

**The 'Gugutu no Momata'  
or 'The Human Intellect'  
(a Suwawa story)**

by  
J. G. F. Riedel  
(Johann Gerard Friedrich Riedel)

translated by  
David Mead

2010

**Sulang Language Data and Working Papers:  
Translations from the Dutch, no. 5**



Sulawesi Language Alliance  
<http://sulang.org/>

## LANGUAGES

Subject language : Suwawa  
Language of materials : English, Suwawa

## DESCRIPTION

This paper presents a short (15-sentence) folktale in the Suwawa language of northern Sulawesi, Indonesia, with free translation and notes. Preceding the text, a brief paragraph introduces the Suwawa people.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Text; Translation; Notes; References.

## SOURCE

Riedel, J. G. F. 1871. De goegoetoe no momata of het menschelijk verstand (Soewawasche vertelling). *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië* 3/5:343-345. Original pagination is indicated by enclosing the page number in brackets, e.g. [p. 343].

## VERSION HISTORY

Version 1 [27 December 2010]

The Suwawa text is in the public domain.  
English translation © 2010 by David Mead. All Rights Reserved.

THE  
GUGUTU NO MOMATA  
OR  
THE HUMAN INTELLECT  
(a Suwawa story)

---

The Suwawa or Tuwawa are an offshoot of the Mongondou who separated themselves prior to the dispute between Kinalang and Mokoapa.<sup>1</sup> They formerly inhabited that portion of North Celebes lying between the plains of Mongondou and Holontalo. When a few centuries later they were attacked and largely devastated by the Mongondou, they partially dispersed to the Limo lo Pahalaä,<sup>2</sup> and for a large part to the Tomini lands, where they intermingled with the tribes already present there. Their old language, similar to Old Mongondou,<sup>3</sup> is entirely lost. The present dialect, which is used among a population of roughly 1200 souls, is a mixture of Old Suwawa, Mongondou, and Holontalo. The following sample, being a favorite story—to which a literal (insofar as possible) Dutch translation and notes have been appended—will make this clear to the reader.

TEXT

Olobu nogihudu no lolai diti inontongamai no tawa. Anga no tawa, “Mongonu io moigihudu no lai diti.” — Anga no olobu, “Gugutu no momata, bea au lai daä<sup>4</sup> agu

---

<sup>1</sup> [translator’s note: Kinalang and Mokoapa are mentioned as siblings in the royal dynasty of Bolaang-Mongondow, and it has been estimated that these two brothers lived in the middle of the sixteenth century (Wilken and Schwarz 1867:298–299, 1871:280–281). The nature of the dispute mentioned here by Riedel, however, is unknown to me.]

<sup>2</sup> [translator’s note: *Limo lo Pahalaä* (also appearing in the literature as *Lima Pahalaa* or *Lipu lo Holontalo*) refers to a confederation of five polities under Gorontaloese rule, comprising Gorontalo, Limboto, Boalemo, Atinggola and Bone (Riedel 1870; Haga 1931). This last region, called Bone or Bune in Gorontaloese after the name of a river (but Bonda or Bunda in Suwawa), is the present-day home of the Suwawa. The date generally given for the founding of the Limo lo Pahalaä confederation is 1673.]

<sup>3</sup> [translator’s note: ‘Old Mongondow’ was formerly used as a designation for the Lolak language (Sneddon 1991:301).]

<sup>4</sup> [translator’s note: I have changed Riedel’s spelling of Suwawa words by replacing the vowel digraph *oe* with *u*, but I have retained his use of diaeresis. In his transcription, Riedel always placed a diaeresis over the second of two identical vowels in sequence. Following information provided by Yuko Kitada, words such as *daä*, *pahalaä*, *moöboetoeogoe*, etc. would today be better spelled as *daqa*, *pahalaqa*, *moqobutugu*,

gihudu no lai diti i ani gugutu no momata dia moali no potugatao.” — Anga no tawa, “O lolai daänimu agu moiparentawa o lai diti, agu ade ginau babiogou mantani poödiugai onau [p. 344] lagedu biogou biogou io.” — Anga no lai diti, “Au ya lai diti mongogu bio gonimu dia moöbutugu animu, bitu ti ama u lai daä mongogu anonimu moöbutugu onimu.” — Anga no tawa, “Mongogu adetu loi animu montogu tiamai ti amamu onau.” — Nlolao lai diti nololao boito toutu no bui mai mainoloia, “Bali ade ta lave mao io mololao, onu to ginanimu pakuapa.” — Anga no tawa, “Mopia paku e.” — No pakua no lai diti boitu nongko ulunia tinungku lo uputia no pakua. — Anga no tawa, “No ea laodo montugu tiamai ti amamu.” — Nlolao lai diti, anga nota ama a maitu tawa no pakua, diado moali mola agu moitia onato, anga nota anonota, maido ita dea mio momate no tawa duno ea no pakua tinungku lo uputia. — Nlolao noi maä mio, anga no lai diti, “Bea ti amau, anganimu anoni mu, mantanipoölio.” — Numolio diado moali. — Boitu no mogutu dodago ti amanota agu no ponotabu no ea mao no ponotabu diado molio. — Anga no olobu, “Ade doni gugutu no momata, io no pakuanota noimamai ti amanota dia no lio.” — E ontuu inumotio olobu ngiponia no pungkilo o batu, noali diado ngipo to butao, babunia numa ti no tawa mai nototabu diado nolio.

