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The Arawak Language of Guiana

This description of the Arawak language, once spoken widely across the Caribbean area but now restricted to some of the native peoples of Guyana, French Guiana and Suriname, was first published in 1928. C.H. de Goeje was a Dutch submariner whose work had taken him to the then Dutch colony of Suriname; on his resignation from the Dutch navy he continued to investigate its peoples and their languages, and was the recipient of a special Chair in languages and cultural anthropology at the University of Leiden. The book provides long vocabulary lists and a systematic exploration of grammar and phonetics; it also discusses the origin of the language and its differentiation from the other Carib languages of the region. An appendix gives anthropological data, including transcriptions and translations of Arawak myths.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-00768-9 - The Arawak Language of Guiana
C. H. de Goeje
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THE ARAWAK LANGUAGE OF GUIANA

BY

C. H. DE GOEJE

VERHANDELINGEN DER KONINKLIJKE AKADEMIE
VAN WETENSCHAPPEN TE AMSTERDAM
AFDEELING LETTERKUNDE
NIEUWE REEKS, DEEL XXVIII, N^o. 2

UITGAVE VAN DE KONINKLIJKE AKADEMIE
VAN WETENSCHAPPEN TE AMSTERDAM 1928

PREFACE

The Arawak or Arowak ¹⁾, whose language is dealt with in this work, inhabit the coastal districts of Surinam and British Guiana; they formerly lived still further East, even as far as the mouth of the Orinoco and Trinidad.

Many vocabularies and a good deal of grammatical information have been published from Arawak, but very few sentences of the language usually spoken and no texts at all of myths etc.; this paucity, however, is compensated for to a large extent by excellent translations from parts of the bible by the Moravian missionaries, and the English missionary Mr. Brett. The grammatical system, strictly adhered to in these bible-texts cannot possibly have been derived from the existing grammars (List of Litterature 5c, 18, 23b), and must therefore be attributed to the cooperation of an Arawak who assisted in the translation or in the correction of it. We may then consider them as being genuine Arawak (especially Brett's texts; those of Schultz contain a freer translation, which is not so easy to follow).

In this work Brett's texts (11. 5a, b) have been used in the first place, and an endeavour has been made, to discuss all the particularities of the language as found in those texts.

In the second place Schultz's texts have been examined, and all that deviates from Brett, or is not found in Brett, has been discussed here.

Of the remaining materials only such forms have been brought in, which appeared of sufficient interest.

Finally the Arawak language has been compared with the other languages of the Arawak-Maipure (A. M.) ²⁾ linguistic family.

The material is not sufficient for any deep investigation concerning pronunciation, pitch, stress and accompanying gesture; the vocabularies are not complete; it is not known whether the colloquial language and the

¹⁾ For the different ways of spelling, see List of Litterature 27; the spelling "Arawak" is at present most in use, and is therefore adopted in this work.

These people call themselves *loko*, plur. *loko-no* (see § 164 a ¹⁾). The name "Arawak" is only used by other tribes (Kaliña: *Aruwākō*, *Arowāka*, Warau: *Aruwākū*) and by the creole population of Guiana. If this word were originally Arawak, then it might be derived from *arōa*, jaguar, or *orōa*, to perform the functions of the medicine-man: the translation "flour-eaters" (v. Martius, II. 15. I. 689: *haru*, starch, *eke*, to eat) seems to be rather far-fetched.

²⁾ "Maipure" (Lucien Adam), "Nu-Aruak" (von den Steinen), "Arawak" (Brinton, Rivet).

language of myths and magic formulas deviate from the language of the bible translations; etc., etc. Therefore this work cannot claim to be an exhaustive treatise on the language.

But Arawak is so singularly transparent, that notwithstanding this incompleteness, several phenomena may be traced back to their origin. This study may therefore perhaps be of some use to linguists in general, and to those who feel interested in the "pre-logical and mystic mentality" of primitive peoples (Lévy-Bruhl, II. 67).

Those readers who have very little time at their disposal, might after reading Chapters I and II, at once proceed to Chapters XVIII—XX.

An Alphabetical Index has been added to facilitate the reading of the Arawak texts.

The English bible-texts have been taken from: The Holy Bible (British and Foreign Bible Society), Oxford, 1840. — Mr. J. Y. Steward of the Berlitz School, The Hague, assisted in the translation of the manuscript into English.

