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Series B Volume 3

AN AUSTRALIAN CREOLE IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY: A DESCRIPTION OF NGUKURR–BAMYILI DIALECTS (PART 1)

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Summer Institute of Linguistics
Australian Aborigines Branch
Darwin
February 1979
PREFACE

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INTRODUCTION TO
SERIES B VOLUME 3

The purpose of this paper is to make available for the layman a description of the creole language spoken in the Roper River area of the Northern Territory. It is written particularly with Europeans working in the area in mind. It has not been written as a technical paper for linguists, but it is hoped that linguists will find it useful in providing information on the language.

It should be noted that this volume (Part 1) does not contain a complete description of Creole. Intonation and rhythm, word formation, adverbs, conjunctions, questions and commands, complex sentences, and discourse structure are not discussed. It is planned that these sections will be described in a second volume (Part 2) in the future. (In addition, a basic dictionary is being published separately as Work Papers of SIL-AAB, Series B, Volume 4.) The sections contained in Part 1 are comprehensively, but not exhaustively, covered.

At several places in this paper the reader is referred to a discussion of a particular item at another location. When the reference is stated as being 'elsewhere', it means that the item will be discussed in Part 2. If the discussion is within Part 1, the chapter or section reference is given.

Examples occur frequently throughout the chapters dealing with Creole grammar. These examples are written in the Creole practical orthography as discussed in Chapter 3. In some situations an example of an unacceptable or ungrammatical construction is given. These examples are marked by a preceding asterisk (*).

This paper is based on some 27 months of fieldwork under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics since March 1973. Of this time approximately 60% has been spent at Ngukurr, 30% at Bamyili, and the remaining 10% elsewhere.

Without the help of many people this paper would not have been possible. I would like to thank the many Creole speakers who have shared their language with me, especially those who patiently worked with me in formal situations: Barnabas Roberts, Mordecai Skewthorpe, Andrew Joshua, Isaac Joshua, Charlie Johnson, Wallace Dennis, David Jentian, and Danny Jentian. Thanks are due to the late Lothar Jagst,
Kathy Menning, and Joyce Hudson for their editorial comments on earlier drafts of sections of this paper, and especially to Mary Huttar and Mike Ray for editing the full manuscript. Thanks are also due to Julianne Slater and her typing pool for typing an earlier draft of this paper and to Verna Campbell for typing the final draft. I also appreciate the encouragement received from Phil and Dorothy Meehan, Margaret Sharpe, Velma Leeding, Holt Thompson, Warren Hastings, Neil Chadwick, David Zorc, Gail Forbatt, Debbie Maclean, George Huttar, Reg Houldsworth, and my wife Joy.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Series B Volume 3</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. THE SOUND SYSTEM OF CREOLE</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A PRACTICAL ORTHOGRAPHY FOR CREOLE</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. NOUNS, PRONOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND THE NOUN PHRASE</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. VERBS AND THE VERB PHRASE</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. PREPOSITIONS AND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. SIMPLE SENTENCES</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4

NOUNS, PRONOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND THE NOUN PHRASE

4.1 NOUNS

4.2 PRONOUNS

4.2.1 Personal Pronouns

4.2.2 Possessive Pronouns

4.2.3 Reflexive and Reciprocal Pronouns

4.2.4 Demonstrative Pronouns

4.2.5 Interrogative Pronouns

4.2.6 Indefinite Pronouns

4.3 ADJECTIVES

4.4 THE NOUN PHRASE

4.4.1 The Basic Noun Phrase

4.4.2 The Complex Noun Phrase

Bibliography for Chapter 4
The noun phrase in Creole is composed of three major elements - nouns modified by adjectives and pronouns. All nouns, most pronouns, and most adjectives under certain conditions can occur in the place of a noun phrase. Note, for example, the subjects and objects in the following 'story'.

Noun Phrase.

Subject          Object
Main wagwun    dog bin   killim jadon fetwan gowan.    'My white dog killed that fat goanna.'

Nouns

Subject          Object
Olgamen bin    meigim  baga.   'A woman made a fire.'

Pronouns

Subject          Object
Imin          ondi gugum im.  'She was going to cook it.'

Adjectives

Subject          Object
Dromgginbala    bin dagat rowan.  'A drunk ate the raw (goanna)'.

Nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and the noun phrase are discussed in order below.

4.1 NOUNS

A noun in English is commonly defined as the name of a person, place, or thing. It can also be described by the fact that it occurs as the subject or object of a verb. Nouns in Creole can be described in much the same way. A few Creole nouns are given below as examples.

Jali             'Charlie'
Wadaguajaja    'Goose Lagoon'
bilibong        'billabong'
gabarra 'head'  
boniboni 'colt'  
daga 'food'

Nouns in English are either definite (the colt) or indefinite (a colt, some colts) and either singular (colt) or plural (colts). Creole nouns are unmarked for all four of these features. In all the examples given above in brackets, Creole would have simply boniboni. Thus, the sentence:

*At bin luk boniboni.*

could be translated, depending on what the speaker actually saw, as:

'I saw the colt.' (definite-singular)  
'I saw a colt.' (indefinite-singular)  
'I saw the colts.' (definite-plural)  
'I saw some colts.' (indefinite-plural)

This parallels the Aboriginal languages, which rarely mark nouns for number. There are some exceptions, but these are usually restricted to nouns referring to animate or human beings as opposed to inanimate things (Wurm 1972:63). Alawa, for example, marks plurality on human nouns by reduplication, though it is optional (Sharpe 1972:54).

