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 Nohpaiakra // Raipiatatara ‘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),\(^2\) 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-Muaniama (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,\(^3\) 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, Istitfanus 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.

\(^2\) Batumiau 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).

\(^3\) I 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 (Terrnanu) 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 Laitutum) 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.)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{r-mesli7flll} & \text{ (Lakor) } \text{// ra-saawa } \text{(Leti)} & \text{‘they marry’} \\
\text{liola} & \text{ (Moa) } \text{// puorsa} & \text{(Leti)} & \text{‘door’} \\
\text{usu} & \text{ (Moa)} & \text{// lal } \text{(Leti)} & \text{‘(sea)bank’} \\
\text{na-riwa} & \text{ (Moa\textsuperscript{4}) } \text{// na-ksau } \text{(Leti)} & \text{‘he cherishes’} \\
\text{na-doona} & \text{ (Moa) } \text{// n-takra} & \text{‘he sees’}
\end{align*}
\]

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.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{*tirka} & \text{ // llena} & \text{‘lightning’} \\
\text{na-kropna} & \text{ // *na-kreetu} & \text{‘he limps’} \\
\text{*kaperi} & \text{ // kapansa} & \text{‘ill’} \\
\text{-liiru} & \text{ // *-tawu} & \text{‘backside’} \\
\text{r-wutu} & \text{ // *r-kesa} & \text{‘they bind’}
\end{align*}
\]

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 // llena).

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

\textsuperscript{4}Tutukei 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*na-wiru // *na-kawi</td>
<td>‘he arranges// orders’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*dupla // *mawia</td>
<td>‘witchcraft’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*n-duarteta // *l-leluktani</td>
<td>‘he founds a domain’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lerliiru // lertawu</td>
<td>‘in early days’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n-rei // n-tawu</td>
<td>‘he withdraws’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tukar-nu // taw-nu</td>
<td>‘his back’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R-sopl-ulu // r-sopal-liiru ...</td>
<td>‘They sailed ahead // sailed behind ...’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl-sail-head // 3pl-sail-back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uera // watu</td>
<td>‘water // stone’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uera // waresra</td>
<td>‘water // provision’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uera // tali</td>
<td>‘water // rope’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pipi // wawi</td>
<td>‘goat // pig’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siwi // wawi</td>
<td>‘chicken // pig’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asu // wawi</td>
<td>‘dog // pig’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SMALL REFERENT</th>
<th>NONSMALL REFERENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>koko // lalawna</td>
<td>'child // grown-up (lit. 'big')'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loi // spou</td>
<td>'proa // (sailing) boat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pua // nura</td>
<td>'betel // coconut'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wes // waani</td>
<td>'scull // oar'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koni // maanu</td>
<td>'grasshopper // bird'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FEMALE REFERENT // MALE REFERENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEMALE REFERENT</th>
<th>MALE REFERENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>puata // muani</td>
<td>'woman // man'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ina // ama</td>
<td>'mother // father'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nara // *siali6</td>
<td>'sister // brother'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iera // riata6</td>
<td>'sister-in-law // brother-in-law'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ttei // ddalu</td>
<td>'female animal // male animal'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SEAWARD // LANDWARD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEAWARD</th>
<th>LANDWARD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>liora // riaa</td>
<td>'seaside // landside'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uueta // loka</td>
<td>'estuary // river'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tutu // lowna</td>
<td>'cape // plains'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nusa // rai</td>
<td>'island // land (lit. 'continent')'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tioruna // taniarta</td>
<td>'bintangor-tree stem // soil's border'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eni // wuura</td>
<td>'(beach) sand // mountain'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HIGH // NOT HIGH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGH</th>
<th>NOT HIGH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tul-lu // lawan-ne</td>
<td>'his height // his bigness'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wuwar-nu // nain-ni</td>
<td>'above // under10'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koam-ne // uuar-ne</td>
<td>'its [a tree's] crown // its root'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7For female speakers, ela // nara. The daily speech word for siali is ali.
8For female speakers, oll // 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'
rumalllewu  '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.)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{n-kili} &/ \text{n-toli} & & \text{‘he looks back // he sees’} \\
\text{n-toli} &/ \text{n-tàkra} & & \text{‘he sees // he looks (at)’} \\
\text{l-lëesa} &/ \text{n-toli} & & \text{‘he reads // he sees’}
\end{align*}
\]

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

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

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 a*su-*ne muani.*

   3sg-see dog-and man$^{11}$

   'He sees the dog and the man.'

