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Palenquero is a Caribbean Spanish-based Creole spoken in San Basilio de Palenque (Colombia), that has known increasing documentation in the last forty years; although much descriptive work has been accomplished (Friedemann & Patiño 1983, Schwegler 1998) many aspects of its grammar haven’t still been covered by a detailed study, one of which is surely the copula system.

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the various copulas present in Palenquero and to account for their syntactic and semantic distribution and compatibility with different kinds of stative predicates. Our assumptions are formulated by consulting primary data collected through elicitation from native speakers and secondary data from the Moñino-Maglia (2015) corpus and descriptive literature.

We support the hypothesis (mentioned in Gutierrez Maté 2017) that Palenquero has a split copula system, between adjectival and nominal predicates.

We show that the oppositional couple *tá/sé* works with adjectival predicates, and, it has already been noticed by F&P (1983), coincides with the distribution of the Spanish *estar/ser*, being motivated semantically: in fact, *tá* is used with stage-level adjectival predicates and with locative predicates, while *sé* is used with individual-level adjectival predicates.

On the other hand, *sendá* (from the Spanish *sentar(se)* ‘to sit’) is preferred before nominal predicates, and it is generally used in *predicational* sentences, while *(s)é* occurs mainly in *specificational* and *equative* copular clauses (Mikkelsen 2005).

	Subject	Cop.	Predicate	
Adjectival		tá	Stage-level	
		sé	Individual-level	
Nominal	Referential	sendá	Non-referential	Predicational
	Non-Referential	sé	Referential	Specificational
	Referential	sé	Referential	Equative

On these grounds, it is worth to further enquire other points of theoretical and descriptive order:

- The distribution of *sé* and *sendá* with nominal predicates, since, although as mentioned, they account for a grammatical opposition, in some cases they may exhibit substantial overlapping.
- The selection of copula forms according to the entity-order (Lyons 1977) encoded by the sentential subject (like in locative clauses in 1).
- At a theoretical level, the connection between an individual-level adjectival predicate and a referential nominal predicate, as they select the same copula in the split system.

- (1)
- a. *Ma mesa a tà i sala.* (own collected data)
 DEF. table TAM COP. in living-room.
 ‘The table is in the living room’.
 (I order entity; Lyons1977)
 - b. *Oriki a sendá ndi plasa.* (II order entity; Lyons 1977)
 Party TAM COP. in square.
 ‘The party is in the square’.

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