THE QUESTION OF PREDICATE CLEFTING IN THE INDIAN OCEAN CREOLES

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0. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is a modest one. It aims first at clarifying some of the notions and the terminology used in the literature on Predicate Clefting (henceforth PC), and, secondly, at an application of the now sharpened notion of PC to the much debated question of whether the French-based Indian Ocean Creoles, in particular Mauritian Creole, Seselwa (Seychelles Creole) and the Creole of Rodrigues, do or do not have PC. The answer is that they apparently had one or two highly restricted (and now obsolete) constructions that are reminiscent of PC. This evidence is on a par with the extremely tenuous case for serial verb constructions in the same languages, and points to what may have been a very weak West African (Kwa) substrate influence due to the fact that around the middle of the 18th century Kwa speakers formed just over 10 per cent of the total slave population.

1.0. Predicate Clefting

PC is the term that has come to be used (e.g. Mufwene 1987) for the phenomenon, observed in certain non-European languages, that predicates, i.e. verbs or predicative adjectives, are singled out for clefting. Where PC has been observed, it virtually always involves leaving a copy of the clefted predicate in its canonical sentence position, as is seen in the following sentences:

la) <i>Pí-pa ní nwò pa á</i>
kill-kill is they kill him	Yoruba (Boretzky
1983:225)
b) <i>Gbi-gbe ní won gbe e lo</i>
take-take is they took it go (= away)	Yoruba (Alleyne 1980:172)
c) <i>Na swari mi bribi a físi swari aka</i>
is swallow I believe the fish swallow hook	Sranan (Boretzky
1983:221)

(Note that the Yoruba sentences have the Cleft Marker (*ní*) in second position, and reduplicated clefted verbs.) English, and other European languages, do not have this construction. What is found in these languages is either some form of pseudoclefting with resumptive *do* or contrastive accent:

- 2a) *It is kill they killed him.
- b) Kill is what they did to him.
- c) They KILLED him (that's what they did to him).

Let us first put in some comment on the semantics of cleft constructions. Semantically, they specify a *topic*, what the sentence 'is about', and provide a *comment*, an answer to a question often only implicitly raised about the topic. Thus, in a simple cleft sentence like:

- 3) *It's the dean who lied about the committee.*

the (possibly implicit) question is *Who lied about the committee?* This question defines the topic of the sentence that answers the question. The answer, *the dean*, is what is often called the comment. It is the new information brought in by sentence (3) in any context where it is suitably used. Likewise, a sentence like (1a) is to be understood as providing an answer to a preceding (possibly implicit) question: *What did they do to him?* The constituent denoting the topic is typically unaccented, whereas the constituent that contains the comment bears strong accent. When the comment is a correction with regard to information given earlier, the accent is contrastive.

Cleft constructions, as well as the related constructions with pseudocleft and emphatic or contrastive accent, carry the presupposition that what is referred to in the topic constituent is real. Thus, (1a), (2b) and (2c) have the presupposition that there was something they did to *him*. And (3) presupposes that someone lied about the committee. And a sentence like *What the child dreamed about was the abominable snowman* presupposes that there *really was* something the child dreamed about, even though the thing it dreamed about does (did) not exist. The presupposition that goes with (pseudo)clefts and emphatic or contrastive accent cannot be cancelled under negation. A sentence like *It's not the dean who lied about the committee* still presupposes, as a necessary entailment, that someone lied.

This (discourse-) semantic analysis of clefts and related constructions is important in view of the notable confusion in the literature over PC-constructions. What concerns us here is cleft (not pseudocleft or other) constructions in sentences that present a verb or predicative adjective as comment to a topic asking for such a comment. In some of the literature, as will become apparent below, PC-constructions are mixed in with other constructions that involve movement as well as repetition of the predicate. Alleyne (1980:171-173) does not do that: all his examples are clearly of the PC kind. Yet he speaks unhappily of "topicalization of the verb," whereas, on the contrary, the verb is comment, not topic, in PC-constructions. Mufwene (1987) likewise speaks of the "topic" position when referring to the position occupied by the comment.

