Words and Expressions: Notes on Parallelism in Leti

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The islands in the extreme southwest of the Indonesian province of Maluku constitute a string that traditionally belongs to a region called Nohpaikra // Raipiatatra ‘Guided Islands and Conducted Lands’. Parallelism is a well-attested phenomenon in East Indonesian languages. Whereas parallelism seems to be confined to ritual speech in the languages of the Timor area to the west, it appears to involve the entire language (both lexically and grammatically) in the Southwest Maluku. This study offers preliminary insights into the structure and function of parallelism in lirmarna ‘royal speech’ and lirasniara ‘sung speech’ by analyzing text samples from a Leti (Moa) myth, prayers (from Riedel 1886), and a few songs.

1. Introduction

The many publications by James J. Fox on ritual languages in East Indonesia have made lexical parallelism—the pairing of words—one of the best known features of the languages in the region of Timor. While many data are available on parallelism in Nusa Tenggara Timur, less is known about this phenomenon in the languages directly east of Timor. This study presents results of ongoing research on parallelism in Western Leti, a Central Malayo-Polynesian language spoken on the island of Leti off the easternmost tip of Timor, in Southwest Maluku.¹

Western Leti (hereafter simply Leti), is spoken by approximately 4,600 people who mainly live in the domains of Tutukei, Tomra, and

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Nuwewang on the West Side (Wielwiarta), a strip of land located between Cape Tutukei to the north and Cape Nuwewang to the southwest. Leti speakers distinguish two languages in this area: *lirleti* ‘Leti language’, the language brought to Leti by the so-called “boat owner” clans (*oraspou*), and *lirnusa* ‘land-language’, which represents the language of the “aboriginal” clans, such as Aalleti (Tutukei) and Peri-Muaniaana (Tomra), who were already there when the “boat owners” arrived. Two speech styles are distinguished in Leti: (1) *lirmetrialma* ‘inside-reef-language’, a secret speech style for fishing purposes on the islet of Luang, which seems to be absent on Leti, and (2) literary speech, subdivided into spoken speech, called *lirmarna* ‘royal language’, and ‘sung language’, *lirasniara*.

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the form and function of Leti literary language by analyzing a speech by a Tutukeian official, Istifanus Taluta; a Moa text recorded by J. P. B. de Josselin de Jong; and a Tomra prayer from Riedel (1886). For brevity, I will refer to these three texts as Taluta’s speech, the Moa *ttui*, and the Tomra prayer.

### 2. Form and meaning of Leti parallelism

The pairing of lexical items is the main feature of *lirmarna*. This phenomenon was first observed in the Leti language by Rev. Geerlof Heijmering, who represented the Timor division of the Dutch Missionary Society (*Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap*) in Serwaru. He wrote, “Another, to me different, beauty of the language is its diversity of words, with which it can express one and the same thing by alternating words that sound differently” (1846: 41). Although research is still ongoing, some preliminary remarks can be made on the form of these lexical pairings.

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2Batuniau on the East Side and Tutuwaru on the South Side fall within the western dialect group. Traditionally, they are not domains, but “detached properties” of the domain Tutukuei // Sondawa (according to Tutukeian and Luhulelian tradition).

3I found some remnants in Tomra, where an old woman belonging to the “aboriginal” clan of Wurwola spontaneously gave me *lirmetrialma* equivalents of the reef fish that she had caught. For many clans—not only the “boat owners”—*lirnusa* is also a secret speech style (not a separate language) that is used for witchcraft.
2.1 Form: Rules and tendencies

The Leti data show many combinations in which both lexical items mean the same thing. However, a closer look at these specific pairs reveals that only one word in the combination is preferred in Leti daily speech. Its counterpart appears to come from an (extra)insular isolect. A similar phenomenon was attested in (Termanu) Rotinese by Fox (1974), where he speaks of dialects rather than isolects. In the following examples, Lakor refers to isolects spoken on Lakor Island and in Moain (East Moa), while Moa refers to isolects spoken in East Leti (Luhuleli and Laitutun) and on West Moa (Kaiwatu up to at least Pati toward the east). (The fact that the Leti items occur second in the following pairs is accidental.)

- **r-meslima** (Lakor) // **ra-saawa** (Leti) ‘they marry’
- **liola** (Moa) // **puorsa** (Leti) ‘door’
- **usu** (Moa) // **lai** (Leti) ‘(sea)bank’
- **na-riwa** (Moa⁴) // **na-ksau** (Leti) ‘he cherishes’
- **na-doona** (Moa) // **n-takra** ‘he sees’

Some of these pairs contain items that are explicitly identified as exclusive to **lirmarna**. They do not occur in Leti daily speech. In the other dialects I studied, too, they were only attested in **lirmarna**. Starred items among the following examples are confined to **lirmarna**.

