4. Semantic parallelism in Rotenese ritual language

My objective here is: 1) to discuss the semantics of Rotenese ritual language; 2) to offer an exemplary text with translation and analysis; and 3) to consider some directions in the study of this language form. Rotenese ritual language is a form of oral poetry characterised by the required coupling of virtually all semantic elements. The language is formal, formulaic and parallelistic. Semantic elements comprise prescribed dyadic sets; these sets are structured in formulaic phrases; and, as a result, composition generally consists in the production of parallel poetic lines. While simple in structure, elements of this language are of sufficient number, variety and complexity to allow considerable scope for stylistic elaboration but little scope—if any at all—for individual improvisation. Knowledge of these ritual forms is essential to an understanding of Rotenese social classification. Any recitation of ritual language requires a ceremonial context. A minimal ceremonial context, for the Rotenese, involves the giving of native lontar gin (‘the water of words’) to one’s guest. A practice, among elders and especially among chanters on visits to each other, is to recite short bini at each other between successive rounds of gin. These minor contests often end in excited incoherence. Some ancestral figures, I was told, as they grew older, abandoned ordinary language entirely and spoke only in ritual language.

Parallelism and its Indonesian occurrence

This linguistic phenomenon, which Roman Jakobson (1966:403) has aptly described as ‘canonical, pervasive parallelism’, is of widespread, general comparative significance. Robert Lowth, who in publications on ancient Hebrew poetry between 1753 and 1779 first articulated the concept of parallelismus membrorum, distinguished between ‘parallel lines’, the parallelism of conjoined verses and ‘parallel terms’, ‘the words of phrases, answering one to another in the corresponding lines’ (Lowth 1778:i:x). Since Lowth’s early observations, Biblical scholarship has painstakingly examined the ‘repetitive parallelism’ of Hebrew poetry and, in tracing its relation to Ugaritic and Canaanite forms, has demonstrated that Lowth’s ‘parallel terms’ constitute, in the Semitic oral

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traditions of Syria and Palestine, a standardised body of conventionally fixed word pairs by means of which verse forms were composed (Newman and Popper 1918–23; Gevirtz 1963).

The study of parallelism, originally inspired by these Hebraic parallels, has become a subject of research among the oral literatures of the world. Major studies have been made on the languages of the Ural-Altaic area, particularly on Finnish-Karelian folk poetry, and on the epics and songs of the Turkic and Mongolian peoples; on Chinese ‘parallel prose’; on Russian and other Slavic folk traditions; and on the ‘polar-expressions’ in ancient Greek literature. Emeneau (1966) published an article on ‘formulaically fixed pairs of song units’ among the Toda, which suggested parallelism may be of wider occurrence within the Dravidian language group. Parallelism was also evidently characteristic of ancient Maya poetry (Thompson 1950:61–3) and is preserved in the oral traditions of the modern Maya (Gossen 1970:315–61).

This sheer accumulation of studies on parallelism, in its varied metric, syntactic and semantic appearances, seems, at times, to reduce the phenomenon to nothing more than a device of stylistic repetition, an ornate redundancy (cf. Gonda 1959), whereas what certain facets of ‘compulsory’ semantic parallelism offer is a means to formal research on the ‘metaphoric correspondences’ of particular speech communities (Jakobson and Halle 1956:76–82). The parallelism prevalent—often in priestly or esoteric speech forms—among many of the Indonesian peoples provides an extensive field for comparative research on this form of binate semantics.

The Bible translator Hardeland, in his Versuch einer Grammatik der Dajackschen Sprache (1858:5), was the first to note the Hebraic parallels in Dajak ‘spirit language’ (Basa Sangiang): ‘Der Charakter der basa Sangiang ist poetisch, voll Sinnbilder. Die Form ähnelt der Hebräischen Dichtersprache hinsichtlich des Rythmus und der kurzen parallelen Glieder.’ As an illustration of this language, Hardeland included as an appendix to his grammar a long text with translation and commentary. The text was, in some ways, a curiosity since it consisted of a running German translation with Dajak words inserted, singly or in pairs, above their appropriate German equivalents, making it difficult, if not impossible,
for anyone unacquainted with Dajak to construct the verse parallels. The posthumous publication of Schärer’s two-volume Der Totenkult der Ngadju Dajak in Süd-Borneo (1966), however, provided an enormous corpus of texts in Dajak Basa Sangiang. Had Schärer completed his intended five volumes with its promised lexicon, his research would have been a unique monument in the study of parallelism.

Parallel language forms are not confined to this one area of Borneo. Of considerable importance also, from the Mualang and Kendajan Dajak groups, are the ritual and cosmological texts published by Dunselman (1949, 1950a, 1950b, 1954, 1955, 1959a, 1959b, 1961). Evans, in his study of the Tempasuk Dusun (1953), made a short analysis of Dusun sacred language and provided several exemplary texts in this language. And, over many years, Harrison and Sandin have recorded numerous Iban chants, many of which give evidence of a traditional parallelism (cf. Harrison 1966).

