Breaking the Language Barrier: a Biocultural Approach to Documenting Oral Literature
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This teaching was given to me by a friend and elder on why the women wear dresses in the sweat lodge. He had tears in his eyes as he spoke to me. I am a little more than humbled.

This story speaks to me of the incredible resilience of the First Nations People and the struggle of indigenous peoples all over the world to hold their cultures and their spirits strong.

It is through the passing of such stories through the generations that the people have been able to keep such precious teachings alive through the storms of change.

However, much is lost when the original language, in this case Anishnabe, is westernized, or translated into English.

George Appell, our guest editor for this issue, explains:

"Through oral texts we hope to get to understand the cultural mind of the other, how they view the world. Language either determines what a society considers reality to consist of or it expresses the view of the society as to what reality consists of. These are two different approaches to linguistic anthropology. Let me give you an example of why translation can be so difficult. Among the Ojibwe there is a verb form that is used only for objects that are mobile. However, it is also used for rocks. The famous anthropologist, Hallowell, asked why did they use that verb form to apply to rocks. The answer was that sometimes rocks do move!"

As the diversity of the world’s languages is lost, so is the treasure of knowledge and teachings on how to live that has been shared since the beginning. Yet, since I began my research for this issue, I have learned that there is hope. There is still a chance that a culture, a language, can still be awoken from their sleeping state. And this hope is what I wish to share with you in this issue of Langscape.

In the words of PIJELÁNEWOT, Saanich Language Apprentice, page 30 of this issue, “I feel the Language. You cannot see it or touch it. For me it is there, the spirit of the language. The SENĆOŦEN language has always lived in me. I just had to wake it up.”

All My Relations,

Ortixia Dilts
Editor-in-Chief, Langscape
Creative Designer, Terralingua

Bibi Mganga, the village healer (Mbugu ethnicity) whose powers came to her in a dream. Credit: Samantha Ross
THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF ORAL LITERATURE

Oral literature is the repository of the critical knowledge and philosophy for non-literate societies and serves as a vehicle for artistic creativity of great value and beauty. This literature through narrative, poetry, song, dance, myths and fables, and texts for religious rituals provides a portrait of the meaning of life as experienced by the society at its particular time and place with their existential challenges. It encapsulates the traditional knowledge, beliefs and values about the environment and the nature of the society itself. It arises in response to the universal aesthetic impulse to provide narratives that explain the nature of life and human response to challenges. It retains knowledge to be passed on to succeeding generations. It contains the history of the society and its experiences. Thus in various forms this oral literature portrays the society's belief systems and makes sense of life. It provides a guide to human behavior and how to live one's life. With the arrival of literacy, the core of this literature and its art rapidly disappears.

Oral Literature is also the repository of the artistic expression in a society. And thus its beauty resonates across cultural boundaries. As such this literature is a response to the universal human instinct to find balance, harmony, and beauty in the world and the need to understand pain, suffering, and evil. It functions to fulfill the need for religious belief and spiritual fulfillment necessary for human existence. Through stories, tales, songs, it recounts the works of the gods and the frailty of humankind. It explains how the world and human existence came about. It serves to communicate ideas, emotions, beliefs and appreciation of existence. Oral literature defines, interprets, and elaborates on the society's vision of reality and the dangers in the world. It explains the causes of human suffering, justifies them, and suggests ways of mediation and the healing of suffering. Oral literature deals with the human adventure and achievements against odds. It is also a form of entertainment and fosters the feelings of solidarity with others who have had similar experiences. Thus oral literature may encompass many genres of linguistic expression.

George N. Appell, Ph.D.
April 2012
Part 1: THE VOICES OF THE EARTH

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Dr. George Appell
South Africa – the “Rainbow Nation”

With a land surface area of 1.1 million km², representing just 1% of the earth’s total land surface, South Africa is home to almost 10% of the world’s total known bird, fish and plant species, and over 6% of the world’s mammal and reptile species. Not only do we claim to have the third-highest level of biodiversity in the world, we also call ourselves the ‘Rainbow Nation’, a title that reflects the country’s rich cultural diversity. Biocultural diversity has been defined as “the diversity of life in all its manifestations – biological, cultural, and linguistic – which are interrelated (and likely co-evolved) within a complex socio-ecological system” (Maffi 2010). An integral part of this diversity, cultural expression through language, is central to how knowledge and values pass across generations.

IsiXhosa language

IsiXhosa forms part of the Nguni language group sometimes referred to as “Cape Nguni”. The distinguishing feature of isiXhosa are the click sounds (c, q and x) which were incorporated through language contact with the Khoi and San speakers of the south western region of South Africa. IsiXhosa speakers make up 18% the South African population. Most of the speakers of this language are situated in the South African province of the Eastern Cape.

During South Africa’s apartheid period the Xhosa Language Board served as an instrument of Government control, screening out protest literature and restricting topics to “traditional” themes.
The isiXhosa language portrays nature (*indalo*) in the names and descriptions of times of the day. In Xhosaland a whole day (a day and a night) is called *usuku*, consisting of imini (daytime) and *ubusuku* (night-time). The names of the various times of day in isiXhosa are beautifully descriptive, often drawing on vivid images of rural life and nature.

In 1994 isiXhosa became one of nine indigenous languages to obtain official recognition in South Africa’s first post-apartheid Constitution. Following the democratic transition the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) was also created and charged with responsibility for language planning. However the development of the language in education has proven to be especially difficult. While the language is taught as a subject at all levels, it is only used as a medium of instruction in very few schools and only from grade 1 to grade 3.

Famous isiXhosa speaking South Africans include two Nobel laureates: the former Archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu, and first democratically elected President, Nelson Mandela.

**Times of the Day in Xhosaland**

Here we show how the isiXhosa language portrays nature (*indalo*) in the names and descriptions of times of the day. In Xhosaland a whole day (a day and a night) is called *usuku*, consisting of imini (daytime) and *ubusuku* (night-time). The names of the various times of day in isiXhosa are beautifully descriptive, often drawing on vivid images of rural life and nature.

*ilinkuku zokuqala* (the first fowls). The first round of crowing of the roosters before most people are awake in the village.

*ilinkuku zesibini* (the second fowls). The second round of crowing by the roosters, about an hour later. The men will usually have left the huts at this time, when ‘the night is brown’ or kusentsundu.

*Xa kumpondo zankomo* (time of the horns of the cattle). A time when the light is just sufficient to reveal the raised horns of the cattle in the *ubuhlanthi* (byre). This is when the ‘day breaks’ (*ukuthi qhekre*) and the *inyakrini* (glossy starlings) begin to make a considerable noise. The chattering of these metallic blue birds with golden-yellow eyes is rendered:

*Ubusuk’oba kange silale; be sisela, be sisela; amehlo ebomvu nje; be sisele, kange silale* (“Last night we had no sleep, we were drinking, we were drinking, our eyes being red as you see them, we were drinking, we never slept”)

*Ukuwa kwamanyakrini* (the falling of the glossy starlings). The time when these birds leave their roosts.

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Isifingo (the morning twilight). During this period the morning star, ikhwezi lokuqala, rises above the eastern horizon, and is followed some time later by the second star, ikhwezi lesibini. Some people believe that each star ascends before and after the second crowing of the roosters respectively.

Umsobomvu (the rosy face of the morning). The time when the sky pales or assumes a pink colour with the coming of the sun.

Ukuwa kweenkuku (the falling of the fowls). The time when these domestic birds leave or ‘fall off’ their roosts.

Ukuthi chapha kwelanga (when the sun’s rays brighten the hilltops they touch lightly on the hills). The day is then said to be starting (kusasa).

Ukuphuma kwelanga (the sun comes out). The moment when the sun begins to rise visibly from under the horizon.

Xa ilanga lishiya iintaba (the sun leaves the mountains). The time when the sun has begun to ascend above the horizon.

Ukunyibilika kombethe (the dew melts). The time when the sun is just warm enough to evaporate the dew on the grass.

Ukuphakama kwelanga (the sun is lifting). The time when the sun rises higher into the sky.

Intlazane (milking time). From 10 to 11 in the morning, when the cows are milked.
Xa kumpondo zankomo (time of the horns of the cattle). A time when the light is just sufficient to reveal the raised horns of the cattle in the ubuhlanthi (byre). This is when the ‘day breaks’ (ukuthi qhekre) and the inyakrini (glossy starlings) begin to make a considerable noise. Photo: Tony Dold

Ukuya kwimini emaqanda (towards the time of the egg). Just before midday with the sun in the middle of the heavens in the same way that the yolk forms the centre of an egg. This is immediately followed by emini emaqanda (time of the egg). Midday.

Ukujika kwelanga (the sun is turning to go down) or ukuya komhla (‘towards that time’ [the end of the day]). When the sun begins its descent.

Ukubetha kwempepho (to be touched by a gentle cool breeze) The onset of the afternoon sea breeze, reflecting a coastal environment.

Xa libantu bahle (when a person is beautiful - the sun is personified as a beautiful person). Early afternoon.

Ukuwa kwamathunzi (the shadows fall) and ukugcangca kwelanga (the sun loses its strength) refer to the late afternoon.

Liya kunina (it [the sun] is going to its mother). Sunset.

Ukuqala ukungcola (to become dirty). Twilight, which is expressed metaphorically as the “soiling” of the day.

Urhatya lwemivundla (twilight of the hares). Deepening twilight when the imvundla (scrub hare) comes out of its shelter in the long grass.

Isidlo sangokuhlwa (food of the evening). The time of the evening meal.

Ukulala kweentsana (children go to sleep). The time when children are sent to bed.


_Ukubekwa kwamacala_ (to put down sides). The time spent lying on the sleeping mats before falling asleep.

_Ubusuku bukabhadakazi_, (the time of night when no-one is about. _Kwesibhadakazi_ means an isolated, uninhabited place). The middle of the night.

_Ezinzhulwini zobusuku_ (the ‘deep’ of night). The period of complete darkness before _iinkuku zokuqala_ (the first fowls).

**The future of isiXhosa**

Along with the loss of biodiversity and erosion of traditional cultures, the world is currently undergoing a third extinction crisis: that of the diversity of human languages (Maffi 1999). It is estimated that half the people in the world now use one of eight global languages. Experts say that as many as 200 African languages have already disappeared and that more than a third of the endangered languages on earth are African. The loss of languages, cultural practices and indigenous ecological knowledge all reflect the breakdown in the relationship between humans and their environment.

For the past three years Inkcubeko Nendalo^2^ has worked with Grade 10 learners in seven resource-poor Government schools in Grahamstown. All the learners are isiXhosa first-language speakers from low income families living in urban “township” conditions where exposure to recreational natural areas is severely limited by their economic status. However, many learners still have limited knowledge of traditional nature-based religious activities and customs as well as reference to nature in isiXhosa such as in idioms, proverbs, songs and expressions. Inkcubeko Nendalo strives to build on this existing knowledge as a basis to instill an awareness and pride in Xhosa cultural heritage, including the isiXhosa language.

Dr Michelle Cocks is a research officer at the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at Rhodes University in Grahamstown and has recently completed her doctorate on Wild Resources and Cultural Practices in Rural and Urban Households in South Africa.

Tony Dold, a plant taxonomist, ethno-botanist and photographer, is the curator of the Selmar Schonland Herbarium at the Albany Museum in Grahamstown. Together, he and Michelle have documented Xhosa medicinal plants, ethno-veterinary plants and plants used in Xhosa religious ceremonies. He is a member of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) and is actively involved in education and conservation programmes.

http://www.bioculturaldiversity.co.za


The Eastern Arc Mountain Chain in Tanzania is one of the 33 global biodiversity hotspots and provides an ideal opportunity to study biological and linguistic diversity. The range spreads from Southern Kenya to Southern Tanzania and was formed as the Rift Valley took shape creating isolated mountainous blocks replete with unique ecosystems and biodiversity, prompting the moniker "The Galapagos of Africa". The mountains are home to 200 endemic species of fauna and more than 800 endemic floral species, including the popular African violet (Saintpaulia) and Busy Lizzies (Impatiens), with new species still being discovered. Tanzania is also linguistically diverse, with more than 127 indigenous languages, although Kiswahili is the lingua franca, spoken by 95% of the population. President Julius Nyerere chose Kiswahili as the national language to promote peace, unity, national identity and tribal cohesion after Independence in 1961, as it is a neutral language, not favouring one ethnic group or region over any other. The many vernacular languages are used within ethnically homogenous groups, predominantly in family settings in rural areas.

In Tanzania, both the unique linguistic/cultural diversity and biodiversity are under threat. A major challenge concerning the safeguarding of linguistic diversity is the lack of documentation on languages and language speakers, and national linguistic policies that neglect the importance of African languages for development. Kiswahili has the advantage of being neutral, but without support for the other languages it dominates all walks of life – business, education, religion, entertainment and administrative duties. The local languages are not recognized in any official capacity and are actively banned from
being used in education or the media. English is also taking its toll on local languages being the medium of instruction in secondary schools, the language of government and courts. Within traditional spheres where the local languages would customarily be used, such as around the local area, the market, and within peer groups, Kiswahili is pushing out the vernaculars into smaller and smaller arenas such as the home and among elders.

However, there is one domain in which the local languages are remaining dominant: the area of ethnobotanical knowledge. Discussing plants—their uses and other pertinent knowledge, such as the plants’ ecological needs and locations—is better performed in the mother tongue. These findings point to the need for integrated intercultural and multilingual conservation practices. Local languages are essential for transferring locally specific indigenous knowledge that is vital for conserving the local environment and for providing the local population with livelihood resilience and economic opportunities.

The three stories below are in Kima’a, Kiswahili and English (West Usambara Mountains, Tanzania - Mbugu group). Kima’a is referred to as ‘inner’ or ‘pure’ mbugu with only approximately 3000 speakers whereas the more spoken mbugu or ‘outer’ or ‘simple’ version has around 7000 speakers.

The stories were told to project developer, Samantha Ross, by elders in the village of Goka and then translated by her research assistant who lives locally. The pictures were drawn by a local artist, Geoffrey Mathew Mkilanya, in Lushoto town (and some school children).

They are in the process of creating a printed book of folk tales to give to the contributors and villagers (and schools) to preserve their language and culture. Many have never seen their language written down and wept when shown a first draft.