Likewise, Creole has three nouns referring to human beings that are optionally marked for plurality by reduplication. One of them is marked by reduplicating the whole word:

*olmen 'man' olmenolmen 'men'*

while the other two reduplicate only part of the word:

*olgomen 'woman' olgolgomen 'women'  
wanguwalubala 'orphan' wangwawanguwalubala 'orphans'*

While it is true to say that Creole nouns are unmarked for definiteness and number, it is wrong to say that Creole cannot indicate definiteness and number. These features may be indicated by the use of demonstrative and indefinite pronouns, as shown in the following examples:

*At bin luk dadan boniboni. (definite-singular)*

'I saw the colt.'
Ai bin luk wanbala boniboni. (indefinite-singular)
'I saw a colt.'

Ai bin luk olabat boniboni. (definite-plural)
'I saw the colts.'

Ai bin luk samba la boniboni. (indefinite-plural)
'I saw some colts.'

Likewise, while it is true to say that Creole nouns are not marked for gender, it is not true to say that gender cannot be indicated. Some words carry an inherent gender. For example, mami 'mother' and olgamen 'old woman' are inherently feminine, while dadì 'father' and olmen 'old man' are inherently masculine.

English speakers should beware that the inherent gender of a Creole word may not be the same as that of the English word from which it was derived. The classic example would be gremi, which is derived from the feminine English word granny. The Creole gremi may, as in English, refer to one's mother's mother, but it may also refer to one's sister's daughter's children whether male or female, to one's daughter's daughter's husband, or to one's wife's mother's mother's husband.

Nouns that do not inherently carry a gender distinction but which apply generally to a person or animal of either sex, may be specified as being male or female by the use of the adjectives boiwan 'male' and gelyln 'female'. For example, the unspecified gender reference in

Imin kilim lebdem wolabi.
'He killed a nail tail wallaby.'

could be specified as

Imin kilim boiwan lebdem wolabi.
'He killed a male nail tail wallaby.'
or

Imin kilim gelyln lebdem wolabi.
'He killed a female nail tail wallaby.'

Creole nouns can be divided into three classes (proper, count, and mass) according to the type of modifiers that can precede them. These classes are not absolute as some nouns can occur in more than one class.

1. Proper nouns are names, in the strict English sense, especially of people, pet animals, and places. Some examples are Wangan
(a person’s name), Marlu (a dog’s name), and Burranju (a place name). Proper nouns are distinguished from other noun classes in that they occur with very few modifiers.

Aboriginal place names commonly apply to kantri 'a defined geographical area' but may also apply to the significant features within that area, such as riba 'rivers', krik 'creeks', bilibong 'billabongs', and hil 'hills'. These latter are sometimes specified by reference to the feature. For example, Karniyarrang, while referring to a specific kantri, may also refer to a specific krik or hil within that kantri. These may be more specifically referred to by a double noun as Karniyarrang Krik and Karniyarrang Hil.

2. Count nouns, as the name implies, are those which can be counted. In other words, count nouns may be preceded by the numeral modifiers. They are not restricted, however, to numeral modifiers but may take the full range of modifiers. For example, jaojao 'water lily stalk' can be used in the following constructions.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ai bin dagat jaojao, (no modifiers)} & \quad \text{ate} \quad \text{water lily stalk.'} \\
\text{Ai bin dagat fobala jaojao, (numeral modifier)} & \quad \text{ate} \quad \text{four water lily stalks.'} \\
\text{Ai bin dagat sambala jaojao, (indefinite pronoun)} & \quad \text{ate} \quad \text{some water lily stalks.'} \\
\text{Ai bin dagat bigbala jaojao, (adjective)} & \quad \text{ate} \quad \text{a large water lily stalk.'}
\end{align*}
\]

3. Mass nouns are those nouns that cannot be counted. That is, they cannot occur with numerical modifiers.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ai bin dagat daga,} & \quad \text{ate} \quad \text{food.'} \\
\end{align*}
\]

and
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ai bin dagat sambala daga,} & \quad \text{ate} \quad \text{some food.'} \\
\end{align*}
\]

but not *\text{Ai bin dagat fobala daga,} \quad \text{ate} \quad \text{four food.'}

It is also possible in Creole to talk about simple nouns, reduplicated nouns, compound nouns, and double nouns.

1. The vast majority of the nouns in Creole are simple nouns being composed of one root word.
binji  'stomach'
brolga  'Brolga'
garnda  'private parts'
marlabangu  'freshwater mussel'

2. Reduplicated nouns have a root word that occurs twice. Many of these words are animal names that have been derived from English words.

bigibigi  'pig'
jukjuk  'chook'
gabigabi  'calf'

Some have been derived from Aboriginal words. Many of these words are onomatopoeic; that is, they are formed from sounds that resemble those associated with the object named.

nirrinirri  'fly (insect)'
karrakkarrak  'Comorant'

3. Compound nouns are made up of two closeknit root words.

sengran  'sand' ('sand' + 'ground')
ingulok  'hawk' ('eagle' + 'hawk')
sugabeg  'wild honey' ('sugar' + 'bag')
bakjamba  'bucking horse' ('buck' + 'jumper')

4. Double nouns consist of two root words which are not as closeknit as compound word roots.

gras wolabi  'agile wallaby'
waya apiya  'fishing spear'
ded silip  'deep sleep'
blesol kantri  'black soil country'

The distinction between double nouns and compound nouns is not well defined.