Of special importance, because it drives from a people outside the immediate Indonesian area who yet pertain to the Indonesian language group, is the magnificent Rhade epic, in parallel verse, ‘La Chanson de Damsan’, translated by Sabatier (1933).

An outstanding collection of rigorously parallel ritual verses originates from Nias and the Batu Islands. The collection includes a ‘hero epic’ and a selection of verses from women’s ceremonies, by Lagemann (1893, 1906), some translated but unexplained texts by the dictionary compiler Sundermann (1905), and two long ‘priestly litanies’ and some 40 ‘songs’, most of which vary in length from 200–400 verse couplets each (with Dutch translations and copious philological and ethnographic commentary) by Steinhart (1934, 1937a, 1937b, 1938, 1950, 1954). As Lagemann first observed (1906:341): ‘Die Form dieser älteren Ueberlieferungen ist eine poetische, und zeigt durchweg einen Parallelismus der Verse, wobei es weniger auf den Reim als auf einen gewissen Rythmus ankommt.’

Another area remarkable for its parallel ritual verse is the Celebes. Adriani, despite the fact that neither he nor Kruyt published any long ritual texts,6 noted in several important articles (1932a, 1932b, 1932c) that the prayers and invocations of the Bare’e Toradja tadu priestesses were highly formulaic: ‘Almost always they are parallel’ (1932a:205). His analyses, however, concentrated on the sound changes, word exchanges, ellipses, archaisms and borrowings that

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6 Van der Tuuk (1864–67:v–vi), in his classification of Batak speech forms, mentioned differing forms of ‘ornamented’ speech for mourning, divination and cosmological instruction by datu priests. Similarly, Matthes (1872) produced a meticulous—near-model—study of the certain Bissu rituals of the Buginese. As Adriani (1932b:6) has observed, however, neither of these men published extensive texts in these special languages. What remains puzzling is why Adriani, who was acquainted with Toradja sacred language and who, in addition, recognised the importance of the study of this speech form, did not record a corpus of his own.
distinguished elements in this language form from those in ordinary language. To these transformations, he attributed an ‘animistic magic’ that made this ritual language central to Toradja life.

Dunnebier, in his linguistic work on Bolaang Mongondow (1938, 1953), has provided some short examples of parallel verse from the northern area of Celebes but the finest collection from the Celebes is van der Veen’s excellent and well-annotated Sa’dan Toradja texts (1929, 1950, 1965, 1966), which, together with his Tae’-Nederlandsch woordenboek met register Nederlandsch-Tae (1940), provide excellent specimens of Toradja ritual verse and the means for their thorough study. As he noted also, in all these texts, ‘two lines of a strophe are linked by parallelism, i.e. more or less the same content being expressed in both lines though with different words’ (van der Veen 1966:17). What is most strikingly apparent in these verses—as with those of Nias—is their thoroughgoing, consistent binate semantics.

In eastern Indonesia, parallelism has been evidenced in several publications (cf. Arndt 1933; Onvlee 1934; de Josselin de Jong 1941; Vroklage 1952). The only large, critical corpus of parallel verse is, however, the collection of funeral chants translated by Middelkoop in ‘Een Studie van het Timoreesche Doodenritueel’ (1949). For Rotenese, the linguist Jonker published a single text in parallel verse, Ana-Ma Manu Kama ma Falu-Ina Tepa Nilu, a funeral chant for orphans, widows or strangers. Jonker added this chant, together with a paraphrase in ordinary language, to his collection of Rotenese folktales (1911:97–102) to provide ‘an example of the poetic style’ that he characterised as marked by ‘sustained parallelism’ (1911:130). He admitted the chant was obscure and he therefore limited himself to translating only the paraphrase and adding notes to various words in the chant itself. These notes, although sometimes incorrect, seem to indicate that Jonker had partially grasped the organising principles of Rotenese semantic parallelism. This present analysis may therefore, I hope, be regarded as a continuation of his investigations on Rotenese.

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6 These texts are extraordinary in one respect: they are translated and annotated by a man whom many Atoni regard as a practised master of their ritual language. As some Atoni point out, one of the chief reasons for the rapid spread of Christianity on Timor was Dr Middelkoop’s adaptation of Atoni ritual language in his Bible translations and hymnal. (For a discussion of the problems of translation raised by native Sumbanese verse and Hebrew parallels, see Onvlee 1953:16–23; Lambooij 1932:139–44.)

