ka-'pō -i -ya
girl kiss -PAST-3s-ERG
He kissed the girl

Ma'non nīpīchu'kai?
ma'non n-pīchu'ka-i
girl 3-kiss -IND
Did he kiss the girl?

[29]

Pon koka'pöuya.
pon koka-'pö -u -ya
dress wash-PAST-2s-ERG
You washed the clothes

Pon kokokai?
pon n-koka-i
dress 2-wash-IND
Did you wash the clothes?

[30]

Pon koka'pöiya.
pon koka-'pö -i -ya
dress wash-PAST-3s-ERG
He washed the clothes

Pon nokokai?
pon n-koka-i
dress 3-wash-IND
Did he wash the clothes?

[31]

Uyun yu'natö'pöuya.
u -y-un u'natö-'pö -u -ya
1s-A-father bury -PAST-2s-ERG
You buried my father

Uyun mu'natöi?
u -y-un m-u'natö-i
1s-A-father 2-bury -IND
Did you bury my father?

[32]

Uyun yu'natö'pöiya.
u -y-un u'natö-'pö -i -ya
1s-A-father bury -PAST-3s-ERG
He buried my father

Uyun nu'natöi?
u -y-un n-u'natö-i
1s-A-father 3-bury -IND
Did he bury my father?

[33]

Amörö e'münka'pö.
amörö es -münka-'pö
PRO:2s DTR-bleed-PAST
You bled

Amörö me'münkai?
amörö n-es -münka-i
PRO:2s 2-DTR-bleed-IND
Did you bleed?

[34]

Mö'rö e'münka'pö.
mö'rö es -münka-'pö
PRO:3s DTR-bleed-PAST
He bled

Mö'rö ne'münkai?
mö'rö n-es -münka-i
PRO:3s 3-DTR-bleed -IND
Did he bleed?

[35]

Wü' tópai amörö u'tö'pö.
wü' tópai amörö u'tö -'pö
hill from PRO:2s descend-PAST
You came down from the hill

Wü' tópai mu'töi?
wü' tópai m-u'tö -i
hill from 2-descend-IND
Did you come down from the hill?

[36]

Wü' tópai mö'rö u'tö'pö.
wü' tópai mö'rö u'tö -'pö
hill from PRO:3s descend-PAST
He came down from the hill

Wü' tópai nu'töi?
wü' tópai n-u'tö -i
hill from 3-descend-IND
Did he come down from the hill?

Besides this proximate past, this type of construction is also used in two other tenses: an immediate future [37], and a distant past [38]:

[37]

Ma'non, a'ra semeina.
ma'non a -tuma s-te -ina
girl 2s food 1 taste-INTEN
Girl, I'm going to taste your food

[38]

Tu'ke kono' sentakatai karaiwa damú' piyau.
tu'ke kono' s-entaka-la -i karaiwa yamú' piyau
many rain 1-spend REM IND Brazilian COLL among
I spent many years among the Brazilians

Table 3 shows the pronominal affixes present in the verbs in the nominative construction of [21-36]:

Table 3
Nominative prefixes

	Intransitive	Transitive
1	∅-	s(V)-
2		m(V)-
3		n(V)-

These prefixes are clearly a subset of the ones presented by Gildea (1992:18,19) as the Carib of Surinam Set I Personal Prefixes, and he further claims that there is complementary distribution between some of those prefixes with a preverbal object NP, a situation that clearly does not obtain in Pemón.⁷ He includes (most of) the prefixes in Table 3 in his table of Set I A-Oriented Prefixes. Why he does not include s(V)- in this table (although he does for Bakairí, Carib, and Kapón), must be related to the fact that the source he used (Armellada 1943) presents it as an object prefix (as is also the case in Armellada & Olza 1994). It does not necessarily come as a surprise that Set I affixes show up in Pemón, an ergative language which should be using only Set II affixes, because, as Gildea (1992:36) puts it:

Some ergative languages actually do utilize one or two Set I tenses, but the languages are still best categorized as Ergative Languages due to (1) the clear dominance of the Set II system, and (2) the predominance of unambiguously ergative tenses.

And later on (178) he adds:

Actually, Pemóng and Kapóng are also Mixed Languages, since although they have developed full ergativity in most tenses, they have retained two Set I tenses each (...) they are very closely related to fully ergative Language Makushi, which has lost all Set I tenses.

A further reason he gives for not including Pemón (and Kapón) among the Mixed Languages is that "they do not seem to accord the Set I system any special status with regard to auxiliaries" (181). The auxiliary verb *echi* 'to be', which is highly idiosyncratic, does have forms with both the S-subject prefixes of Table 1 and with the intransitive prefixes of Table 3 (Set I). In spite of the superficial irregularity of these forms, all of them share a common root *esi* which surfaces as different allomorphs (*e' ~ echi ~ 'chi ~ chi*) due to the operation of several processes.

