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### *Oral Traditions Questionnaire*
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## PREAMBLE

This questionnaire was originally compiled for the 2000 East Nusantara Linguistics Workshop, held 21-23 July 2000 at the Australian National University, Canberra. The questionnaire was distributed to participants who were asked to complete it and submit their responses to the organisers prior to the workshop. The completed responses formed the basis for discussion in a day-long session. The questionnaire is based on features known or thought to occur in the languages of the East Nusantara region, which includes eastern Indonesia, East Timor, and Papua.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years several detailed accounts of oral traditions among ethnolinguistic groups in eastern Indonesia have appeared (for example, Fox 1988, Hoskins 1993, Keane 1997). Yet overall, the study of oral traditions in this region remains neglected. This is particularly apparent for Maluku, for which there is no body of work comparable to the emerging descriptions of the oral traditions in Nusa Tenggara. The aim of this workshop, therefore, is to widen our knowledge about oral traditions in East Nusantara and, in so doing, to provide a preliminary typology of the genres and of the structural and functional features of oral traditions for this region.

The questions below which participants are asked to address for the language(s) with which they work, are aimed at
- determining the range and distribution of genres of oral traditions throughout the region
- and examining
- the function(s) of genres
- structural features (such as parallelism)
- aspects of composition and performance
- ownership of knowledge and constraints on speech
- transmission (maintenance and loss) of oral traditions.

We realise that many linguists may not have focused on some of these issues in their research and may have only limited familiarity with the oral traditions of the language they have been studying. However, respondents are asked to provide as much detail as possible for these questions, including examples (of genres or certain structural features) where relevant.

**THE QUESTIONNAIRE**


## 1   The language

Which language is this questionnaire on and where is it spoken?


## 2   Genres of oral traditions

2.1   List as completely as possible the genres of oral traditions which you are aware of in this ethnolinguistic group. These may include (but are not limited to):

narrative genres, for example:
- origin or creation tales
- epic tales
- historical narratives
- folk tales

oral poetry

song genres

riddles

language of rituals associated with life stages, for example:
- midwifery rituals
- proposal of marriage
- payment of bridewealth
- burial practices

language of rituals associated with village-wide ceremonies, for example:
- building/consecrating a new dwelling or ritual house
- (Central Moluccan) *pela* (intervillage alliance) ceremonies
- chant to mark the opening or closing of a ceremony

healing language/ register

hunting and/or fishing language/ register

respect register (possibly involving lexical replacement terms)

mantra/incantations/(magical)chants/spells, for example those used for:
- curative purposes
- malevolent purposes, such as causing illness or catastrophe
- success in hunting and/or fishing
- protection of self or property
- appeasement of gods or ancestral spirits
- crop planting and harvest


2.2   Identification of oral traditions

Do members of this speech community differentiate between the various genres you have listed through:
- naming of genres?
- topic (e.g. celebrating or marking a particular aspect of life)?
- differences in function?
- structural differences?

Note any other means speakers use to differentiate genres (for example, through association with a particular composer or performer, or with a particular location, time of year or season, etc.).

## 3   Function

3.1   What functions are filled by the oral traditions which you have listed?

3.2   On what occasions are the genres you have listed heard or performed?
>    Consider, for example:
>    - on what occasions might folk tales be narrated to young children (in the evenings in the home, in garden huts, etc.)?
>    - on what occasions might origin or creation tales or epic tales be narrated?
>    - when would particular song styles be heard or performed?


## 4   Structure

4.1   What are the structures of the genres you have listed?
>    Consider, for example, special phonological features, such as:
>    - metathesis
>    - phonemes which only occur in certain registers, possibly through the incorporation of loanwords or the use of another language (for example, some Alune incantations were composed in north Moluccan languages and in Arabic)
>    - prosodic and suprasegmental features
>    - voice qualities (imitating or playing the role of other participants, use of creaky voice, etc.)

4.2   Morpho-syntax
- have you noted the presence of unusual morpho-syntactic features in the oral traditions of this language?
- have you noted the absence of any commonly-occurring morpho-syntactic feature in any genre?

4.3   Lexicon
- is a special lexicon part of a certain genre?
- what language does that lexicon draw on?
- are any special wordplay techniques found?

4.4   Discourse structure and other structural components. For example:
- have you noted the use of repetition of phrases, sentences, or larger segments in a narrative?
- are there set themes or components which recur in certain genres (narratives, song)?
- do sung segments occur in some narrative traditions?
- do songs, incantations or other genres take a conventional length (number of lines) or number of segments?
- is there a formulaic opening and/or closing in certain genres?
- verse and chorus in oral poetry

4.5   Parallelism

The phenomenon of parallelism among the languages of eastern Indonesia is best known through Fox's work on Roti. Fox (1988:1) notes that "paired correspondences, at the semantic and syntactic levels, result in what is essentially a dyadic language - the phenomenon of 'speaking in pairs'". Parallelism has also been reported in the languages of East Nusantara in Sumba among the Kodi (Hoskins 1993, 1996), Weyewa (Kuipers 1992), and the Anakalangese (Keane 1997), in Flores among the Nage (Forth 1996) and the Ata Tana 'Ai (Lewis 1992), in Seram among the Alune (Florey 1998), and for the languages of Leti, Kisar and Wetan (van Engelenhoven 1997).