The first root word of some compound and double nouns can stand for the whole noun.
waya ~ waya spiya  "fishing spear"
baya ~ bayawud    "firewood"
but not "suga for sugabeg  "wild honey"
nor "gras for gras wolabi  "agile wallaby"

4.2 PRONOUNS

Most of the pronouns of Creole fall into one of three groups - personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and indefinite pronouns. In addition to these three main groups, there are also possessive pronouns, interrogative pronouns, reflexive pronouns, and one reciprocal pronoun.

4.2.1 Personal Pronouns

Part of the personal pronoun system of Creole is similar to that of English, though the system as a whole is very different. In English, there are two sets of personal pronouns, one is used in the subject position of sentences while the other is used in the object position. These two sets of English pronouns are given in Charts 4.1 and 4.2.

Chart 4.1 English Subject Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person - masculine</td>
<td>he</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>she</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuter</td>
<td>it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 4.2. English Object Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first person</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person - masculine</td>
<td>him</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feminine</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neuter</td>
<td>it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most noticeable difference between Creole and English personal pronoun systems is the lack of gender distinction in the third person singular. Where English has he, she, it, him, and her, Creole has only the one form im (from the English masculine him).

Im bigbala.

could mean, depending on the context,

‘He is big.’

‘She is big.’

or ‘It is big.’

Ai bin luk im.

could mean, depending on the context,

‘I saw him.’

‘I saw her.’

or ‘I saw it.’

English speakers are prone to think that Creole speakers do not know the difference between the subject and object pronouns of English. This is because Creole uses mi (from the English object pronoun me) as the subject pronoun. In actual fact, both mi and ai (from the English subject pronoun I) occur in Creole but are used differently than in English. Mi can be used in all subject positions and object positions, while ai can be used only in subject positions, though not as the subject of an equational sentence.
Mi  wangulubala.
'I am an orphan.'

but not *Ai  wangulubala.

Mi  bin  luk  boniboni.
'I saw a colt.'

and  Ai  bin  luk  boniboni.

Boniboni  bin  luk  mi.
'The colt saw me.'

but not *Boniboni  bin  luk  ai.

Creole also makes a distinction in the third person plural between the subject and object pronoun. *Dei* (from the English subject pronoun they), like English, is used only in subject positions, while *dem* (from the English object pronoun them) is used only in object positions. (It should be noted, however, that *dem* also functions as a demonstrative pronoun in either subject or object noun phrases.)

Dei  bin  luk  boniboni.
'They saw the colt.'

but not *Dem  bin  luk  boniboni.* (subject position)

Ai  bin  luk  dem.
'I saw them.'

but not *Ai  bin  luk  dei.* (object position)

Dem  boniboni  kamar  iya.  (demonstrative pronoun)
'Those colts are coming here.'

Similarities between the Creole and English personal pronoun systems virtually stop here. Though the actual Creole pronoun forms are derived from English, their meanings are derived from the Aboriginal languages.

Unlike English, Creole does not have a simple set of plural pronouns. Instead, it has two non-singular sets. The one set is 'dual', which refers to two persons or things. The other set is 'plural', which refers to more than two (as opposed to the English plural being two or more). The Creole non-singular second and third person pronouns are given in Chart 4.3.
Chart 4.3. Non-Singular Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>dual</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td>yândubala</td>
<td>yubala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person</td>
<td>dubala</td>
<td>olabat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yândubala _kaman iya._
'You (two) come here.'

Yubala _kaman iya._
'You all come here.

Dubala _kaman iya._
'They (two) are coming here.'

Olabat _kaman iya._
'They all are coming here.'

In the first person, not only is a distinction made between dual and plural, but also whether or not the person (or persons) spoken to is included in the 'we'. If the person being spoken to is included, the pronoun is inclusive; if the person is excluded, it is exclusive. The first person non-singular inclusive and exclusive forms are given in Chart 4.4.

Chart 4.4. Inclusive-Exclusive Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>dual</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>inclusive</td>
<td>ywúmi</td>
<td>wí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclusive</td>
<td>mindubala</td>
<td>mibala</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ywúmi _bin_ luk boniboni.
'We (you and I) saw a colt.'

Wi _bin_ luk boniboni.
'We (all of us) saw a colt.'
**Mindubala bin.**  **luk boniboni.**

'We (myself and someone else) saw a colt.'

**Mibala bin**  **luk boniboni.**

'We (myself and some others but not you) saw a colt.'

Putting the above together, the personal pronoun system of Creole would look like Chart 4.5.

**Chart 4.5. Creole Personal Pronouns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>dual</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first person</td>
<td>mi/ai</td>
<td>yunmi</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inclusive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclusive</td>
<td>mindubala</td>
<td>mibala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td>yu</td>
<td>yundubala</td>
<td>yubala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person</td>
<td>im</td>
<td>dubala</td>
<td>olabat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was mentioned earlier, this parallels the pronoun systems of the Aboriginal languages. Both the distinction of inclusive and exclusive in the first person and the presence of a dual number are widespread, and generally no distinction is made in the gender of the third person (Capell 1937:32, 40; Wurm 1972:62). The third person is also often used as a demonstrative pronoun (Wurm 1972:62).

Chart 4.5 of the Creole personal pronouns is really an oversimplification of the true picture. Continuum variation as discussed in Chapter 2 also affects Creole grammar. This is probably most easily seen in the personal pronoun system. The pronoun Chart 4.5 gives the heavy pronoun sub-system. Chart 4.6 (see following page) gives the light sub-system.