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

(b)  *Puate // muani r-oone ine.*

   woman // man  3pl-eat fish

   'The woman and the man eat the fish.'

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

(c)  *Muani-ne puate r-oone ine.*

   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)  *Ur=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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$^{11}$Lack 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) \[A-sie \ loi(-ne) \ n-sie \ spou.\]
\[1sg-make \ proa(-and) \ 3sg-make \ boat\]
'I made the proa and he made the boat.'

(h) \[A-sie \ loi(-ne) \ n-sie \ diembatne.\]
\[1sg-make \ proa(-and) \ 3sg-make \ bridge\]
'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) \[N-sie \ spou-ne \ a-sie \ loi.\]
\[3sg-make \ boat-and \ 1sg-make \ proa\]
'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 *konu // 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>konu // maanu</em></td>
<td>‘grasshopper // bird’</td>
<td>‘flying animal’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nusa // rai</em></td>
<td>‘island // land’</td>
<td>‘archipelago’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>pipi // wawi</em></td>
<td>‘goat // pig’</td>
<td>‘domestic cattle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lel // masa</em></td>
<td>‘ivory // gold’</td>
<td>‘treasure’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ora // ai</em></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*. 
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 I) 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

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12In 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 isolect 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 Tounawan (D). Again, the total number of words is indicated on the vertical axis.

Figure 2. Lexical pairs in the Moa ttui
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 // Tomra, 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
It is discussed at greater length elsewhere (Van Engelenhoven 1996).

\[ Pu'; tou_{2}, pu'_{(t)} lapliapi_{3} \quad / \quad nura_{1}, mera_{2}, nura_{(t)} sersieri_{3}. \]

Idamme ilapi_{3} tienn' ida \quad // \quad idamme nseri_{1}, tienn' 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 // melia</td>
<td>‘day // night’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ira // ada</td>
<td>uera // ai</td>
<td>‘water // wood’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lukunu // wisara</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>

^13De 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.

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.

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 interinsular 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)**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Du, amku // sialkiomanni, [-komanni 'mine altogether?' is said to be extremely archaic] inku // narkomanni, puate // muani, sarani // kantu, kokkoi // latawne!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mimsiorsuoru msiertiaru sninnipo mitsina // mitsalmai,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>totopo aukota ita Matrumne makresi // klawna, makpupnu // kkadwela lianti wuwarmu // malianti nainni ntedendi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ita Matrumnede, hantulruesi // nrurriesi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>low, ntolpiaasa // nakarpaasa lianti wuwarmu // lianti nainnidipo nwakdiori.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>low, ntoli momuou: rimormiorira snioli // liene, duparne // iewasne, iatiane // kallenne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ita Matrumne nassuosuoru.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PARELLELLISM IN LETI

7 Iena miweratla rarammila
   ita Matrumne ollietela rimormiori
   inonne.

8 Hetameseo.

9 Siapo tsiiatede Enatu?

10 Tunnu // unne nwakruanima
    rimormiori iteme.

11 Etanzurtapinu // nsawaploi
    saido.

12 Enassuai sorsuoruo.

13 Noramma ardomiku ululude,

   puate // muani,
   kokkoi // latawne,
   kantu // sarani

   makametanma
   ita matrumne runne nainnide
   mitinina // mitailsalmeka
   Pandita, ita Matrumne
   sopsopanne, salululide.

   nkekeera // natare
   halmekpo mitinina // mitail.