Alleyne (1980:171-2) implies or suggests that there may be a scale or hierarchy in constituent clefting. The subject is clefted out most easily, and is gen-

erally not copied or resumed by an anaphoric pronoun. The clefted (prepositional) object is sometimes resumed anaphorically, especially when it relates to an NP in an embedded clause:

- 4a) *Hae nawo huu no?*
who is you saw him

Twí (Alleyne 1980:172)

- b) *Ta Maria Pedro a bisa Wanchó ku el a kumpira flor pa e*
is Maria Pedro PERF tell Wanchó that he PERF buy flowers for her
Papiamentu (Mufwene 1987:84)

When the verb is clefted out, it is, as has been said, usually copied, not resumed by an anaphoric *do*-verb. Given the evidence on verb duplicates in a variety of constructions in the languages of the world, Alleyne's suggestion is clearly worth considering.

2.0.

In Creole linguistics, PC-constructions have a certain interest. It is well-known that they are not a Creole universal: there are too many Creole languages that clearly lack them. They are, therefore, not part of Bickerton's (1981) 'bioprogram' for the acquisition of existing languages and/or the formation of new ones. On the contrary, their distribution provides a strong argument in favor of substratist theories: PC is indigenous in the Eastern parts of West Africa where Kwa languages are spoken, and those (and only those) Creole languages that drew their original speakers from that area have PC. It is thus easily understood that PC is common to, and commonly used in, all Caribbean Creoles without exception, since the bulk of the slaves exported to the Caribbean came from those parts (Price 1976).

The statistically relevant correspondence between the occurrence of PC constructions in all Caribbean Creoles, no matter what lexifier language they are derived from, and the Kwa languages has been noted by virtually all authors on the subject. At the same time it has been noticed that there are differences between the West African group and the Caribbean Creoles, such as the fact that in the Kwa languages the Cleft Marker stands in second position whereas it has first position in the Caribbean Creoles (except for Palenquero, which also has the Cleft Marker in second position (Alleyne 1980:171; de Friedemann & Patiño Rosselli 1983, *passim*)), or the reduplication of the clefted verb in Yoruba. But these differences are insignificant compared with the similarities, which are clearly dominant. Boretzky notes in particular (1983:224) the functional similarity in the Cleft Marker: in Yoruba this marker is *ní*, which with neutral tone is the copula verb 'is', with rising tone the locative adverb 'there', and with falling tone the demonstrative 'that'. It is difficult not to think of, e.g., Sranan *na*, which is both copula and definite article, and also a general locative preposition. (One recalls, furthermore, that the alternative co-

pula form *de* is probably derived from *there*.) Boretzky accordingly concludes (1983:220):

This great similarity between West African and Creole languages induces the assumption – as in many other cases – of a West African substrate. (translation mine)

The grammatical pattern of PC in the Caribbean Creoles is strikingly uniform: Cleft Marker, followed by the clefted predicate, followed by the non-clefted sentence. There is no complementizer ('that'). Deviations from the pattern have been attested, but very rarely. Boretzky (1983:222), quoting from Hesseling (1905), notes the absence of the Cleft Marker in Negerhollands *Loop mi le loop* ('walk I PRES walk') and *Slaep mi ha slaep* ('sleep I PERF sleep'). He comments that here "*da* is probably to be supplemented at the beginning of the sentence." Mufwene (1987:84) quotes a sentence in Papiamentu where the adjective is clefted out but not repeated: *Ta kibrá e outo ta* ('is broken the car is'). He attributes this to the fact that the copula *ta is* already repeated, so that a repetition of the adjective might seem superfluous. In view of the fact, noted by many authors (e.g. Alleyne 1980:172), that there is a close relationship between clefting and WH-questions, this may be compared to Sranan *O bigi yu futu de?* ('how big are your feet?'), with the copula verb *de*, and the semantically identical and equally acceptable *O bigi yu futu bigi?*, with the adjective repeated (cf. Seuren 1986:124).

The universality of PC in the Caribbean Creoles is illustrated by the following examples:

a) <i>Da breek sender ka breek</i>
is break they are-now broken	Negerhollands (Boretzky
1983:222)
b) <i>Se depale u ap depale</i>
is stray you PRES stray	Haitian (Lefebvre et al.
1982:154)
c) <i>Se pa pale m di u pale</i>
is not speak I told you speak	Haitian (Lefebvre et al.
1982:156)
d) <i>Mari vle se rêmê pu zak rêmê l</i>
Marie want is love for Jacques love her	Haitian (Lefebvre et al.
1982:123)
e) <i>Ta kasa bo kier kasa</i>
is marry you want marry	Papiamentu (Boretzky
1983:223)
f) <i>A tiif Jan tiif di mango</i>
is steal John stole the mango	Jamaican (Mufwene 1987:71)
g) <i>A sik Samuel sik</i>
is sick Samuel sick	Jamaican (Mufwene 1987:71)
h) <i>Da tiif i tiif mai buk</i>
is steal he stole my book	Gullah (Mufwene 1987:71)
i) <i>Na bigi yu futu bigi</i>
is big your feet big	Sranan

And, as has been said, clefting, including PC, is very much part of the normal style of speaking in all these languages.