The light sub-system is similar to the English system. Plural object pronouns for the first person (as) and third person (dem) are used as in English. While *dem* is relatively common, *as* occurs less frequently. When it does occur, it is often in the hortatory construction *Led as... 'Let us...'.*

Though both first person singular pronouns *ai* and *mi* occur, their usage is not identical with that of English. The so-called 'object' pronoun *mi* 'me' is used as the subject in equative sentences instead of *ai* 'I' as in English.
Chart 4.6. Light Pronoun Sub-System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first person</td>
<td>ai/ni</td>
<td>wi/as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td>yu</td>
<td>yu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person</td>
<td>im</td>
<td>dei/dem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though only one third person singular form (im) is listed, other forms sometimes occur. 'It' occasionally occurs, 'he' and 'she' less frequently occur, while 'him' and 'her' rarely occur.

The heavy and light sub-systems do not operate independently in actual speaker usage. Most speakers make use of the full range of pronouns given in Charts 4.5 and 4.6. This means that the two charts, in effect, are superimposed on each other. The singular pronouns of both charts are the same so present no difficulty in understanding them.

The plural pronouns of the light sub-system may best be thought of as being generic forms, with the dual and plural of the heavy sub-system being specific forms. The first person generic plural is wi. There are four first person specific plurals: yuoni (dual, inclusive), mindubala (dual, exclusive), wi (plural, inclusive), and mibala (plural, exclusive). These generic-specific pronouns could be diagrammed as in Chart 4.7, the inner circle being generic.

Chart 4.7. First Person Generic-Specific Pronouns

```
structure: yuoni wi inclusive
structure: mindubala mibala exclusive
structure: specific specific
structure: dual plural
```
The second and third person pronouns are less complicated since they lack inclusive-exclusive distinctions. They could be diagrammed as in Chart 4.8, the inner circle being generic.

Chart 4.8. Second and Third Person
Generic-Specific Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>yumdubala</th>
<th>yubala</th>
<th>second person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doi</td>
<td></td>
<td>third person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dubala</td>
<td>olabat/dei</td>
<td>specific person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dual</td>
<td></td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the preceding discussion has been on the system of the personal pronouns of Creole. The following discussion will deal with variations in the form of pronouns used. Most of these variations, unlike that of the variation in the system, are not so much due to the continuum nature of Creole as they are to dialect and age group differences.

The plural set of pronouns given in Charts 4.7 and 4.8 above are those used mainly at Banyili. Ngukurr speakers tend to use a different set. The two sets are given in Chart 4.9 (see following page). In actual usage, the inclusive-exclusive distinction at Ngukurr is generally not made, minalabat seldom being used and melabat being used in the generic plural sense.

There are a number of variants that are used mainly by older people and cattle station people. These include melelabat in place of melabat; yulabat, yuwalabat, or yunalabat in place of yurol; imalabat in place of alabat; and imbubala or jeidubala in place of dubala.

There are also a number of variants that are used mainly by younger people. These include mela in place of melabat (though mela is reported to be the usual form used at Elsey Station by everyone),
Chart 4.9. Bamyili-Ngukurr Plural Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bamyili</th>
<th>Ngukurr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>first person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inclusive</td>
<td>wi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclusive</td>
<td>mibala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second person</td>
<td>yubala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>third person</td>
<td>olabat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

minbala or mibala in place of minubala, and yunbala or yunbla in place of yundubala. School children at Bamyili also tend to use yunbala or yunbla as the singular vocative pronoun of address instead of yu.

Some forms function in ways other than as personal pronouns. It has already been mentioned that the third personal plural dem is also used as a demonstrative pronoun. So likewise is olabat. In addition, olabat is also used as the plural vocative pronoun.

Olabat. kaman na!
'You all come!'

The third person dual pronoun dubala is also used as the numeral two.

4.2.2 Possessive Pronouns

Unlike English, Creole does not have a possessive set of pronouns distinct from the personal pronouns. Instead, basically, the personal pronouns are simply placed before a noun to indicate possession.

yu gaborra
'your head'

melabat daga
'our food'
Not all personal pronouns can be used in this type of possessive construction. *At, as, dei, and dem do not occur in possessive constructions.*

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mi} & \quad \text{gabarra} \\
& \quad \text{'my head'}
\end{align*}
\]

can occur, but not

\[
\begin{align*}
\star\text{ai} & \quad \text{gabarra}
\end{align*}
\]

Or

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{olabai} & \quad \text{boniboni} \\
& \quad \text{'their colt'}
\end{align*}
\]

can occur, but not

\[
\begin{align*}
\star\text{dei} & \quad \text{boniboni}
\end{align*}
\]

Possession may also be expressed by the use of personal pronouns in a prepositional phase (see Section 6.3.3 on prepositions).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{gabarra} & \quad \text{blang a mi} \\
& \quad \text{'my head'}
\end{align*}
\]

While it is true that there is no set of possessive pronouns in Creole as such, there are several possessive pronoun forms. These occur as synonyms with the personal pronouns in possessive constructions as discussed above.