14 Naltieri ita Matrumne

   tirne // kturnu,
   inoone // iniatnu,
   riorne // niaawyne

Mande mimsorsuoru
mbiawarmela atmi // wurmi,
pele mbiiali sioli // iewswe
kalale // mokmoko.

15 Totpo // mande

   msioli // mbiewsene
   snioli // iewse iatiate
   pele mpiaallita tukaro.

   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 nennio.
Thus [for // in order to],
the heart [lit. ‘insides’] of our Lord
will take you.

18 Nararamniatmio.
He will have compassion with you.

19 Totpo // mande
         mliernene kalennema
         nusdi wawanne //
         lalianti wawarnu emse waliu.
Thus, like that
you will find His luck
on this island //
on top of the sky [= in heaven].

20 Nene tuwu nsoruo.
Till the end of times.

21 Noramma mkiarmieke lera
         woneme.
Just work for six days, then.

22 Ede mísia // mimunio.
Then you garden // burn.

23 Mkierta // mkiato.
You tap // cut.

24 Mkiastiani // mpialtianio.
You dig soil // turn soil.

25 Mliawla lioro.
You go seaward.

26 Rimormiori muani rkarri snio.
The men do the gardens.

27 Rimormiori puate rlawaro.
The women make sarongs.

28 Rwatiaio.
They cut wood.

29 Rpipara // rwatetio.
They cook // chop.

30 Rasikru // rasmurano.
They spin // twine.

31 Ita Matrumne
         nanoa // nanatu rimormiori
         tlemene ita apannu wniotne.
Our Lord
advises // sends [advice] to us
humans
together, that we must be diligent, for
then
we will receive the contents for our
stomach.

32 Noramma
         ita Matrumne inionede paetnu //
         parsamnepo
         ita unatu 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 Rwaktunohri rimormiori
         meksolu lu 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).

And when they came, they were building a house called Gaining Slaves // Winning Servanta, 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 //
dona on (the) island of Damar // (the)
land of Damar."

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.

Then 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/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).
PARELLELLISM IN LETI

23 Noramme marna Msawan nwawe 
Loliha // Tarrekna nanetterpe 
rsolvuti // rletwutu. 
Then the marna of Msawan called 
Loliha // Tarrekna protected them 
and they lived together // dwelled 
together.

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

25 Li'iru ne Terkiei nmaipie nsollie 
Kiera. 
Afterswards Terkiei came to live in 
Kiera.

26 Mere marna Kiere nwawe 
Poikelaka // Lelsioirur'a // Rurula 
Latirna // Laklatna, irse rla rale 
Terkiei hdi'il le Msawanpe rodie 
rsolwutu // rletwutu. 
But the people of the Kiera marna 
called Poikelaka // Lelsioirur'a // 
Rurulatna // Laklatna, they went to 
take this Terkiei from Msawan and 
brought him to Kiera.

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

28 Noramme leridane Terkiei hdi'il 
rmai rahnia // rkerale ernida 
nwawe Lowna Taklena (el)la(e) 
Klihlten onni, rorwutge ornho 
Klihe nwawe Diletii // Wo'oteti. 
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 Diletii // Wootei.

29 Leridane iria alorane rado'one 
ari ida nla'alora // rmai ria 
nwawe Lairomana // 
Katiliaramna (Lai // Seli // Kati // 
Rioo). 
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: 
"mila'awepa reparanane tila'a 
lkta." 
Then they called him to go together, 
but he refused, saying: "Go, we'll go 
to the garden tomorrow."

31 Noramme reparpe rlasoklorane 
ropepe rmai lika (Lowna // 
Taklena). 
He said: "My village, that's Klis over 
here."
34 Mere Klihdide, marna Kierida
    nwayne Riwuntora enanpe
    nsoliulu Klihdi'.

35 Noramme irmognogpe rla rsarlie
    orlete Riwuntordi pe rswakpe
    rsolvatu // rlatwatu.

36 Leridane Terkiei hdi' hialli nalle
    tisperpe nmni.

37 Nallae Sera // Rwawna// Wianu //
    Liera.

38 Nma nwhaknqiro hiialli Terkiei
    hdi'i; nanni Aitiawimeha
    (Aitiapmeha).

39 Noramme norwutge hialli
    Terkijeine muanidwali nwayne
    Sairdama, irwotelge rso'o ta
    Klihdi, mere rso'o tnelmelepe
    relle wiratwile // muratle rso'o te.