He Kidunda cha Mafia (Kima’a) (na Wazee ya Lushoto)

We aha Irente viewpoint uneagho kidunda cha Mafia mlha wa magharibi twai iaze ho liso naho kwa uda kidunda ya techidiwe ni vahe mira chilo mighatu ya viaghu mikumure, mtunguja hu gitutu na ngogwe na nanasi ni tunda makumure bi na to a-nahe kidunda helo iziwa na hetoholye sa hediiwe ni vahe kwa kuba umuru uka-aghgo gomae jianikwe he mahako simoreji iba ite ukuhe ana he kidunda ka umuru udori ya matunda mire usea-a chii-l na ang’a.

Ake hebaiwa ite ukuadori na ang’a venekudori ugkwa mkini kwa kuba. Ukuba uli tuagho kwa unejunguluka ata bi. Mira waradoto wake matunda aaye uneaghokwa hag ata helo nkoma hata vahe verahiriti gu-a tevemuru kuga-a gu-a waradota abuu na kutagho mhake na hu kidunda.

Kwa kuba waradota udaa kuga-a gu-a unesasuiwa ite ni aghoni uga-a ka gu-as. Ya ni lusimo lwa ku la-a vimaye na mighatu kwa jrmla.

Hekaya ya Mlima Mafi (Kiswahili)


Huu ni mfano mzuri wa kutunza mazingira. Tunza au kufa!

The legend of Mafi Mountain

If you look West out over Irente Viewpoint, you can see Mafi Mountain in the distance. The mountain is uninhabited yet wild food is plentiful. The legend says that if you visit the mountain you may take your fill of all the wild fruits which are bountiful. BUT you must not pick any and take them home. If you do, you will spend the rest of your days circling the mountain, you will never find your way home.

This is a good example of a story that helps conserve the local environment – conserve or perish!

Drawn by Lushoto school children.
Hadithi ya Mtu na Rafiki yake (Kiswahili)

A story about a Friend and his Neighbour

Long ago at the village of Mpanda in Lushoto district, there lived two men Kaboya and Mwilu. One day they decided to go down to the plains to hunt for meat to feed their children and themselves.

They hunted for many days without any luck. Eventually one day they found a small Dik Dik. They killed it and then made a fire. Kaboya told Mwilu that he was the hungriest so he should eat first. Mwilu disagreed and said, “No we have hunted together so we should eat together and not you first.” Kaboya replied, “If you don’t let me eat first I will kill you.” Mwilu said, “Kill me then but God will see you, here in the middle of nowhere.” As they were arguing a bird in a tree above them was listening. Kaboya turned to Mwilu and killed him with an arrow and then hung his body in the tree. Then he sat down and ate all the meat.

The bird started to sing;

“You killed Mwilu and hung him in the tree. I will tell everyone at home. You killed Mwilu and hung him in the tree. I will tell everyone at home.”

Mzee Sheshe (Sambaa ethnicity) Chake Chake Village shared some of the stories for this project. Credit: Samantha Ross.
After Kaboya had finished eating, he returned home. The bird followed him singing all the way. Kaboya arrived home and the bird sat on the tree outside. It began to sing its song. Relatives asked Kaboya where Mwilu was. Kaboya lied and said he was lost in the forest. The bird continued to sing again and again, and finally the relatives realised that Kaboya had killed Mwilu. The bird, without stopping its song, began to fly in the direction of the forest. The relatives followed until the bird landed in the tree where Mwilu was hanging. They saw Mwilu and took his body down. They dug a hole, placed the body inside and then covered the body with branches from the tree. Then they sadly returned home and finished the funeral according to their customs.

**Misoire ya Kubuu hile Kuahghoika Mdighe are Rangwi aya Azeto (Kima’a) (na Mzee Kibungi)**

A ta azeto are he idi la Rangwi mko wa 1954 heelitie ndighe kumure jiliye naare mhla wa Mlalo jiso na mhla wa Rangwi jikaoni mbeyu kumure vahe vekajisuanuiwa ka ndighe vekatotí ite jitesughaiwa ni vajerumani veshindiwe (veremiwe) he aku ya vangereza.


**Historia ya Baa la Mwisho la Nzige huko Rangwi (Kiswahili)**

(ri na Mzee Kibungi)

Kuna historia huko maeneo ya Rangwi mnamo mwaka 1954 ya baa la nzige. Katika mwaka huu walitokea nzige wengi sana kutoka upande wa Mlalo kwenda Rangwi ambako waliharibu mazao mengi. Watu waliwachukia sana nzige na waliamini kuwa nzige hao walitumwa na Wajerumani walioshindwa

**Historia ya Baa la Mwisho la Nzige huko Rangwi (Kiswahili)**

(ri na Mzee Kibungi)

Kuna historia huko maeneo ya Rangwi mnamo mwaka 1954 ya baa la nzige. Katika mwaka huu walitokea nzige wengi sana kutoka upande wa Mlalo kwenda Rangwi ambako waliharibu mazao mengi. Watu waliwachukia sana nzige na waliamini kuwa nzige hao walitumwa na Wajerumani walioshindwa

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*Drawn by local artist, Geoffrey Mathew Mkilanya, in Lushoto town.*

The story of the final Rangwi Locust disaster

By Mzee Kibungi

There is a story in the Rangwi area about a locust disaster in 1954. In this year there were a lot of locusts coming from Mlalo to Rangwi where they destroyed many crops. People were very angry and they believed the locusts were sent by the Germans.

There was a man named Kiandiko from the Mbugu tribe who was a traditional healer. One day this healer told all the people to be outside when the locusts were coming. As the locusts were flying towards Rangwi, everyone gathered outside.

Kiandiko was holding his gourd and he asked all the people to look in the direction of the locusts. Then he spoke some special words into his gourd and poured out medicine to change the direction the locusts were flying in. The locusts changed direction, flying south to Shume instead of landing in Rangwi.

It is said that locusts were never seen here again.
The Legend of Kweku Ananse

Ainsely Lewis
Jamaica

The legend of Kweku Anansi has travelled from the West African regions to the Caribbean via the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Anansi (also spelled Ananse or Anancy) from the Twi language means “spider”. The legend of Anansi is particularly known among the Asante people (Ashanti people) and related Akan peoples of Ghana. Ananse is particularly integral to the symbol of tradition. Story telling is a tradition in Africa that is passed from one generation to the next. It also bonds the family close together, and is an agent in bringing about a community spirit. The same applies to Jamaica, as we get our roots from African story telling. It is a joy to everyone when listening to a seasoned orator conveying Ananse stories to us as Jamaicans. Children would listen with glee to the Adventures of Ananse. I, as well as many others, enjoyed reading with delight Anansi stories in publications included in the national curriculum while we were in elementary school. Although this tradition is dying out in Jamaica, story telling is an integral part of our culture that links us back to our ancestry in West African regions.

Ananse is known for using his cunning nature, which he uses to his advantage at the expense of others. At times he falls into his own misfortunes due to his avarice and being outwitted by his peers. Although his adventures and downfalls are humorous, there is always a moral message behind them, which wise Jamaicans heed. Ananse, although known for his rebellious nature and his untamed spirit, gives us as Jamaicans a sense of pride and the liberty to express our freedom that our forefathers fought for. Ananse will forever be immortalized in both the Jamaican context and West African traditions.

This Ghanaian tale, which is also known in Jamaica, explains how Ananse stories and wisdom are scattered across the world:

Ananse and the Wisdom Pot

“A long time ago Kweku Ananse was respected as the wisest creature on earth. He was so wise that people came from all over to consult him. However, he grew tired of so much company, so he
Ananse, although known for his rebellious nature and his untamed spirit, gives us as Jamaicans a sense of pride and the liberty to express our freedom that our forefathers fought for. Ananse will forever be immortalized in both the Jamaican context and West African traditions.

decided to put all of his wisdom into a pot and climb a tall tree to hide from everyone. He hung the pot around his neck and proceeded up the tree. However, the pot hanging over his belly kept getting in the way of climbing. His son Ntikuma saw what was happening and told Ananse to tie it on his back so his hands would be free. Ananse was furious that his son knew something he didn’t, because it showed that he did not know everything. When Ananse smashed the pot to the ground, wisdom was scattered all over the world.”

Of the plethora of Ananse stories, the following two stories are examples of popular Ananse stories, as spoken in Jamaican Creole/Jamaican Patois, as contained in the published work *Jamaica Anansi Stories*.

**Anansi and the Tar-baby - The Grave**

“Once Mrs. Anansi had a large feed. She planted it with peas. Anansi was so lazy he would never do any work. He was afraid that they would give him none of the peas, so he pretended to be sick. After about nine days, he called his wife an’ children an’ bid them farewell, tell them that he was about to die, an’ he ask them this last request, that they bury him in the mids’ of the peas-walk, but firs’ they mus’ make a hole thru the head of the coffin an’ also in the grave so that he could watch the peas for them while he was lying there. An’ one thing more, he said, he would like them to put a pot and a little water there at the head of the grave to scare the thieves away. So he died and was buried.

All this time he was only pretending to be dead, an’ every night at twelve o’clock he creep out of the grave, pick a bundle of peas, boil it, and after having a good meal, go back in the grave to rest. Mistress Anansi was surprised to see all her peas being stolen. She could catch the thief no-how. One day her eldest son said to her, “Mother, I bet you it’s my father stealing those peas!” At that Mrs. Anansi got into a temper, said, “How could you expect your dead father to rob the peas!” Said, “Well, mother, I soon prove it to you.” He got some tar an’ he painted a stump at the head of the grave an’ he put a hat on it.

When Anansi came out to have his feast as usual, he saw this thing standing in the groun’. He said, “Good-evening, sir!” got no reply. Again he said, “Good-evening, sir!” an’ still no reply. “If you don’ speak to me I’ll kick you!” He raise his foot an’ kick the stump an’ the tar held it there like glue. “Let me go, let me go sir, or I’ll knock you down with my right hand!” That hand stuck fast all the same.
If you don’ let me go, I’ll hit you with my lef’ hand!” That hand stick fas’ all the same. An’ he raise his lef’ foot an’ gave the stump a terrible blow. That foot stuck. Anansi was suspended in air an’ had to remain there till morning. Anansi was so ashamed that he climb up beneath the rafters an’ there he is to this day.”

The Cowitch and Mr. Foolman.

“A gentleman had a cowitch* property. He wanted to have it cut down, but whoever cut it must not scratch their skin. Anyone who cut it down without scratching, he would give the pick of the best cow on his property. Many tried, but failed. Anansi says that he will cut it down. So the gentleman sent his son to watch and see that he cut the tree without scratching his skin at all. Anansi began cutting and the juice of the tree began to eat him. He wanted to scratch. He said to the boy, “Young massa, de cow yo’ papa goin’ to gi’ me, white here (scratches one side), black here (scratches the other), had a red here, had anodder black here, blue jus’ down at his feet.” He went on that way until he cut down the tree.

He got the cow, but he couldn’t manage the removal of the cow alone, and he didn’t want to get any intelligent person to assist him, he wanted a fool; so he got a man by the name of Foolman. Foolman wasn’t such a fool as he thought. They removed the cow to a place to butcher it near to Foolman’s yard, but Anansi did not know that. So he said to Foolman, “Brer Foolman, we mus’ get fire, roast plenty of meat.” Foolman said he didn’t know where to go to get fire. Anansi pointed out a little smoke a long distance off. Foolman refused to go. He got vexed and started to go for the fire himself. He was no sooner gone than Foolman called up his family, butchered the cow, and removed all the parts, leaving the tail. He dug a hole in the earth and drove the root of the tail down as tight as he could. When he thought it time for Anansi to come back, he held on to the hair of the cow-tail and called out, “Brer Nansi, run! Brer Nansi, run!” Anansi come and he say, “Brer Nansi, de whole cow gone, only tail!” He held on to the tail and both of them thought to pull up the cow. While pulling, the tail broke in two. So Anansi had to give Foolman a piece of the tail that popped off. So with all his cunning, he got but a very small piece.”

[* A kind of plant with poisonous juice.]

When an Anansi story is finished, the statement “Jack Mandora, me no choose none” would be uttered for a conclusion. “Jack mandora, me no choose none”, as defined by the Dictionary of Jamaican English means “this is not directed at anyone in particular, but with the implications that if the shoe fits, one may put it on”.

Dr. Pascale de Souza in her work “Creolizing Anancy: Signifying processes in New World Spider
"Tales" vividly depicts what Ananse stories meant to our ancestors in the slave period:

"Slaves needed a folk hero whom they could praise for his ability to defy more powerful forces, rather than a figure punished for defying the given order. Anancy's perennial rebellion against social norms and his use of trickery made him an attractive figure of resistance for this downtrodden people."

Ananse shows us, as Jamaicans in modern times, and to those who lived in the emancipation era (the era immediately after slavery has ended), how to be resilient, and how to survive and adapt in every situation. Ananse tales and concepts are a bridge that connects us to our ancestors and to related peoples of West Africa; it is a symbol of our African pride.

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Kwéyòl (Antillean French Creole) is spoken in many countries including Martinique, Commonwealth of Dominica, French Guyana, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Seychelles, Mauritius Réunion, St. Lucia, and remnants remain in Trinidad and Tobago and Grenada to name a few. Kwéyòl takes a seat in the heart of our identity and culture. In the Saint Lucia milieu, the vehicle or cultural transportation system for transmitting home-grown knowledge is the Kwéyòl language, the blood vessels which contain and sustain both the biotic and cultural heritage. If, as Frantz Fanon taught, ‘a language supports the whole weight of a people’s culture,’ then Kwéyòl storytelling is the right hand of our Kwéyòl oral tradition.

The Antillean Isle of St. Lucia does not have a full blown indigenous population as such, since most of them have been assimilated into the general population to form what is know as the Creole culture. Nonetheless, the Island of the iguanas – the island which bore the Amerindian names ‘Ioūanalao’ and ‘Hewanorra,’ meaning “there where the iguana is found” boasts a potpourri of four ethnic groups flowing in our cultural veins, which gave birth to the Kwéyòl Language. According to genotype, they are, in essence, Amerindian, European, African, and East Indian. The credence of the culture is carried in the language; thus Kwéyòl is the dominant medium for storytelling in our folklore. Overall, the dominant and most visible (phenotypically) ethnic group or cultural expression is that of the African posse, even if each of the other ethnic groups has a presence in the amalgamation. In some instances and in some activities, one ethnic group influence can lead-
out. For example, in the Kwéyòl language the vocabulary is mainly French, but the syntax bears strong African influence. Nevertheless, there are several Amerindian names and words embedded in the language and likewise for English influence.