Table 4
The verb *echi* 'to be' in the present tense

	S-subject Prefixes		Set I Prefixes
	Affirmative	Interrogative	
1s	Øe'dai	Øe'dan	Øechi
2s	me'dai	me'dan	auchi
3s	ni'chi		i'chi
2p	me'datöi	me'datöu	auchikon

Gildea states that he could not find examples of use of the tenses using Set I prefixes given in the descriptions in the texts he examined (1992:181). However, he is cautious enough to acknowledge that this apparent disuse of Set I system in Pemón might be related to discourse considerations. In this he is right, because Set I forms have the particular distribution described above, whereby only 1st person can be used in the affirmative, 2nd and 3rd persons being used only for interrogatives and

deprecatives. Thus it is very difficult to find them in narrative texts, unless direct speech is recorded in the narratives. But direct speech does abound in Pemón narratives, and Set I forms appear in the texts that Gildea surveyed, as seen in examples [37] and [38], both taken from Armellada (1973). They also appear in the narratives collected by Koch-Grünberg as early as 1912:

[39]

¿To' na' mdtú'kai, dako?
to' na' m-tu'ka-i y-ako
PRO:3p INT 2-kill -IND A-mate
Did you kill them, mate? (Koch-Grünberg 1981:157)

6. THE CO-OCCURRENCE OF NP'S AND PRONOMINAL AFFIXES IN THE NOMINATIVE CONSTRUCTION

An interesting feature of the nominative construction is the fact that NP/Pronominal Affix Complementarity ceases to function: Pronouns (and full NP's as well) may co-occur with pronominal affixes. One must bear in mind that there are restrictions about using these forms in the affirmative, interrogative, and deprecative, as shown in Table 5:

Table 5
Intransitive verb *enta'na* 'eat' with Set I prefixes

	Pronouns	Verb Forms	Aff	Int	Dcp
1s	(yuurö)	Øenta'nai	✓	✓	✗
2s	(amörö)	menta'nai	✗	✓	✓
3s	(mörö)	ncnta'nai	✓	✓	✓
13	inna	menta'nai	✓	✓	✗
2p	amörökon	menta'natou	✗	✓	✗
3p	to'	menta'nai	✓	✓	✓

Interestingly, with several subjects of a transitive verb used in this construction, it is possible to have NP's and pronominal affixes simultaneously, and also the ergative marker *-ya* added to the subjects, as illustrated in Table 6, which contains sentences translatable as 'I/you/Antonio/we/ye/they picked them up'. Again, one must bear in

mind that there are restrictions about using these forms in the affirmative, interrogative, and deprecativ. However, I have not been able to find examples of this situation in texts, although they have been volunteered by my main language consultant. It is indeed surprising to encounter the ergative case marker co-occurring with the Set I prefixes.⁸

Table 6
Transitive verb *aimuku* 'pick up' with Set I prefixes

	Subject (Pro)nouns	Object Pronoun	Verb Forms	Aff	Int	Dep
1s		to'	saimukui	✓	✓	✗
2s		to'	naimukui	✗	✓	✓
3s	Antonioda	to'	naimukui	✓	✓	✓
13	innada	to'	naimukui	✓	✓	✗
2p	amörökonda	to'	naimu'tou	✗	✓	✗
3p	to'da	to'	naimukui	✓	✓	✓

7. EXCURSUS: A NOMINATIVE CONSTRUCTION IN MAKUSHI?

The fact that there are several Set I tenses in Pemón, already mentioned in Armellada (1943) and re-examined with abundant examples in Armellada & Olza (1994), as well as in Akawaio, must lead one to be suspicious about their absence in Makushi. Perhaps the claim that "Makushi is the only one which shows no trace at all of the Set I system" (Gildea 1992:181) must be re-examined.

For example, in Abbott (1991:49) we find a table giving the paradigm of the imperative forms. Interestingly, she gives the prefix *m(V)-* as the marker for second person polite imperative, and the prefix *n(V)-* as the marker for third person imperative, both used with the suffix *-i* (glossed as IMPerative). This description and the examples she gives (numbers 129, 130, 135, 137, and 138) are structurally similar to the examples of nominative constructions given in [21-36] above, with a deprecativ reading.

Undoubtedly these forms are both formally and (at least in part) semantically identical to the nominative construction under examination

in Pemón. It may be the case that they also have interrogative readings and that the same discourse factors that have hidden their presence in Pemón have also been at work in Makushi. If this happens to be the case, there are also Set I forms in Makushi, making it a split ergative language. The claim of exclusive ergativity of Makushi made in Derbyshire (1994:194) would then have to be revised.⁹ But even if such interrogative readings did not exist, it is clear that this form of imperative in Makushi contains what seems to be the final remnant of the old Set I. The claim that Set I systems are innovative loses strength too.

