The ‘Gugutu no Momata’
or ‘The Human Intellect’
(a Suwawa story)

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

translated by
David Mead

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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.

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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]

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The Suwawa or Tuwawa are an offshoot of the Mongondou who separated themselves prior to the dispute between Kinalang and Mokoapa. 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 Pahalãä, 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, 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’ agu
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 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 its 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
longer has teeth\textsuperscript{5} on account of laughing when the snake was cut in pieces while it could no longer budge itself.\textsuperscript{6}

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.’\textsuperscript{7} — Momata ‘people.’ — Potugatao, from mogata ‘understand, appreciate.’ — Daānimu ‘your greatness.’ — Agu ade ginau, literally ‘according to my feelings, thoughts’; gina also means ‘the heart.’ — Mantani poōdietai 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.’

\textsuperscript{5}[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?]

\textsuperscript{6}[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.]

\textsuperscript{7}[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