The most commonly used possessive pronouns are the first person singular forms *mi* and *main*. Both may be used in place of *mi* in a possessive construction.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mi} & \quad \text{gabarra} \\
\text{mai} & \quad \text{gabarra} \\
\text{and main} & \quad \text{gabarra} \\
& \quad \text{'my head'}
\end{align*}
\]

*Main*, however, as distinct from the possessive use of *mi* and *mai*, is able to stand alone. That is, *mi* and *mai* must be used in a construction in which that which is possessed is expressed following the pronoun, while *main* may be used without overtly expressing what is possessed. In this particular usage, *main* also sometimes occurs with the suffix -wam as *mainwam*. For example, the sentence
'I saw my colt.'
could be expressed as

\[
\begin{align*}
Ai \text{ bin } & \text{ luk main } \text{ boniboni.} \\
Ai \text{ bin } & \text{ luk mai } \text{ boniboni.} \\
Ai \text{ bin } & \text{ luk mi } \text{ boniboni.} \\
Ai \text{ bin } & \text{ luk main.} \\
Ai \text{ bin } & \text{ luk mainwan.}
\end{align*}
\]

but not

\[
\begin{align*}
*Ai \text{ bin } & \text{ luk mai.} \\
*Ai \text{ bin } & \text{ luk mi.}
\end{align*}
\]

The use of the first person plural form \text{awa 'our'} is not uncommon. For example, 'our camp' though usually expressed as \text{melabat kemp} can also be expressed as \text{awa kemp}.

4.2.3 Reflexive and Reciprocal Pronouns

English combines several of its personal pronouns with \text{self} to form compound personal pronouns, such as \text{yourself} and \text{themselves}. Such pronouns are usually referred to as reflexive pronouns because their main function is to reflect the action of a verb back upon the subject instead of passing it onto some other object.

He hit \text{himself}.

They are also sometimes used to emphasize a particular participant.

I saw \text{him} \text{myself}.

or She \text{herself} gave it to \text{him}.

Creole likewise has a reflexive pronoun. Unlike English, however, which has different forms for the various person-number combinations, Creole has one main form \text{mi jelb} which is used regardless of person and number references.

The basic function of the Creole reflexive pronoun \text{mi jelb} is similar to that of English. It reflects the action of the verb back upon the subject.
Imin kilim mijelb.
'He hit himself.'

Yu labda wajim mijelb.
'You should wash yourself.'

Dubala bin bujim mijelb.
'They lost themselves (i.e. got lost).' 

Olabat bin luk mijelb.
'They saw themselves.'

The Creole reflexive pronoun can also be used to emphasize a particular participant.

Mi bin gibit im mijelb.
'I gave it (to) him myself.'

However, unlike English, the reflexive pronoun in the emphatic usage cannot occur as part of the subject. The following construction is not possible.

"Mi mijelb bin gibit im.
'I myself gave it (to) him.'

Creole does, however, make use of an emphatic particle na in a similar construction.

Mi na bin gibit im
'I gave it (to) him.'

This is discussed elsewhere.

In addition to mijelb, several light forms occur. Their occurrence, however, is much less frequent. Forms that are in use include

yoursef 'yourself, yourselves'
imef 'himself, herself'

There are also several phonological variants of mijelb, including mijalb, mijel, misel, and miself.

Mijelb has functions other than its reflexive and emphatic usages. The basic reflexive construction, like many constructions, can mean more than one thing, depending on the context in which it is used.
Yu nemo bogi mijelb.
can mean either

'Do not bathe yourself.'
or
'Do not bathe by yourself.'

Im wokabat mijelb.
could mean

'He is walking himself.  
(i.e. He himself is walking.)'

but would most often mean

'He is walking by himself.'

An emphatic form of this meaning would be

Im wokabat mijelb kantri.
or Im wokabat mijelb, mijelb kantri.

'He is walking by himself, all alone.

(Literally:

He is walking himself himself country.)'

However, when there is a non-singular subject, as in

Dubala wokabat mijelb.
'They walk themselves.'

it normally means

'They walk by themselves, individually, not together.'

The construction to express 'together, not individually' makes use of the adverb mijamet, as in

Dubala wokabat mijamet.
'They walk together.'

An emphatic form of 'individually' is expressed by reduplicating the reflexive pronoun, as in
Dubala wokabat mijelbmijelb.
'They walk each by himself.'

Olabat bin go mijelbmijelb.
'They went their own ways.'

Melabat dagadagat mijelbmijelb.
'We each eat by our own selves.'

Creole has a reciprocal pronoun *gija* that is used in a variety of constructions to stress a mutual or reciprocal relationship of two or more participants. Consider the following examples.

Olabat bin oldei kilimbat gija.
'They were always killing each other.'

Minubala fidan bekbon gija.
'We are sitting with our backs to each other.'

Dubala silip but gija.
'They are sleeping head to foot.
(Literally: They sleep foot to each other.)'

Dubala bada gija.
'They are sisters to each other.'

Dubala banji gija bin go.
'By male and female couples they went.
(Literally: Two husband/wife to each other went(208,167),(940,281).)'

Banjibanji gija barnbarn.
'All (of the grass) is burning.
(Literally: Husbands/wives to each other are burning.)'

### 4.2.4 Demonstrative Pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns of Creole are similar to those of English (*this, that, these, those*) in that there is a singular and plural set, both of which distinguish a 'near' and 'distant' reference. In addition, Creole has long and short forms as well as the 'normal' form for the singular set. The plural set also has two alternate forms. The chart below lists the demonstrative pronouns with the commonly used heavy to light variants.
Chart 4.10. Demonstrative Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'near'</th>
<th></th>
<th>'distant'</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(heavy → light)</td>
<td>(heavy → light)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>singular</td>
<td>dijan</td>
<td>jarron</td>
<td>darron</td>
<td>tharron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>jadan</td>
<td>dadan</td>
<td>dadan</td>
<td>thadan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long</td>
<td>dijanwan</td>
<td>jarrawan</td>
<td>darrawan</td>
<td>tharrawan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>jadanwan</td>
<td>dadanwan</td>
<td>dadanwan</td>
<td>thadanwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short</td>
<td>di</td>
<td>jat</td>
<td>dat</td>
<td>that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>die</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plural</td>
<td>dijlot</td>
<td>jadlot</td>
<td>dadlot</td>
<td>thatlot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dijmob</td>
<td>jadmob</td>
<td>dadmob</td>
<td>thatmob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dislot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dismob</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the exception of the singular short forms, all Creole demonstrative pronouns are able to stand alone. That is, that to which they specifically refer need not be overtly expressed in the same construction.