- *tirka // lleno* ‘lightning’
- **na-kropna // *na-kreetu** ‘he limps’
- *kaperi // kapansa* ‘ill’
- **-liiru // *-tawu** ‘backside’
- **r-wutu // *r-kesa** ‘they bind’

In these combinations, the starred words are all explained as possible **lirmarna** equivalents of the daily speech items (as in the case of **r-wutu // r-kesa**) and sometimes even as the only possible **lirmarna** equivalent (as in the case of **tirka // lleno**).

In some cases, both items are identified as **lirmarna**. Neither member of the pair occurs independently in daily speech.

⁴Tutukei follows the Moa dialects here, according to de Josselin de Jong (n.d.). The form *na-riwa* means ‘he keeps in his lap’ and *na-ksau* ‘he carries on his back’. In Tomra and Nuwewang, *na-ksau* has replaced *na-riwa* and there is no longer any difference between these two meanings. The same happened in Tutukei, where *na-riwa* has replaced *na-ksau*. 
It seems difficult at this stage to establish definite rules for parallelism. However, closer examination shows that some items appear in other combinations, and always in the same position. In other words, the positioning of the items seem to be lexically fixed. This is shown by -*tawu ‘back’, which always occupies second position.

such fixed combinations seem to imply that lexical items cannot be paired freely. the speaker of *lirmarna must know the positions of the words if he wants to produce acceptable *lirmarna. this does not mean, however, that each item has a lexically defined position. in the following example, the suffix -liiru fills the final slot; in the example above, it occupies the initial position in the pair.

**rules can be detected for those items that also occur in daily speech.** *uera ‘water’, for example, must always be in initial position:

- *uera // watu ‘water // stone’
- *uera // waresra ‘water // provision’
- *uera // tali ‘water // rope’

A combination where ‘water’ and ‘seawater’ (*taski) would be linked as *taski // *uera is not acceptable. It must be *uera // *taski. the word for ‘pig’ (*wawi), on the other hand, must always occupy final position:

- *pipi // wawi ‘goat // pig’
- *siwi // wawi ‘chicken // pig’
- *asu // wawi ‘dog // pig’

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5 *leta and *tani mean ‘village’ and ‘soil’, respectively. the verbs -*dutra and -*lelku are not really understood, but could be interpreted as ‘walling the village’ (cf. *lutru ‘stone wall’), and thus ‘fencing the soil’.

6 compare *uera // *tali ‘watery // ropelike’, meaning ‘bendable’.
Although the arrangement of items seems defined purely on lexical grounds (and as such more or less unplanned), a semantic analysis may provide some hints. It is the task of anthropologists to place the outcome in a cultural framework.

The arrangement of the paired items seems often to reflect antonymic concepts. For instance, items that name small objects or female objects precede those that name nonsmall or male objects, respectively.

**SMALL REFERENT // NONSMALL REFERENT**

- **kokkoi // lalawna**: ‘child // grown-up (lit. ‘big’)
- **loi // spou**: ‘proa // (sailing) boat
- **pua // nura**: ‘betel // coconut
- **wesi // waani**: ‘scull // oar
- **koni // maanu**: ‘grasshopper // bird

**FEMALE REFERENT // MALE REFERENT**

- **puata // muani**: ‘woman // man
- **ina // ama**: ‘mother // father
- **nara // *siali*7**: ‘sister // brother
- **iera // ria8**: ‘sister-in-law // brother-in-law
- **ttei // ddalu**: ‘female animal // male animal

**SEAWARD // LANDWARD**

- **liora // riaa**: ‘seaside // landside
- **ueeta // loka**: ‘estuary // river
- **tutu // lowna**: ‘cape // plains
- **nusa // rai**: ‘island // land (lit. ‘continent’)
- **tiouruna // taniarta**: ‘bintangor-tree stem9 // soil’s border
- **eni // wuura**: ‘(beach) sand // mountain

**HIGH // NOT HIGH**

- **tul-lu // lawan-ne**: ‘his height // his bigness
- **wuwar-nu // nain-ni**: ‘above // under10
- **koam-ne // uaar-ne**: ‘its [a tree’s] crown // its root

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7For female speakers, ela // nara. The daily speech word for siali is ali.
8For female speakers, oii // iera.
9The bintangor is a tree found near the sea and used as a landmark between domains. (See also Jonker 1932:166.)
10Lit. ‘its skull // its underside’, as in lo lianti wuwar-nu ‘above the sky (= on the sky’s skull)’, lo lianti nain-ni ‘under the sky (= on the sky’s underside)’. 
Some nominal sets refer to parts and wholes. Their arrangements seem lexically fixed and as such unpredictable. Reversing the order in one of the sets appeared not to be acceptable for my informants.

wuura // kawru  ‘mountain // slope’
riwta // pepna  ‘fence // garden’
ruma // lewu    ‘house // bench’
liina // raaru   ‘hearth-stone // fireplace’

An observable phenomenon that needs further research is a kind of vowel harmony, especially in verbs. According to this (for the time being hypothetical) rule, lexical items would be arranged according to the quality of the vowel that carries main stress. Items with stressed high vowels precede items with stressed nonhigh vowels and items with stressed front vowels precede those with stressed nonfront vowels, according the following hierarchy: $i < u < e < o < a$. (The phonemic distinction between long and “short” vowels and between mid and mid-low vowels is irrelevant here. For a discussion, see Van Engelenhoven 1995a, or Van der Hulst & Van Engelenhoven 1995 for a generative alternative.)

