

Ngiru huru – a genre of healing and ethnobotany

Stefan Danerek Palu'e Audio Collection

Kaipuleohone Ethnographic Archive

<https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/38830>

Item SD1-000 (PDF) is a guide to the collection.

SD1-136 - SD1-295 Huru/ngiru huru. A genre of healing. Ethnobotany

Stipend: Hilarius Ratu. Grant sum 1.100 EUR

Recordings by Hilarius Ratu, Stefan Danerek, Pidhu Sophune, Maria Methi

Transcripts and translations (ELAN): Stefan Danerek (Ed.) and Hilarius Ratu



Palu'e sources. From top left to bottom right: Sia Dongge, kampung Mata mere, applying the masticated mixture around the ears of S. Danerek. Anastasia Roja, kampung Wolondopho, recorded explaining *huru hola* ("huru snake", severe stomach pain). Kula Warene, kampung Mata mere, after recording. Lunda, kampung Sali, posing next to *wuwu* fish traps after recording.

Language: ISO-639 code ple. Palu'e. Native name *Sara Lu'a*. Classification: Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian, Bima-Lembata (Lewis, Simons, and Fennig 2016).

Sara Lu'a is an endangered Austronesian language in the line of Central-Western Flores languages (Arka et al 2007, Fox 1998: 3-5). It is spoken only on Palu'e Island and in the homes of exile communities. Currently over 10,000 people reside on the island, and a few thousand more are registered as inhabitants but reside in Malaysia and elsewhere. There is evidence of language shift and attrition, primarily because of migration for work and the increasing use of the national language (Indonesian). Families usually speak *Sara Lu'a* at home and it is still the main language on the island, but educated locals consider that *Sara Lu'a* is threatened by extinction. It is still possible to collect narratives that are entirely, or mostly, composed in the local language. Specific language domains and speak genres are directly threatened because of cultural shifts towards the modern culture, including the healing genre *ngiru huru* covered in this subproject.

The GBS grant supported a sub-project within a larger language and oral traditions documentation effort begun in late 2013. The most important part of the documentation is the creation of an audio archive that prioritises cultural content and language diversity through many different speakers. In this way the material will be useful and interesting for both community members, also as 'local content curriculum', and researchers from various disciplines. The annotated audio recordings comprise several genres and are archived with Kaipuleohone Ethnographic Archive, Univ. HI. Currently the collection consists of 296 items.

For basic information on Palu'e society, see M. Vischer's article entry 'Palu'e' in (ed.) P.

Hockings. 1993. *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*. About the sub-grouping of *Sara Lu'a* and the languages of Flores, see for instance R. Blust (2009), 'The position of the languages of eastern Indonesia: a reply to Donohue and Grimes', *OL* 48: 36-77, and (2013), *The Austronesian Languages*.

The initial aim was the creation of an annotated set of high quality audio recordings (wav) of at least 20 individual voices narrating at least 40 applications belonging to the specific branch of local healing and ethnobotany that we refer to as *ngiru huru*. Narratives range in length from less than a minute to over 10 minutes and are supplemented by elicitation/interview, all in *Sara Lu'a*) and photography, and a few video clips. The recordings were processed in

Audacity and annotated in ELAN with (in order of priority/importance) 1) metadata (English) 2) *Sara Lu'a* 3) Indonesian.

The main purpose of the documentation was to document the specific medicinal branch *ngiru huru*, that, in summary, uses chewed areca nut and piper betle (fruit not leaf), with lime powder, as both medicine and medium together with other plants that are chewed simultaneously. This documentation enables us to define this specific healing and analyse it further. Another purpose is that of language documentation, where the recordings function as samples of the island's mutually intelligible dialects and cover an important domain of the language.

