Children’s verse in Kulisusu
(Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia)

by
David Mead

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In this paper I present eighteen silly and sometimes even nonsensical children’s verses recorded in the Kulisu area of Buton Island, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, including a few that are primarily in Malay/Indonesian. Some verses are performed with accompanying actions, and from this perspective can be considered a kind of play. Accompanying sound files are embedded in the document.
Children’s verse in Kulisu (Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia)

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The following is a collection of verses for children that I have recorded in the Kulisu area. These silly or sometimes even nonsensical verses are usually performed with accompanying actions. From this perspective they can also be considered a kind of play.

The Kulisu homeland is located in the northeastern corner of Buton Island in the province of Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. However not all verses reported below are in the Kulisu language, and some have clearly been borrowed from Malay. An interesting study—which I do not pursue—would be to investigate how widely the same or similar verses are distributed in Buton Island, Sulawesi, or across Indonesia. With this paper I hope merely to provide some documentation regarding children’s verse in one language community, especially since many of these verses have declined in popularity since the introduction of television sets and, more recently, computers, tablets, and smart phones.

For each verse I have included a sound file, which is embedded in this document. Sound files can be played by clicking on the red speaker icon. If you find that this does not work, you may need to first download the document to your computer and change your pdf reader’s security settings. Each verse is also accompanied by a small amount of commentary and, when helpful, by pictures.

The following orthographic conventions have been used to transcribe Kulisu: ɓ and ɗ are imploded stops that contrast with their unimploded counterparts; NSDictionary is a rarely occurring interdental stop; c and j symbolize affricates (just as they do in Indonesian); the digraph ng represents a velar nasal /ŋ/, while Kulisu w in actuality is a voiced bilabial fricative /β/. Finally Kulisu e is always a front vowel, where it is necessary to represent schwa I use ĕ. Other symbols have their expected values.

Pua-pua Waompo

This rhythmic nonsense verse is repeated by Kulisu parents to their young children. When performing this verse, an adult or older child lies on his or her back, with the young child lying prone on the adult’s shins. The adult, holding the child by the arms, gently rocks the child up and down in time with the verse. On the final line the adult lifts the child up in the air while gently shaking their legs.
The following version of Pua-pua Waompo was performed by Wa No’e of Rombo village on March 6, 2004. In the transcription an acute accent indicates that that syllable is stressed. While stress in Kulisusu normally falls on the penultimate syllable, an interesting feature in this verse (as well as a number of other verses below) is that stress falls on the final syllable of each line.

01  Púa-púa wá’ompó  
    Wá’ompó watáundé  
    Táundé gándá-gándá  
    Gánda-gánda tábósé  

05  Tábósé i káaró  
    Káaróno téenté  
    Téenténo gúllumá  
    Gúllumáno i aró.  

09  Í aró wakakurúíí!

Respondents whom I consulted were reluctant to assign any meaning to the verse, since most of the words have no meaning in the Kulisusu language.

Parents play Pua-pua Waompo with their children any time they want—there needn’t be any special occasion. However, people report that it used to be played a lot more before the advent of television to the Kulisu-su area.

**Pua-pua Naana**

The rhythm of Pua-pua Naana as well as the accompanying actions are identical to those described in the preceding section for Pua-pua Waompo.

I have recorded long and short versions of this verse, both of which were performed by Wa No’e in Rombo village on March 6, 2004. I present the long version first.
As indicated by the English translation, most of the words of Pua-pua Naana are meaningful in the Kulisusu language. Some words have been deformed to fit the rhythm, such as pua-pua (for apua-apua), naana (for ana-ana) (both in line 01), kacici (for kacicii) (05, 06), and the splitting of timpuruhako across two lines (06, 07). The usual word for henna leaves, kadea, appears in this verse as ngkadea-dea (09). The meaning of wause (10, 11) was unknown to any of our respondents; some suggested it was possibly a woman’s name.

The second version of Pua-pua Naana that I recorded is identical to the first version except that it omits lines 05b through 12a.