\[\text{Dijan} \quad \text{jukijuki} \quad \text{ai bin} \quad \text{luk.} \]
\['\text{This is the Suzuki I saw.}'\]

or \[\text{Dijan} \quad \text{ai bin} \quad \text{luk.} \]
\['\text{This is the one I saw.}'\]

\[\text{Ai bin dagat} \quad \text{jadlot} \quad \text{garniya.} \]
\['\text{I ate those water lily roots.}'\]

or \[\text{Ai bin dagat} \quad \text{jadlot.} \]
\['\text{I ate those.'}\]

The singular short forms (di, di, jat, and dat) cannot stand alone. They occur only in a noun phrase preceding an overt expression of that to which they refer.

\[\text{jat} \quad \text{pappap bin} \quad \text{dagat} \quad \text{bib.} \]
\['\text{That puppy ate the meat.'}\]

but not

\[^{*}\text{Jat bin dagat bib.}\]

4.2.5 Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are those used in forming questions. There are four such pronouns in Creole, two having only human or personal reference, one having only non-human or non-personal reference, and the fourth having neutral reference.

\[\text{hu} \quad \text{'who' (personal)}\]

\[\text{Hu bin dagat?} \quad \quad \text{\textit{Who has eaten?}}\]

\[\text{blau} \quad \text{'whose' (personal)}\]

\[\text{Blau jat daga?} \quad \quad \text{\textit{Whose is that food?}}\]

96
wanim 'what' (non-personal)

Wanim bin dagat main daga?
'What ate my food?'

wijan 'which' (neutral)

Wijan bin dagat?
'Which one ate it?'

In addition to neutral versus non-personal references, wijan 'which' differs from wanim 'what' in that it is specific while wanim tends to be more generic. This is illustrated by placing the two examples above in a larger context:

Wanim bin dagat main daga?
'What ate my food?'
Lilbala pappap din dagat.
'A little puppy ate it.'

Wijan bin dagat?
'Which (puppy) ate it?'

Wijan differs from other interrogative pronouns in being able to occur in a construction preceding the generic reference it is related to.

Wijan mikibul bin binij?
'Which young bull died?'

but not

*wanim mikibul bin binji?

Likewise,

Wijan gel bin kaman?
'Which girl came?'

but not

*hu gel bin kaman?

Blaw 'whose' is a contraction of the preposition blenga and the interrogative pronoun hu. It is sometimes expressed by the longer form of blenga hu as well as by the permuted form hu blanga.
Blau jadon waya?
Blarga hu jadon waya?
Hu blarga jadon waya?

'Whose is that fishing spear?'

Hu 'who', wanim 'what', and wijan 'which' may occur as the object of a preposition, thus making an interrogative prepositional phrase.

Imin gibil langa wijan?
'He gave it to which one?'

4.2.6 Indefinite Pronouns

The indefinite pronouns of Creole are divided into two main groups on the basis of the way in which they can be used in a sentence. The pronouns of the first group are always used as independent pronouns; they always stand alone, never in a modifier position in a noun phrase. For example, the indefinite pronoun enibodi 'anybody' can occur in the construction

Enibodi gin dagat.
'Anybody can eat.'

but not in

*Enibodi biginini gin dagat.
'Anybody child can eat.'

The pronouns of the second group, however, may occur either alone or functioning like an adjective in a noun phrase. The example immediately above could be

Eni biginini gin dagat.
'Any child can eat.'

Within a larger context this second group of indefinite pronouns may occur alone, as in

Eni gin dagat.
'Any can eat.'

The pronoun in such cases normally has a referent within the larger context. In other words, the example above would be

'Any (child) can eat.'
The pronouns in the independent group of indefinite pronouns may be subdivided into four groups on the basis of their meanings. These groups are:

- **Universal** - the *ebri*- 'everyone' compounds.
- **Assertive** - the *sam*- 'some' compounds.
- **Non-Assertive** - the *eni*- 'any' compounds.
- **Negative** - the *no*- 'no' compounds.

There are three compound forms in each of these groups carrying a basic personal reference:

- **Neutral** - the *-wan* 'one' compounds.
- **Personal** - the *-bodi* 'body' compounds.
- **Non-Personal** - the *-jing* 'thing' compounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Non-Personal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Universal</strong></td>
<td><em>ebriwan</em></td>
<td><em>ebribodi</em></td>
<td><em>ebrijing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'everyone'</td>
<td>'everybody'</td>
<td>'everything'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assertive</strong></td>
<td><em>samwan</em></td>
<td><em>sambodi</em></td>
<td><em>saming</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'someone'</td>
<td>'somebody'</td>
<td>'something'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Assertive</strong></td>
<td><em>eniwon</em></td>
<td><em>enibodi</em></td>
<td><em>enijing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'anyone'</td>
<td>'anybody'</td>
<td>'anything'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
<td><em>nowan</em></td>
<td><em>nobodi</em></td>
<td><em>najing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'no one'</td>
<td>'nobody'</td>
<td>'nothing'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pronouns of the adjectival group of indefinite pronouns do not subdivide into neat categories as do the independent indefinite pronouns. The majority are assertive and are listed here in a somewhat relative order from those indicating paucity to those indicating multitude.