Our expression in storytelling is in two genres, the storytelling or ‘Kont’ in itself, and the riddle, which makes reference to proverbs and other wise sayings. However, a ‘kont’ may also contain both genres. In both storytelling and riddles, the presenter begins with the refrain “Tim-Tim!”, whilst the audience responds, “Bwa chèz!”. The presenter calls again, “Tout sa Bondyé mété asou latè?”, to which the listeners respond, “Tout chòz!” However, for storytelling exclusively, the presenter calls to the audience “I di kwik!; to which they respond “kwak!” This same refrain between presenter and audience is repeated during the high points of the storytelling. Only then can the story or riddles begin or continue as the case may be. Hence, the call seems to be a call for the listeners’ undivided attention before the story teller begins or continues in earnest.

These stories carry much of the cultural heritage and lessons on morality and ethics, hope, love, patience, perseverance, hygiene, moderation, suffering, and hidden meanings. They sustain and capture our imagination and creativity in articulating our jokes, joys, pains, aspirations and disappointments. In verity, they speak to all of our lived experiences. The riddles, in particular are employed to test one’s thinking capacity or depth of reflection. In essence, these stories inform about the lives of the people and are used as entertainment or learning tools for our enjoyment, but more importantly, for our ultimate survival. It’s a method of sharing knowledge and testing one’s capacity to learn and observe and inform participants about both the biotic and cultural heritage too. In short, it is a local/traditional classroom based on our oral tradition. The verbal instructions take the form of questions and answers and stories which sometimes have hidden meanings, like parables and proverbs.

The follow are examples in both genres the Storytelling (‘kont’) and Riddles:

A. Storytelling

Title: Ti wonm pa bwilanm, sé métanm ki bwilanm.

Meaning: Removal of the skin does not burn; it’s the putting on of the skin that hurts or burns.

The story is told about a witch who made a pact with the devil, in order to gain economic advantage in her community. The condition of the pact was that for her to obtain the favors she requested, she
had to remove her skin before every session with the Devil and place it somewhere safe, since afterwards she must put it back on to become a normal human again. On several occasions she took her skin off while having audience with the devil, and as a result, began to prosper. But the devil, being a double crosser as he is, and who now needed to inflict pain on her, set someone up who was envious of her apparent economic success, to find out where she hid the skin. The devil instructed the envious person how to find the hidden skin. Having found the skin, he took the skin and soaked it in pepper, salt and vinegar and replaced it in the same spot. When the owner of the skin came back from her rendezvous with her slick Boss, the devil, she discovered the skin was now unbearable. She could no longer wear her skin. Thus, she began to weep inconsolably, howling, howling, “Ti wonm pa bwilanm, sé métanm ki bwilanm,” for it was impossible for her to become human again.

The moral of the story is that those who put aside their principles to obtain privileges stand to lose both. Moreover, the devil (trickster) is malicious; he will grant you favors, but will eventually (sooner or later) trap and dump you for spite as he is always in search of a new diabolic plot. It’s his nature to do so, so beware!

**B. Riddles & Proverbs**

**Question (Q.):** Dlo pann? - English (Eng.): Water hanging?
**Answer:** Koko – Eng.: Coconuts

**Q. :** Dlo doubout? – Eng: Water standing?
**Ans:** Kann – Eng: Sugarcane

**Q. :** Sél twavay ou ka toujou koumansé anho ? – Eng: The only job you always begin at the top?
**Ans. :** Fouyé tè - Eng. : Digging

Although storytelling relates life experiences, riddles, proverbs, warnings and morals, relate much more. Today, it is a threatened body of endangered knowledge and folk art. St. Lucia and, by extension, most other Kwéyòl speaking nations are losing this art form rapidly and the command of the language itself. There is a lot of language diluting. The status of Kwéyòl as a spoken language in St. Lucia needs to be checked and verified through systematic surveys in order to ascertain how widely spoken it is on the island. Story telling may well be one of the ways we can reverse the adulterating trend, by upholding this ancient oral tradition. As Marie Françoise Bernard-Sinseau of Martinique puts it,"In the Eastern Caribbean, the non-official Creole language is the guardian of the Carib heritage in popular culture thanks to the folktales. It is the vector of technicity from ancient times. It preserves the riches of our bestiary ( coulirou, balaou, titri, lambi...) and popular culture is the cornerstone of local societies.” So then, let the retelling of the storytelling continue!
K'alal ik'ub li banomile
When the Earth Got Dark

José Luís López Gómez
Tsotsil

A note from the Author: José Luís wanted to clarify that the story does not belong to him and that it has been told in his community for time immemorial. He wanted to share the story with others so he translated it from his original language to Spanish and those at Project SEED helped him translate into English. José Luís says:

“This story is told by elders in my hometown of San Juan Chamula in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. This town is located in the highland region of los Altos de Chiapas. The original name of this area was Cham yo’ which means, the water died. During colonization the name was changed to what it is today. This narration is done in tsotsil, my indigenous tongue, and from a young age we are told this story so that we have respect for our mother earth, maiz, but especially the gods that govern the Earth.”

Taj svo’nejal banomil, li muk’ta moletike, ja’ xalik ti jun k’ak’al ik’ub li osilé, jech no-ox tok ja’ xalik ti bael viniketike ja’ mux xch’u-unik ti matalé, mu’yuk slekil lij xkuxlejalike, ja’ no ox ti bu xbatike, k’usitik no-ox slajesik. Mu’yuk xi ch’ik ta sventa lij kajbaltike. Ja’ je chik to-ox li bael viniketike.

Tij kalbaltike ja’ laj skelik ti chopol ti vinik laj spasike, jak la yalik ti mu’yuk k’usi sventa, ja’ yu’un laj snopik k’uxelan xu’ stuk’imtasik ti viniketike. Va’ yu ja la smalaik ti skekubike, k’alal las k’elik ti mu’yuk no-ox xtok slekilal li viniketike, lij kajbaltike ja’ laj tsobmsbaik, já la xyalik: li viniketike ja mux sch’u-unik lij mantaltike, mu’yuk xyich’banik ta muk’, ja’ sk’an xkak’betik yilik ti schopolalike ja’ yu’un laj snopik xyik’ubtasik li banomile.

Ti banomile ja’ ik’um skotol, li viniketike ja’ mux snaik ti k’usi k’ot ta pasele, ja’ no-ox spasik ti k’usitik nopemiké, múyuk no-ox xyich’ik ta venta li kajbaltike. Ti ik’ oxile ja’ jaliy ep k’ak’al, va’yu ja’ lik sk’elik ti k’usi muxa stak’ pasike. Ti vinetike, xchiuk ti tak’inetike ja’ lik xkuxlejal, lok’tal sat, xchiuk ye, likik ta k’opojel. Ja’ skotol likik ta ti’banej, ti viniketike ja’ snak’ sbaik, ti ik’osile ja mu’yuk k’usi stak’ sk’elik. Va’yu ti viniketike ja’ likik ta sjipel ti kusitik oy yu’-unike, sventa mux xtiotik yu’un.

Ja’ jech lajik ti bael viniketike li’ ta banomile, mu’yuk buch’o kuxin komel. Ja’ yu’-un xyaliko ti
When the Earth got dark

Elders narrate that thousands of years ago the Earth did not have the clarity that it has today. They also say that the first people were imperfect, they wandered from place to place and ate whatever they found because they did not work, or respect the gods. They were the first people who inhabited Mother Earth.

The gods realizing the imperfections of their children said their creations were useless and began thinking about how to correct them. But for a time were hoping they would improve, but on the contrary, they became more rebellious, they mistreated their creator, not taking him into account, they forgot him, never realizing they were made by divine hands. Then the gods said, “Since you do not respect us or take us into account, we will punish all of you.” The gods then thought of a punishment for their children and decided to darken the world to serve as an example of their foolishness.

The whole Earth was covered in duskiness—the darkness was total. Those first people asked themselves what was happening and did not understand. Amongst themselves they were confident that they could solve everything, as they did not take into account the gods. But the darkness lasted for a long time and they began to worry and in that they began to regret the wrong they had done to the gods. As the gods saw their repentance, they knew that was the price they had to pay for their mistakes. It so happened that everything began to have life in the darkness, the pots that were once used for cooking now had eyes and a mouth so they began to speak. The people who could still light up a torch of pine with anguish and horror saw what was happening. All tools used for work and cooking began to devour all the people in and all you could hear were the sounds of them being devoured. People ran to hide but in the darkness they could not see and were trapped by the metal pots that at one time they used. So the people began to destroy everything they had in their homes lest they come to life.

So it was in this way that the first people on Earth died. No one survived, and everything was left in complete silence. Now they say that some of the pots found in caves are from that time because when the pots finished devouring the people, they hid there awaiting the light of day to return.

Then the gods seeing that the Earth no longer had people began to think about their new creation. They imagined that people had to be cheerful and respectful. So they used maiz to form the new people. This is why when we pray for maiz we say: “sacred shadow of God, sacred reflection of our Lord, we cannot bear hunger, nor can we bear thirst; my essence is your shadow, your reflection is my body.” Saint Salvador created the people by blowing into the nose and ears of his creation to bring life and so his creation would have spirit and blood. This is why, it is very important that we take care of maiz, because it is part of our body and our spirit. We must also continue to obey the gods, because the elders say that if we make the same mistakes as the first people did, it will happen again that the Earth will darken and objects and tools will once again come to life.
Kanoko

Nora Gonzales & Claudio Bustillos
Rarámuri


Mulipi na’irli o’mochia mapu ko’na walu rajina kuuchi ku.

Ali je aniy e kine ochipali Erasmo reweami, mapu pe’ ke binoy riwayo ruye, noli be mapu a’li taa kaachi kipu ochipali cho echaniya ruwai cho.

Mapu echi ocherami ko je aniya ruawai, mapu we kanilika e’pereeli, sinibi napawika no’chali a’li omawa a sicho, ki ta ko walu chiiliweka kita wichimoba mapu rika wka namuti niji sinibi rawe.

Noli be sine kaachi, repakie resochi si’la ruwai ajare ralamuli ne bawe we’eli, ne a we’eli be ko, ma bela ko echo’na e’perea ruwai, echi mapu kano anea anei ru.

Echi kano, ma’a sineami namuti jakami kwichi niruami ko’ali, ke bile namuti ripiuka echi rika bi’che, maa ralamuli eperelachi a’a o’nokali kowa’ami.

Echi ocheramii bela sineami pakotami napabuli, a’li je rika anili, mapu sineami ka koupa echi kano; echi jita bela minabi suwisii echi kowa’ami, jita ko echi kano ne bawe rasiami koa’amii nilii, kilipi nira a bela suwisili echi kowa’ami. A’li bi’che sine rawe, mapu a’li echi muki komichi ye u’chuti namuti wchoa, a’li bi’che echona silii echi kano noli be echi kuuchi muchi chikosiami nilii kopoa rua’a, ne’ bela ke bile chiiliweka ye’li kipi iye echi kuuchi muchi, jita asibama echi lowa’ala.

Photo credit: Nora Gonzales & Claudio Bustillos
Je’ na ko minabi walu koyenali echi omo’nali jita ko ma minabi suwisali echi kuuchi mapu we sema anika o’nokali kachiya raboa’ye.

Che sine kachi bile rejojy je rika ilali mapu sineami pakotami najiremka nochama a’m ra’abo, mapu a’li sineami ralamuli we o’noka nocha echi jibinila ko we o’noka kowa’ami newaa koniwa ruya ma suunisa nocha.

Noli be echi rijoy chami cho na’tali mapi chu rika suwa’ama echi kano, a’li bi’che a bajurenali kano, ne bela sapuka simiale nochasia. Ma suwinisa ko echi rijoy betelahi ma kala manili kowa’ami mapu sineami ka ko’mea. Noli be echi kano ne weli bitoli bochiami ya’ero kowa’ami jita ne kala sebali bosama. A’li ma kala bosasa ma ku resochi simiali ku risib’sia.

A’li ma roko’o ta alabe anichana ruwai ruluwa, ne we ri’ichana ruwai, ne mi nakamta aniya resochikaye. Ma che’lachi k we sapuka sime’ali echi ochei jawami i’nesia chu o’la echa nili ro’koo, ali ma sisaa ko riwali mapu ma suwika bitili echi kano, ali je ilali echi ralamuli mapu romia suwili weli kosaa rapako.

Noli be ke wesi machili mapu echi rejoi nulali, batosi rakala batunla nulali jita echo nachi suwa’ama echi kano.

Ali echona jonsa ko ma we kanilii jita ko ma ke iteli mapu jita o’monaba echi kano ma suwaba suwili. Jipi ko sineami kuuchi ma ke ichipka rejolima. A’li jipi ko echi wichimoba ayenacho ma we semarelsi ku mapu rika nilii chabe ki’ya, echi ku’uchi ne bawe ujuma o’nokali wikarakaa ali we kachiya. A’li echi kawi ma minabi ku wika namuti jakami ku uchutuli. Ke bela wesi machili mapu echirika natali echi rejijy mapu echi ku’a’ka suwa’ama echi kano.

Noli a machili echi na’tali mapu rika olali echi rejoi ali sineami mapu kuiruli. Jita ko kita wichimoba tamo weka namuti i’ya mapu rika we kala jaka ajarupa.

Jita bela je’ na’ raichali tamo na’tali i’ya mupu chu sika a sineami najiremka nochasa a we kalabe machi ali a omeripa sayeria mapu chakena na’ta tamo kit’ra. Ta ko re weli ralamuli ke. Ke pi ko sewesa re ko.
Ganoco

The Rarámuri are a group of Indigenous people that live in the Sierra Tarahumara in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. This region is characterized for its ample oral tradition that has been transmitted from generation to generation through the course of years. As an example, the Indigenous instructor Nora Gonzales and Claudio Bustillos share the following story:

By the fire of three stones and burning wood.

My grandfather Erasmo told me that this is not something he saw, but when he was a little boy his grandfather would tell him.

The most elderly would share that in the past the village people were happy and always came together to work and celebrate the good harvest that the land would grant them.

But suddenly in the caves that were among the hills came to live giant men, very very large men called “ganocos.”

They ate all the wild animals until they had to find food in the village.

The elders gathered together and agreed that the community would have to feed the ganocos.

The people in the village were left with very little food as the ganocos ate a lot and so little by little the ganocos ate all the food until one day, while the women washed clothes in the river, the ganocos arrived and took their children to eat them. Unflinching the ganocos weren’t bothered by tearing babies from the arms of their mothers to appease their own hunger.