The following is a third version of Pua-pua Naana, performed by Hasariy in Ereke on October 30, 2017. It is similar to the first version presented above—both versions have a total of fifteen lines—but differs in lines 04 and 05 where i laro ngkeu ‘in the forest, in the midst of trees’ takes the place of melolo ngkeu ‘at the top of the tree.’ Other minor differences are bacici for kacici (lines 05 and 06), kaimpuru for katimpuru (lines 06 and 07), and sedu ‘prod with the horns’ for sodo ‘poke’ (line 14).
I now present three verses in succession which have in common that they have no actions associated with them, but are repeated simply as a feat of memory. The three verses each have parts which are meaningful in Kulisusu, but the rest is simply nonsense. The only explanation for the nonsensical parts is “this is the way our elders taught us.”

The first of these, Tii-tii Lamontii, rhythmically falls in the same mold as Pua-pua Waompo and Pua-pua Naana, and through line 10 also has the expected tail-head linkage whereby the last word of one line becomes the first word of the following line. The following version of Tii-tii Lamonti was performed by Wa No’e in Rombo village on October 24, 2019. Interestingly in this verse, the beat falls on the penultimate syllable in lines 06, 10 and 18.

**Tii-tii Lamonti**

The first of these, Tii-tii Lamontii, rhythmically falls in the same mold as Pua-pua Waompo and Pua-pua Naana, and through line 10 also has the expected tail-head linkage whereby the last word of one line becomes the first word of the following line. The following version of Tii-tii Lamonti was performed by Wa No’e in Rombo village on October 24, 2019. Interestingly in this verse, the beat falls on the penultimate syllable in lines 06, 10 and 18.
15 Pewádi i kúalí Make sweet rice in the wok
Pödödólo i kúró Make steamed cakes in the pot
Hóruóno Wáimbú Wa Imbu’s weaving
Motónu i pápa. Lies ruined on the plank.

Apart from the odd word here and there (ɓalumbi ‘star fruit’ in lines 05 and 06, koila ‘green sea turtle’ in lines 09 and 10), the first twelve lines are practically without meaning in the Kulisusu language. In today’s language people expect line 17 to run horuno Wa Imbu ‘Wa Imbu’s loom,’ but perhaps in horuo we find an old, no longer productive suffix –o; if so, the meaning is not ‘loom’ but rather ‘that which is to be woven.’ In line 18 papa is translated as ‘plank,’ but specifically these are planks which form the strakes of boat.

**Arua Arua**

The following version of Arua Arua was performed by Wa No’e in Rombo village on October 24, 2019. No known actions are associated with this verse.

01 Árua, árua Over there, over there
Táu wahembó ncumáɗá Tau wahembo ncumada
Ncumáɗá päilalá Ncumada päilala
Päilála mbenuá Pailala mbenua

05 Mbenúa wéko-wéko Mbenua weko-weko
Wéko-wéko sumpála Weko-weko sumpala
Sumpála madönde Sumpala madonde
'Dónde párubása Donde parubasa
Párubasáno nunú Parubasano banyan.

10 Nńunu ma’ómbo-ómbo Banyan (fruit) approaching ripeness
Ómbo-ómbo Lá Etu Approaching ripeness La Etu
Lá Etu Káɗacúa. La Etu from Kadacua
Káɗacúa momóni Kadacua asks
Momóni tae ndáti Asks tae ndati

15 Táe ndáti Wa Tápi Tae ndati Wa Tapi
Io Wa Tápi ána owóse Wa Tapi is a big child
Wárambéá ngkúítá The octopus is spread out (?)
Kuitáno Lá Porá The octopus of La Pora
La Póra nta óeó La Pora waiting for a liana

20 Oeóno tóřuku The liana of the mountain
Kántaríno bála eá The weft of the large fishing weir
Konáno bála eá The catch of the large fishing weir
Sa’ulu tɛndu-tɛndu Just one garfish
'Die’o díe’o mɛrî-mɛrîdì Slice it, slice it very finely

