

Some comments on “Journey from Mingkoka Bay to Kendari”

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LANGUAGES

Subject language : Tolaki
Language of materials : English

DESCRIPTION

In February and March 1903 the Swiss explorers Paul Sarasin and his cousin Fritz Sarasin traveled across Sulawesi's southeastern peninsula. This was followed two years later by their report about the journey, published as chapter 6 in volume 1 of *Reisen in Celebes*. Later, and after the establishment of colonial authority over the peninsula, the civil administrator in Kendari, Frits Treffers, offered some six pages of corrections and other comments concerning the Sarasins' account, which are here translated into English.

SOURCE

Treffers, F. 1913. Enkele kantteekeningen op "Reise von der Mingkoka-Bai nach Kendari", hoofdstuk VI van "Reisen in Celebes", door Dr. P. en F. Sarasin. Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 55:223–229. Original pagination is indicated by including the page number in square brackets, e.g. [p. 223].

VERSION HISTORY

Version 1 [18 August 2020] Translated 1995, prepared for online publication July and August 2020.

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**Some comments on “Journey from
Mingkoka Bay to Kendari”,
Chapter VI of *Reisen in Celebes*, Part 1,
by Dr. P and F. Sarasin, Wiesbaden, 1905^{1 2}**

By Lt. F. Treffers

(with a map)

Reading the above-mentioned travel description brought to mind some remarks which I would like to put into words. Herewith I have no other aim than to testify of my genuine interest in the journeys of the Messrs. Sarasin, so bravely undertaken, and would never want, using the so much easier way in which I encountered the land and the people, to undercut in the least the scientific fame of these two tireless researchers.

Page 336. (Here it is said that the beach near Kolakka, on the southern half of the east coast of the Gulf of Bone, is diminishing fast, so that perhaps in twenty years an area of 500 meters wide would be swallowed by the sea).

After a visit to Kolakka it struck me at once that the gain of the sea on the land in nearly ten years was not in proportion to the assumption the book makes. I even thought I could recognise one of the dry trees in the photograph. I will venture to think (but I wish to point out right away that I do not possess any geological knowledge) that [p. 224] the reduction of land that the writers saw was only a result of the change that the mouth of the Kolakka river undergoes after every rainy season. Kolakka is situated on coralline limestone, and covered totally with mud. Ebb and flood tides are noticeable in the bends and ditches. Through a combination of wave action and current there appears at the mouth of the river an accumulation of silt, so high that plants and even trees can grow there. Together the river and the waves deposit more ground than what the waves can take away at flood tide or during storms. But through heavy floods the current will change direction, sometimes as much as ninety degrees in a few weeks, then the silt will be deposited in another place and the sea will have ample opportunity to continue its old game of give and take, which doesn't help the beach vegetation or coconut trees.

¹ [footnote 1, p. 223] With notes by Dr. N. Adriani.

² [editor's note: This English translation was prepared in 1995 by a volunteer who worked for Wycliffe Associates UK, but whose name has unfortunately been lost. During the process of preparing the translation for online publication it was slightly edited by David Mead and Gweno Hugh-Jones. The spelling of native words has been updated using the following substitutions: *oe* → *u*, *j* → *y*.]

Page 339. (It says that ‘sword’ is called *pade* and ‘machete’ is called *tadu* in the language of Mekongka).

For ‘sword’ read *tawu* and for ‘machete’ *pade*.

Page 343. (“When asking about the existence of bows and arrows we heard that they were not in use any more, but people knew the tools from of old and called them *opidi*”).

In the whole country the bow and arrow, just like the wooden blowpipe, is only known from memory.

Page 345. (It is said that because the Mowewe valley is completely flat it proves to be the bottom of a former lake.)

A section of the Mowewe valley still consists of swampland.

Page 349. (“We were told that the Simbune flows into the Opa lake. If this is true the Tinondo ridge would be the water divide between the two seas”).

The Simbune flows into the A Opa swamp.

Page 354. (Description of the grave of a person of high standing, a terrace, on it a rectangular plank enclosure, completely filled with red clay, all this [p. 225] under a large roof, thereupon an open wooden coffin and next to it burial gifts. It is assumed that the body has been buried in the packed clay inside the plank enclosure).

The bodies are buried in graves. How much attention is given to the things on top of the grave depends on the status of the deceased. Often people use round stones from the rivers. Near Kolakka I saw an old grave in the form of a boat. Often cocounts and other fruit trees are planted around graves, so that when you see coconut trees from afar and approach, your chances are greater of arriving at a burial site than a house.

Page 357. (“The trough-like plain between the mountain systems is without doubt the southern continuation of the similar plain which we had passed through in the north of the peninsula, when we went from Matanna lake through Tomori to the bay of the same name”).

The trough-like plain that was noticed at Lambuya is separated from the plain east of Lake Matana by a very high and vast mountainous landscape. When you cross the mountains from Lasolo towards the south you will climb the whole first day, and then descend the whole of the next day. The Konawe plain was once clearly a lake or swamp. The only way through is just above Puhara, where still the river breaks through the mountains with difficulty whilst developing strong rapids. Between the two rivers in the Konawe plain there is a low ridge, which at only a few places rises above the old bottom of the lake.

Page 358. (“There is a contract with the Anakéa or Sáosáo of Laiwói located in Kendari. In fact Laiwói is only one of the many districts into which Konawe is divided, and its sovereign is without any influence in the interior. Therefore he could with the best will [p. 226] not carry out the order given him to fetch us at the border of the domain of Luwu”).