This became a problem and the community was very saddened since there were no longer children who could brighten up the land with their laughter.

One day a man decided to organize the community to do a task (all would work in the field while the women would make the food to celebrate at the end of the work day). And so, all the men and women of the village came together to work.

But this man went on to invite the ganocos to work with the promise that at the end of the day there would be plenty of food.

And so it went, that when they finished the work, the women called everyone to eat. They all gathered together around the campfire and the ganocos awaited with great big bowls of special meal prepared just for them. Happily, the ganocos devoured everything in their sight until they were filled and returned to their caves.

At night they heard moaning coming from the caves and the whole community was scared of these startling noises.

The next day the men of the village with traditional responsibilities were sent to see what had occurred in the caves and when they arrived they realized the ganocos had died from all the food they had eaten.

The whole community was happy and celebrated knowing that the ganocos were dead and they could once again allow their children to run free.

Elders say that the families had hidden the few children who were still alive and now that the children ran, sang and smiled, the land returned to its original state.

Mother Nature greened and again birthed animals. Nobody knew that the man who had organized the work day had asked his wife to grind enough chilicote to kill the ganocos.

But what they did know was that when the community came together to work, the land gave them the gift of life.

This legend shows us that when people come together they can beat giants.
In October of 2010, I made a trip to Saanich, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, to talk with WSÁNEĆ elder STOLȻEɬ (John Elliott) of the Saanich Tribal School and Peter Brand of First Voices for Langscape Volume II, Issue 7. At that time, Terralingua was exploring a collaboration with the WSÁNEĆ for a Voices of the Earth oral literature documentation project.

I was given the article ALEṈENEȻ to study. What stood out for me at that point was the concept of learning from place. STOLȻEɬ explained to me that everything was once human, the animals, the rocks, the trees, and walked amongst us to teach us how to live.

I returned this April, to see how the now active oral literature project was coming along for a presentation in this issue, and witnessed something that amazed me: that it is possible for a (nearly) dormant culture/language to become a living language once more.

For this interview, I spoke to five Saanich Language Apprentices: MENÉŦIYE, PENÁWEN, PENÁĆ, PITELĂNEWOT and SXƏDTELISIYE. These people, working under the guidance STOLȻEɬ, form the next generation of fluent SENĆOŦEN speakers. They have been working with the elders in a situation similar to Leanne Hinton's Master-Apprentice program, with the addition of developing their own programs to teach the language to other young WSÁNEĆ, including a language nest for pre-schoolers.

As part of the collaborative project with the WSÁNEĆ, Terralingua began working with the apprentices to support their effort to document their traditional stories. Two stories were chosen, they were recorded and transcribed in SENĆOŦEN, and they were turned into two books illustrated by the apprentices themselves, to be presented to the community.

This article was originally intended to be a presentation on this small facet of their amazing work. However, I was greatly inspired by the strength of conviction of these voices, and felt that it was imperative to share the greater whole of the messages that they had to give. As I did not want to dilute the essence of their messages, I decided to keep their words in their original form from the interviews and allow the readers to draw their own conclusions.

Thus it is my pleasure to present to you the stories within the story, the language stories of these bright-eyed young language apprentices in their journey to revitalize language and culture within their community: The Voices of the Earth.
MENETIYE TE NE SNÁ. Ć,SE LÁ,E SEN ET W̱SÁNEĆ. STIWET I XEDXELMEŁOT TŦE NE ŚU,ÁLI. Ć,SE LÁ,E SEN ET TŦE JESIṈSET ŚWÉLOKE.

My name is MENETIYE, I am from W̱SÁNEĆ on Southern Vancouver Island. STIWET and XEDXELMEŁOT are my parents. I come from the “always trying to better yourselves clan”. To think about the language, my family, and my people, all three of those are one unit. One of my favorite sayings is from my grandfather. He said: “The SENĆOŦEN language is inside of you, because you are W̱SÁNEĆ, it is in your blood, now we just have to find out what the fire is to light under you’re a** to wake it up”. This quote totally shows the personality and philosophy of my elder’s generation, and how nothing is impossible and how we are born with the inherent rights and ability to speak and learn our language.

When I was young I used to hear a lot of talk about our language, and different ideas how the fluent speakers were going to teach the younger generation. We would have language sessions in the living room at my grandmother’s house and my parent’s house. Our language lessons at my family’s house were always a lot of fun and we shared many laughs, a lot of tea, and everyone was welcome. My personal favorite part of sitting and learning language with my family was sitting and listening to my late Uncle Gabe ŁEKTEN Bartleman tell old W̱SÁNEĆ stories. ŁEKTEN made the stories sound like songs and he would act out the parts of the stories, it always felt like we were in the story with him even though I could barely understand the story he was telling. Although our family language lessons were fun and we enjoyed each others’ company I could tell we were having these language lessons because the elders were afraid we were going to lose our ancient language. I grew up hearing SENĆOTEN, and hearing how beautiful the language is, and about family history. I feel I have the responsibility to carry on with the work that the older people in my family worked on to the best of my abilities.

We do try to take English stories and translate them into SENĆOTEN but since we are not fluent sometimes our translations don’t come out the way they are supposed to. For myself I am still trying to stop myself from going from English into SENĆOTEN because it changes the sentence structure of SENĆOTEN. I really enjoy listening to old recordings and transcribing from them, because it is also a learning tool for myself as many of the words in those old recordings aren’t used in our everyday lives very often. Also because we have so few speakers of SENĆOTEN we don’t get to hear a fluent speaker tell stories on a daily basis, to hear the tone of voice and the accent is also very important. Every time I listen to the old recordings I learn from them.

I do believe that all of our stories have a deeper meaning, but most stories do. The difference between western stories and W̱SÁNEĆ stories is that at the end of the western stories the storyteller explains the deeper meaning; while in the W̱SÁNEĆ stories it is the job of the audience to figure out what the deeper meaning is. Some people say that our creation stories are mythical but our people know they are true. The origin of many of our words in SENĆOTEN comes from our creation stories, and it explains how old our language is at the same time.
A language apprentice is a student of the language, committed to learning the language and becoming a fluent speaker in order to eventually teach it. A language apprentice is also an agent of the language's preservation, who creates support material, resources and curriculum for teachers and community. The language apprentice's task is ensuring the language's survival according to the direction of a qualified language authority.

The language apprenticeship has been a great privilege. It has been a great reward to me not just in terms of its cultural significance and of attaining the ability to listen and speak the language, but also as a human being. Yes it is a job, and an important one at that, but sometimes it is undermining it by referring to it as a job. I am fulfilled in the work as it has meaning, not only to me, but the community at large. I am satisfied understanding and working toward that purpose. The language apprenticeship has not only enabled me to grow, but has really made me grow as a human being.

When I had initially taken it upon myself to be a language apprentice, in relation to my growth to this point, my comprehension of the language and its ultimate value was obscure. The relevance of the work itself was a no brainer in terms of its proposed outcome. However, when I reflect back now, my feeling is that there was no substance to the language that I was using. One reason was because I had not yet indulged in the language's real intent in terms of what the language says on its own terms, rather than taking the inherent translations for granted. In other words, I had not explored how words say what they say. A better way to address meaning in the language, or the intent (considering a lack of official linguistic expertise) is considering rationale in the language. In consideration for rationale of the language, I have come to realize that the rationale is at the core of the way the old people had thought. Another thing to consider is cadence, or rhythm of the language as well as tone. As it is the case with many languages, the changes in intonation often indicate different meaning. In essence, the language has a song, a rhythm to an older tune that is still underlined, or suggested by our SENĆOTEN first language-speaking elders. I had heard before on several occasions that when the old people spoke that it was like a song, which I have been privileged to hear. However, other than liking the sound of the tune I had not paid it much mind, and my mode of speech was like a robot. I had begun to mimic the tune of the language, and somehow it began to wake up inside of me. Both the language's structure and the rationale had suddenly began to unveil to my comprehension. I still have much to learn but ultimately this is what has made me speak and understand the language.
Similar to most First Nation languages, it is very difficult to translate a story word for word from English to SENĆOŦEN. I believe that a SENĆOŦEN story may lose the essence when translated or told in English. There is a certain rhythm to the sound and expressions given when you hear a story in SENĆOŦEN. I think that the stories created so far, should stay in SENĆOŦEN and keep the idea of a “Word key” so that learners can use the word key to translate the story themselves for language practice and use the key to understand and comprehend the story in their own way to help them gain knowledge of how SENĆOŦEN works.

Each of our SENĆOŦEN stories have a teaching inside the story. Every character plays an important role in the stories and tells us about their characteristics and why they are the way they are today. It is a belief of the WSÁNEĆ people that our great creator changed our animal ancestors and all living things for a reason: to teach us how we as WSÁNEĆ people were taught to live in our territory. Our stories will always serve as a general guideline to the way we raise our children. Manners, acts of kindness, and acknowledgements are examples of what teachings are portrayed through our WSÁNEĆ stories.

My family has been tremendous support for my long-term goal of becoming a fluent SENĆOŦEN speaker. I feel that I have a duty to continue on the work that has been started by my late grandfather Dave Elliott Sr. and my father John Elliott Sr. and many of my Aunts and Uncles. The work that we do now would not even be possible if the alphabet had not been created and the teachers we have now use our alphabet to revitalize and document thousands of words and phrases. I feel that we cannot forget the work that has already been done and we as SENĆOŦEN Apprentices use the work they have done and build on it to bring awareness to our people that our language is still here and it is very possible to return to our standard of living.
My three daughters TOLISIYE, LIQIŦIÁ, and ŦE,ILIYE were given SENĆOŦEN SNÁs (names) by their SILE STOLȻEȽ (Grandfather John). Using SENĆOŦEN names as their legal first names was a statement we wanted to instill in our children to be proud of being WSÁNEĆ. Their names connect to their land (LIQI-waterlily), sea (TOL-out at sea), and WSÁNEĆ virtues (ŦE,IT-truth).

I want my children to have the opportunity that many of our people did not have, that I did not have, to hear our ancestral tongue in the home. Morning routines in our home are now in the language and all my girls are now acknowledging me as TÁN (mom) and used to me ignoring them till they acknowledge me in SENĆOŦEN.

I am learning SENĆOŦEN alongside my children and I know there will be a time where they will surpass me in fluency.

Using the language with my daughters has become a daily thing.

Our language nest is called SENĆOŦEN LE,NONET SCUL,ÁUTW (SENĆOŦEN Survival School). It consists of 8 students. It is a SENĆOŦEN immersion run preschool/daycare. The curriculum is based on our WSÁNEĆ 13 ŁKÁŁJ SĆELÁNEṈ (13 moons). The themes are culturally tied to our WSÁNEĆ beliefs, harvesting, and connections to land. The students are learning from a SENĆOŦEN perspective, and we are using the Dave Elliott SENĆOŦEN Alphabet. The students work on 6 different booklets that introduce, colors, numeracy, shapes, SENĆOŦEN alphabet practice, Names, and family and community. Parents are required to sign a contract, that they will commit themselves to learning the language alongside their child. Take-home parent kits are another way to get language into the home and we are close to having this resource available to parents. These kits contain flash cards, labels, games, recipes, and many resources that parents can use in the home. Also, we have elders and language instructors come in a couple of days a week to help us new language teachers with language fluency building.

Our language nest is so important and we are trying to be creative to keep it sustainable. These children have learned so much in the 3 months [since we started the language nest] and these 3/4 year olds are bringing language into their homes. Our language is still at a critical state and we are looking at different methods of revitalizing and keeping our language alive. Our children are our hope and future.
PITELÁNEWOT

In 2007, I was hired as a SENĆOŦEN Language apprentice. My responsibility as an Apprentice was to become a Language Carrier. I was given the task to learn the language, and become a teacher. These were a couple of goals at the beginning. Learning our SENĆOŦEN language. This was a huge undertaking at my age. I had been busy with raising two girls, and 4 boys, one grand-daughter and one grandson. As well as completing a Social Work Degree and Masters of Education Degree. I had been a learner of the English Language for so long. I had developed many habits and learned a culture that was not mine. But I learned how to walk with my feet firmly planted, one in the WENITEM (the people who appeared) world and one in the WILNEW WSÁNEĆ world.

I put life aside once again and opened my heart to my SENĆOŦEN Language journey. I was determined to become a carrier of our SENĆOŦEN language. I had the desire and determination to learn because I believe it is my responsibility to help pass on our language to future generations.

I became part of the “movement” of SENĆOŦEN language revitalization. STOLȻEȽ (John Elliott) at one of our classes mentioned, that we as learners have to acquire a SENĆOŦEN attitude. What we are doing is freeing our people when we are learning the language. We are freeing ourselves from all the wrongs of the past history which was meant to shackle our people to a culture that was not meant for us.

I feel the Language. It may be hard for a researcher of science to understand this because it is something that is not tangible. You cannot see it or touch it. For me it is there, the spirit of the language. The SENĆOŦEN language has always lived in me. I just had to wake it up.

I do have a SENĆOŦEN attitude. I expect that I role model this to my children. I think in the language. I speak as much as I can to my children in the language. Even if it is simple commands. I will use the language. My 4 year old son is in the LENONET SCUL HÁUTW. HELI (life) is the name of my 4-year-old. He understands me when I tell him to do things in the language. His brothers understand and say things to him too. I talk with my children about beliefs and values and how this makes us WSÁNEĆ WILNEW. To respect the teachings of the Elders. To respect our ALEṈENEȻ. To respect the animals, and the trees.

We harvest medicine in August down at TIXEN. My way to teach them is how I was taught through role-modeling. My eldest daughter Shana age 24, has taken many teachings from myself and her SILE (grandmother), my TÁN (mother). I have always told her that she has a responsibility as the Eldest to teach her siblings. Shana has taken her responsibility seriously and she has taught her siblings through conversations. Spoke to them about respect. The importance of respecting the Elders. She has taught them to respect themselves and young men and women. I am proud of this because with a large family and a busy life it does get overwhelming. She would have the time to talk with them when I was not around or if I was locked in my room doing homework. I am PITELÁNEWOT first before anything. I may be a “counselor with a M.Ed.” a “Council member of STÁUTW, Tsawout First Nation”, but most importantly, I am me, a mother. I live my teachings and culture. I have a SENĆOŦEN attitude. When I am doing any work my teachings are presented first. I have traditional modalities; I burn sweet grass, KEXMIN (Indian consumption plant). I light candles and do prayer of gratitude to our creator. I carry much of this because I care about our people in our community. This is what I bring with me to Girls Group, to education and to health, to our environment and to our communities.
About the Images in this article:

The illustrations in this article were done by the Saanich Language Apprentices for the project: WYELḴEN IST TTÉ SXÍÁM ŁTE Bringing Our Stories Back with support from, and in collaboration with, Terralingua. Illustrations 1 and 6 were drawn by MENEŦIYE. Illustrations 2-5 were drawn by PENÁĆ and digitized by PENÁW̱EṈ.