25 Patámo sálipuo Shared to the entire region
La Háji sáimpáta. La Haji doesn’t get any.
In line 01, *arua* is a distal demonstrative meaning ‘that down there.’ Otherwise, the first fifteen lines are difficult to interpret, although I have given meanings where possible. When recorded, Wa No’e articulated line 11 as *ombo mo’ombo La Etu*, presumably the result of getting a bit tongue-tied. In line 17 *warumbea* has several interpretations depending on whether it contains the stem *marambe* ‘broad, long and wide,’ *rambe* ‘exhausted,’ or *rambea* ‘a kind of freshwater crustacean.’ The sense of lines 19 through 22 is that the slats which make up the walls of the fishing weir are woven together with a forest liana, implying an extremely large trap; contrary to expectation, however, it catches hardly anything.

**Muu-muu**

The following version of Muu-muu was performed by Hasariy (Wa Hata) in Ereke on November 31, 2017. Hasariy could remember only the verse, but not any actions performed with it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Muu-muu lágá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wansá i dópi-dópí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Wapúri lólo ngkósambí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Umúu!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This verse makes use of alliteration. Lines 02 through 05 each begin with *w*, and perhaps not coincidentally the related sounds *m, mb, mp* and *p* also occur sprinkled throughout the verse. Muu-muu can be regarded as a kind of accentual verse, since each line has four stressed syllables occurring on a regular beat. This develops into regular iambic tetrameter in lines 03 through 05. Metrically the verse can be diagramed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>DUM DUM DUM DUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM DUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da-DUM!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is a second version of Muu-muu Laga, performed by Asia in Rombo village on November 6, 2019. The only differences are in line 02 where instead of *wansa* we find *sa*, with apparent movement of the nasal to the following consonant; and in line 06 where *amuu* takes the place of *umuu*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Muu-múu lágá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sái ndópi-dópí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Waléo-léo mpémbuní</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>DUM DUM DUM DUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM DUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>da-DUM!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The verse ends with a period (!).
Baba Waoke

The Kulisu verb *ɓaɓa* means to carry something on one’s shoulders or back. When repeating this verse, an adult or older child sits on the floor with a younger child on their back, arms wrapped around the adult’s neck and legs around their waist. The adult rocks forward and backward in time with the verse.

The following version of Baba Waoke was performed by Wa No’e of Rombo village on March 6, 2004.

01 Ɓaɓa waoke Carry on the back, Monkey
    Taako mongkaa Let’s go eat
    ‘Bakeno nunu Banyan fruits
    I Lasora At Lasora.
05 Taeno ndoke Said the monkey:
    Topoko’ari’omo Let’s finish them off.
    Taeno kuhe Said the cuscus:
    Tonaa-naa’opo Let’s just store them.

Only one species of monkey is found in the Kulisu area, the booted macaque, *Macaca ochreata brunnescens*, also known as the Muna-Buton macaque. The usual word for this monkey is *ndoke* as in line 05, but in line 01 *waoke* refers to an adult monkey carrying young on its back. In line 02, *taako* is a short for *tolako* (to- ‘we’ + *lako* ‘go’). Lasora (line 04) is the name of a village on the southern outskirts of Ereke. *Kuhe* ‘cuscus’ (line 07) is the Sulawesi bear cuscus, *Ailurops ursinus* Temminck.
Kii-kii Ndaua

When repeating this verse, boys and girls and any adults playing put their hands in the middle, one above the other. Minimally it requires two participants. With the thumb and forefinger, each hand pinches the skin of the top of the hand below it, except of course the lowest hand isn’t pinching anyone. It can also be played, less correctly, with fists stacked one on top of the other.

Participants move their hands gently up and down in rhythm with the words. At the end of the verse, the person with the bottommost hand moves that hand to the top. The verse is repeated until people become tired of playing.

The following version of Kii-kii Ndaua was performed by Wa No'e of Rombo village on March 6, 2004.