This is exemplified below by *-toli* ‘to see’. Note that its position in the sets depends on the quality of the stressed vowel in its paired item. (For convenience, stress is indicated by an acute accent.)

\[
\begin{align*}
n-kíli // n-tóli & \quad \text{‘he looks back // he sees’} \\
n-tóli // n-tákra & \quad \text{‘he sees // he looks (at)’} \\
l-léésa // n-tóli & \quad \text{‘he reads // he sees’}
\end{align*}
\]

The verb *-keri* ‘to scratch’ is another case where vowel quality determines relative position in the pair.

\[
\begin{align*}
n-kíkri // n-kéri & \quad \text{‘he saws // he scratches’} \\
n-kéri // n-kói & \quad \text{‘he scratches // he scrapes’} \\
n-kói // n-kártu & \quad \text{‘he scrapes // he scratches’}
\end{align*}
\]

### 2.2 The impact of parallelism on Leti syntax

The formal feature of parallelism, pairing lexical items, is reflected in Leti syntax. ‘And’ conjunctions, or amplifications (Van Engelenhoven 1995a: 209–211), feature the enclitic *na* or *ne* ‘and’, as in (a).
(a) *N-toli asu-ne muani.*
    3sg-see dog-and man
    ‘He sees the dog and the man.’

Items that form lexical pairs, however, are simply juxtaposed, as in (b).

(b) *Puate // muani r-oone iine.*
    woman // man 3pl-eat fish
    ‘The woman and the man eat the fish.’

When the order is reversed, the parallelism is broken, and the enclitic *na* or *ne* is again required.

(c) *Muani-ne puate r-oone iine.*
    man-and woman 3pl-eat fish
    ‘The man and the woman eat the fish.’

‘Or’ conjunctions, or alternations (1995a: 211–213), feature the concatenation (indicated with =) of the adjective *duma* ‘some’ to the first element.

(d) *Uur=duma wawi e’lo sasre.*
    uuru=some pig it.at forest
    ‘An uuru-bird or a pig is in the forest.’

The adjective is paratactic between items that are identified as a lexical pair, for example, *asu // wawi* ‘dog // pig’.

(e) *Asu duma wawi e’lo sasre.*
    dog some pig it.at forest
    ‘A dog or a pig is in the forest.’

When the order is reversed, the construction is no longer a lexical pair and the adjective is concatenated to the first word.

(f) *Waw=duma asu e’lo sasre.*
    pig=some dog it.at forest
    ‘A pig or a dog is in the forest.’

Although these parallelisms are lapsing into disuse among the youngest speakers going to school, they still prevail in the speech of older people. As such, they play a grammatical role in conjunctions.

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11Lack of space forces me not to indicate the indexer suffix in the glosses. For the semantics of this suffix, see Van Engelenhoven 1994, 1995a.
Coordinative constructions refer either to simultaneous or sequential events (Van Engelenhoven 1995a: 245–246). Simultaneous coordination is constructed by simple juxtaposition of the clauses, or by means of *na/ne* ‘and’, whether any of the constituents can be identified as lexical pairs (g) or not (h).

(g) \[ A\text{-}sie\ loi\text{-}(ne)\ n\text{-}sie\ spou. \]
\[ 1\text{sg-make proa(-and)}\ 3\text{sg-make boat} \]
‘I made the proa and he made the boat.’

(h) \[ A\text{-}sie\ loi\text{-}(ne)\ n\text{-}sie\ diembatne. \]
\[ 1\text{sg-make proa(-and)}\ 3\text{sg-make bridge} \]
‘I made the proa and he made the bridge.’

In simultaneous coordination, where the members of lexical pairs occur in reverse order, the connector *na/ne* is obligatory.

(i) \[ N\text{-}sie\ spou\text{-}ne\ a\text{-}sie\loi. \]
\[ 3\text{sg-make boat-and}\ 1\text{sg-make proa} \]
‘He made the boat and I made the proa.’

This latter pattern was explicitly observed in the speech of certain (old) individuals of high esteem in the community of Tutukei. More research is needed to determine whether this is another illustration of the grammatical impact of parallelism or not. For the time being, the influence of parallelism is considered to be a matter of pure stylistics, and not of grammar.