References:

1 www.firstvoices.ca
2 www.terralingua.org/voicesoftheearth
3 See Langscape Volume II, Issue 7, page 14. ÁLEṈENEȻ: Learning from Place, Spirit, and Traditional Language. Many of the voices within the ÁLEṈENEȻ are the same ones in the interview here. http://www.terralingua.org/lit/langscape/
4 See ref. 3 above, and the article in the same issue, page 12: Interview with John Elliot, First Voices.
5 I found the best source for information on the program is the following video link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcHrlBmxEWM. The Master-Apprentice Program (MAP) was first developed in California specifically for Native American languages, but the program can be used to learn any language. It was initially created by Leanne Hinton, Nancy Richardson, Mary Bates Abbott and others (Hinton 2001). For more information on the program in California, see the website for the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival at http://www.aicls.org/. The goal of this program is to facilitate the development of fluent speakers through a program where Elders/fluent speakers are partnered with committed learners in an immersion environment in the home and on the land for 300 hours a year. This is a one-on-one program. In both the video and the website, you will also learn about the “Breath of Life Program” in which participants, whose languages have few or no speakers, are supported to access, understand, and do research on materials on their languages, and to use them for language revitalization. The stories of success in the video were quite touching.
6 “In the early 1960s, Dave Elliott became a custodian at the Tsartlip Indian Day School, attended by most of the Saanich children. Dave recognized the rapid decline in the use of SENĆOŦEN and the knowledge of the language and culture. The late Phillip Paul led an initiative to establish the Saanich Indian School Board. The SENĆOŦEN language was immediately offered as part of the curriculum of the band-operated school. Realizing that without a method of recording the language it would eventually be lost, Dave began to write down SENĆOŦEN words phonetically. He soon discovered that upon returning to read previously recorded words, he could not understand what he had written. Dave studied with a Victoria linguist, learning the International alphabet and other orthographies. The main difficulty with these systems was that some of the complex sounds of the SENĆOŦEN language required numerous symbols to be represented, resulting in long and complicated words. Dave decided to devise his own alphabet, using only one letter to denote each sound. He purchased a used typewriter for $30 and set out to make the SENĆOŦEN writing system accessible to his people. During the winter of 1978 the Dave Elliott SENĆOŦEN Alphabet was created.”. www.sisb.bc.ca/index3.html/
As a graduate student in linguistics who engages in documentary fieldwork on the Mortlockese language in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), I am reminded over and over again that I have teachers not only in the university classroom, but also in the communities where I work. It may seem easy to point out some obvious differences between the two contexts; for example, in a university classroom, I would expect to receive handouts, read computer presentations on a projector, engage in critical thinking discussions around a table, and so forth. In the field, I wouldn't expect to encounter such things, and yet in a way, I do: the summary handouts are realized as moments when my host grandmother shows me the process of cooking máái nééné ‘roasted breadfruit’, the projector is the entire faash ‘pandanus tree’ which a friend explains to me by pointing at individual parts, and the discussions are facilitated not around a table but in a mösöró ‘cookhouse’ where discussions almost always start off with cups of coffee. What I am beginning to realize, too, is that an integral part of the epistemology of these local communities is storytelling. This not only includes what we might consider the traditional genre of a narrative – that is, a sequentially ordered account of events – but I consider “storytelling” to include other genres such as expository texts, anecdotes, jokes, procedural texts, proverbs, and so forth; these are all deftly woven into the creation, explanation, and dissemination of bodies of knowledge. This is all the more evident when I reflect on my experiences asking my host family, friends, and consultants about the traditional ecological knowledge of their local communities. It does not matter how long the list of bird names nor how many pages in the book of local plants; my teacher at the moment will find a way to incorporate some type of text to contextualize the information in ways that are meaningful not only to him/her, but also to me as a student. The transmission of biocultural knowledge through oral storytelling is a fundamental part of how these community members shape and share knowledge, and I am continuously learning how to shape my own fieldwork methodology to their lesson plans.

While many of the languages in geographic Micronesia are well-documented in terms of the availability of published reference and pedagogical grammars, not all are, and kapsen Mwoshulök ‘Mortlockese’ in particular has very little representation in the linguistics literature.1 As a student engaged in documentary fieldwork, I am guided by the recent charges by experts in the field of language documentation to take a “discourse-centered approach” (Woodbury 2003:41). No longer are individual wordlists or a set of felicitous sentences the sole goal of

1 See Rehg 2004 for a discussion of the efforts of various collaborative projects from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and the East-West Center for the documentation of Micronesian languages and the training of Micronesian educators.
The objective, rather, is to create a documentary corpus of real-world uses of language, as varied as possible. The impetus for this change comes not only from the increasing emphases on documenting linguistic diversity (cf. Woodbury 2003) and the encroaching realities of language endangerment (cf. Hale et al. 1992), but also from the recognition of connections between linguistic, biological, and cultural diversity (cf. Maffi 2005). Needless to say, this is a very exciting prospect! There is so much knowledge out there to record and understand, and we are not necessarily restricted to specific grammatical investigations. The net we need to cast has to be much larger than before. To facilitate the casting of that large net, I have often found that by shifting the conversation to topics of biocultural knowledge, I would come across something that resonates with the speaker I am working with in ways that are meaningful to him/her. Be it knowledge of medicinal uses of plants, or the phases of the moon, or the various ways of local styles of fishing, each person has his/her own specialty, and very often I am treated to unelicited stories which serve as the means of transmitting that information.

The structure of existing materials often serve as great elicitation tools, allowing the speaker to expand on information he/she feels is relevant while following a predetermined order, such as the pages in a book. In the summer of 2010, I returned to the atoll where I had previously worked as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Pakin Atoll is the home to a community of Mortlockese-speaking residents in Pohnpei State. For one of my elicitation tools, I used a small full-color brochure titled *Plants of Pohnpei.* I asked my host mother, Annastasia Maipi, to look through the images in this brochure, which provides local names in Pohnpeian and descriptions/uses in English. My general request of her at the beginning of our recording session was for her to go through each plant, identifying the ones which grow on Pakin and the various medicinal, culinary, or cultural uses of the plant. As we started, there was not much I needed to do by way of asking directed questions about the plants. Annas very much took the lead, recounting not only facts about how the plant is used but also stories and memories surrounding the plant, texts which I did not specifically elicit. Towards the beginning of her discussion about *kūshel* ‘turmeric’ (*Curcuma longa*), she remarked, “Loomw, imi kan itei mwongo, emi ioor eeu kkón, iir mii amata nganei kūshel llan shoo we, raa iúngútei, mii kai mmn nganei llan kkón we, upé nanganei llan arúngún kkón we, utáán ram!” (‘A long time ago, I used to take part in eating *kūshel*, there was a certain type of pounded breadfruit pudding, they would grate the *kūshel* with the coconut, they would...’)

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2 I would like to acknowledge the Arts and Sciences Student Research Award from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa for this funding opportunity to conduct fieldwork on Pakin in the summers of 2010 and 2011.

3 This brochure is published by the Conservation Society of Pohnpei in collaboration with the New York Botanical Garden and the Japan Official Development Assistance.
then squeeze it, then it would be put onto the pounded breadfruit pudding, and if you were to look at the coconut cream of the pudding, it's so yellow!”) After this, we entered a discussion of some other uses of the shéén ‘leaves’ and faúen ‘tuber’, including my question to Annas about the use turmeric to create a body powder, which is a part of culture of outer island Yap communities to the west, but not something that Annas had observed on Pakin or Pohnpei. Immediately after this, completely unprompted by me, Annas returned to her earlier topic of the kkón ‘pounded breadfruit pudding’ that is made with kúshel, whereby she explicated the cultural significance of that special dish: “Loomw, usun llan sokkon kkón we re kan féérei, usun shak ngé re kan féérei pwe mii kan ioor kapsen sokkon fansóun pwata repé mwongo sokkon kkón we. Usun aewan – re Mwoshulok re kai úró ‘naúfé’, aewan nainain – re kan féérei sökkón kkón mii kúshel, iwe pwúpwpwúlú kewe, mwomwmwongo fangan. Iwe ina uluulen.” ('A long time ago, for the kkón that people used to make, it was as if they made it to eat for a special occasion. I think that the most important reason – the Mortlockese say naúfé, which means just recently born – they would make the kkón that has kúshel, and then the married couple who had the child would eat it together. That was the way it was.‘) I was particularly struck by her use of loomw ‘a long time ago’ in both instances; over the course of several years of interactions with speakers of Mortlockese, I’ve learned that loomw is not just used as a temporal adverb in the strictest sense, but it also functions as a discourse marker which frames the following passage as a narrative. It is the job of the listener to follow that information which is arguably foregrounded because of its prominent place in the discourse at that point in time (especially in the context of a text that is not temporally sequenced). I inferred that my host mother was sharing something from her cultural knowledge of kúshel because it was directly relevant to our conversation at hand about how re Mwoshulok ‘Mortlockese people’ use that important plant.

Another example comes from my interactions with a native speaker of pworausen Pááfeng ‘Pááfeng’ while working on a project in Chuuk. Constantine Dungawin assisted me in identifying the local names for some of the flora and fauna of his home atoll of Pááfeng. My elicitation tool was a set list of flora and fauna that are commonly found throughout Micronesia, such as the coconut (Cocos nucifera). Because Pááfeng and Mortlockese are very closely related languages, most of my interaction with Constantine was in the medium of Mortlockese for the purposes of explaining my questions, and he would reply in Pááfeng. The list, however, was essentially a set of

4 I would also like to acknowledge the Island Research and Education Initiative for providing the opportunity to travel to Chuuk to conduct elicitations on the languages of Chuuk State (Chuukese, Mortlockese, Pááfeng, Nómwonweité, and Polowatese) in 2009 and 2010.
English words and phrases that needed translation into the local language. The time constraints during those elicitation sessions meant that I could only primarily focus on eliciting the terms from that pre-determined list, but this did not deter me from asking Constantine about local names of other flora and fauna that were not on the list. By shifting the mode of our conversation from an elicitation-translation session into a question-answer discussion, this provided the opportunity for spontaneous expository texts to arise, which Constantine allowed me to record in addition to the main work. In these stories, anecdotes, and procedurals, he mentioned names of animals which I had never heard of before while living on Pakin or in the other languages I was working on. For example, after discussing commonly-found mollusks such as *siim* (*Tridacna clam*) and *tto* (*Hippopus clam*), Constantine mentioned the name *elipwii*; upon seeing the confused look on my face, he asked, “Een mii sileei elipwii?” (‘Do you know what *elipwii* is?’) He went on by explaining the location it is found on the reef, a place that is distinct from where one finds *siim* or *tto*. Another name, *lukumw*, sounded vaguely familiar to me as Pakin Mortlockese *rokumw* ‘a type of land crab’, but apparently it was not; while *rokumw* is a small land crab, it is not small enough to fit inside the empty shells which *lukumw* call home, not unlike hermit crabs (*lúmwmw* in Mortlockese and *lumwomw* in Pááfeng). I was very much acquainted with *lúmwmw* from my time on Pakin, but this was the first time I had heard of a type of crab called *lukumw*. Constantine explained, “Iká pwe aa toowuw masawan, iwe aa itulong

5 The list also provided space to write-in names of other species not represented or sub-species of those already represented.
óón fanú, iwe lumwomw mii toongeni toolong llón, mii kan oor ekkana péén mii tékia.” (‘When the lukumw leaves from inside, and it then goes into the island, the lumwomw is able to go inside, there are empty shells which are large enough for it to fit inside.’) I could not help but be amazed at this impromptu lesson that Constantine was giving me on invertebrates; indeed, he emphasized the point by saying, “Mii chóngmóng iit, mii chóngmóng ekan maan, kiirh mii toonganei angei mé leeset.” (‘There are a lot of names, there are a lot of animals, those which we are able to get from the ocean.’) We continued on back and forth, him mentioning Pááféng names of mollusks which I am sure are found on Pakin but whose names I had never elicited, and me attempting to remember Mortlockese names, some of which were unfamiliar to Constantine. It was quite the cross-cultural/linguistic experience for us both!

Although the elicitation sessions I had with Annas and Constantine were paper-based with us sitting at a sheepel ‘table’ or on a pwalang ‘porch’, I did try to make opportunities to allow the speaker to share information with me in a natural environment. During my time as a teacher in Pakin Elementary School, I worked with a fellow teacher named Celino Taiwelyaro, a native speaker of kapetali Weleya ‘Woleanian’. Celino provided me with many opportunities to audio- and video-record him walking around Nikahlap (the main islet of Pakin Atoll where we lived and worked), explaining the names, significance, and uses of plants which he is already familiar with from his home atoll of Feshaiulape. All the visual aids and hands-on tools we needed were already around us. Rather than just explaining to me the medicinal uses of the white fruit of net (Scaevola taccada), Celino would pick a fruit, gently squeeze it to allow the clear liquid to drip, and explain, “Me ka uwal, si gal googo reel tefiyal, tefiyal teling, tefiyal mat. Gare go metag telingomw, gare ebwe metag lan metomw gare... siyaa fiyet, menalong na shal.” (‘As for the fruit of this plant, we use it for medicine, medicine for the ears, medicine for the eyes. If your ear hurts, or if your eye hurts...we’ll squeeze the fruit, and allow the liquid to go inside.’) In his explanation about the uses of mai ‘breadfruit’ (Artocarpus altilis), he first led me into the woods to standing

under a towering breadfruit in order to point out specific aspects of the tree. He explained that the massive trunk is used to carve a variety of important objects such as wa ‘canoe’, yanif ‘taro pounding board’, and waigeng ‘coconut grater’. Because we had recently watched a movie about the Hōkūle’a voyage back to Satawan to honor Mau Piailug, Celino discussed how mai is used to carve wa terag ‘sailing canoe’. A deft strike of his knife against the trunk allowed the bwilis ‘sap’ to slowly ooze out, which prompted him to explain its use as an adhesive for the construction of canoes. Celino’s expository texts were created in the moment, inspirations for which were all around us in the form of the natural environment.