01 Kii-kii ndáuá The ndauá bites
   Sábará moséganó Whoever is the brave one
   Limbáako i wáwo Move to the top

In the first line, kii-kii is considered to be a deformation of the verb stem kikii ‘to bite’ (kii-kii itself means to scream in the manner of excited young girls). No meaning is attached to the word ndauá, although in this context people suppose it might be a kind of insect.

Taa-taapo

The song Taa-taapo is sung to a child to cheer him or her up and to encourage good behavior. It can also be sung as a lullaby when putting a child to bed. Adults also sing it
to very young children while clapping (Kulisusu meta-taapo) along with the beat, perhaps also taking the child’s hands and clapping with them. The toddler who knows to clap their hands on their own is strongly rewarded with praise for their smart behavior. No other motions accompany the singing except for clapping.

The following version of Taa-taapo was performed by Wa No'e in Rombo village on March 6, 2004.

01  Taa-taapo
    Moncineino wone  The one with hands open for broken grains of rice
    Kei kolaro       If s/he is well behaved
    Wone-wone’eteno  A few more broken grains

05  Kei moɓongo
    Lapa nta’i to’uno.  Truly just the chaff.

In line 02, moncinei means to receive something into one’s cupped hands or other similar open container (as for example catching raindrops in one’s hand or a bucket).

In the present day it is more common to hear parents sing the following verse to young children of about one year of age. I present the verse here but I have not recorded it since it belongs to the national culture and is not specific to Kulisusu.

01  Tépuk-tépuk tángan  Clap the hands
    Súka, suká        Happy, happy
    Tángan di kepála  Hands on the head
    Túrun di pinggång  Lower to the waist.

Similarly to Taa-taapo, children who know to clap, place their hands on their hand, then lower their hands to their waist, are strongly praised for their intelligence.

Kowaho

This quatrain is the Kulisusu version of “Rain, rain, go away” but it is sung with the opposite intent: by singing this verse one wishes for heavier rain. The following version
of Kowaho was performed by Hidayati and her children An and Dian in Bone village on November 6, 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>01</th>
<th>Kowaho, kowaho</th>
<th>Raining, raining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mora-moransa ete</td>
<td>Increase the heaviness a bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Popateo apiu</td>
<td>Put out your fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Balengka’o esau</td>
<td>Turn your ladder upside down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Waebo**

This song is sung by Kulisu children when a meal is served, but someone finds that their food is too hot to eat. The word *waebo* in the first line has no known meaning. In the second and third lines, children choose the name of one person from among those present who will be *momapuno* ‘the cool one’ and another name for who will be *mokulano* ‘the hot one.’ The primary purpose of this song is to pleasantly while away a minute or two while waiting for hot food to cool.

In the recorded version, the song is sung in unison. It is usually sung individually, with each child getting their turn to choose whose names will be inserted into the verse. Adults also participate, especially if children insist on it.

The following version of Waebo was performed by Hidayati and her children An and Dian in Bone village on November 6, 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>01</th>
<th>Waebo, waebo</th>
<th>Io Tu’a, momapuno, Io An, mokulano</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Gaba Gaba**

This verse with its catchy march tune in 10-10-10-6 meter is a Kulisu version of “Eenie meenie miney moe.” The person last touched when the verse ends is eliminated. It can also be played with both hands extended, a person being out only when both hands have been eliminated. In general it is better to be eliminated, since the one remaining will be given a less-favored position in following games. When only two people remain, the loser may be determined by a final round of Gaba Gaba, or by some other means, such as the local version of Rock-Paper-Scissors.
The following version of Gaba Gaba was performed by Wa Nuhuria J. (Wa Nuhu) and Wa No’e in Rombo village on March 6, 2004. Some of the words have a meaning in the Kulisu language, while others do not. The second verse ends with a recitation of some villages in the Kulisu area. Ronta and Lambale lie on the road from Baubau to Ereke, while the other villages are in the Ereke neighborhood (Wapala, Lipu, Laangke, Lakonea) or immediately to the south (Linsowu, Rombo).