Ngiru huru knowledge has been obtained directly from practitioners, community members or village shamans who explained themselves (in one speaker narratives, supported by interviewing) and occasionally showed and demonstrated their materials and healing. There are dozens of *huru* (symptom, illness), named 'huru x', where the x can be a plant name or a symptom. *Huru* also refers to a kind of curse that is used to deter theft from plantations, marked by a sign, the thief falls ill with a certain *huru* if a certain *huru* has been applied. So *huru* refers to the cure as well, which is always identified with a certain individual in the village who has inherited the capacity and knowledge to cure that particular symptom/illness, and who is, often but far from exclusively, also the person who has put a curse in his/her plantation. It is the latter phenomenon that complicates analysis, but at the same time it makes more interesting, to analyse qualitatively.

Practitioners are both men and women, but more women than men, women also chew more betel generally. Practitioners are seldom young because the capacity to cure is as a rule passed on to a descendant when one reaches old age. How many *huru* there are has been a question: We have recorded 80 practitioners. 167 *huru* (12 non-chew. 7%), 3 of 155 (2%) chewed cures do not use areca nut and piper betle. Several *huru* appear with more than one practitioner, but are as a rule more or less different, in both cure and curse-prohibition. The 12 non-chewed *huru* may be defined separately. Work will be done on that by the collection editor.

The project was initially planned to run from c. 1 Dec. 2015 to 31 Jan 2016. It was delayed and prolonged to some extent. Recordings of *huru/ngiru huru* were mostly done from March 2015 until November 2015. The editor and assistants, particularly Pidhu Sophune, and Maria

Methi, have continued to supplement the *huru* collection up until March 2017. Hilarius Ratu was himself particularly active in the field March 2015 and from then on, until March 2016 with annotation work in ELAN.

Hilarius Ratu fell ill with a mysterious disease during the summer/dry season 2016. Later, he passed away with symptoms of meningitis, unconfirmed, 8 Dec 2016. Ratu's sudden death means a great loss for the documentation and revitalisation of *Sara Lu'a*, because he was the only intellectual who was committed to the project, and he had great plans. Ratu was a very sympathetic man, liked and missed by many, grieved by thousands.

The budget was used as planned, with only minor alterations, but the Editor (SD) does not have the exact details.

Budget

Indonesian Rupiah (IDR), approx.

2 persons 2 months (full) + 1 person 2 months (half) x 2.250.000 (min. monthly wage):
11.250.000 (divided between Ratu and assistants)

Transportation: 1.500.000

Sources "tips" (symbolical value, not same as fees): 1.500.000

Expenses for archiving (also responsibility of Dr. S. Danerek): 1.000.000

one 1TB hard disc: 800.000

one 16 GB high quality memory card: 500.000

Tot. Sum: 16.550.000 IDR > 1.100 EUR (sum grant)

Other sources cited:

ELAN/Sloetjes, H., & Wittenburg, P. 2008. Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, The Language Archive, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. <<http://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan>>

Fox, J.J. 1998. The Linguistic Context of Florenese Culture. *Antropologi Indonesia* 56: 1-11.

Lewis, Simons, and Fennig. 2016. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 19th edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. <<http://www.ethnologue.com>>

Stefan Danerek, also on behalf of Hilarius Ratu, express our sincerest gratitude to GBS for the grant that gave support at a time when the project was out of funding. We thank our Indonesian partner, the Association for Oral Traditions (ATL, Jakarta), and the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia (RISTEKDIKTI) who granted the research permit. Special thanks to our assistants Maria Methi (Puine) and Pidhu Sophune (Ebbe). We also thank all our sources, too many to be named. Stefan Danerek expresses his sincere gratitude to Ratu for his dedication and friendship (RIP). We thank our families and hosts on Palu'e: Mama Lue Une, Lunda Roja, Wongga Luthe, and Ratu's wife Delz Slokain.

Stefan Danerek, Dr. 1 Aug. 2017

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Hilarius Ratu, born 1984, is from the village Ndeo, Palu'e and Maumere, Flores, where he went to high school and took a degree in computer engineering. He was Stefan's first contact with the Palu'e, online. They finally met in early 2014, and Ratu (or Hila as he also was called) became Stefan's main assistant from June 2014 and on.

Pictures below: 1. Ratu on a boat trip to Riung in 2014; 2. Ratu exhibits an old textile, kampung Lei, Oct. 2017; 3. Ratu working on annotations in his home in Maumere, Sept. 2014.