The mere act of asking “how do you say this in your language” is not really an act void of any
context. I have grown to become more aware of the power dynamics of how my identity as a Peace Corps Volunteer or a fieldworker or a host family member affects the immediate context and my relationship with my interlocutor. I am always grateful, then, when the person with whom I am recording takes the reigns and leads me on a journey through a story, however brief or anecdotal it may be. They have defined their role as a storyteller, and I am the listener. As a final example, I am reminded of a moment sitting on the pwalang of the house of the samwoolición Pakin ‘high chief of Pakin’, named Pius Siten. I was showing him a poster which contained pictures of various Micronesian birds, and he listed off the names of úúk ‘white-tailed tropic bird’ (Phaethon lepturus), asaf ‘great frigatebird’ (Fregata minor), and so forth. When he came across the pictures of shorebirds such as the liakak ‘whimbrel’ (Numenius phaeopus) and kuliing ‘American golden plover’ (Pluvialis dominica), he suddenly said in a quiet voice, “e úró, loomw, aa?” (‘they used to say, a long time ago, hmm?’), and I knew that I would be treated to a tittilap ‘story’. Pius briefly told me the story of a woman from Satawan (an island of the Mortlocks chain) who had snuck upon a man wandering ilik ‘ocean-side beach’. Because she startled him so, in his anger he commanded her to go away likin ilaap ‘outside of Yap’; the shorebirds around them such as the liakak and kuliing were the ones to aína ‘give feathers to’ the woman, thus allowing her fly away to Satawal. Previously, I had viewed that instance of a cultural tale as a “side bonus” of the elicitation session with the chief, because my main focus was to record the names of the birds on that poster, not necessarily texts. I now see the intrinsic value of discourse-based elicitations for my fieldwork on languages of Micronesia, allowing the speakers’ texts to help shape my questions and investigations. Storytelling is not epiphenomenal to the fieldwork, regardless if our primary focus is on morphosyntactic description or ethnobotanical elicitation. It should be one of our guides to fieldwork, especially when the people with whom we work choose to share their stories with us.

References


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Kiavaw, lit. “to have an odor,” is the epic poetry addressed to the class of spirits that are the spirits of water, the Tamba’ig. It forms a section of the major ceremony for illness and is performed in the longhouse.

The Tamba’ig spirits are considered to be particularly dangerous. Care must be taken not to attract them. Their name can only be mentioned under careful ritual constraints. The Tamba’ig detect the smell of blood, and when they do, they come and suck it so that eventually the person will die. Thus, the name, “Kiavaw,” for this epic refers to the odor exuded by the blood of human beings. The Tamba’ig, in addition to smelling blood with ease, can also hear very keenly. If they hear someone learning the epic poem dedicated to them, and an offering of a chicken is not forthcoming, they will also become very angry and follow the offender to his house and make him sick.

The Tamba’ig wander about looking for their prey, but they particularly like to lurk where there is water -- in rivers, in swamps, even in the dew. However, their homes are in the ocean. Therefore, the ocean is considered to be a particularly dangerous place.

Photo Credit (above) G.N. Appell
The Tamba’ig are Muslim, and as a result will not accept pigs in a sacrifice, only chickens. The attribution of their ethnicity mirrors the traditional world of the pagan Rungus. The Coastal Muslim were highly predatory. They were particularly prone to kidnap Rungus to sell into slavery or as human sacrifices for other ethnic groups.

The poem begins by telling of the activities of the various Tamba’ig -- those that lurk around the longhouse; then the ones in the yard around the longhouse; those on the paths; etc. Some of the Tamba’ig become birds, making their nests in the bodies of humans to cause sickness and lining their nests with the intestines of people. One Tamba’ig in passing by sucks the juice from a sugar cane, and the person who subsequently sucks the sugar cane is made ill from the saliva left there by that spirit. In that part of the epic poem translated here, the group of Tamba’ig being addressed is a race called “Bubutan.” The action in this part of the poem takes place at their home in the ocean. A father is talking to his son and tells him it is time he thought of getting married. The name of the son is Mangkahis, derived from the term for a type of crab, angkahis, which lives on the edges of rivers. The father first suggests a girl who lives at the place of the weekly market, but the son turns down the suggestion, saying she is not suitable because her skirts are too short and her hair too sparse. Next the father suggests the girl at the boat landing. But again the son rejects her saying she has one short leg and one short arm, and he would grow old before his time if he married these girls.

The father finally suggests a girl named Morolongoi and the son agrees as he says that she is an equal match. How they are alike is explained in the translation below. The name of the maiden, “Morolongoi” literally means, “Singing Brook,” and her substitute name, “Morologung,” means “The Sound of Falling Water.” Each character in the poem has two names, his or her standard name and a ritual name that frequently elaborates on the character or appearance of the individual.

The poem describes the son preparing to leave with his friends to go ask for the hand of Morolongoi. They arrive at the ladder to the longhouse of Morolongoi. When the party arrives there is great excitement among the children of the longhouse, who all rush to the top of the ladder and stand staring down without saying anything. Morolongoi tells the children they are rude to stare without inviting the guests to climb up into the longhouse.

At this point we take up the translation. Morolongoi greets the guests, and turns to the young man. She offers him betel chewing supplies. She talks about how she and he are alike. Then she says that they both do not have appropriate clothing for a wedding, and they will have to find some. For the young man is found a very black jacket, a multicolored belt of the rainbow, a headcloth of lightning, a sword of lightning, and a blowpipe as long as the poles that hold up heaven. Next they look for clothing for the bride: a skirt of stinging leaves, leg brass of the tentacles of the Portuguese man-of-war, etc. There is no explanation given as to why the woman’s clothing is so loathsome in comparison to the man’s. However, the degree of refinement or repulsiveness of the clothing, housing, or behavior of spirits indicates in these epics the degree to which the spirits will aid or harm mankind.

Translation note: The epic poems consist of couplets, with the first line in the standard Rungus language and the second line in an esoteric, ritual lexicon. Frequently, the second line carries additional meaning amplifying the first. At other times, the words in the second line are simply ritual substitute words, repeating the meaning of the first. In this latter case, our translation will reflect this by duplicating the first line.
Interlinear Translation

267. **Asi ku di kiaka**
Ara ku di kiudung
Salute my to older sibling
Greetings my to older brother

268. **Kada ko’u po kahago**
Ingkod ko’u po singgaraw
Don’t you now hurry
Stop you now rushing

269. **Onuvo ku po i kampil**
Alapo ku po i gansakan
Bringing my now the kampil,
Carrying my now brass box

270. **Kampil kud tinumbukan**
Gansankan sinurungan
Kampil my inlaid
Brass box cast

271. **Tinumbukan bulavan**
Sinuragan mosilo
Inlay of gold
Casting of yellow

272. **Iti no ma kiaka**
Ilo pogi kiudung
Here now indeed older sibling
That certainly elder brother

273. **Osodop nopo it valai**
Otuvong nopo pogun
Night fully at the dwelling
Dark fully at the house

274. **Minudung kito rorizan**
Sumondot dot binulud
Sit down we rorizan
Settled down in the room

Trial Translation

“I salute you, my older sibling. I greet you, my elder brother.”

“Don’t you now be in a hurry,” said Morolongoi, Singing Brook.
“Stop rushing around now.”

“I am bringing now my kampil with its betel and tobacco,” she said. “I am now getting my brass box.”

“My kampil has an inlaid design. It is a box cast of brass.”

“It is inlaid with gold, cast in yellow metal.”

“Here is now indeed my older sibling, that one who is indeed my elder brother.”

Night has fallen on the dwelling. It is completely dark at the house.

“We sit together in the priestess’ sanctum. We settle in the rorizan.”
275. **Limpupu ko nirilit**  
   **Tundaki ko nitabid**  
   **Shampoo plant vines entwined**  
   Vines tied together  
   
   “We are entwined as vines of the shampoo plant. We are vines wrapped around each other.”

276. **Obuk nga kopirolot**  
   **Ungkui nga kopisirag**  
   **Hair of equal quality**  
   Locks of similarity  
   
   “Our hair is of the same quality. The beauty of our locks is equal.”

277. **Unturu nga mirompok**  
   **Olimo nga mitopong**  
   **Fingers that equal length**  
   Five that are the same  
   
   “Our fingers are of equal length. Our hands are of equal size.”

278. **Lalata nga mizap**  
   **Lobpuvon nga mitopong**  
   **Ringworm patches of equal count**  
   White patches the same  
   
   “We have the same number of ringworm patches on our skin. The white patches are equal.”

279. **Kopirad ti sundu**  
   **Kopibagal ti lodun**  
   **Alike in godliness**  
   Equal in power  
   
   “We are alike in our godly qualities. We are alike in our spiritual powers.”

280. **Kamboros Morolongoi**  
   **Kansunud Morologung**  
   Spoke Morolongoi  
   Said Morologung  
   
   Thus spoke Singing Brook, so said Falling Waters.

281. **Osuvab no po i valai**  
   **Anavau no po i pogon**  
   **Tomorrow fully the dwelling**  
   Light fully the house  
   
   When tomorrow has come in the dwelling, when it is fully light in the house.

282. **Sizong kad Morolongoi**  
   **Gongo kad Morologung**  
   Flute note speaks Morolongoi  
   Flute note speaks Morologung  
   
   With a voice like the clear note of the nose flute, with musical tones she spoke, said Singing Brook:

283. **Asi ku di kiaka**  
   **Ara ku di kiudung**  
   **Salute my to older sibling**  
   Greetings my to elder brother  
   
   “My salutations, older sibling, my greetings to elder brother.”
284. Olozow kito misavo
   Ava‘i kito migondu
   Inappropriate we marry
   Not fitting we wed

   “To marry would not be right. It is not fitting we wed for.”

285. Aso ma sulung to
   Tida i mang hampo to
   None indeed clothes we
   No truly dress clothes we

   “Clothes we indeed have none. No truly fine apparel do we have.”

286. Kamboros Morolongoi
    Kamsunud Morologung
    Spoke Morolongoi
    Said Morologung

   So spoke Morolongoi, Singing Brook; so said Morolongoi, Falling Water.

287. Monimpa i Mangkahis
    Mangampot i Mangka‘ai
    Answers Mangkahis
    Replies Mangka‘ai

   Mangkahis, the Crab, then answers. Mangka‘ai, the Crustacean, replies:

288. Nunu kagima sulung
    Kuran kagima hampo
    What really clothes
    How really dress clothes

   “What really are we to wear? How are we really to dress?”

289. Monimpa Morolongoi
    Mongampot Morologung
    Answers Morolongoi
    Replies Morologung

   Singing Brook answers him. Falling Waters replies to him:

290. Nunu ot ihim-ihimon
    Kuran hovo-hovoron
    What is to be looked for
    How to be found

   “What has to be looked for? How is it to be found?”

291. Tudukan to do sulung
    Bolizan to do pakai
    To be shown us clothes
    To be bought us apparel

   “For we will be shown clothing. We will be bought apparel.”

292. Panangbadu murondom
    Panangsapoi musalup
    Put on a black badu
    Put on this black jacket

   “Put on this jacket of the night. Wear this badu of the dark.”
293. **Pononghokos buluntung**  
**Pononghongo simbakol**  
Wear a belt rainbow  
Put on a belt rainbow

294. **Ponongsignal goniiton**  
**Ponangbidak podohon**  
Put on the sigal of lightning  
Wear the headcloth of thunderbolt

295. **Ponongbadi goniiton**  
**Ponongkazin podohon**  
Put on a sword of lightning  
Wear a blade of thunderbolts

296. **Ponogtambung misungkod**  
**Ponongrondong nipanggol**  
Carry a blowpipe like pillar  
Hold a blowpipe thick tree

297. **Ilo no pakai nu**  
**Ilo no hampo nu**  
Those now your apparel  
Those now your dress clothes

298. **Kamboros Morolongoi**  
**Kansunud Morologung**  
Said Morolongoi  
Spoke Morologung

299. **Sizong kadi Mangkahis**  
**Gongo kadi Mangka’ai**  
Flute note speaks Mangkahis  
Flute note speaks Mangka’ai

300. **Nataru ro’un dohon**  
**Nalazaw nong yoku**  
Keep leaves my  
Keep now as for me

301. **Ika’u no pokibazin**  
**Ika’u no pokitizow**  
You now ask for a spouse  
You now ask for a husband

---

“Put on this belt of the rainbow. 
Wear a belt of many colors.”

“Put on a headcloth woven of 
lightening. Wear a sigal made of 
thunderbolts.”

“Put on a sword of lightning. Put 
on a blade of thunderbolts.”

“Carry a blowpipe like one of the 
pillars supporting the sky. Hold a 
blowpipe thick as a post.”

“Those will now be your apparel. 
Those now will be your finery.”

So spoke Morolongoi, Singing 
Brook. So said Morologung, Falling 
Water.

With a voice like the clear note of 
the nose flute, with musical tones 
spoke Mangkahis, the Crab:

“I will keep my leaves. As for me, 
I will keep my leaves.”

“You have asked for a spouse. 
It is you who have asked for a 
husband.”
302. Aso po pakai nu
   Tida po ma hampo nu
None yet clothes your
No yet indeed apparel your
   "But you have nothing to wear. "
   Indeed you do not have any apparel."

303. Nga tudukan to pakai
   Bolizan to hampo
Then show us apparel
Bought us dress clothes
   "So show us your apparel, the dress clothes you have bought."

304. Panangtapi tohopoi
   Pononggonob tohipu
Put on a skirt of nettle tree
Wear a skirt of stinging leaves
   "Put on a skirt from the nettle tree."
   Wear a skirt of stinging leaves."

305. Ohopoi indahaton
   Ohipu inlubokon
The nettle tree of the sea
Stinging leaves of the bay
   "From the nettle tree by the sea, stinging leaves from the bay."

306. Pononglungkaki bolung
   Ponongbolingkus dubol
Wear leg brass Portuguese man-of-War.11
Put on leg brass stinging jellyfish
   "Wear leg brass made from the tentacles of the Portuguese man-of-War. Bend around your leg the tentacles of the stinging jellyfish."

307. Bolung do indahaton
   Dubol do inlubokon
Portuguese man-of-war of the sea
Stinging jellyfish of the bay
   "The Portuguese man-of-war of the sea, the stinging jellyfish from the bay."