01 Gaba gaba io tonto, io tonto
    Gaba-gaba space under a house,
    Tonto ngkorana telolo cundo
    Space underneath is muddy, the heel is submerged
    Siale bando tiga bolanda
    Siale bando tiga bolanda
    Sonde paki konde
    Sonde paki konde

05 Gaba gaba randue, randue
    Gaba-gaba surgeonfish, surgeonfish
    Lagi libale Ronta Lambale
    Lagi libale, Ronta, Lambale,
    Rombo Linsowu Wapala Lipu Rombo, Linsowu, Wapala, Lipu,
    Laangke Lakonea Laangke, Lakonea.

The following is an alternative version of Gaba Gaba, performed by Hasariy (Wa Hata) in Ereke on November 30, 2017. The tune is the same except for an extra anapastic foot in line 01, along with the tonal and metrical repetition of the fourth line to create a quintet.

01 Gaba gaba iloya, iloya, iloya
    Gaba-gaba iloya, iloya, iloya
    Sampapatiru ditutup mata
    Sampapatiru eyes are closed
    Siale bando tiga bèlanda
    Siale bando three Dutchmen
    Sonde paki konde
    Sonde paki konde

05 Raja tutup mata
    The rajah closes his eyes

A good portion of the verse is nonsensical. However the parts that do make sense are not in Kulisu, but rather in Indonesian (line 02: ditutup mata; line 03: tiga bèlanda; line 05: raja tutup mata). Interestingly, when this version was performed, it was used to choose

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1 Randue is specifically the blue-lined surgeonfish, Acanthurus lineatus L.
the person to be ‘it’ in Ta’i Timara (see below), who as part of the game is required to have their eyes closed.

The following is a third version of Gaba Gaba, performed by Ramsia (Wa Cia) in Ereke on November 3, 2019.

01 Gaba gaba ilo’a, ilo’a, loia  
Sampopateru ditutup mata  
Si io bando tiga bèlanda  
Sonde paki konde  
05 Raja tutup mata  

In this case the family performed Gaba Gaba only once, and the person chosen was the first to be ‘it’ in a following game of hide-and-seek.

**Tuu-tuu Kaluku**

Tuu-tuu Kaluku is another but less-widely known version of “Enie meenie miney moe.” Players place both hands in the middle, and the verse is repeated until only one person remains. Presumably as above, this person is to be ‘it’ in a following game.

The following version of Tuu-tuu Kaluku was performed by Maxsum Roy of Ereke on November 4, 2019. No meaning is assigned to the words, although notably *kaluku* in line 01 and repeated in line 02 is the word for ‘coconut’ in several other languages of Sulawesi.

01 Túu-túu kálukú  
Kálukú maú-maú  
Máu-máu lábijá  
Lábijá mpákedu-kedu  
05 Túndái-ndáái  
Térabósi bótoló
Bungkoloko

*Bungkoloko* is the word for ‘doodlebug’ or ‘antlion’ in the Kulisu language. The children’s verse below is sung while fishing for antlions.

The first step is to dig up a single antlion larva from its pit, and tie it near the end of a donated strand of long hair. A child or adult then dangles the hair over another antlion pit so that the lure touches the center. The verse is then sung one or more times, after which the hair is pulled up with (hopefully) a second antlion attached. If not, the verse with its actions can be repeated, including trying a different antlion pit.

Because catching the first antlion and securing it to the strand of hair requires some dexterity, usually older children are the ones who go antlion fishing, although younger children can be encouraged to join in.

The following verse was performed by Hasariy (Wa Hata) in Ereke on November 30, 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Búngkolóko búngkolóko</th>
<th>Ant lion, ant lion</th>
<th>01</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pína’i bába ánaú</td>
<td>Come up carrying your child on your back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dákumókumbí rídí</td>
<td>It has finely bumpy skin rash.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Kulisu area, the easiest place to find antlion nests is in the dry ground under houses built on stilts. As people transition away from this kind of construction in favor of brick and mortar homes, antlion nests have become a less common feature of the landscape.