### 2.3 Meaning: Referential extension and reduction

Leti speakers are compelled to place their messages in a spatiotemporal framework, although the language lacks the morphological devices to do so. Instead, it has an elaborate deictic system to specify space, time, and empathy (Van Engelenhoven 1994). Parallelism is equally deictic, in that it locates referents within the timeframes of (local) history. This is exemplified by the variety of names for Leti Island, as shown in the chart below. Location in time also implies social and geographical determination of the referent. This aspect of parallelism will be discussed elsewhere. (See Van Engelenhoven, forthcoming.)
Meanings are also paired to create new designations out of their shared semantic components. (See Ebeling 1978, 1994, for terminology and notation.) For instance, the pairing koni // maanu below can refer to any entity categorizable as |flying| and |animal|, whether it be a grasshopper, bird, or bat. As such, the separate components of the lexical pair are hyponyms of the new meaning. This effect can for the time being be labeled referential extension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEXICAL PAIR</th>
<th>PAIRED MEANINGS</th>
<th>NEW MEANING</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>koni // maanu</td>
<td>‘grasshopper // bird’</td>
<td>‘flying animal’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nusa // rai</td>
<td>‘island // land’</td>
<td>‘archipelago’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pipi // wawi</td>
<td>‘goat // pig’</td>
<td>‘domestic cattle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leti // masa</td>
<td>‘ivory // gold’</td>
<td>‘treasure’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ora // ai</td>
<td>‘bamboo // wood’</td>
<td>‘timber’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opposite effect, which we might call referential reduction, occurs when all semantic components of the paired meanings make up the new meaning. For instance, the new referent ‘fort’ features both |hill| and |stone|. 
LEXICAL PAIR       PAIRED MEANINGS     NEW MEANING
ili // watu        ‘hill // stone’      ‘fort’
puata // muani     ‘woman // man’      ‘sex (gender)’
ruma // lewu       ‘house // bench’     ‘household’
leta // rusnu      ‘village // territory’ ‘domain’
elwa // *puona\(^\text{12}\)  ‘field // nest’     ‘plantation’

3. Functions of Leti parallelism
A look at three sample texts will help elucidate the functions of parallelism in Leti.

3.1 Istifanus Taluta’s speech: Emphasis
Istifanus Taluta was a prominent figure in Dutch–Letinese contacts during the 19th century. As a member of the Prirulu clan in Tutukei, he could claim the title of *pati* (Riedel 1886, Van Engelenhoven 1995a). Not only was he a devoted helper to the Dutch missionaries, he was also the principal (if not the only) intermediary available for the colonial government for all the islands from Leti up to Babar (Van Eijbergen 1864, Neurdenberg 1876).

A closer look on one of his speeches (see Appendix 1) reveals four main paragraphs in the text: an opening (sentences 1–5), a core (sentences 13–16), and a conclusion (sentences 30–36), and a Leti translation of the “Our Father” at the end of the text. These paragraphs are respectively labeled A, B, C, and D on the horizontal axis in Figure 1. The

\[^{12}\text{In daily speech: ppuna.}\]
transitional sentences are labeled ab, bc, and cd. The vertical axis indicates the number of words.

Parallelism is first a manifestation of the speaker’s erudition. This is shown by the high proportion of lexical pairs in paragraph A, the opening. By creating many parallelisms here, the speaker tries to capture the attention of the hearer(s).

The crux of the message—going to church and observing the teachings of the Christian scriptures as explained by the minister—is packed into paragraph B, where about half of the words are paired. Parallelism is used here to emphasize the importance of the message.

A third function can be detected in the transitional sentences. Here, parallelism reflects Taluta’s standing as a leading noble in Leti society.

3.2 The Moa ttui: Historiographic value

One of the two main genres in Leti (and Moa) oral tradition is the ttui, which has a historiographic and explanatory function. It describes the history of a place, a clan, and so forth, but it also provides a framework for the audience to determine their place and role in the world and society (Van Engelenhoven 1995a: 23).

The second text is a ttui (from de Josselin de Jong n.d.: 19–33) from Eastern Moa, an isolec that is genetically close to Leti (Van Engelenhoven 1995b). This is graphed in Figure 2. Again, four paragraphs are distinguished: a prologue (A), the arrival of the main character on East Moa (B), the foundation of Klis (C) and the foundation of Tounwawan (D). Again, the total number of words is indicated on the vertical axis.
Although the title promises a story about the foundation of the domain Tounwawan on East Moa, the bulk of the *ttui* discusses where the founder of the older domain Klis came from (paragraph A). Another major part of the story discusses how Klis was founded (paragraph C). Most lexical pairs occur in paragraph A. As in paragraph A of Taluta’s speech (3.1), parallelism offers proof of the storyteller’s erudition.

Most lexical pairs are names of persons, places, and ships. The number of parallelisms is about the same in paragraphs B, C, and D. These indicate the historiographic truth value of the respective paragraphs and locate their narrated events within the entire history of Moa (see 2.3).

3.3 The Tomra prayer: Sacredness

Nowadays praying (in the Christian sense) is always done in Indonesian and never in one’s native language. Riedel (1886) is one of the few sources available where prayers can be found from the “premissionary” period. (See Appendix 3.)