Sao-Sao was head of the area around Kendari bay. His grandfather was a Buginese who married the daughter of the ruler of Arona Maeto (around 1850). With some effort and more energy he could very easily have provided a guide.

Page 358. (“The inhabitants of Konawe call themselves, they said, Tokéa; for ‘no’ they use the word *tambóki* which is quite different from the neighbouring *konio* of the Tomekonka”).

Laiwooi= *lai iwoi* = there is water = the name of the area where the Konawe river wells up. Konawe also means river. The name Laiwooi has spread to the whole river basin. In Laiwooi lies Andolaki, the place of origin of the inhabitants of the river basin of the Konawe. They therefore call themselves To Lalaki and never use the word To Kea. In the Bajo language *kea* means ‘friend’ (*bea* in the language of the Tolalaki). The Bajo are a fishing people, spread around the coasts of Celebes. Many of them traded with the natives and called them friends (*kea*) for understandable reasons.

Concerning the word ‘no’ note the following:

kio (Mekongka) = ‘no’

kio nio= *kionio* = *konio* = ‘there is not’

kioki (To Lakaki) = ‘no’

tamboki= ‘there is not’

In addition to *kioki* and *kio* (especially in the area south of Lambuya and Rate-rate) *taa* is used for ‘no,’ and for *tamboki* and *konio* or *kioki-no-laa* ‘there is not’ often *taalaa*.

Page 360, Figure 113. (“The adjacent picture shows a photograph of a Tokea fighter of the higher type with lance, sword and armored jacket”).

Do not think of a fighter. The lance is not a fighting lance and [p. 227] the man is not holding a short sword but rather a machete.

The To Mekongka and the To Lalaki have completely the same weapons. Their lances are all for throwing, they are too afraid to stab. Usually they only use their two-handed (and awkward) short sword to finish off the people that got hit by a lance and to behead people who are asleep or already dead.

Page 371. (“Head-hunting still occasionally occurs, for instance at harvest time and also when the chief dies”).

Head-hunting trips were not undertaken specifically after the harvest, but more to pacify the spirits in case of an illness (malaria), also at weddings, funerals, or the building of a large house. The sacrifices before and after the harvest consist of the slaughtering of a chicken (around eighty years ago they slaughtered a dog).

Page 372. (“Beside a brook, Watuwátu, we noticed a large heap of stones, and all passers-by always threw another stone on it”).

Watuwatu. I asked one of the heads why passers-by always threw a stone onto the existing pile. He said that his grandmother taught him to do so. Otherwise the spirits would lead him astray. A similar custom occurs on other occasions, for instance among the Bajo when they sail past a certain sharp cape called Tanjong Pemali. Then they throw a piece of wood on their Lorelei rock,³ otherwise captain and crew would perish. In the Loma mountains one has to pass through a very small and dangerous mountain track. Here also a stone is thrown onto an existing pile to ward off accidents.

Page 373. (“We indeed realise that we are in the country of the Tololáki or Toláki”).

As previously mentioned, the whole population call themselves To Lalaki (*Ingami To Lalaki* = ‘we To Lalaki’).⁴ [p. 228]

Page 374. (“The Tololaki come from the north, from an area around Lake Matanna, from a place called Andolaki”).

Often the Matana lake is mentioned, also on p. 340 and p. 360. I assume that the travellers must have felt the lack of a good translator. For Matana the reader should understand Loma. Many blacksmiths live in Loma, and situated to its west is Andolaki. The so-called *anakia* of Lalumera was probably in a talkative, happy mood. Maybe he was courageous in his own area, but there is no special warrior caste—if only because the To Lalaki do not fight—although they do have a dance with a shield and short sword. Their headhunting trips were always cowardly expeditions, and the chance of danger was almost non-existent. Something did exist like the ‘per’ among the Papuans,⁵ and it is quite easy to get someone to murder (in the past: to headhunt) for a reward when a person is too afraid to do it himself. But even then the murder is carried out in a cowardly manner. Before our arrival blood revenge did of course exist, but does not any more. People are glad to no longer have it as an ‘obligation.’

³ [editor’s note: The Lorelei is a large rock on the banks of the Rhine River in Germany.]

⁴ [editor’s note: The first person plural exclusive independent pronoun is more correctly spelled *ingami*.]

⁵ [editor’s note: In the original „per”; its reference here is unclear to us.]

The custom of mixing the brains with an alcoholic drink made from rice did indeed exist.

Playing with dice and cockfighting are also known among the To Lalaki. Their habits always remind me of the historical accounts of our highly esteemed Germans, who also played with dice and drank home-brewed beer from the skulls of their dead enemies.

I include a small sketch with more detail than the general map in part I. The mountain range consists of three high ridges running south-east to north-west and cutting somewhat obliquely across the peninsula. [\[p. 229\]](#)

I hope that through the above contributions I have increased the value of this book, in which “above all, the authors have sought to capture in word and image the strange cultures that, in a short period of time, will have disappeared from the face of the earth.” (Foreword to Volume I, page vii)

KENDARI, June 1912.

SOUTHEAST CELEBES

LEGEND

1. Lake Towuti
2. Bungku
3. Laa Lindu (river)
4. limestone mountains
5. Laa Solo (river)
6. Konaweha (river)
7. Sembune (river)
8. A Opa (swamp)
9. rapids
10. Laa Lumbuti
11. Latoma mountains
12. Mekongka mountains
13. To Maronene