**Ta’i Timara**

In Ta’i Timara, the person who is ‘it’ bends over, and the other players place both hands on his or her back, palms upward, except for the leader, who places only one hand palm upward. In the other hand they hold a small object, such as a pebble. When the verse commences, the leader goes around the circle, counting each hand in time with the verse. As the conclusion nears, the leader places a small object in someone’s palm. All players then make fists, and ‘it’ turns around and looks. Players continue to shake their fists up and down, repeating *ɗie’e’e, ɗie’e’e* until the person who is ‘it’ selects the hand they think contains the object. If they guess incorrectly they remain ‘it,’ but if they guess correctly, the person holding the object becomes the new ‘it.’

The following version was sung by Hidayati and her children An and Dian in Bone village on November 6, 2013.

01  Tá’i tímará  
  ’Đúa nígántú  
  Simatá-matá  
  Máta pálúré  
05  Málulú gandá  
  ’Die’e’e die’e’e die’e’e …

A second version, performed by Hasariy (Wa Hata) in Ereke on November 30, 2017, is identical except for a minor difference in the second line.

01  Tá’i tímará  
  ’Đúa nígántó  
  Simatá-matá  
  Máta pálúré  
05  Málulú gandá  
  ’Die’e’e die’e’e die’e’e …
Ta‘i Timara requires a minimum of three players. But it can be played by more, even up to seven people at a time.

**Cincin Loji**

To play this game, one person (the leader) holds their hand out palm downward. The other participants place an index finder pointing upwards into and touching the leader’s palm. The leader then repeats the rhyme, ending with *pintar* (Indonesian for ‘smart’), *bodoh* ‘stupid,’ *cantik* ‘pretty,’ or *jelek* ‘ugly.’ Whoever keeps their finger there and is caught when the leader closes his or her hand is considered to possess that characteristic, and whoever flees, the opposite. Of course you want to stay if the leader says ‘smart,’ and flee if they say ‘stupid.’

In this game, the leader can also be one of the participants, but with insider knowledge they should always choose correctly.

The following version was performed by Hidayati and her children An and Dian in Bone village on November 6, 2013.

01 Cícín lójí
    Símaintári lójí
    Tári búnga símboló
    Maka dia …
    pintar.
    bodoh.
    cantik.
    jelek.
A simplified version of this verse (appropriate for younger children) was performed by Hasariy (Wa Hata) in Ereke on November 30, 2017. In this version the only object is to keep one’s finger in position touching the leader’s palm until the leader reaches jipo, at which point everyone flees. If someone’s finger is caught they are considered to be ‘dead.’

01 Cinčin lójó
   Tára búnga lójó
   Jipo!

Maa-maantuu

When someone passes gas but no one admits to it, this version of “Enie, meenie, miney mo” can be used to ascertain who did it. The result is taken humorously, not seriously.

The following version of Maa-maantuu was performed by Hidayati and her children An and Dian in Bone village on November 6, 2013.

01 Maa-maantuu
   Siapa yang kentut? Who passed gas?
   Ditampeleng Slapped on the side of the head
   Raja buu kentut Rajah Buu passed gas
   Ta’ino kuda Horse manure
   Maka pio-pioto Therefore pio-pioto.

This verse is primarily in Indonesian. In line 03, tampeleng is substituted for correct tĕmpeleng. In line 05 ta’ino is Kulisu; Indonesian would be tahi(nya).

Tumbu-tumbu Blanga

For Tumbu-tumbu Blanga, players form their hands into fists and stack them one on top of the other in the center. The person with the topmost fist uses their fist to pound the stack in time with the verse, while everyone sings. When the end of the verse is reached, the person with the bottommost fist flattens their hand. The verse is then repeated, as many times as there are fists, until all the fists in the stack have been flattened. This includes a final round, when the leader, who up until now has been pounding the stack of fists, flattens his or her own hand. Then the leader bores into the pile of flattened hands using their index finger. When their finger has been inserted as far as it can go, this is a signal for all the players to throw their hands into the air, ending the game.
The following version of Tumbu-tumbu Blanga was performed by Hidayati and her children An and Dian in Bone village on November 6, 2013. Acute accents indicate syllables receiving the beat.