3.0.

The question to be considered here is whether PC also occurs in the French-based Creoles of the Indian Ocean, in particular Mauritian Creole (MC) and its offshoots Seselwa, spoken in the Seychelles, and the Creole of the minute island Rodrigues (RoC). According to Corne (Baker & Corne 1982:85-89), these Indian Ocean Creoles also have PC, and Corne takes this (p. 128) as support for Baker's claim (pp. 134-141), following Goodman (1964: 130-132), that there are strong West African elements to be traced in Mauritian Creole and Seselwa, due to sizeable slave contingents from West Africa between 1729 and 1750 (the formative period for Mauritian Creole).

In assessing such a claim a distinction must be made between those West African slaves who spoke a language with PC and those who did not. Baker made a detailed study of both the numbers and the origins of the slaves that were imported in Mauritius between 1729 and 1750. He distinguishes consistently between slaves sent from Goree, i.e. Senegal, and those sent from Juda, i.e. Benin. Only the latter qualify as possible speakers of a language with PC constructions, a Kwa language that is. His statistics (Baker & Corne 1982:198) show that in 1735, of a total slave population of 1450, 12 per cent originated from Benin, as against 36 per cent from Senegal, 19 per cent from India, and 33 per cent from Madagascar, the latter having steadily increased their share over the preceding years since 1728. (Before 1728 all slaves came from Madagascar, but their total number came to no more than 50.) The proportion of speakers of a language with PC constructions was thus relatively small, yet not insignificant.

It will be shown below that these Indian Ocean Creoles do not really have PC, though there are two features that may be related. These are, however, highly idiomatic and also highly restricted, and now virtually obsolete. Baker's historical claim about the formation of Mauritian Creole is thus somewhat weakened but clearly not invalidated. In fact, the PC-argument suggests that there may have been some Kwa influence in early Mauritian Creole, but that whatever such influence there may have been was swamped by the vast numbers of slaves of different origin (in particular Madagascar) arriving after 1735 and by the continuing presence of French settlers with some command of the pre-existing Madagascar and Reunion French Pidgin or Creole varieties.

No trace of PC has ever been found or claimed to be found in the Creole of Reunion (RC). But Reunion was colonized by the French in 1664, and no West African imports are recorded. It is, therefore, hardly to be expected that there should be any Kwa influence traceable in RC. The remaining three Creoles, MC, Seselwa and RoC, are essentially one language, sometimes called *Isle de France Creole* (IdeFC), originating in Mauritius and transplanted to the Seychelles and Rodrigues, respectively. The linguistic differences among

MC, SC and RoC are small, and there is complete mutual comprehensibility. We shall now examine Corne's claim that PC occurs in IdeFC.

Corne (Baker & Corne 1982:85-89) does not speak of *Predicate Clefting*, but of *Double Predication*, following Taylor (1977). This terminology is unfortunate since it covers up essential distinctions between PC and other constructions involving the copying of the verb or adjective, as we shall see. Corne presents three classes of cases where Double Predication occurs. The first class is represented by the following batch of sentences (p. 85) (the spelling has been regularized):

- 6a) *Bate li kapav bate* MC
 beat he can beat
 'he can beat her as much as he likes (it will be in vain)'
- b) *Rode Ză ti ape rod so lisiê, me li pa fin truv li*
 search Jean PAST CONT search his dog but he not PERF find it
 'John was really searching for his dog, but he couldn't find it'
- c) *Debat li ti debat, me vag la ti resi zet li â-deor brizâ*
 fight he PAST fight but wave the PAST succeed throw him outside reef
 'struggle as he would, the waves managed to throw him beyond the reef'
- d) *Galupe li ti galupe, me zot ti resi trap li*
 run he PAST run but they PAST succeed catch him
 'although he was running like hell, they were able to catch him'
- e) *Mâze i a kapab mâze, me zame i pu grosi* SC
 eat he ? can eat but never he will grow
 'eat as he might, he will never put on weight'
- f) *Taye i ape taye, me lapolis i ape vin derier li*
 run he CONT run but police he CONT come after him
 'even though he is running as fast as he can, the police are on his heels'
- g) *Malad li ti ape malad, me dokter napa ti kapav soy li* MC
 ill he PAST CONT ill but doctor not PAST can treat him
 'although he was falling gravely ill, the doctor could not treat him'

Corne adds that the two SC examples, (6e) and (6f), were obtained from an elderly speaker resident in New Zealand and were rejected by other SC speakers. He accepts that the structure exemplified in (6a-g) is now obsolete in SC. He comments, furthermore: "In all such sentences that I have recorded to date, the basic meaning is invariably one of emphasis and concession ('although', 'in spite of', 'be in vain')."