The occurrence of *olagija* as an indefinite pronoun is relatively rare. The non-assertive form *eni* 'any' also occurs as an adjectival indefinite pronoun.
Chart 4.12. Assertive Adjectival Indefinite Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shajnami</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fyu</td>
<td>'few'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lilbit</td>
<td>'a little'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samen, sambala</td>
<td>'some'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haf</td>
<td>'a portion, &quot;half&quot;'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holot, holbit</td>
<td>'all, whole'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>olagija</td>
<td>'(absolutely) all'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blandi, blandibala</td>
<td>'plenty'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naf</td>
<td>'enough'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nomo lilbit</td>
<td>'a lot'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bigmob, karangnyiringba</td>
<td>'lots, many'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tumani, tumaj</td>
<td>'very many, very much'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thadmaj, milyans</td>
<td>'an unbelievable quantity'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is also a small group of indefinite pronouns that are compounds of naja- and all carry the meaning 'other, another'. They are all neutral in their personal reference and occur with singular and plural forms.

Chart 4.13. Naja- Indefinite pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>naja</td>
<td>najaan</td>
<td>nabajot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>najawen</td>
<td>najaun</td>
<td>najamob</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'other, another'</td>
<td></td>
<td>'others'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 ADJECTIVES

Adjectives are not always easily distinguished from nouns. There are several reasons for this. Most adjectives commonly occur with a nominalizing suffix -bala, -wam, and occasionally -baga,
though they may occur without it. For example, bigbala, bigwan, bigbaga, and big all mean 'big'. This nominalizing suffix allows the adjective to function as a nominal or noun. For example, blekbala 'black' as an adjective would be

\[
\text{In abum blekbala} \quad \text{dog.}
\]

'He has a black dog.

Blekbala may also be used as a noun as in

\[
\text{In blekbala.}
\]

'He is an Aborigine.'

This example could also mean

'He is black.'

with blekbala being an adjective.

Similarly some nouns may be used as adjectives. For example, munanga 'European' is usually a noun, as in

\[
\text{Dad? munanga bin me?im mi bush.}
\]

'That European made me confused.'

It may, however, be used as an adjective as is

\[
\text{Imin blandim munanga} \quad \text{tri.}
\]

'He planted a European (i.e. non-native) tree.'

The distinction between adjectives and adverbs, also, is not clear cut. For example, kwikbala may be used as an adjective as in

\[
\text{In gadim kwikbala brambi.}
\]

'He has a fast wild horse.'

or \[
\text{Bia im brambi kwikbala.}
\]

'His wild horse is quick.'

It may also be used as an adverb as in

\[
\text{In brambi bin ran kwikbala.}
\]

'His wild horse ran quickly.'

Adjectives have two major functions. The first of these is modifying a noun in a noun phrase. This is referred to as the attributive function.
Bigbala aligerra jidanbat jeya.
'A big crocodile lives there.'

Imin spirrim lilwan wolabi.
'He speared a little wallaby.'

The second function of adjectives is as a complement or comment in a non-verbal clause. (See Chapter 7 on simple sentences.) This is referred to as the predicative function.

Aligerra bigbala.
'The crocodile is big.'

Wolabi imin lilwan.
'The wallaby was little.'

Adjectives may be intensified in several ways. Most common is reduplication where the whole of the adjective is reduplicated.

Im shabalashabala wadi.
'It's a very sharp stick.'

as compared with

Im shabala wadi.
'It's a sharp stick.'

In some cases, however, the adjective may be only partially reduplicated.

Beibi lililwan.
'The baby is very small.'

as compared with

Beibi lilwan.
'The baby is small.'

Intensity, with a stronger sense of emphasis, can be indicated by modifying the adjective with an adverb such as brabli.

Brabli gudbala daga, tharran.
'Very good food, that.'

A few adjectives carry an inherent sense of intensity.

Imin gjish bigiswan bifibiji.
'He caught a very big fish.'
Though the form of these Creole intensive adjectives is derived from the English '-est', they do not function in a comparative-superlative manner as does the English '-est'. In other words, Digiwan means 'very big', not 'biggest'.

4.4 THE NOUN PHRASE

Noun phrases can be classified into two groups. The basic noun phrase consists of a noun modified by preceding adjectives and determiners. The complex noun phrase is a basic noun phrase with post-modifiers, that is modifiers that follow the noun; or with compounding of the phrase; or elements within the phrase.

4.4.1 The Basic Noun Phrase

The noun phrase, in its basic form, consists of a noun modified by a preceding adjective.

Adjective + Noun

\textit{lilbala gel}

'little girl'

As was discussed in the previous section, an adjective need not occur with the nominalizer suffix.

\textit{lil buddlawa}

'small flower'

The adjective may also occur in a reduplicated form to indicate intensity.

\textit{shabalashabal} \textit{wadi}

'very sharp stick'

The adjective may also occur with an adverbial modifier.

\textit{brabli bigbala fish}

'very fat fish'

The noun of a noun phrase is not restricted to being modified by only one adjective. Several may occur.

\textit{longwan shabalashabal} \textit{waya}

'long very sharp fishing spear'
"bigbala  budibala  redbala  bol  
'big    pretty   red    ball'

Though noun phrases with more than two adjectives do occur, they occur relatively infrequently.