7 Van de Wetering (1925) has recorded a number of parallel verse excerpts from the marriage rituals of the Rotenese. One of these (1925:640–1), a 12-line excerpt from the marriage ceremonies of Thie in southern Rote, so pleased my own chief instructor in ritual languages, S. Adulanu, when he heard me read it that he made me recite it to him repeatedly until he had committed it to memory.
Ritual language and the speech forms of the Rotenese

The Rotenese pride themselves on being an articulate, contentious, talkative people. The skilful manipulation of their language in all its facets is highly prized and their dede’ak ('language, speech, dialect litigation') can be classified into a variety of subtly interrelated speech forms, each distinguished by some intersection of specific criteria—those of subject, style, context or usage. Thus, for example, ‘mockery speech’ (a’ali-o’olek), usually marked by two individuals’ repartee from what is, in effect, a relatively circumscribed set of short, insulting phrases, differs as much from ‘ordinary conversation’ (kokolak) as a more conventional folk genre such as ‘riddles’ (neneuk) differs from ‘tales’ (tutaik) or that subset of tales which, when linked to specific genealogies, are regarded as ‘true tales’ (tutui-tete’ek) and serve as charters for political practice (Fox 1971). What these various speech forms do is signal different standardised social contexts, each with separate conditions and expectations for the use of semantic elements. The study of these speech forms could approximate an ethnography of Rotenese social life.

Ritual language is confined to two speech forms in Rotenese: bini ('poems, chants') and sosodak ('song'). Although the Rotenese frequently speak of ritual language as if it were a separate language—‘the language of the ancestors’, with its own unique vocabulary and rules of utterance—it might more accurately be described as a poetic style characteristic of the bini. All bini are, by native definition, in ritual language, but not all songs. Songs in ritual language are precisely those whose verses might be equally well recited as bini. The distinction is one in the manner of performance. Short bini may be either recited or sung (soda), while long bini are chanted (helo) publicly at ceremonial gatherings. This distinction, however, is by no means rigid. In ritual language, the verbs soda and helo form a single dyadic set.

Ritual language ought to be used on all formal occasions when individuals or groups come together. 8 There exist, therefore, standard bini for greeting strangers, for bidding farewell, for making requests to superiors, for all the crucial states of courtship, for initiating or facilitating bride-wealth negotiations, for the installation of a lord, at haircutting rituals for house-building ceremonies, at the annual hus feasts when these feasts were still held, for weddings and particularly for funerals. Although used at ceremonies, ritual language is not primarily a

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8 The use of Indonesian, especially an oratorical or Biblical style of Indonesian, by young schoolteachers and some native preachers as an equivalent of ritual language at ceremonies has tended, in recent times, to restrict the use of ritual language. The issue is not, however, clear-cut. Many native Christian preachers have adopted ritual-language forms and some are outspoken exponents of its use. Furthermore, some ceremonies involve the use of Indonesian for Christian phases of the ritual and Rotenese for traditional phases.
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religious language. Unlike ‘special’ languages in other areas of Indonesia, it is not a vehicle for communication with the spirits who should properly be addressed in the speech form (–seseo) nor is it a vehicle for the preservation of ancestral histories that are told in ordinary language in the form of tutui-tete’ek. Ritual language is simply the language of formal social or ceremonial interaction.

It is for funerals—the most complex rituals of Rotenese ceremonial life—that the repertoire of bini is most elaborated. These bini are either chanted in praise of the deceased or danced to in a circle-dance with a leader and surrounding chorus. The repertoire seems intended to delimit all possible categories of deceased persons. With the exception of those who have died a violent, inauspicious death, there are particular funeral bini for nobles or for commoners, for young noblemen, for rich commoners, for someone who has died from a lingering illness, for a girl who has died as a virgin (‘unripe’), for a widow or for an orphan, for an eldest child, or for a child who has died shortly after birth. These funeral bini have a general format. The deceased is compared with a chant character and then the stereotyped genealogy and life course of this chant character are told. In most instances, the chants explain the reasons for and circumstances of the chant character’s death; in some instances, the chant character describes his illness or admonishes his descendants; and most chants conclude with the mourning and funeral of the chant character.

Since ritual language is desired in all formal interaction, it is not the exclusive preserve of any class or priesthood. Some women demonstrate almost as much knowledge of ritual language as men and their active use of this language is often called upon especially at various stages of the marriage ceremonies. Although youth are not socially expected to betray a serious interest in ritual affairs, many—in spite of their own disclaimers—show a surprising knowledge of proper dyadic sets and have usually memorised some short bini and songs. Participation in the circle-dance with its antiphony between leader and chorus is an effective means of social instruction.