The second class is represented by an example (p. 86) from RoC, which Corne calls "a similar structure." The context is a conversation where a dog says to a king:

- 7) *Zape mem, to pa kon zape?*
 bark like you not know bark
 'don't you even know how to bark?'

The third batch of examples (p. 86) has the typical structure *napa - ki* (lit.: 'it is not - that'):

- 8a) *Filao-la napa tini ki li tini* MC (Lolliot 1855)
 filao (= plant)-the not hold that it holds
 'the *filao* holds really fast'
- b) *Napa tini ki li tini* MC (Baissac 1880)
 not hold that it holds
 'he/it holds fast'
- c) *Napa vane ki li vane* MC (Baissac 1880)
 not run that he runs
 'he runs + emphasis'
- d) *Napa rode ki zot ti rode, ler Zâ ti* MC
 not search that they PAST search when Jeanne PAST
perdiso lasê lor
 lose her chain gold
 'they really searched diligently when Jeanne lost her gold chain'
- e) *Napa bure ki voler-la ti bure, ma lapolis ti resi may li* MC
 not run that thief-the PAST run but police PAST manage catch him
 'the thief ran as fast as he could but the police managed to catch him'

The first three sentences of (8) are taken from Lolliot (1855) and Baissac (1880) and thus represent 19th Century MC. The last two are called "modern MC" by Corne. Yet, when I sprang sentences of the types exemplified in (6) or (8) on native speakers of MC, the reaction was invariably one of total perplexity. It would seem that Chaudenson (1984:173) is right in speaking of "de faits très marginaux" when commenting on these observations. It is quite likely that the constructions exemplified in (6) and (8) did once exist in all or most of the IdeFC varieties, but they are quite clearly obsolete now. This inference is reinforced by the antiquated forms *ape* and *napa* in (6) and (8) where modern MC would have the forms *pe* and *pa*, respectively.

More importantly, however, the cases of (6), (7) and (8) do not represent one homogeneous category. First of all, sentence (7) is a common case of left dislocation, found in many languages including English (though, probably, with varying degrees of stylistic idiomaticity): *Bark, don't you know how to bark?* It is, therefore, not relevant in the present context.

Then, the cases of (6a-g) all represent a construction with a concessive meaning, as Corne himself clearly says, typically followed by a *but*-clause. This is clearly not Predicate Clefting as defined above, and as typically found in the West African Kwa languages. It is quite possible that this concessive construction, or close relatives, is also found in some of the West African (Kwa) languages. Piou (Lefebvre et al. 1982:153), who does distinguish clearly between Predicate Clefting ('clivage du prédicat', pp. 122ff.) and Double Predication ('redoublement verbal', pp. 152ff.), gives Haitian examples that are reminiscent of (6):

- 9) *limê l limê lâp-lâ papiyô-d vole*
 light he light lamp-the butterfly-the fly away
 'as soon as he lit the lamp the butterfly flew away'

Grammatically, the construction seems identical, but the meanings differ: where IdeFC has a concessive meaning, Haitian has the temporal meaning 'as soon as'. If this form of 'verbal doubling' is indeed of African (Kwa) origin, cases like those in (6) do provide evidence in favour of at least some Kwa influence in IdeFC, even though it did not persist and has now been clearly eliminated from the language.