#### TRANSLATION

The python saw a buffalo being led by a child. The snake asked him why he allowed this. The buffalo answered, “Human intellect is not to be understood. Although I am big, I cannot do otherwise than to let this small child lead me.” The snake said, “How is it still possible, you who are so big, that you allow yourself to be led by a child? I have mind to bite him; let him but approach me, then he will see whether I shall not swallow him.” The small child said, “I am small, and if you swallow me you will not be satisfied. My father, however, is big in stature. If you eat him you will be very satisfied.” The snake said, “If that’s the case, go off and call your father here.” The child set off, but immediately came back, saying, “I don’t trust you. It could happen that you will make use of my absence to slip away. It’s better that I first fasten you to the ground.” The snake answered, “Okay, stake me then to the ground.” And the child staked him fast, from his head to his tail. Then the snake said, “If you are done, go quickly and call your father.” The child went to find his father and said to [p. 345] him, “Father, over there lies a large python. I have staked it fast to the ground so that it cannot budge. It had you called in order to bite you. Come, let’s go and finish off the snake, which I have staked fast up to it’s tail.” Approaching, the child pointed out the place to his father, and at the same time said to the snake, “You want to bite my father. Now move!” The snake tried to move, but to no avail. Thereupon the father took his machete and hacked the snake, which could not move, into small pieces. Then said the buffalo, “This was the human’s reasoning: The child staked the snake fast, so that when the father came he could no longer move.” Then he laughed so loud that his tooth hit a stone and fell out. On the one side the buffalo no

---

etc., in which *q* represents glottal stop. Two problems in my updating Riedel’s transcription, however, are: (a) I do not *also* know in which cases a glottal stop should be indicated between *unlike* vowels; (b) some words in Riedel’s transcription are also missing any indication of an initial glide. An example of both is the first person singular pronoun, transcribed by Riedel as *aoe*, but better written today as *waqu*. Because of these limitations, I prefer to present the text close to its original form and leave the task of providing an updated, more accurate transcription to others.]

longer has teeth<sup>5</sup> on account of laughing when the snake was cut in pieces while it could no longer budge itself.<sup>6</sup>

#### NOTES

*Inontongamai*, verbal form of *montong*, *ontong* ‘see, observe.’ — *Moigihudu*, verbal form of *gihudu* ‘guide, lead a horse or buffalo on a rope.’ — *Gugutu* ‘intellect,’ also ‘actions.’<sup>7</sup> — *Momata* ‘people.’ — *Potugatao*, from *mogata* ‘understand, appreciate.’ — *Daänimu* ‘your greatness.’ — *Agu ade ginau*, literally ‘according to my feelings, thoughts’; *gina* also means ‘the heart.’ — *Mantani poödiugai onau* ‘attempt to approach me.’ — *Mongogu* ‘if, when.’ — *Adetu* ‘if so, in such a way.’ — *Nololao*, verbal form of *lao* ‘go, move oneself toward somewhere.’ — *Paku e*, verbal form of *paku* ‘spike or nail fast.’ — *Nongko ulunia tinungku lo uputia* ‘from its head up to its tail.’ — *Anono*, from *ano* ‘eat up, swallow.’ *Numolio*, verbal form of *molio*, *lio* ‘move or budge oneself.’ — *Mogutu* ‘draw, for example a sword from its sheath.’ — *Dodago* ‘a machete.’ — *Ngipo* ‘tooth.’ — *Numoti*, from *moti* ‘laugh.’ — *Nototabu*, verbal form of *tabu* ‘chop fine, cut into pieces.’

---

<sup>5</sup> [translator’s note: In regard to water buffalo tooth anatomy, I would assume that the ‘missing teeth’ refer to the large gap (diastema) on the lower jaw between the front teeth (incisors and incisor-like canines) and the cheek teeth (premolars and molars). Such a gap on the lower jaw is characteristic not only of water buffaloes but of bovids generally. However, could the ‘missing teeth’ refer instead to the dental pad which replaces the upper front teeth in water buffalo?]

<sup>6</sup> [translator’s note: Treffers (1913:230) recorded a nearly identical story from the Tolaki area of southeastern Sulawesi. In this version, a python wanting to fight a man is tricked instead into eating the man’s rooster. After the sated snake falls asleep, the man fastens it to the ground fore and aft of the bulge in the snake’s body where the rooster lies, then finishes off the snake. A water buffalo, seeing what happened, laughs so hard that its jaw hits a branch, knocking out some teeth.]

<sup>7</sup> [translator’s note: Dutch *verstand*, *handeling*. Schröder (1908:21, 71), by comparison, renders Suwawa *gugutu* as Dutch *daad*, Malay *pekerjaan*, *perbuatan*, thus ‘deed, work, doings.’]

## References

- Haga, B. J. 1931. De Lima-pahalaa (Gorontalo): Volksordening, adatrecht en bestuurspolitiek. *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 71:186–314. [translated into Indonesian and published 1981 under the title *Lima Pahalaa: Susunan masyarakat, hukum adat, dan kebijaksanaan pemerintahan di Gorontalo*. Jakarta: Djambatan.]
- Riedel, J. G. F. 1870. De landschappen Holontalo, Limoeto, Bone, Boalemo en Kattinggola, of Andagile: Geographische, statistische, historische en ethnographische aanteekeningen. *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 19:46–153.
- Schröder, E. E. W. G. 1908. *Gorontalosche woordenlijst*. 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Sneddon, J. N. 1991. The position of Lolak. *VICAL 2: Western Austronesian and contact languages: Papers from the Fifth International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics, Auckland, New Zealand, 1991*, edited by Raw Harlow, 299–318. Auckland: Linguistic Society of New Zealand.
- Treffers, F. 1913. Drie verhalen afkomstig van de To Lalaki. *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 55:230–233.
- Wilken, N. P.; and J. A. Schwarz. 1867. Allerlei over het land en volk van Bolaang Mongondou. *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 11:284–400.
- Wilken, N. P.; and J. A. Schwarz. 1871. Geslachtsregister in de taal van Bolaang-Mongondou, met woordelijke vertaling. *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 15:278–297.