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Sara Lu'a (Palu'e) Audio Archive



Faces of Palu'e oral traditions and sources. From top left to bottom right: lakimosa Lena Lue about to demonstrate a child's play, Village chief Aloysius K., lakimosa Bangu telling origin tales, 5th grade pupil telling a fable (Tomu school), lakimosa Ngaji, Lengu Nande listening to her own tale, W. Wera listening to himself, Tole Dhu'ane hearing his own voice, Dewi & Intan with siblings after being recorded, pupils attentively listening in Guru Rin's (bv desk) class (grade 5 and 6. Tuanggeo/Lei

Language: ISO-639 code ple. Palu'e. Native name Sara Lu'a. Classification: Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, Bima-Lembata or North-Central-Western Flores languages.

Sara Lu'a, spoken only on the small island Palu'e (c. 10 000 inhabitants) off the Flores north coast and in the homes of exile communities, is not a critically endangered language, but there is evidence of language shift and attrition. It is still possible to collect narratives that are entirely, or mostly, composed in the local language. The GBS grant supported a sub-project within a larger documentation effort (including the creation of a *Sara-Lu'a*-Indonesian dictionary and Sara Lu'a botany/medicine) begun in late 2013. The most important part of the documentation is the creation of an audio archive that prioritises cultural content, which during the GBS-funded field trip meant recordings of different types of folk tales. In doing so I am confident that the material will be useful and interesting for both community members, also as 'local content curriculum', and researchers from various disciplines. The annotated and translated audio recordings includes several genres, also song and ritual speech – polyphony is an aim – will be archived both locally and in a university based immaterial archive with online access for the community and researchers.

The funding was used for fieldwork, recording and processing audio files for archiving in-field. I collaborate with the speech community, particularly through an assistant/partner, Hilarius Ratu, who had proven an interest in documenting his culture but lacked the tools. He is computer-able, and has learned basic ELAN (TLA, MPI, Nijmegen), which we use as annotation tool. The work consisted mostly of identifying sources and convincing them of the importance that they and their tales are recorded. We still search for new sources outside of the kampongs that we live in, and it can be time consuming. In this set of recordings we began with elders in Ratu's home village Ndeo: Blasius Sosu (85 yrs, caretaker of the buffalo used in the culture's most important ritual), Wilhelminus Wera (72 yrs, master singer of the traditional corpus of songs, which and whom we intend to record in the near future, and Punga Dhu'ane. More about the sources and activities, but not all, during the fieldwork:

Lakimosa, traditional priest-leader, who holds the office of sacrificing the water buffalo (*Pati Karapau*), Ngaji, of the traditional domain Keli that I stay in was recorded in a bamboo hut on a desolate hill hamlet with four inhabitants, singing the water buffalo ritual (bringing buffalo, Pua Karapau), and the ritual language used before and during this joyous ritual. This is a valuable contribution for which I am grateful. *Lakimosa* Bangu of Woto kindly contributed origin stories and a couple of historical/ancestor narratives already on my first visit to Woto. Magdalena Lue, also *lakimosa* of Keli, told funny fables together with some grandchildren in front of her house in kampong Lei. Two children told fables too, which was fun and encouraging because we want many different voices in the archive.

We had planned to record the biggest folk tale about Pio with Aloysius Kindepima, village chief of Lidi, but he was busy reporting last year's budget and we could not find the opportunity for it yet. We want to do it really good, preferably in a studio-like condition. We recorded two other shorter tales with Aloysius. A slight disturbance was that Ratu's laptop showed signs of aging and is not optimal for work on audio anymore; his work is slightly slowed down because of that (GBS sponsors?). The project was also conducted during the worst months of the year 'wula waja' (West winds) and rainy season. Because of the weather we could not pass the ocean when we wanted to, and we could not charge our equipment some nights because the petrol generators are not on in nights with rain and lightning. Another cause of delay was Ratu's marriage with a woman from another island. It had to be done during Jan-Feb and the adat/dowry deliberations and the wedding brought him and his family to Kupang, Timor, twice, but he, and I too, always brought audio files to work on. I stayed two weeks longer in Palu'e/Maumere than planned due to the above. So the task of recording was mostly mine. When Ratu returned from his marriage I was able to share with Him a set of perhaps the most interesting recordings so far.