40 Rdenmekle nale leridane rla
    rwakle marna Kierida nwayne
    Pohi // Kau // Ioka // Rei, tope
    nodie hri'ina Kiera // relia Kiere
    rodile rso'o ta hwa'ana Klihdi.

41 Noramme rso'o tepe ntorua
    irmomoge rsoi // rlete Klihdi.

42 Leridane tuvgarie ternine
    ntsahri // niatsorhi Paliokhwni
    nanke raarpe rwlaripie rma
    rsollie Tounwawandi'i.

43 Mere Tounwawandi'i ide letidta'a
    hdi'i.

44 Lutru // ripattoini hdi'a.

45 Pipioa // wawikrhndi hdi'i.

46 Mere Uptiwalkilu nore
    UPoramehu trze, rmaie rso'o te
    ledi'i.

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

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

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

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

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

Then he accompanied his brother
Terkici 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.

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.

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

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

But this Tounwawan then, this was
not a village.

It was walls // fences.

It was a goat shed // pig sty.

But it was Sir Tiwalkilu and Sir
Wonlaimehu who came measuring
this village.
47  *Mere rodie hri'ina Kiera // rela Kierepe rale dotarletdi'i.*  
But they built the village with the Kiera Spirit // Kiera Soul.

**APPENDIX 3. A TOMRA PRAYER (3.3)**

**SOURCE:** Riedel 1886:373.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Leti</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Ei Uplera, mkuemuma nuunu upasnu // kakperni; lisarni ida // laani ida, rwaloome.</em></td>
<td>Oh, Lord Sun, descend in the butts // the twigs of the banyan; its bran // its (dry) branches, they collected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Kadu // wawitorna; amietma mpolwutu; spou liarnu // spou wooni.</em></td>
<td>Rice-sacks // tied pigs; the black wood (porka pole); summon the boat’s stern // the boat’s bow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Leta worua // rusnu worue; rodwutu // rateme pempuenu // tepteparo.</em></td>
<td>The two villages // the two gardens; are assembled // are collected fully // entirely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Rpollua Uplera // Orporke; rtetpio naana // rreriaepo nemnu; rkuakumpo naana // rpapalpo nemnu.</em></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Nensalmeke resra suowoone // wukru suowoone.</em></td>
<td>That he just takes the right victuals // the right harvest [lit ‘to reap’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Simniatapo leli // po rei wawiaana mkuakarse.</em></td>
<td>The chicken-eye, it is like ivory, // so they tear the pig’s liver [which] you cut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>Nodi nusriela lolola loruma woate // aana woate.</em></td>
<td>Bring the island people to the path at the four houses // the four children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Rpollua Uplera // rwakka Uplera; naviru // rwakawi; leli sniaani // masa sniaani; sutra sniaani; pipiaana worua // wotelu; marne liawanne // wasru liawanne.</em></td>
<td>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 marua’s greatness // the wasru’s greatness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><em>Pele nsernu // pele nwalse; pimmiati // wammiati; liola napuuriate, kauniatiate.</em></td>
<td>To exchange // to answer; the dead goats // the dead pigs; the trunks having vicious bugs, the bad betel leaf.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10 Nodi nmai // ntemne ila; spou liamu // spou uoone; mutusieri // mutuarma; ndurumlola // nsakmlole; ntelola // ntoplole.
   To bring hither to // to fix thisher to; the rear of the boat // the front of the boat; outsiders // insiders; to distribute // to divide [with]; to cut // to fold [with].

11 loonutki nnamu pele, rasoi rawenu // dokusniemetme nnamu pele, riti ki rawenu.
   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.

12 Leta worua nawerwema // rusnu worua ntertero.
   May the two villages expand // the two territories be rank.

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