308. Pononggading dolimusun12
   Ponongvaru dobodung
Put on armlets the spiny fish
Wear armbands of spiny fish
   "Put on armlets from the poison spines of the catfish. Wear armbands from the spines of fish."

309. Ponongonsungoi dot angkalamai
   Ponongmurandoi dot inggipan-gipan
Put on wristlets of centipedes
Wear wristbands of earwigs
   "Put on wristlets of centipedes. Wear wristbands of earwigs."

310. Angkalamai inda'aton
   Inggipan-gipan inlubokon
Centipedes from the sea
Earwigs from the bay
   "Centipedes from the sea, earwigs from the bay."
311. **Kamboros di Mangkahis**  
**Kansunud di Mangka’ai**

Words of Mangkahis  
Spoken by Mangka’ai

312. **Asi ku di kibazin**  
**Ara ku di kitizow**

Salutations my for have a spouse  
Greetings my for have a wife

These were the words of Mangkahis.  
This was spoken by Mangka’ai.

“I salute you, my spouse. I greet you, my wife.”

Note: The epic continues for 1247 couplets. The two spirits marry. But then they divorce because they discover that they have lost their sense of smell. They can no longer smell blood and find human beings.

NOTES

1 The derivation of the word, Tamba’ig is not yet quite clear. It probably is related to the word for water, va’ig. // indicates a glottal stop.

2 The term “brother” and “sibling” here is used as a form of address indicating respect between the two, but also indicating that they are of the same generation. It does not indicate any kin relationship.

3 Kampil is the generic name given to a variety of small brass boxes that every man and woman owns and in which they keep their areca nut (Areca catechu), their betel vine leaf (Piper betle), their lime, and their tobacco for chewing and smoking. All visitors are offered this on arrival to indicate respect.

4 Po and no are difficult to translate into English. Po indicates the onset of an action. No indicates the completion of an action. In some instances they both can be translated by “now,” with the state of action indicated by form of English verb used.

5 Pogun is the word used in everyday language to indicate a deserted housing structure. Here it is the substitute word for house or dwelling.

6 Rorizan is a special room built over the sleeping portion of the longhouse where a spirit medium or priestess spends her days learning the epic poetry and weaving the ritual clothing. We have alternated between “spirit medium” and “priestess” to refer to the female religious specialist. The former indicates the ability to go into trance, while the latter indicates the ability to recite the epic poems and poetic narratives.

7 Sizong is what the first clear note of the nose flute is called. In the epic poetry it indicates the opening up of conversation by an individual with a pleasing, refined voice.

8 A badu is a man’s ceremonial jacket, woven of native cotton spun by hand and dyed black with indigo. The patterns on the jacket appear in white and represent mythological creatures and spirits.

9 A sigal is a man’s headcloth. They are worn by all men and were traditionally woven by the Rungus but now are purchased from various Coastal Muslim ethnic groups, each of which has their own identifying weaving style.

10 Misungkod is translated here as “pillar.” It refers to the sungkod, those pillars that hold up the sky.

11 Leg brass: The Rungus women wear coils of heavy gauge brass wire wound around their legs from their ankles to their knees. And when they walk they sound like a bag of coins being shaken. They also wear a variety of bracelets and armbands from shells, brass wire, and wood.

12 A dolimusun refers to a species of catfish. It has spines in the lateral fins that can cause severe wounding because of the poison.
Part 2: DOCUMENTING ORAL LITERATURE: THEORY AND METHODS

THE SABAH ORAL LITERATURE PROJECT: THEORY AND METHODS

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and
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Only by knowing how other peoples in other times, other places, and other cultures have experienced and interpreted the human condition can we truly understand what it means to be human and our place in the universe.

G.N. Appell

Prologue
The Traditional Oral Literature of the Rungus
The Ritual Texts - *rina’it*
Other Genres of Oral Literature
Philosophy of the Sabah Oral Literature Project
Field Recording of the Ritual Texts and Other Narratives
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Prologue

The original research among the Rungus was by my wife, Laura, and myself from 1959-1963. The Rungus are a Dusunic speaking people of the Kudat District of Sabah, Malaysia. At the time of this research they were longhouse dwelling, swidden agriculturalists practicing their traditional religion. They raised hill rice, maize, and cassava and domestic animals including pigs, chickens and water buffalo. They were the most traditional Dusunic speakers in all of Sabah. During this period of research I focused on the social structure of the Rungus, the language, and the swidden economy. Laura focused on the language and the religion.

As the traditional religion and language of the Rungus people was exceedingly complex, we had always planned to return to them to continue our study after I had completed writing my Ph.D. dissertation.

However, by 1966 the new Chief Minister of Sabah, Malaysia, prohibited all anthropological research. In 1980 we tried to return for a short visit but we were turned away at the airport. I had been declared persona non grata.

In 1985 I met Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan at a conference in Boston and told him of our plight. He assured me that when he became the Chief Minister he would have my status as persona non grata removed.

In 1986 we then returned to continue our study. But much to our surprise during that period of 23 years Rungus society had had major changes.

Christianity had largely replaced the original religion. One of the major genres of oral literature was the religious performance for illness, for success in agricultural activities, and for fecundity of the village and families. Previously these were performed by priestesses who were also spirit mediums. These ritual ceremonies were seldom being held.

In the past, when there was a death, friends and neighbors would come and spend the night sitting with the body of the deceased retelling myths and legends to keep people awake and to hold the predatory spirits at bay. This was seldom done any longer.
The old *adat* (customary law) of marriage had largely disappeared. Where before the Rungus culture stated that extramarital sexual relations were prohibited, there were now unmarried women with children and some Rungus women had become prostitutes. In 1987 one headman asked if he could see our data on the old *adat* of marriage and weddings as he could not remember what the rules were.

The Rungus language was also being rapidly eroded and lost. In some families children were now being talked to in Malay as infants so that they would be prepared for their schooling. Most of the young men and women had had a primary education and many had some experience with secondary education.

The Traditional Oral Literature of the Rungus and Related Ethnic Groups

Every society in its own unique way responds to the challenges of the human spirit through oral literature in its various forms. This literature arises from universal creative impulses as refracted through a particular culture. And by it the meaning of life is organized, the uses of the environment and how to live in it is explained, the causes of human suffering are justified and its mitigation suggested, the spirit world is populated and its relationship to humans detailed, the reasons for social injustice are argued, warfare and its reasons are glorified, how the nature of love, beauty and companionship is experienced, and how one is to be in the world.

Thus, the traditional oral literature of the Rungus and the related Dusunic speakers has developed over long periods of time to interpret and explain the human condition as viewed through their cultural window, to symbolize their experience with the environment, their place in history. Such literature gives us insight into the human condition during those times in human history when small communities existed on subsistence agriculture and came into conflict with other such societies. It has great aesthetic value, resonating with all of us, as it deals with the universal challenges of the human spirit.

As a result there is a vast inventory of poetry, prayers, songs, hymns, word pictures of the life that they have led, their relation with the absolute, with each other. This accumulation of oral literature, winnowed through the ages, is exquisite in beauty and depth of wisdom. It provides a unique portrait of life as lived in a different time and place by individuals who share the human spirit with us. To me and Laura, my wife, the loss of this oral literature would impoverish all of us. This was our reason for establishing the Sabah Oral Literature Project.

The Rungus oral literature thus encodes the basic cultural themes, values, and propositions of the society. And it contains the creative voice of the people. The poetry of the ritual texts are exquisitely beautiful. This volatile library will disappear shortly to the great loss to the world of cultural data and art forms which have considerable aesthetic value. Thus, there was and is considerable urgency in collecting as much of the traditional oral literature as possible to develop a full understanding of the Rungus way of life and to prevent this well developed linguistic art from being lost forever. These concerns led to the creation of the Sabah Oral Literature Project to collect not only the oral literature of the Rungus but also that of other related Dusunic speakers in the Kudat District.

This oral literature of the Rungus is their major form of artistic expression. As a result, it contains a number of genres as follows:
**Ritual Texts - rina’it**

Throughout the Kudat District among the Rungus and related ethnolinguistic groups there is a chanted form of poetry called *rina’it*. We will focus on the Rungus forms here as our collection is most complete for the Rungus. *Rina’it* carries the meaning from its stem /ra’it/ - to speak, and can be translated as ‘that which was spoken’. These chanted poems are lengthy and are performed by priestesses. They are used for curing illness and to renew goodwill with the gods and spirits. In both instances they are accompanied by the sacrifice of multiple pigs.

These epic poems, the *rina’it*, are formed in couplets. The first line is in the standard vocabulary, and the second line, reiterating the first, is in a ritual lexicon. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interlinear Translation</th>
<th>Free Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sizong kad Morolongoi</strong></td>
<td>In a voice like the clear note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gongo kad Morologung</strong></td>
<td>of the nose flute spoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flute note speaks Morolongoi</td>
<td>Murmuring Water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flute note speaks Morologung</td>
<td>With musical tones spoke Falling Water.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Asi ku di kiaka |
| Ara ku di kiudung |
| Salute my to older sibling |
| Greetings my to elder brother |

These couplets appear most frequently in seven syllables although there are ritual texts in which the couplets have eight syllables.

As Fox (1971, 1988, 2005) points out this form of semantic parallelism is common to the Austronesian languages. Yet the cultural content of the texts are reflective only of the specific culture where they were created. ²

An epic ritual text may take up to two or three days to perform and are chanted by priestesses. And there are sections that are sung in chorus by female attendants with a beautiful melody. The music of the chants can be played on the nose flute and it is often done for entertainment. The experience of the performance of these ritual texts is extraordinarily moving.

For illness, a priestess (acting as a spirit medium), will consult with her spirit familiar to find out what spirits have been offended by the sick person and have stolen his or her soul. This then determines which of the poetic chants will be used. Has the individual offended the various spirits that dwell in the longhouse apartment? Or have they offended the spirits that inhabit the sacred groves found throughout the village (see Appell 1997, n.d.)? Illness is thus perceived as the loss of one of the individual’s souls to an inhabitant of the spirit world who punishes or tortures the soul to retaliate for the ritual delict.

These epic chants are used in marriage ceremonies to sanctify the marriage and prevent the ill
effects from a possible incestuous union. These chants in various forms are also used to renew the vitality and fertility of the domestic family, its fields, its domestic animals and to increase its success in accumulating items of wealth such as gongs, jars, and brassware. Also there are texts used to renew the fertility of the village as it is perceived to decline over time following a ceremony.

In the epic poems the priestess recounts her travels to the lands of the spirits and gods in order to negotiate with them. Alternatively, she may recruit a spirit helper to travel throughout the spirit world. In either case on arrival at the abode of a spirit or god, the priestess or spirit helper negotiate with those spirits who have caused illness to return the lost souls in exchange for pigs. For those epic poems that are restorative in nature, the priestess or the spirit helper goes to those spirits and gods who can bring back the fertility of the family and village with the offering of a pig or pigs to establish goodwill between the spirits and the family or village. These epic poems are thus the narrative of the travels of the spirit helper or spirit familiar and the meeting up with the various spirits, the negotiations entered into and even a description of the spirits’ abodes and personae.

These travel narratives contain a number of repetitive phrases that indicate a meeting with a spirit or a travel on to another spirit. For example, when you greet a spirit the standard phrase is:

| Asi ku di komburongo             | My Greetings to you Komburungo |
| Ara ku di Rinokizan              | My salutations to you Spirit of the Sweet Flag |

When a spirit answers there is always a couplet indicating the beauty of the voice:

| Sizong ka dilo sumandak maidan (speaks) | With a voice like the clear first note of the nose flute, the Spirit maiden speaks |
| Gongo ka dilo dinazang              | With a flute-like tone, the spirit maiden opens (the conversation) |

To indicate the supernatural like qualities of the spirit helper the following phases are used repeatedly:

| Mozo pompod di barat | Following the end of the wind |
| Milit timpak di ribut | Going on top of the wind |
| Momoz di gonitn      | Following the lightening flash |
| Momulod di podohon   | Following the path of the lightening |
| Monorumbali yaddaw   | Crossing over the sun |
| Mongorivalod runat   | Overtaking the path of the day |

Another repetitive device is duplicating the list of the family members in each of the different spirit households that are visited.

These formulae in the *rina’it* facilitates memorization of the lengthy texts, as does the use of a series of couplets that are repeated in similar contexts. This provides one explanation of how these texts are memorized and passed on to the next generation of priestesses.

This problem of continuity in oral literature was first addressed by Milman Parry in his study of Yugoslavian epic poetry. He developed the idea of the formulaic character of the diction in oral literature. He compared the forms of formulaic diction found in these texts to those found in the
Homeric Epics. He concluded that the Homeric Epics arose originally as oral literature and were not composed as written texts, as we know them today. This conclusion was developed and refined by Albert Lord in his study of oral literature. In essence the formula is a “group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea” (Stolz and Shannon 1976:ix). Examples of these are: “Achilles swift of foot,” or “Hector of the flashing helmet,” but there are other forms as well, such as the repetition of phrases and whole sequences of lines (Lloyd-Jones 1992:52; also see Foley 1990).

There is also the use of couplets in the ritual poetry which aids memorization. The first line is in the standard language and the second line, amplifying the first, is in an esoteric, ritual lexicon. This use provides a means to enhance memorization. This is similar to what has been reported for the Berawan in Sarawak by Metcalf (1989) and what is found in Sulawesi and Eastern Indonesia (see Fox 1988).

The interesting aspect of the ritual lexicon is that it contains lexemes that are part of the standard lexicon of other languages in Borneo. For example, the longhouse apartment in Rungus is ongkob. In the Rungus ritual language it is lamin, which is the standard term for longhouse apartment among the Bulusu’, who live far away in Kalimantan Timur up river from Tarakan. In 1980-81 we worked with them during the period we were excluded from visiting the Rungus. Other ritual terms that we found part of the standard lexicon of the Bulusu’ are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Rungus Std.</th>
<th>Rungus Ritual</th>
<th>Bulusu’ Std.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>soul</td>
<td>hatod</td>
<td>lingu</td>
<td>lingu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water</td>
<td>va’ig</td>
<td>timog</td>
<td>timog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rice</td>
<td>parai</td>
<td>bilod</td>
<td>bilod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maiden</td>
<td>modsuni</td>
<td>samandak</td>
<td>samandak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The explanation for these lexemes in the ritual language from far away ethnic groups, only distantly related to the Rungus, is far from clear.

The phonemes, the morphemes, the morphology, and the syntax of this ritual language are identical with the standard Rungus language.