This prayer to Uplera, the Lord Sun, asks for a good harvest for the Western Leti domain Dai // Tionraa, encompassing the entire desa Tomra (traditionally without the quarters of Nuswelwieli) on the West Side. This domain is referred to by two of its “pagan names”: *leta Naiaka // rusnu Nonsiala* ‘Naiaka village // Nonsiala territory’ (1886: 374). (A pagan name is called *nama hindu* ‘Hindu name’ in local Malay and *naanmelma* ‘dark name’ in Leti. For a discussion of toponyms, see Van Engelenhoven, forthcoming).

There is little difference between this text and either Taluta’s speech or the Moa *ttui* with regard to lexical pairs. The “Our Father” has been
taken from Taluta’s speech and added as a separate text for comparative reasons. Whereas prayers would seem to be an outstanding register for parallelism, this assumption is countered by the strikingly low score of parallelisms in the “Our Father”—one lexical pair in 51 words. This must reflect the speaker’s inability to transpose these outlandish words into acceptable lirmarna.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Leti parallelism: Between pragmatics and verbal art

Leti parallelism is above all a pragmatics-based phenomenon. It functions as a means to focus on the central message in a text, whether this is in simple discourse (3.1), in narrative (3.2), or in more ritual contexts (3.3). The indication of historiographic truth (3.2.) and sacredness (3.3) can safely be considered implications of this pragmatic function.

The sociolinguistic element of parallelism is its confirmation of the speaker’s standing within society. This means that each clan needs a lirmarna specialist to be its spokesman in the domain’s assembly. All houses (lineages) also require such a “voice” in clan-internal meetings. Clans and houses who lack a gifted “voice” borrow one from their allies.

The only component in parallelism that cannot be attributed to pragmatic or sociolinguistic considerations is the idea of erudition. Knowledge of and fluency in lirmarna are essential for certain positions within the clan and the domain. However, as can be seen in the appendices, one only needs to fill the appropriate lexical pairs in the corresponding slots to produce proper lirmarna. As such, parallelism has little to do with verbal art.

The sung counterpart of lirmarna, lirasniara ‘sung language’ can be considered one type of verbal art in Leti, as for example in tiatki. Tiatki are distichs that generally summarize a ttui and warrant the trustworthiness of the story they belong to (Van Engelenhoven 1995a: 24). However, they are also created extemporaneously—in a song contest, for example. The following distich is such a tiatki and refers to the love between a girl (the areca) and a boy (the coconut). The artistic component here is the intertwining of lexical pairs into separate lines, which is a feature of tiatki. Members of the same lexical pair have been marked with identical subscripts. Lack of space prevents me from pursuing the
matter here. It is discussed at greater length elsewhere (Van Engelen-
hoven 1996).

\[ Pu'1 \text{ tou}_2 \text{ pu'}(1) \text{ lapliapi}_3 // \text{nura}_1 \text{ mera}_2 \text{ nura}(1)_3 \text{ sersieri}_3. \]

\[ Idamme llapi_3 \text{ tiemn'} ida // idamme nseri_3 \text{ tiemn'} ida ne. \]

‘The bulging areca is an overhanging areca //
the red coconut is a leaning coconut.
They overhang each another //
they lean on one another.’

### 4.2 Topics for further research

The importance of parallelism in a language like Leti is evident. Not only
does it have pragmatic and sociolinguistic functions, it also has an impact
on grammar. This suggests that parallelism cannot simply be ignored as a
stylistic feature, but must be incorporated into an overall analysis of the
language.

The compatibility of lexical items is one of the topics that needs
further study. A cognitive approach as suggested by Langacker (1991)
and Wierzbicka (1996) will certainly add new information on how Leti
speakers conceptualize their world.

Parallelism is also indispensable for comparing both language and
culture in the Timor region. Not only does parallelism reveal archaic
lexemes. It can also show the genetic relation between isolects that look
quite different because of divergent sound changes.

A comparison of parallelism will surely add to the anthropological
knowledge of this area. A quick glance at De Josselin de Jong’s (1937)
data reveals, that the (non-Austronesian) Oirata language community on
Kisar uses many lexical pairs that are identical to the ones used on Leti
island, further to the east.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OIRATA</th>
<th>LETI</th>
<th>GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rusunu // raini</td>
<td>loi // spou</td>
<td>‘proa(^{13}) // boat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wadu // wanat</td>
<td>lera // mela</td>
<td>‘day // night’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ira // ada</td>
<td>uera // ai</td>
<td>‘water // wood’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lukunu // wiisara</td>
<td>kota // wawa</td>
<td>‘word // talk/speech’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuhuru // nami</td>
<td>puata // muani</td>
<td>‘woman // man’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{13}\)De Josselin de Jong (1937: 270) actually translates it as ‘canoe’.
What kind of relation between language and culture is reflected in parallelism? ‘Ivory’ and ‘gold’ are equally compatible in the closely related languages of Leti and Wetan in the Babar archipelago (De Josselin de Jong 1987), whose cultures both participate in the Interinsular Alliance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WETAN</th>
<th>LETI</th>
<th>GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>leli // maa</td>
<td>leli // masa</td>
<td>‘ivory // gold’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The occurrence of the same lexical pair in the non-Austronesian Oirata language on Kisar can be explained the same way. However, Meher, the Austronesian counterpart on the northern side of the island, quite unexpectedly displays the opposite order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OIRATA</th>
<th>GLOSS</th>
<th>MEHER</th>
<th>GLOSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>odo // lawan(^{14})</td>
<td>‘ivory // gold’</td>
<td>maha // leli</td>
<td>‘gold // ivory’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why does Meher, which belongs to the same subgroup as Leti, have a different order here? Kisar is located at the extreme west border of the Interinsular Alliance. The lexical pairing in the non-Austronesian Oirata can be explained as a reflection of Kisar’s participation in Southwest Maluku interisland trade, or perhaps even better, of Oirata’s alliances with such members of the Interinsular Alliance as Leti (De Josselin de Jong 1937). ‘Ivory’ and ‘gold’ are respectively associated with female and male in Southwest Maluku (de Jonge & van Dijk 1995). Their reverse order in Meher may very well reflect a cultural divergence between the Luang-oriented, matrilineal cultures to the east (Leti, Moa, Luang, Sermata, etc.) and the Timor-oriented, patrilineal culture of the Meher people (Filomeno Jacob Abel, S.J., pers. comm.).