But what about the construction exemplified in (8)? There can be no doubt but that we have an idiom here, something like (for (8c)) 'it isn't RUN what he did: one needs a stronger word!'. In fact, Baissac (1880:199) comments: "*c'est une ellipse, au lieu de Napas apéle vané ça qui li vané, ça ne s'appelle pas courir!*" (i.e. this is an elliptical way of saying *Napa apel vane sa ki li vane*, or 'one doesn't call that run!'). Assuming that (8c) once was idiomatic in MC, a correspondingly idiomatic translation into English might be: *Wow, does he RUN!*

What we have here is clearly an idiomatised form of what Horn (1985) calls *metalinguistic negation*, in particular that variety of metalinguistic negation where the appropriateness of some expression is called into question, as in:

- 10a) *No you little brat, Grandma hasn't kicked the bucket, she has deceased.*
- b) *That book isn't good. It's excellent.*
- c) *Miss Debenham is not a woman, she's a lady.*

Such sentences can be paraphrased (Seuren 1988) as, respectively:

- 11a) The proper expression X to be used in *Grandma has X* is not *kicked the bucket* but *deceased*.
- b) The proper expression X to be used in *That book is X* is not *good* but *excellent*.
- c) The proper expression X to be used in *Miss Debenham is X* is not *a woman* but *a lady*.

Likewise, the paraphrase for (8c) would be:

- 12) The proper expression X to be used in *Li X* is not *vane* (but something stronger).

If paraphrases such as those in (11) and (12) are to count as syntactic analyses they obviously require a proper syntactic argument. Unfortunately, however, next to nothing is to be found in the literature on the treatment of quoted elements in grammar. Yet even so it is immediately clear that natural language grammars tend to obliterate the distinction between quoted and directly used elements. Sometimes, as in (13a), spelling conventions prescribe quotes even though they have no auditory counterpart. But often also, as in (13b), orthography simply follows pronunciation and no distinction is made:

- 13a) *'Rome' consists of four letters.*
- b) *In a nutshell, you're a dead man.*

It is, of course, inappropriate to maintain (cf. Burton-Roberts 1989:122-124) that in the 'literal' interpretation (13a) says that the city of Rome consists of four letters, or that (13b) means 'literally' that the addressee is a dead man

in a nutshell. What these sentences mean literally is, respectively, that the word 'Rome' consists of four letters, and that, *to say it* 'in a nutshell', the addressee is (doomed to be) a dead man. It is just that the grammar of English (or any other language) allows systematically for a deletion of material that shows the metalinguistic character of the elements in question.

Under this general, well-founded assumption it seems safe to accept that, apart from details, the same principle applies to (10a-c), so that something like the paraphrases of (11) will serve as a grammatical analysis for (10a-c). But then one will also accept (12) as a grammatical analysis of (8c), and similarly for all other cases of (8), which can now be characterized as cases of *metalinguistic predicate clefting*.

In being metalinguistic, the cases quoted in (8) differ from ordinary PC as found in the Kwa languages and in the Caribbean Creoles, which cannot be interpreted as instances of metalinguistic PC. An analysis of, for example, the Jamaican sentence (5f) given above (i.e. *A tiif Jan tiif di mango*) as:

14) The proper expression X to be used in *Jan X di mango* is *tiif*

is not only not favored in the literature, it is also semantically incorrect, since what is emphasized is not the appropriateness of the lexical choice, as for example in (10a-c) above, but the stark reality of what Jan did to the mango. The sentence (5f) is therefore to be analysed rather in terms of:

15) The X [*Jan X di mango*] is *tiif*

or: *What John did to the mango was steal (it)* (as an answer to the question *What did John do to the mango?*).

Again, as with (6a-g), it is not to be excluded that the particular form of metalinguistic PC as found in now obsolete varieties of IdeFC is of West African, preferably Kwa, origin. But no positive evidence for this hypothesis, whether in the Kwa languages or in the Caribbean Creoles, has so far been presented in the literature. Nor can it be excluded that metalinguistic PC constitutes an innovation within IdeFC, possibly on the basis of, no doubt very weakly represented, forms of ordinary PC. All this, however, is, for the moment at least, pure speculation. What remains is the curious fact that IdeFC has, or rather had, this very specific form of metalinguistic PC.

It is doubtful to what extent the occurrence of metalinguistic PC, as exemplified in the sentences of (8), can be taken as supporting evidence for Corne's claim of West African (Kwa) influence in IdeFC. These sentences represent one grammatically and semantically highly restricted, rarely used and now obsolete form of PC. If they are taken as support for this claim it will have to be presented in a much weakened form since, apparently, the PC construction in IdeFC is not clearly of Kwa origin, and it was never totally integrated into the language. It remained an isolated phenomenon, which has now been dropped from the language altogether.