Keane (1997: 101-111) provides a useful analysis and discussion of both the structure and the broader cultural meaning of parallelism. Here we are interested in trying to ascertain the extent to which parallelism occurs as a regional feature in the languages of East Nusantara and in determining both the range of structures.

- Does parallelism occur in this language? If so, list the genres in which it occurs.
- Parallelism has been noted at all linguistic levels and differs in its complexity and its form throughout this region. What form does parallelism take for this language?
- What functions associated with the use of parallelism?

## 5   Speech levels

5.1   Are there speech levels (similar to those described for Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese) in this language?

5.2   How are those levels structurally differentiated? e.g.
- lexicon
- morpho-syntax
- discourse

5.3   How are those levels functionally differentiated? e.g.
- age
- gender
- class/caste
- topic
- situation
- combination of the above

## 6   Composers and composition

6.1   In some speech communities composers are acknowledged and venerated. For the language/s with which you are familiar:
- is the right to compose restricted to certain parts of the community (by clan or lineage, age, gender, status, etc.)?
- are members of the speech community aware of the composer of oral traditions? For example, are certain narratives said to have been composed by a particular person?
- are certain members of the community renowned as composers?
- is composition in some oral traditions (e.g. origin or creation tales) attributed to a key ancestral figure?
- are some oral traditions said to have been created by non-human composers (e.g. Alune midwifery knowledge was created and transmitted by cuscus (*Phalanger* spp.))?
- are particular composers associated with certain oral traditions (e.g. songs, epic tales, mantra, riddles) but not with others (e.g. historical narratives, chants performed at village-wide ceremonies)?

## 7   Performance and performers

7.1   Is the right to speak or to use or perform certain oral traditions restricted to one part of the community (by clan or lineage, age, gender, status, etc.)? For example:
- Fox (1974:65) notes for Roti that "nobles speak more than commoners, men more than women" and so forth,

- Florey (in press) notes among the Alune a headhunting register restricted in earlier times to Alune men initiated into the *kakehan* society, midwifery knowledge restricted to women in a particular clan, a healing register restricted to certain renowned healers.

7.2 Are other constraints on ownership of knowledge noted for this speech community?

7.3 Who are the performers in this community?

7.4 Can non-human entities (animal, spirit, deities) be performers or participants?

7.5 Are particular performers associated with certain oral traditions but not with others?

7.6 Are certain members of the community renowned as performers?

7.7 Who are the ritual specialists in this community?

7.8 What performance contexts have you noted in this speech community?

7.9 Are certain oral traditions restricted to particular performance sites or prohibited from occurring in certain sites? Consider, for example:
- public vs. private
- men's or women's ritual houses
- within or external to residential areas

7.10 What time frames are associated with various oral traditions? Consider, for example:
- time of day (or night)
- period of time (hours, days)
- seasonal aspects
- ceremonies/rituals which may be performed in several phases with varying lengths of break between phase

7.11 What constitutes the 'stage' in performance?

7.12 What is the relationship between 'audience' and performer?


## 8   Change

8.1 Is there evidence of change in the structure or function of any of the genres you have described? If so, what changes have you noted, or what changes do practitioners or audience note? For example:
- are marriages still associated with 'traditional' ritual practices or have they become part of modern state and religious (Christian/Muslim) practice?
- is bridewealth still paid and is there an associated ritual/ceremony?
- if there were restrictions on the language which could be used during hunting or fishing, is this register still used? Always? Occasionally? Only by older members of the community?

8.2 Do healing practices still draw on, for example, a healing register, healing rituals, the use of incantations or mantra?

8.3 Are genres of oral traditions being composed in a language other than the language indigenous to this community: for example, a regional lingua franca, a regional Malay variant, or Indonesian?

8.4 Are new styles or genres emerging?

8.5 Which rituals are still performed regularly?


## 9   Issues about recording oral traditions

We are interested in learning more about reasons for a) the limited documentation of oral traditions by linguists working in the East Nusantara region and b) the difficulties some linguists in the field report in attempting to record this kind of information. If you have worked through this

questionnaire and found that there is little which you can say in response to these questions, we would like to learn more about *why* that may be the case. Some possible reasons may be:

- working in a situation in which many genres of specialised knowledge are already obsolescent
- encountering difficulties in gaining access to genres of specialised knowledge
- lacking specific skills you feel are necessary to undertake this task (e.g. knowledge of ethnomusicology)
- focus on a different task (e.g. recording the language to write a grammatical description)
- limited time in the field
- lack of interest
- other reasons?

If you have encountered difficulties in gaining access to and recording certain genres of specialised knowledge, can these difficulties be attributed to, for example:

- ownership of knowledge
- taboos or restrictions on the right to transmit knowledge
- restrictions on the right to narrate/sing/chant/perform
- reluctance to discuss ancestral (pre-Christian or pre-Islamic) practices
- other reasons?

Please briefly outline the issues which have had some bearing for you in regard to documentation of oral traditions in the language with which you work. Your response may include

- your experiences
- reasons for lack of documentation of oral traditions
- reasons for difficulties in gaining access to and recording certain genres (both your explanations and those of members of the speech community)
- attempts you have made to overcome those difficulties and level of success in so doing
- what might encourage you to document oral traditions (e.g. collaborative research, different training)

## 10  References

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