After an interval of seventy to a hundred years, Southwest Maluku has managed once again to gain the attention of the scientific community. Kisar, Damar (Pannell 1991), and the Babar archipelago are or have been recently studied by anthropologists. Several Southwest Maluku languages (Luang, Leti, Kisar, Wetar, and Roma) are being studied in the framework of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. However, there is still no overall picture of the languages and cultures in this region. Practically nothing is known of its early precolonial history or its mythology.

Very salient and intriguing areal features, such as parallelism and metathesis (the reversal of vowels and consonants) can only be studied thoroughly by comparing data from different sources. Therefore, more

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research is needed on oral traditions in the region. Local stories are necessary to track the boat travelers from the mythical Luang Continent who wandered through the entire archipelago as far as Australia (Ian McIntosh, pers. comm.).

APPENDIX 1. TALUTA’S SPEECH (3.1)


1  
Ou, amku // sialkimanni, [-komanni ‘mine altogether?’ is said to be extremely archaic]
inku // narkomanni,
puate // muani,
sarani // kantiu,
kokkoi // lalawne!

2  
Mimsorsuoru msiertiaru tniimipo
minina // mitailmaiau,
totpo aukota ita Matrumne
makresi // klawna,
makpupnu // kkadwela
lianti wuwarnu // malianti nainni iudedendi.

3  
Ita Matrumnede,
hanturuesi // nrurriesi.

4  
Iow,
ntolpiaasa // ntakarpasa
lianti wuwarnu // lianti nainmidipo
nwalldiori.

5  
Iow, ntoli momuou:
rinmiorirna snioli // lietne,
duparne // iewasne,
iatiatne // kallenne.

6  
Ita Matrumne nassuorsuoru.
Do not think in your heart, that our Lord is far from the living [man’s body].

That is not so.

Why does He know it, when we do bad things?

Its tip // its trunk [= cause] is, that He comes nearer to the living people who we are.

He does not forget // remembers everything.

He knows this thoroughly.

So, it was last week [lit. 'old weeks'], that you, women // men, children // grown-ups, heathens (//?) Christians [cf. Christians // heathens in sentence 1] who sat in the house of our Lord, heard // listened to the Minister, the messenger of our Lord, who is holy.

He talked about the language // the sayings and the advice // the message and the commands // the prohibitions of our Lord, which He carved // arranged for you to hear // listen [= obey].

For if you all bear it in your liver // your breast, you will choose a lucky // good life // behavior.

Thus [in order to // for], you will reside // behave while its bad life [ =traditions] // behavior you will throw behind.
17 Mande // totpo
   ita Matrumne raramne nenmie.
Thus [for // in order to],
the heart [lit. ‘insides’] of our Lord
will take you.
18 Nararamniatmo.
He will have compassion with you.
19 Totpo // mande
   mliernene kallennema
   nusdi wawanne //
   laliante wuanrnu emse walle.
Thus, like that
you will find His luck
on this island //
on top of the sky [= in heaven].
20 Nene tuwa nsoro.
Till the end of times.
21 Noratma mkiarmieke lera
   wonem.
Just work for six days, then.
22 Ede misnie // mitunio.
Then you garden // burn.
23 Mkierta // mkiaito.
You tap // cut.
24 Mkiastiani // mpialtiano.
You dig soil // turn soil.
25 Mliawla lio.
You go seaward.
26 Rimormiori muani rkari snio.
The men do the gardens.
27 Rimormiori puate rlawaro.
The women make sarongs.
28 Rwatia.
They cut wood.
29 Rpipara // rwatetio.
They cook // chop.
30 Rasikru // rasnurano.
They spin // twine.
31 Ita Matrumne
   nanoa // nanatu rimormiori
   itmomuou masialo tpealnembo
termene ita apanno wniote.
Our Lord
advises // sends [advice] to us
human
together, that we must be diligent, for
then
we will receive the contents for our
stomach.
32 Noratma
   ita Matrumme inioonede paetnu //
   parsampepo
   ita unatnu nmeso.
So,
the purpose // the motive [= the
reason] of our Lord’s advice
is only (for) our benefit only.