Much the same picture emerges when one considers the other linguistic feature typically found in Kwa-influenced Creoles, serial verb constructions. Corne agrees (Baker & Corne 1982:104) with Jansen et al. (1978) that the Indian Ocean Creoles lack serial verbs, though he cautions in a note (p. 119) that the question deserves further study, especially for Seselwa, where he found one possible but doubtful instance of serialization, – evidence which he calls "anecdotal in the extreme." Since Bickerton (1981) claims that serial verb constructions (other than PC constructions) are indeed part of the innate 'bioprogram' for language acquisition and genesis, it is of importance to him that they should be present in IdeFC. And indeed, in his (1989) Bickerton makes an attempt at eking out evidence from Seselwa meant to show that this language, as well as MC, contains "a wide variety of serial constructions" (p. 156). Most of his data, however, were recorded some time ago from speakers who were then between 74 and 96 years old. Seuren (1990) rejects Bickerton's evidence. He points out that Bickerton's claim is based on a sloppy concept of serial verbs. He shows, moreover, that many of the cases quoted by Bickerton as instances of serial constructions are open to obvious alternative analyses not involving serialization. And he presents the results of a spot-check on Bickerton's data, carried out on members of a Seychellois family recently expatriated for political reasons. These results systematically contradict Bickerton's evidence in that it is either rejected as unacceptable or analysed in terms of coordination. What remains is the faint possibility of few and highly restricted serial constructions in older forms of Seselwa but now obsolete.¹

The upshot is that the case for PC constructions, as for serial verbs, in IdeFC is extremely weak. It is hard to establish if they were present at all in the past. What remains now is, if anything, no more than two ghosts in the attic. The contrast with the Caribbean Creoles, with their proven Kwa substrate, is obvious.

NOTES

1. Bickerton's rejoinder (1990) is, unfortunately, of a kind one prefers to ignore, if only because of the slurs he casts (p. 295) on a Seychellois family about whom he knows nothing except that they are political refugees and were kind enough to discuss sentences of their language with a European linguist.

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POSTSCRIPT

After finishing this paper I had the opportunity to consult a native speaker (student of biochemistry) of the Ashanti dialect of Twi (one of the major Akan languages or dialects, and hence belonging to the Kwa group) about the possible occurrence in his language of analogs of concessive and metalinguistic Predicate Clefting, respectively. Mr. Bonsu did, of course, confirm the frequent and idiomatic occurrence of ordinary PC cases:

- 1a) *Wia na wia-ye sika-no* (cf. (5f,h) above)
 steal is he steal-Past money-the
 'he really did steal the money'
- b) *So ara na wo nan so* (cf. (5i) above)
 big it is your feet big
 'your feet are really big'

As regards concessive and metalinguistic PC, he at first denied the existence of any analog of such constructions in his language. Then, however, after some

relaxed conversation, he produced the following cases of concessive PC, adding that older people would say such things, not younger people like himself:

- 2a) *Bo no ara na bo no, ɔ n-ka nokware* (cf. (6a) above)
 beat him it is beat him, he not-tell truth
 'one can beat him as much as one likes, he won't tell the truth'
 b) *su ara na su, me m-ma wo sika*
 cry it is cry, I not-give you money
 'you can cry as much as you like, I won't give you money'

These seem close enough parallels of the constructions exemplified in (6) above. He compared these with concessives like (3), which, in his perception, was more or less the same construction:

- 3) *Otuu mirika otuu-ye, wa-n-duru ho*
 he do running he do-Past, he-not-arrive there
 'though he ran as fast as he could, he didn't get there'

As regards metalinguistic PC, Mr. Bonsu gave the following examples, again, he said, from a less current register:

- 4a) *ɛnye kura na ɔ kura-ye, ɔ bam no* (cf. (8b) above)
 it wasn't hold that he hold-Past, he embrace her
 'he didn't HOLD her, he EMBRACED her'
 b) *ɛnye bo na ɔ bo no, ɔ kum no*
 it wasn't beat that he beat him, he kill him
 'he didn't BEAT him, he KILLED him'

It thus seems that the two forms of PC that did occur in IdeFC do indeed have correlates in Kwa languages. This evidence reinforces the claim made by Baker and Corne that there was some West African influence in IdeFC: the statistical chance of such constructions arising spontaneously and jointly, without any historical (substrate) backing, is infinitesimally small. The correlation between, on the one hand, the known facts of West African slave imports as sketched above and the joint occurrence of these two constructions on the other, must therefore be significant. This significance is enhanced by similar facts concerning serial verb constructions. The **best theory** thus appears to be the one that claims some, albeit weak, Kwa substrate influence in Mauritian Creole and its offshoots.

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