One day in December, Maria Methi, who has helped with identification of medicinal plants and has contributed a few tales, suddenly got the idea to ask a great grandmother living two houses away if she could tell tales. Lengu Nande (born c. 1915-1917), who is almost deaf and does not have any teeth, an almost a century old woman who still works in her plantation up in the hills, could tell like no other, in spite of her having not told tales for along time. During the first session the following day, Lengu

nicely dressed in batik, I recorded ten tales, in fluent, swift language without any mixing with Indonesian words. Five weeks later I returned and recorded another ten tales and narratives (although she had said she had told all she knew the first time). Lengu Nandene's tales, and impressive narration (although her voice is not the clearest), is a most valuable contribution to the archive, and we wish to publish some of these fantastic tales in a book in the future.

Although I have made an effort at communicating my intentions, the community cannot always provide sources, partly because they do not know; they have to ask around. In early February we tried another approach to collect tales, through the local schools, classes 5 and 6: 'Mendongeng Palu'e' (BI. "Fairy telling Palu'e"). The teachers, who keep the written tales for record (I photograph them), were positive and managed to get the children to look for sources and write down the tales and sources' names, and memorize if possible, in a week. Then the children presented the tales in class, mostly reading from their notes, before the teacher, I, and the other children. After reading the pupil received a notebook after shaking hands. The experiment, done in two schools so far, was positive, an exercise in local language skills, and produced results (60 some tales, some the nearly the same) that can come to use for our archive too, although most of the tales were funny fables as expected. Recordings, and perhaps a contest, of children who are able to memorize and tell tales, are planned. Exercises like this can help play a role in revitalization and it will create a local resource of tales and creative language once the other four schools do it too, and I share the photographed notes in a flash disc. The audio archive itself will be shared with a local school.

The grant of 1.384 Euros was spent as planned with few adjustments; time and use of transports was spent to look for and try out microphones, and I had to settle for a good combination of AT microphones and accessories instead of the planned Rode microphone (slightly cheaper and happy with results), expenses for two weeks longer stay in field, 16Gb memory cards instead of 32/64 Gb, expenses for rent of room in Maumere and not for hotel, while local transports cost more. Meanwhile work within the larger frame of documentation is on-going. My assistant Ratu is still doing work in Maumere and on Palu'e and intends to record that story with, now former, village chief Aloysius Kinde in his choice of location. The planned budget for the planned time period of 1 Dec -14 to 31 Jan -15 (actual: 27 Nov – 13 Feb, with mic search prior) was (Euros in brackets):

- 1) 2 (Res. and ass.) x 2 (mon) x 2.250.000 (min. wage for ass.): 9.000.000 (586)
- 2) Rode NT3 external microphone w. windshield: 3.250.000 (212)
- 3) return trip Jakarta – Maumere: 2.500.000 (163)
- 4) sources' fees and transports: 2.000.000 (131)
- 5) local transport and four nights in hotel: 3.500.000 (228)
- 6) memory card extreme/extreme pro 32/64 GB 1.000.000 (65)

I and Hilarius Ratu express our sincerest gratitude to GBS for proving support at a time when the project was out of funding. Thanks to it, we are on track, and we will continue the documentation project, and also work on products from it, although, for me and for the time being, from afar. The recording equipment purchased is still being used (March -15) and can be donated in the near future (-16?) to my official Indonesian partner, the Association for Oral Traditions (ATL, Jakarta). We also thank all the sources mentioned above, and T. Tanga, Bapak Mumbu, Paulina Punga, Lanu, Bhaku, P. Tanga, all the teachers (especially Guru Rin, M. Phaku and P. Woni who made the readings happen so quickly) and the children who collected stories and fables, and all those who have helped us in any way, I thank Ratu for being dedicated to the project also after the GBS funded him and in waiting for new supplies. Finally I thank the people who have kindly hosted and fed me on Palu'e; Bapak Wongga and Luthe, Ebbe (Pidhu) and Eri.

Stefan Danerek is from Sweden where he received a PhD degree in Indonesian in 2007 with a dissertation on modern Indonesian literature (Lund University: *Tjerita and Novel. Literary Discourse in Post New Order Indonesia*). His interests are Indonesian/Malay language and literature, Austronesian languages generally, and of the Lesser Sundas particularly. He has also translated Indonesian short stories, poetry and a novel into Swedish.