8. NP/PRONOMINAL AFFIX COMPLEMENTARITY AND ERGATIVITY AS RELATED PROPERTIES

The facts that have been presented so far show that there is a strict correspondence between ergativity and complementarity of NP's and pronominal affixes as ways of expressing the arguments of the verb: ergative constructions do not allow the simultaneous presence of both an NP and a pronominal affix referring to the same argument, whereas nominative constructions do allow it. This is of some relevance if we try to visualise the cluster of morpho-syntactic properties that characterise Cariban languages (word order, ergativity, argument marking, etc.) and also divides them into groups. Following the spirit present in Baker (1996) with respect to other languages, we can also begin to understand what constitutes the "Caribanness" of these languages.

The complementarity observed in Pemón is obviously not exclusive of this language and there is some important literature about this phenomenon in other languages within various frameworks: Breton (Anderson 1982), Chichewa (Bresnan & Mchombo 1987), Hebrew (Doron 1988), Irish (McCloskey 1986, McCloskey & Hale 1984, Andrews 1990), Mohawk (Baker 1996), among others. However, the complementarity works in a different fashion for each of those languages. For example, in Hebrew, according to Doron (pc), the complementarity is only with objects, and with pronominal subjects following the verb. Mira Ariel (pc) also points out that Hebrew complementary distribution between overt NP's and agreement point to a pronoun-agreement source, being different from Pemón in that no choice can be made between overt subject vs agreement. Anderson (pc) points out that languages in which some complementarity exists

between the presence of overt agreement and that of a corresponding overt argument NP are not uncommon, especially if one considers clitic pronominals in eg Romance to be a variant of (object) agreement. For Baker, the mutual exclusivity of agreement and overt NP's in Mohawk is resolved by having the NP itself appear as an adjunct rather than in argument position. He has pointed out (pc) that the point of similarity between Pemón and Mohawk is that pronominal affixes are in complementary distribution with NPs in the clause, but the two striking points of dissimilarity are: (i) pronominal affixes are obligatory in Mohawk, and (ii) therefore the only time one gets full NP's is if they are adjoined to the clause, like a dislocation in English.

When the notion of parameters is becoming more and more the focus of linguistic research, it must be remembered that one of the paradigmatic cases of this notion is: the pro drop parameter. Even between languages of the same family (for example, Italian, Spanish, and French) the pro drop parameter yields different results. It is obvious that the NP/Pronominal Affix Complementarity is intimately related to the pro drop parameter (in both we deal with the formal expression of the arguments of the verb) and the topic deserves attention on its own right. The close connection between ergativity and the complementary distribution of NP's and pronominal affixes, as seen in Pemón, seems to be one of these clusters of morpho-syntactic properties deserving further study in Cariban languages.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have described split ergativity in Pemón, focussing on the difference between the ergative system and the nominative system in terms of their relation to the complementary distribution of pronominal affixes and phonologically full NP's. This complementary distribution holds strictly within a clause in the ergative construction, as it also does within the nominal and postpositional phrases. In the nominative construction, restricted to some specific tenses, this type of distribution does not hold. In Makushi we encounter polite imperative forms which are both formally and semantically identical to the nominative construction under examination in Pemón. If this is the case, there are also Set I forms in Makushi, making it a split ergative language. The claim of exclusive ergativity of Makushi has to be revised, this form

of imperative containing what seems to be the final remnant of the old Set I. In the comparison of Cariban languages it is important to examine the connection between the various morpho-syntactic properties that make up a cluster of features characterising each language. This connection between ergativity and the complementary distribution of the various argument markers of the verb in Pemón seems to be one of such clusters.

NOTES

1. A first version of this paper was presented at the 1995 Summer Meeting of the Society for the Study of the Indigenous Languages of the Americas, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque (USA), July 8,9 1995. The research necessary for this paper was funded by the Consejo de Desarrollo Científico y Humanístico of the Universidad del Zulia, in the form of a grant for the project # 0942-94: *Fonología y Morfología del Pemón (Caribe)*. I wish to thank my main Pemón consultant, Mr Jesús Saturnino Pinto Benavides, a remarkable Pemón teacher from Santa Elena de Uairén, for the dedication with which he has accompanied me in this project. I also wish to thank Spike Gildea (Rice University, Dallas) for his rich comments and his friendship. An anonymous *Opción* reviewer also made important comments that have greatly improved this paper.
2. According to the information provided by the Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática (Censo Indígena de Venezuela, 1992), the Pemón population comprises 20,607 people who inhabit the Venezuelan region known as La Gran Sabana, in the State of Bolívar. The area occupied by these Indians is located at the extreme south-eastern part of Venezuela, near the borders with Brazil and Guyana, where there are also some villages with people belonging to this ethnic group, although their numbers are smaller than in Venezuela (500 in Guyana and 111 in Brazil, in 1980). The language spoken by these people belongs to the Cariban family and comprises three mutually intelligible dialects: Arekuna (Northern Pemón), Taurepán (Southern Pemón), and Kamarakoto (spoken in the regions of Kamarata and Urimán). Of these three dialects, the most