C. H. DE GOEJE.

The Hague. Oct. 1924—Sept. 1927

After the completion of this work, the author spent two weeks in Surinam, and was enabled to clear up several doubtful points. The results of these investigations are included in this volume; a few myths in Arawak, and miscellaneous information, have been added to the Appendix.

I have to thank captain C. C. Käyser, in command of Hr. Ms. Hertog Hendrik (who is himself an explorer), for the opportunity of visiting this country, and the Roman Catholic mission in Surinam for its help in bringing me together with two Arawaks, and for its kind hospitality.

d. G.

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C. H. de Goeje

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Ant.	Anthropos, Wien.
BLA	Bibliothèque Linguistique Américaine, Paris.
JGS	Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London.
JSA	Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris, Paris.
P	De Periskoop, Paramaribo.
WIG	De West-Indische Gids, 's-Gravenhage.
ZfE	Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, Berlin.

Abbreviations used in this work: B., or nihil, Brett, 5; v. C., van Coll, 7; D, Dance, 8; G., de Goeje (collected in Surinam); Hi., Hilhouse, 12; Pen., Penard, 17, 69; Q., Quandt, 18; R., Roth, 19; S., Schultz, 22; Sc., Schomburgk, 21; Sm., Schumann, 23; I. Th., Im Thurn, 25.

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RULES FOR PRONUNCIATION AND ABBREVIATIONS

Brett: *a*, as in father, *e* as in prey, *i*, as in ravine, *o*, as in go, *u*, as oo in too, *ai*, as *i* in mile, *au*, as ow in how, *ci*, as che in cheer, *si*, as she.

S., Sm. and Q. very probably have used the German spelling; *j* thus equals the sound of the *y* of B. Sm. gives in his grammar the meaning of the diacritical signs, but it is not certain whether S. has used them in the same way.

v. C. 7a, b, c and Pen. 17a have used the Dutch spelling; thus *j* ~ B. *y*, *oe* ~ B. *u*, *u* ~ German *ü*, *ie* as *ea* in ear.

G. and Pen. 17b, c, d, 69: *ĩ*, as in hill, *ü*, German *ü*, *u*, German *u*, *ã*, as *a* in walk, *õ*, between French *eu* and mute *e*, *ö*, French *eu*, *e*, French *é*, *ě*, as *ea* in heaven, *ę*, as *e* in written, *ç*, Dutch *ch*, Spanish *j* or *x*, *z*, as *ng* in Dutch or German *engel* (angel) *č*, as *ch* in cheer, *š*, as *sh* in she, *ž*, as *j* in joy, *ñ*, Spanish *ñ*, *λ*, *ρ*, between *l* and *r*, *ι*, most closely resembling *l*, *ρ* most closely resembling *r*. ' , accent, -, long, (, indistinctly articulated.

Sagot and v. C. 7e have used the French spelling; thus *ou* ~ B. *u*, *u* ~ German *ü*.

In this work the following abbreviations and signs are used:

Gen. = Genesis	L. = S. Luke
Mt. = S. Matthew	J. = S. John
Mk. = S. Mark	Acts = The Acts of the Apostles.:

- separates the parts of compounds (only used for the purpose of elucidation); where B. uses this sign, it has been retained, for instance in *l'oforra-kita*, although elsewhere B. spells *loforrakitin*, *lofitikita*;

() indicates: abusively not written in one word, for instance *abaptize da* (which ought to be *abaptizeda*): *a-baptize()da*;

| indicates: written in one word, although according to B.'s usual way of spelling, it ought not to be written in one word.

In the English text, a word or a sentence between () means, that the English text does not contain this word or this sentence, but the Arawak text does contain it; a word or a sentence between [] means that the English text contains this word or this sentence, but the Arawak text (or the part that is quoted) does not.

The ' 's used by B., especially with the pronominal prefixes, have been left out, because their application is not systematic (for instance *b'usweardoan*, thine oaths, *bu'sweardoa fa*, thou shalt swear), or even faulty (for instance *mibilokotu b'akada abu*, with thongs; *mibilokotu* = narrow, *baka* = oxen. (*e*)*da* = hide, *abu* = with). See for the system of hyphens adopted in this work for separating a prefix, § 17.

* indicates a reconstructed word.