In addition to being modified by an adjective, the noun head can also be modified by what is called a determiner. Determiners are, for the most part, pronouns. These precede any adjective modifiers that may occur in the noun phrase.

Determiner + Adjective + Noun

yu  bigbala  wohla  (possessive pronoun)
'your    big    fishing line'

tharran  longum  munanga  (demonstrative pronoun)
'that    tall    European'

wijan  gubalwam  modiga  (interrogative pronoun)
'which    rubbish    car'

sambala  kukwan  yaribun  (indefinite pronoun)
'some    ripe    water lily seeds'

Creole does not have any articles as does English (a, an, the). There is one determiner, however, that functions somewhat like an article. Wambala, though most often used as the number 'one', is not infrequently used in the sense of 'a certain'.

Wambala  men  bin  godan.
in everyday conversation would most likely mean

'One    man    went.'

while in a story context, it could mean

'A certain    man    went.'

In addition to determiners and adjectives, there are two small groups of words that occur in restricted positions in the noun phrase. The first of these is called predeterminers because they precede any determiners that may occur in the noun phrase. Predeterminers include words like ola, ola, olabat 'all' and haf 'half'.

Predeterminer + Determiner + Adjective + Noun

ola  jadlot  yangbala  boi
'all    those    young    boys.'
The second group of restricted words is called postdeterminers because they follow any determiners that may occur. They also precede any adjectives that may occur. Postdeterminers include the numbers and words such as last and first.

Determiner + Postdeterminer + Adjective + Noun

your four little dogs

that last new song

In a given context the noun can be deleted from the noun phrase. In the sentence

Imin kilim bigbala karrakkarrak.
'He killed a big Coromorant.'

the noun karrakkarrak in the noun phrase bigbala karrakkarrak could be deleted so as to give

Imin kilim bigbala.
'He killed a big (Cormorant).'

This deletion can occur only when the preceding modifier can stand alone. If the preceding modifier is an adjective, in most cases it must occur with a nominalizer suffix (-bala, -wan, -baga) in order for the noun to be deleted.

*Imin kilim big.
'He killed a big (Cormorant).'

cannot occur.

If the preceding modifier is a determiner (or predeterminer or postdeterminer), the noun can be deleted only if the determiner can stand independently.

Imin kilim dijan dakdak.
'He killed this duck.

can be

Imin kilim dijan.
but *imin dagat yundubala dakdak.

*He ate your ducks.*

cannot be

*Imin dagat yundubala.*

4.4.2 The Complex Noun Phrase

As stated earlier, the complex noun phrase is a basic noun phrase with postmodifiers. These postmodifiers include the reciprocal pronoun *gija*, emphatic particle *na*, locative adverbs, prepositional phrases, and embedded sentences. These are exemplified below but not given detailed consideration.

**Reciprocal Pronoun**

*Jadon dubala baba gija*

'Those two are sisters to each other.'

**Emphatic Particle**

*Dijen olmen na bin dalimbat mi.*

'This man told me.'

**Locative Adverb**

*Olabat dakdak jeya bla yu.*

'All of the ducks there are for you.'

*Wambala olgamen thanvet bin gibit mi.*

'A woman there gave it (to) me.'

**Blanga Prepositional Phrase**

*Dog blanga dadi bin binij.*

'A dog of Father's died.'

The possessive prepositional phrase may precede the noun in a permuted construction.

*Blanga dadi dog bin binij.*

**Langa Prepositional Phrase**

*Wambala yangboi langa Ropa bin duit.*

'A young boy at Roper (i.e. a Roper boy) did it.'
Burrum Prepositional Phrase

Blandibala burrun Bamyili bin kaman.
'Lots of people from Bamyili (i.e. Bamyilites) came.'

Gadim Prepositional Phrase

Main andi gadim modiga andi kaman.
'My auntie with a car is coming.'

The negative gadim phrase

Main andi nomo gadim modiga andi kaman.
'My auntie without a car is coming.'

Embedded Sentence

Wambala olmen veya imin wek langa Elsi
'A certain man who worked at Elsey Station

bin dalim m.
told me.'

Noun phrases may be made into complex phrases by compounding. Compounding may be external with two or more noun phrases joined by a conjunction.

Melabat dadi bin kaman.
'Our father came.'

and Rubala lombarra bin kaman.
'Your father-in-law came.'

could be combined with a compound subject:

Melabat dadi en yubala lombarra bin kaman.
'Our father and your father-in-law came.'

Compounding may also be internal to the phrase with two or more modifiers being joined.

ola greitron en blekron hoete
'All the grey and black horses'

But note also the construction

wambala yelablekron ston
'One yellow and black stone'
Compounding of pronouns requires special note. With the dual exclusive set of personal pronouns, the person or persons included in the pronoun reference other than the speaker may be specified. This leads to constructions such as

mindubala bonji
'my brother-in-law and I'

compared with mi dûbala bonji
'my two brothers-in-law'

yundu bala ölgamen
'you two women'

compared with yu dûbala ölgamen
'your two women'

Jali dûbala Maikut
'Charlie and Michael'

compared with Jali en dûbala Maikut
'Charlie and two Michaels'

main dadi dûbala mami
'my father and mother'

compared with main dadi en dûbala mami
'my father and two mothers'

The sentence
Dubala kristin kapul la Injai.
does not mean
'Two Christian couples are at Hodgson River.'
but rather
'Two Christians, a couple, are at Hodgson River.'
The possessive/relationship constructions may be built up.
Im jeya longa mi dadi braja kemp.
'He is there at my father's brother's camp.'
BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR CHAPTER 4


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