numerous is Taurepán (spoken by around 45% of the Pemón population). Near this area there are other Cariban languages which are very similar to Pemón, the closest of them being Kapón (with its Akawai(o) and Patamona variants), spoken mainly in Guyana, and Makushi (spoken in the Brazilian State of Roraima).

3. If, as Spike Gildea suspects (pc), the subordination and nominalisation patterns cited by Derbyshire are an areal phenomenon, being also common to many language families of the Amazon, they cannot be used to argue for special relationship between any two language families.
4. Gildea (pc) is now convinced that Kuikúro is at the extreme of the axis.
5. The examples are written in the practical orthography developed for this language (with important modifications, such as not indicating predictable vowel lengthening, see Álvarez 1997). The phonological inventory of Pemón is rather simple, as the spelling reveals, with letters indicating sounds with values very similar to the ones of Spanish, except when indicated in brackets. VOWELS: i, e, ü [high central], a, u, o, õ [mid central]; CONSONANTS: p, t, k, d [interdental voiced fricative], ' [glottal stop], ch [palatal affricate], s, m, n, r [lateral flap], w, y. In the morpheme glosses use is made of the following abbreviations: A- attributive (formation of possessed themes), COLL= collective, DTR= detransitiviser, ERG= ergative, IND= indefinite, INT= interrogative particle, INTEN= intentional, PAR:nn= kinship term # according to Thomas (1971), PAST= past, POSS= possessed, PRO:1= pronoun for 1st person, PRO:13= pronoun for 1st person plural exclusive, PRO:2= pronoun for 2nd person, PRO:3= pronoun for 3rd person singular, PRO:3p= pronoun for 3rd person plural, REM= remote past, 1= 1st person, 2= 2nd person, 2p= 2nd person plural, 12= 2nd person plural (inclusive), 3= 3rd person, 3s= 3rd person singular. In the morpheme division verb themes are given as a whole, although they may be complex by having a noun root plus a verbalising suffix (see Álvarez 1996): *pontö* 'dress someone' (*pon* 'clothes' plus *-tö* 'factitive verbaliser'), *pichu'ka* 'kiss' (*pichu'*

onomatopoeic noun 'kiss' plus *-ka* 'privative verbaliser'), *minka* 'bleed' (*min* 'blood' plus *-ka* 'privative verbaliser'), *yu'natō* 'bury' (*u'na* 'grave' plus *-tō* 'factitive verbaliser').

6. The various allomorphs of the detransitiviser prefix have the following distribution: *e'*- occurs before consonants (the apostrophe represents a glottal fricative if the consonant is voiceless and a glottal stop if the consonant is voiced), *et-* (interchangeably with *at-* due to optional vowel harmony) occurs before the vowel *a*, while *es-* occurs elsewhere.
7. Gildea (1992:68,85) makes a distinction between A-oriented and O-oriented prefixes. Only the O-oriented prefixes are in complementary distribution with O (pro)nouns. The Set I prefixes given in Table 3 are A-oriented. Thus they are not in complementary distribution.
8. One could think that here we have the case of a clever informant accepting a sentence that would never be produced in normal conditions. However, I did not ask for such sentences, which were truly volunteered when I asked for explicit subjects. Also I do not discard these examples because there are other cases in texts, still poorly understood, of co-occurrence of the ergative marker *-ya* with Set I prefixes, particularly in sentences involving the verb *echi* 'to be' as the following, in a progressive construction:

¿Kanaimuda na'ke yorpato areuka gó' nichii?
 kanaimá-*ya* na'ke y ompa -*to* areuka po' n-esi-i
 kanaimá-ERG perhaps A:PAR:58-12 drown in 3-be -IMP
 ¿No será que un kanaimá ahogaría a nuestro compañero?
 (Can it be that perhaps a kanaimá drowned our companion?)
 (CDA-W06:307)

9. With this idea in mind, I briefly interviewed a Makushi speaker from Sorocaima village near the Venezuelan-Brazilian border and I submitted to him sentences with the nominative construction like the ones in [13-20]. I must confess that he rejected all of them saying "that's Taurepán", while giving the corresponding Makushi sentences with the ergative construction.

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