**Other Genres of Oral Literature**

Next there are the prayers and exhortations that accompany sacrifices to the rice spirits to bring them to the fields at planting and to send them safely home after the harvest. There are long prayers and sacrifices to appease the spirits that can destroy one’s fields and plantings, such as mice, birds, and rust. These are in the form of narratives and do not have the poetic formula of the rina’it. These tell of the work of the various agricultural gods and spirits protecting the fields.

There are the historical narratives. These tell of Rungus life and the human condition, of warfare and relations between various groups before the arrival of the British. Then there are the historical
narratives of the arrival of the British and how they established their rule. These are extraordinarily interesting and important for the history of Sabah. And they include important information and detail about leading figures both before and after the arrival of the British.

In addition there are narratives about the tragedies and conflicts in the human condition and about the achievements of individuals in overcoming obstacles.

There are the myths and legends that tell how the world was formed, how it was populated, how it came to be as it is. This includes stories of the flood, how it came about, who survived. These myths and legends also explain how the landscape came into being, and they point out important and symbolically significant topographic features, many with religious connotations. I can remember one old woman pleading with me in 1962 to go to the British and ask them not to destroy the stone figurines of the hunter and his prey overcome by the flood. These figures were not recognized by the road contractors when they started to build roads in the Kudat District, and of course they were destroyed. They would have been important tourist sights had they not been destroyed.

**Philosophy of The Sabah Oral Literature Project**

The philosophy behind establishing the Sabah Oral Literature Project has been to encourage and train local personnel to collect and preserve the oral traditions of their own ethnic group.

This project was also designed to provide a model for the rapid collection and preservation of the oral literature of other regions of Sabah and other areas of the world. It was hoped that this project would demonstrate to local people how they can rapidly move to collect and preserve their oral heritages before they are lost.

In addition to the preservation of this important oral literature, there are certain theoretical questions on the development of oral literatures that we are bringing to the collection: what are the processes by which they are preserved, how are they memorized, how are the passed on from generation to generation, how are creative modifications made. To answer these questions, we have aimed to get recordings of the same text at different times from the same priestess, with several years intervening. And we have sought priestesses from different villages to record the same texts. This gives us some idea of the variance between priestesses.

**Field Recording of the Ritual Texts and Other Narratives**

Talented and well known priestesses and older men known for their story telling powers were and are being sought out. The ritual chants and hymns *(rina’it)* are particularly beautiful and moving. They tell of the work of the gods and the spirits. In these the priestess approaches the various spirits that have caused illness and negotiate with them to return the souls of the ill to their bodies.

In the beginning when ceremonies with these ritual texts were being performed, recordings were made of the actual performances to cure the illness and renew the domestic family’s goodwill with the gods and spirits. These recordings included the priestess going into trance to communicate with the spirits. While these are important texts, it was found that they were hard to transcribe. This is because there was the usual noise of the longhouse: chickens cackling, hogs grunting, children yelling,
gongs playing, etc. Also the priestess would sometimes have helpers taking a section of the ritual to chant while the major priestess at the same time did another section. Furthermore the priestess would frequently mumble her ritual text. Consequently, recordings then were made of these ritual chants being recited without the singing in the same manner as a priestess would be training an initiate.

This procedure is the current method as in the last decade actual performances have all but ceased. The drawback of this procedure is that the music of the chants is not recorded. And it is impossible for the priestess to chant these texts as it would call down the very spirits that steal souls and cause illness. Therefore, as this music is copied on nose flutes and native guitars, we have recorded the various musical forms that accompany each different ritual text on these instruments.

But even this procedure of recording the priestess reciting the ritual text without singing it has had its difficulties. Several ritual texts were considered to be so potent that the priestesses would only agree to be recorded in the recently built church.

The recording of other texts such as historical narratives, myths, legends, stories, etc., presented no such problems. Furthermore, we did not have to spend much effort locating those who knew the best version of these. These usually came from men, and they would present themselves to our recording team to be recorded once the project became well known.

**Equipment used**

Until recently the recording of oral texts was done with a Sony Pro Walkman Portable Cassette tape Recorder with Shur Dynamic Microphone and type II 60 or 90 minute tape cassettes.

There still are villages without power so a battery powered recorder is necessary. Furthermore, we found that the Sony Walkman being rather small was easier to carry on the foot paths to the various villages and was rugged enough to stand the rough handling that it got as well as withstanding the high humidity and temperature. We have had to replace two of these since we began in 1986.

The Sony Cassette Transcriber is the type used in offices for transcribing dictation. It has a foot pedal which permits the individual doing the transcribing to return the tape to several words previously to follow the text. This, however, required power. And so in the beginning all transcriptions were done at the district headquarters where there was electricity. This was an hour and a half away by bus.

The last two years we have been using an Olympus LS-10 Linear PCM Recorder with an additional microphone that can be put near the individual being recorded.

The MP3 recordings are then entered into a computer for transcription. To aid transcription we use a Start-Stop Universal Transcription system 3-pedal USB interface. This permits the transcriber to quickly go back two or three lexemes to review the recording. Recordings are returned to the office by audio CDs.

The collection team also keeps a field journal in which they list the tape number, where the recording is being made, what type of text, who is narrating the text, and the ethnic group of the narrator. This is then collated with the catalog of oral literature collected.
Archiving The Recordings

All original tape recording of oral texts are returned to the office here in the United States. These are marked with a red strip and archived in a fireproof filing cabinet. They are copied in two ways: first to a second tape cassette (marked with a green strip) and an audio CD. The second tape cassette is returned to the field team for transcriptions. The reason original tapes are not used in this is that they can be stretched or torn in the machine used for transcriptions. The audio CDs are duplicated and stored in two different buildings to prevent catastrophic loss.

Originally the archiving of recordings was done on audio CDs. But as all recordings degrade over time, these audio CDs are being converted to MP3 formats and copied on to two separate hard drives to be stored in different locations.

Transcribing the Tape Recordings and the Digital Recordings

The transcriptions of the texts could not take place until a phonemic alphabet was devised. This was done in our original field work with modifications of it as we worked with the oral literature team. The symbols used were selected and tested to make sure they fit with what the Rungus were getting accustomed to from the Malay language, the official language of the country. However, there were certain phonemes that did not occur or were not recognized in the Malay language. This was particularly the case with the glottal stop. While in the Philippines the glottal stop is rendered as /q/, in Borneo it has been rendered as an apostrophe, and we continued to use that symbol, believing that the /q/ would be hard for the Rungus to deal with.

The transcriptions of the texts originally were returned to the office by mail. Now they are returned to us by email. These are entered into our Catalog and are duplicated so that they can be filed in two separate locations.

Cataloging the Texts Recorded

The collected texts and songs are cataloged according to the social entity that they pertain to as charter, protecting, managing transitions, relieving suffering, providing fecundity:

1) Individual Life Passages
2) Domestic Family, including assets, domestic animals, swiddens
3) Longhouse
4) Village
5) Sacred Groves
6) Singing and Music
7) Myths, Legends, Historical Narratives, and Stories
8) Miscellaneous Prayers
9) Word Games

Each entry of a text or song is coded as to: whether or not its tape has been copied; whether or not it has been transcribed; whether or not it has been entered into the computer; and the status of its translation.
Oral literature has been collected from the following ethnic groups in the Kudat District: Rungus, Nuluw, Kimaragang, and Tobilung. By far the majority of texts have been collected from the Rungus. We currently have archived 245 audio CDs and have inventoried over 1500 different texts. The transcription of these texts is nearing completion and the translation of them is in the early stage. New texts are constantly coming in.

However, the focus has always been with the Rungus, as having worked with them for 50 years we have an intimate understanding of their culture.

Translation, Exegesis, and the Rungus Cultural Dictionary

The tape recording of texts and their transcriptions is only half the story. Certainly this preserves this important literature. But unless it is translated, commented upon, interpreted, and explained, the work is only half done.

Without this exegesis, the simple translations of these texts lose much of their beauty and power. For example, certain plants are found in the sacred texts, and without further inquiry there would be little understanding of these. But they are indicators of fertile land. A particularly beautiful maiden is described in terms of being so beautiful and translucent that you can see her intestines. Thus, we need the exegesis of metaphors by those who know them to unravel them and explain them so that we can understand their true depth of meaning. And it is important to note that this effort is not just for those strangers to the society. Its own younger generation also does not understand many of these metaphors, so that in the future, unless we make an exegesis, the next generation will find such texts opaque and inexplicable with a loss of beauty and power.

For example, we have been working with a 55 year old man who had experienced traditional Rungus culture. Yet with certain texts he does not understand the metaphor, he does not understand what is going on or being said, and even some of the words are an anachronism to him.

Over 13 years ago I wrote that the time is running out on getting the proper exegesis of the ritual texts. And this loss of time has not improved the situation.

Let me give you an example. A young warrior on his way to go out to meet the champion of another village dashes down the longhouse ladder, and knocks head over heels a young maiden, who is at first angry with him but then praises him for his bravery and offers to marry him. The critical aspect of this text which we do not understand is that when she is knocked head over heels the text states that you can see her ceramic bowl. Her pininggan. A pinggan is glossed as a plate used for eating. Pininggan is a past tense that could be roughly translated as ‘to have been a plate.’ What does this mean? No one knows what this is a metaphor for. One can only imagine, and that would probably be wrong.

In order to do a proper translation and bring to it a full understanding of the metaphorical language, we have been working over the years on a Rungus Cultural Dictionary. This started out as a simple dictionary, but it is now more than that. It includes explanations for words to put them in their cultural context. It explains briefly beliefs, the uses of tools, the rituals that are required for ceremonies, and so forth. The Cultural Dictionary also lists in what ritual texts the gods and spirits appear, their characteristics, and where they live. This enables the translator to be able to enlarge on the translation. I say will, as this work is still far from complete. We are adding to it each year from the oral literature material we have been collecting.
The *Rungus Cultural Dictionary* we have been building now is in three volumes. It serves a number of functions. As we have noted, the Rungus ritual texts are in couplets, with the first line in the standard lexicon while the second line is in a ritual lexicon. These items from the ritual lexicon are important as they also appear in the standard lexicon as substituted for words that the speaker cannot say because the standard word sounds like the name of his/her parent-in-law. When recording historical texts and other forms of narratives, this can present a problem if there is no list of these ritual terms.

The *Cultural Dictionary* is arranged on the basis of word roots, with the various forms appearing both in the alphabetization and also under the root. Working out from the root of a lexeme frequently gives greater meaning to translating a word.

### Making the Texts Public

When should the collected texts with translations be made public? In the early stages of our work we made it clear that we would not make public for a generation or two the *rina=it* from certain ceremonies. This was for two reasons. The Rungus were afraid that if the ritual texts accompanying human sacrifice were made public, the government would cause them trouble as these sacrifices were forbidden long ago. Second, priestesses have been paid to perform these ritual texts in various ceremonies and also paid to teach them to a new group of priestesses. If we published them, we would take away their source of livelihood.

### Issues in Collecting and Disseminating Oral Literature

As a result of our experience, there are certain issues that arise in the collecting of oral literature. And it is important to be aware of the pitfalls that may arise, such as:

- Making a scarce good a public good can create problems. It may erode the economic status of the practitioner so that he/she loses income.
- Revealing activities in a group that the government has been trying to repress which could lead to punitive action.
- Permitting the identification of individuals whose views the government sees as dangerous, which could lead to punitive action.
- Revealing the source who may not want others to know what kind of cultural data they have passed on to the anthropologist. In fact, it could cause harm to the source.
- Permitting the misinterpretation of data by layman, government individuals, etc. who do not understand anthropology.
- Exposing secrets which sections of the community may not want others to know, such as revealing male initiation rites to females. This could bring harm to those who revealed the secrets and to those who learned of them.

Discussion: There have been rumors among anthropologists of sources committing suicide as a result of the researcher opening up inter-psychic or cultural conflicts and exacerbating them. These have never been verified. But they suggest caution. There is also the case of an anthropologist
publishing a book on men’s secret ceremonies. Women who went to libraries to read the book and see the pictures have been severely beaten by men.

**General Ethical Guidelines**

As a result of our two and a half decade experience in collecting oral literature we have developed ethical guidelines for these kinds of projects as follows:

- Do no harm.
- Learn and respect the local cultural forms of politeness.
- Establish trust.
- Respect the dignity and personal integrity of sources.
- Do not betray the trust you have established while in the field or afterward. This requires no dissembling, no lying.
- Do not add to the level of social conflict.
- Do not attempt to tamper with the system of distributive justice. Distributive justice concerns what is just or right with respect to the allocation of goods, duties, and responsibilities in a society.
- Leave your sources in the field with a positive feeling of the experience.
- Respect the limitations requested by your sources on the materials collected.
- Avoid being captured by any political segment of the society.
- Be open and forthright about your project.

**Conclusion**

It is important to make one thing clear. Tape recording this literature is only half the story. While important and critical, just as important is to have someone knowledgeable in the culture from which the oral literature comes to provide the exegesis of it and build a cultural dictionary for that group. The Rungus in this sense are lucky to have had this done for them by my wife and myself. Where will other such ethnographers come from to do other cultural dictionaries? There seems to be little interest in this problem. However, something is better than nothing. So we are going to continue to support our Rungus field team to expand their activities into the other linguistic groups in the Kudat Division. There are approximately 16 other groups. And to collect this literature will take years of work. Perhaps we can train the Rungus team to pick up some of the cultural contexts in which this literature is performed and some of its complex metaphors and references. Perhaps they will discover local individuals in other groups who would also like to take on this work for their society.
NOTES

1 A Sizong@ sounds like the first clear note of the nose flute. In Rungus epic poetry it indicates the opening up of conversation with a pleasing, refined voice by an principal character, god, or spirit. Morolongoi is the name of a dangerous water spirit, and Morolongung is her ritual name. They are onomatopoetic lexemes referring respectively to the sound of soughing or lapping of water and the sound of falling water.

2 The form of parallelism found in Rungus tests, and also in many of the texts of other Dusunic speakers, is not found among all groups of the Austronesian speakers in Borneo. For example, the texts of the Iban of Sarawak, according to Sather (2001) and Masing (1997). Metcalf (1989) reports in his study of the texts of the Berawan, also of Sarawak, that while there is a certain amount of parallelism, its form is much less formal, less rigid in the coupling of semantic elements. It occurs in the coupling of words, not lines, and the performer has the opportunity to improvise on the text.

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