APPENDIX 2. A MOA TTUI (3.2)


1 Rwaktunnohri rimormiori
   meksolulu Tounwawna.
They tell about the people who first
lived in Tounwawan.
So, once a man called Terkiei lived in a village with the name village Pouring Gold // proa Polishing Ivory on his island Kei.

This man quarreled with the people of his village about the cutting of the fish // the slicing of the eels.

Then he cut his proa // his boat and wanted to sail to Roman // Piatan (Roma).

Then he cut his boat called Close Mountain // Golden Descent for them to go to Beach // Sermata to a village called place of Pleiades // the Sun. And when they came, they were building a house called Gaining Slaves // Winning Servants, the owner of the house now, he was called Rurwana // Pohitiau.

Because the oil got few // and the dona got less, (then) he said to Terkiei and his crew:

“You just wait and I go buy oil // donle noh’ Dama // rai Dama.”

Then Rurwana // Pohitiau cut his boat Village Destroying // Village Dwelling together with his son Hleki // Wo’o and took it to Damar.

Then (when) the trade was done Hleki // Wo’o asked his father Rurwana // Pohitiau permission to go ahead to Beach // Sermata, but his father refused saying:

“Let’s not be split up and go together in order to travel in Luang Spirit // Luang Soul” [= according to Luang traditions].
But his son Hleki // Wo’o truly refused, saying: “I go ahead to take my turn at the construction of our house.”

Then he made a sand-drawing in the form of a boat called Sorteni (Sand-Drawing) // Teniapi (Construction try-out) after which he embarked to take it to Beach // Sermata.

Then his father cursed him saying:

“Don’t you carry a boiling breast // a cooking inside like that.

After you have gone you will get over there.”

Then he was at sea and there was fog// there was smoke and a dry island, so he had not returned to Beach // Sermata but had come straight to Moa.

And so his father Rurwana Pohitiau took his ship called Village-Destroying // Village-Dwelling back to Beach // Sermata // Pleiades location // Sun’s location.

Then they arrived and continued to build their/his home Winning Slaves // Conquering Servants.

Then Terkiei and his crew stated to Rurwana // Pohitiau they would sail.

They mentioned Roman // Piatan when they sailed, but in the end it was (to) a dry island (where) the stream brought them, straight to the bank of (the) Woiti (people) // the bank of (the) Msawan (people).
23 Noramme marna Msawna nwave Loiahu // Tarrekna nanetierpe rsolwutu // rletwutu.
Then the marna of Msawan called Loiahu // Tarrekna protected them and they lived together // dwelled together.

24 UpTerdi’ide nor’ narni ida nwave Lurkuei.
As for Sir Teri now, he was with a sister of him called Lurkuei.

25 Li’iru ne Terkiei nmaipie nsollie Kiera.
Afterwards Terkiei came to live in Kiera.

26 Mere marna Kiere nwave Poiklaka // Lelsioir’ra // Rurulatna // Laklatna, irse rla rale Terkiei hdi’i le Msawanpe rodie rmai Kiera.
But the people of the Kiera marna called Poiklaka // Lelsioir’ra // Rurulatna // Laklatna, they went to take this Terkiei from Msawan and brought him to Kiera.

27 Noramme Terkiei nore marna Kiereri rsolwutula romni nwave Rehilieti // Talleti.
Then Terkiei lived together with these marna of Kiera in their house called Winning Leti // Conquering Leti.

28 Noramme leridane Terkiei hdi’i rmai rahnia // rkeratle ornida nwave Lowna Taklena (e)la(e)
Klihletni onni, rorwutge ornoho Klihe rwawe Dilteti // Wooteti.
Then one day Terkiei and his people came to “plough” // tap in a forest called Field // Taklena near Klis village with the landowners of Klis called Dilteti // Wooteti.

One day as they went to the seashore, they saw a man going seaward // coming landward called Lairomamna // Katilia-ramna (Lai // Seli // Kati // Rioo).

30 Noramme rpolgepe rore, merenamsena nakotniwre: “mlia’awepa reparanpe itla’a likta.”
Then they called him to go together, but he refused, saying: “Go, we’ll go to the garden tomorrow.”

31 Noramme reparpe rlasoklorane rorepe rmai likta (Lowna // Taklena).
Then in the morning they went ashore again and came to the garden (Field // Taklena) with him.

32 Noramme raisoi raitianiele: “letmu elameia?”
Then they interrogated him asking: ‘Where is your village?’

33 Nakotniwre: “let’u ehse Klihdi.”
He said: “My village, that’s Klis over here.”
Mere Klihdiide, marna Kierida nwawe Riwuntora enanpe nso’otulu Klihdi’.