01 Túmbu-túmbu blánga, blánga mína róm
Róm kacalele, bůka tóm, tóm, tóm
Néne dári Ámbon púlang káwin ké Rahá
Káwin báe-báe, nánti bérkélahí
05 Kálau bérkeláhi, bůka sátu dí bawá.

This verse is primarily in Indonesian. However my respondents could give no meaning to mina, rom, or kacalele in lines 01 and 02, although they presumed these words must have meaning in some other language. *Tom, tom, tom* (line 02) is of course onomatopoetic for the sound of pounding. In the rest of the verse, the loss of word-final h (*bawa* for *bawah* in line 05) and k (*tumbu* for *tumbuk* in line 01, *nene* for *nenek* in line 02, *bae-bae* for *baik-baik* in line 04) and the absence of schwa (*blanga* for *bĕlanga* in line 01, *ke* for *kĕ* in line 03, and *berkelahi* for *bĕrkĕlahi* in lines 04 and 05) suggests the influence of a local Malay variety of eastern Indonesia. The verse can roughly be translated as follows:

Pound, pound the earthen cooking pot, the pot of mina rom.
*Rom kacalele*, open it, tum, tum, tum.
Granny returned from Ambon to marry in Raha
Marry well, but later fight
If there’s fighting, open the one below.
**Taa-tambako**

Taa-tambako is played similarly to “London bridge is falling down.” Two players face each other and hold hands so that their outstretched arms form an arch. One of the players is designated as *bintang* ‘star’ and the other as *bulan* ‘moon.’

The remaining players form a line, hands resting on the shoulders of the person in front of them. As the verse is chanted, the person at the front of the line leads the others in a figure-eight pattern, passing under the arch then around ‘moon,’ then back through the arch and around ‘star,’ continuing in this fashion until the end of the verse.

When the verse is finished, the two players forming the arch wait until the last player in line is passing underneath, then drop their arms to ‘catch’ him or her. It is always the last player in line who is caught, not the first one in line or some random player.

The caught player is then given the choice to line up behind ‘moon’ or ‘star.’ Play continues and the verse is repeated until all the children have been caught and given a choice to join moon’s team or star’s team.

Once the final player has chosen sides, the players reposition themselves into a single long line, holding hands with moon and star in the middle of the two teams. There then commences a friendly game of tug-of-war, just pulling on arms, until one side is defeated.

The following version of Taa-tambako was performed by Sri Astuti and several of her nieces in Ereke on November 3, 2019.
01 Taa-tambako
Ana reta delima A child cracks open a pomegranate
Pata benda pata benda Broken thing, broken thing
Anam blas tanggal satu Sixteen first of the month
05 Kenapa neneku ditangkap Why was my granny captured
Inja-inja tana labu Tread on the pumpkin patch
Labunya buat apa What does the pumpkin make
Suka bintang atau bulan? Do you like star or moon?

From line 02 onward all of the words are in Indonesian. Note however (as with Tumbu-Tumbu Blanga above) the loss of final k’s and h’s and the absence of schwa (line 02: reta for rĕtak ‘crack’ and delima for dĕlima ‘pomegranate’; line 03: pata for patah ‘broken’ and benda for bĕnda ‘thing’; line 04: anam blas for ĕnam bĕlas ‘sixteen’; line 05: kenapa for kĕnapa ‘why?’; line 06: inja for injak ‘step, tread’ and tana for tanah ‘land’).

Ruu-ruu Ntee-ntee

I have heard reports that there is yet another Kulisuusu verse, with the name Ruu-ruu Ntee-ntee or possibly Ruu-ruu Ntee-tee. However I have not met anyone who can remember more than just the title. If any Kulisuusu person is in a position to write down the words, and especially to make a recording, I would be very happy if they would pass the results on to me.

Special thanks

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In the electronic age that’s upon us, I hope the next generation of Kulisu speakers will learn to value the old along with the new.