But this Klis then was the property of a Kiera marna called Riwuntora, because he was the first to live in this Klis.

Noramme irmomoge rla rsarlie orlete Riwuntordi pe rwakpe rsolvutu // rletwutu.

Then they all (went to) appear(ed) to this village owner Riwuntora to ask to live together // stay together.

Leridane Terkiei hdi’ hialli nalle tipurpe nmai.

One day a brother of this Terkiei came from the east.

Nallae Sera // Rwawna// Wiunu // Liera.

He came from Beach // Sermata // Pleiade’s location // Sun’s location.

Nma nwahaknohri hialli Terkiei hdi’i; nanni Aitiawimeha (Aitiapmeha).

He came to trace this Terkiei who was his brother; his name was Aitiawimeha (Aitiapmeha).

Noramme norwutge hialli Terkieine muanidwali nwawe Sairdama, irvotelge rs’o’ota Klihdi, mere rs’o’otmelmelepe rale wirstawie // murlaile rs’o’ote.

Then he accompanied his brother Terkiei and another man called Sairdama and the three of them measured Klis here, but as they measured at night, they used bira leaves // mura stalks to measure with.

Rdenmekle nale leridane rla rwakle marna Kierida nwawe Pohi // Kau // Ioka // Rei, totpe nodie hri’ina Kiera // rella Kierpe rodiele rs’o’ota hwa’ana Klihdi.

They just stayed there and one day they went to ask a Kiera marna called Pohi // Kau // Ioka // Rei to measure Klis rightly with the Kiera Spirit // Kiera Soul.

Noramme rs’o’otepe nsorune irnomoge rsoli // rlete Klihdi.

And when they finished measuring they all lived // dwelled in Klis.

Leridane tuwgarie lernine nsalnohri // niatnohri Palioklwani nanki raarpe rawlaripie rma rsollie Toumawandi’i.

One day later one sinned // mistreated the trunk of Palioka, after which they made war and fled to live in Tounwawan here.

Mere Toumawandi’ide letida’a hdi’i.

But this Toumawan then, this was not a village.

Lutru // ripattoini hdi’a.

It was walls // fences.

Pipioa // wawikrahnida hdi’i.

It was a goat shed // pig sty.

Mere UpTiwalkilu nore UPonmehu irse, rmaie rs’o’ote letdi’i.

But it was Sir Tiwalkilu and Sir Wonlaimehu who came measuring this village.
PARELLELLISM IN LETI

APPENDIX 3. A TOMRA PRAYER (3.3)

SOURCE: Riedel 1886:373.

1  Ej Uplera, mkuernma nuunu
     upasnu // kakperni; lisarni ida //
     laani ida, rwalosome.

2  Kadu // wawitnorna; amietma
     mpolwatu; spou liarnu // spou
     wooni

3  Leta worua // rusnu worue;
     rodwatu // rateme pempuenu //
     tepteparo.

4  Rpollua Uplera // Orporke;
     rtpio naana // rrerlaepo nemnu;
     rkukumpo naana // rpapalpo
     nemnu.

5  Nensalmeke resra suouoone //
     wakru suouoone.

6  Simmiateto leli // po rrei
     wawiaasu mkuakarse.

7  Nodi susrila lolola lorumu
     woaote // aana woaote.

8  Rpollua Uplera // rwakla Uplera;
     nawiru // nwakawi; leli sniaani //
     masa sniaani; sutra sniaani;
     pipiaana worua // wotelu; marne
     liawanne // wusru liawanne.

9  Pele nsernu // pele nwalse;
     pimmiate // wammiate; liola
     napuuriate, kaumiatiate.

But they built the village with the
Kiera Spirit // Kiera Soul.

Oh, Lord Sun, descend in the butts //
the twigs of the banyan; its bran // its
(dry) branches, they collected.

Rice-sacks // tied pigs; the black
wood (porka pole); summon the
boat’s stern // the boat’s bow.

The two villages // the two gardens;
are assembled // are collected fully //
entirely.

They call the Lord Sun // the Owner
of the porka pole; they chop for him
to eat // they collect for him to drink;
they herd him to eat // they cultivate
for him to drink.

That he just takes the right victuals //
the right harvest [lit. ‘to reap’]

The chicken-eye, it is like ivory, // so
they tear the pig’s liver [which] you
cut.

Bring the island people to the path at
the four houses // the four children.

They call Lord Sun // they ask Lord
Sun; to arrange // to order the
products of ivory // the products of
gold; the products of silk; two // three
baby goats; and the marna’s
greatness // the wusru’s greatness.

To exchange // to answer; the dead
goats // the dead pigs; the trunks
having vicious bugs, the bad betel
leaf.
To bring hither // to fix thither to;
the rear of the boat // the front of the boat;
outsiders // insiders;
to distribute // to divide [with]; to cut //
to fold [with].

The food-mat is empty, may they fill
it through shaking [trees] later // the
black toddy pot is empty, may they
fill it through gathering later.

May the two villages expand // the
two territories be rank.

REFERENCES