There are, however, individuals who are popularly regarded as master poets or composers of bini. These are the ‘chanters’ (manahelo). They are usually male elders, personally jealous of their abilities and privately disparaging of their rivals’ knowledge. Since the title manahelo is not conferred but is the popular

9 The circle-dance or ‘round-dance’ is reported for many areas of eastern Indonesia. A good, short description of an evening of Rotenese dancing observed in Oenale in 1908 can be found in Lekkerkerker (1910). Lekkerkerker described the rivalry between chanters who took their place at the centre of the circle and the repetition of the changer’s verses by the chorus of surrounding dancers. He indicated, however, that women began the dance and were later joined by men. In all the round-dances I observed or participated in, in Termanu and in Ba’a, men and women danced together from the start. Since Granet, for one, has claimed to have discovered the origin of parallelism in the customary antiphonal rivalry of festival choruses, I should emphasise that however appealing this hypothesis is, the round-dance is an important but by no means exclusive context for the use of ritual language.
attribute of a fluid consensus, it is impossible to number the chanters on the island. To judge from the folktales, lords used formerly to challenge each other by sponsoring rival chant contests between their domains, and, to some extent, any ceremonial gathering can erupt into a competitive performance between manahelo.

Any recitation of ritual language requires a ceremonial context. A minimal ceremonial context, for the Rotenese, involves the giving of native lontar gin ('the water of words') to one’s guest. A practice, among elders and especially among chanters on visits to each other, is to recite short bini at each other between successive rounds of gin. These minor contests often end in excited incoherence. Some ancestral figures, I was told, as they grew older, abandoned ordinary language entirely and spoke only in ritual language.

Introduction to the text

The text for analysis is a funeral chant from the domain of Termanu for a first child, of a noble family, who dies about the age of three months. The child is likened to Dela Kolik and Seko Bunak and the chant recounts the following events: 1) the marriage of the woman Pinga Pasa and So’e Leli to the man Kolik Faenama and Bunak Tunulama; 2) the onset of Pinga Pasa and So’e Leli’s pregnancy and her various cravings, which culminate in the theft of an egg from the eagle and hawk Tetema Taoama and Balapua Loniama; 3) the birth of Dela Kolik and Seko Bunak and his swift abduction by the eagle and hawk; 4) Pinga Pasa and So’e Leli’s pursuit of the eagle and hawk, first towards

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10 I recorded, in the domain of Termanu, long ritual texts from seven acknowledged manahelo, one of whom was a woman. I met, heard perform or was told about several other manahelo. I would estimate, for Termanu in the mid-1960s, with its population of just less than 5800 people, that there were approximately 15 recognised chanters in the domain. On the other hand, I gathered shorter bini from numerous individuals and many of these people within their own village area might, at times, be praised as manahelo. Although not yet capable of long composition, many of these individuals would also be described as hataholi ma-lelak ('people who know').

11 The way in which I came to be given this text should be explained. Sometime after I had settled in Termanu, I was visited by the chanter A. Patola. Some men from my village area chided him by claiming that there was no chant he could tell me that I did not already know. In the situation, I was unable to intervene. He left but returned, unannounced, late one night several weeks afterwards and recited for me a chant about the eagle and hawk (tetema//balapua). With the help of J. Pello, I was able to transcribe this chant from my tape and, in search of a translation and exegesis, I visited my principal instructor in ritual language, Stefanus Adulanu. He was a lively man, well over seventy, and, at the time, a younger chanter, a man of about fifty, Eli Pellando, was spending much of his time with him in a relationship that might be characterised as a further ‘apprenticeship’. Both chanters criticised A. Patola’s version of the chant and, rather than providing me with help in understanding it, they offered to give me the ‘correct’ version. Several days later, they presented me with the chant I publish here. Although Stefanus Adulanu assumed—as was his due—the credit for this version, it is almost certainly the joint composition of the two chanters. Furthermore, the chant has, in fact, been ‘influenced’ by A. Patola’s version, which, though it rambles and then ends abruptly, is in excellent ritual language. A comparison of the two chants could offer some insight into variation and composition among chanters.
eastern Rote (as is implied by the use of certain proper names) and then to the westernmost domain of the island, Delha; 5) the flight of the eagle and hawk seaward, then upwards to the Sun and Moon, thus ending the possibility of further pursuit; and finally 6) the return of the eagle and hawk and the gathering and burial of Dela Kolik and Seko Bunak’s remains. The chant suggests that the primary disposal of the corpse was once left to carrion birds and that a secondary burial was performed thereafter on the bones of the deceased. Although similar practices have been reported for some neighbouring islands, there is no evidence for such burials from the ethnography of Rote’s recent past nor did the chanters who provided exegesis to the text remark on this possibility. Primary tree burial of this sort is, however, alluded to in other chants where it is formulaically referred to as *fua beuk*/ndaekak* (‘to burden the beuk tree//to drape the kak tree’).12 The present chant is now performed at a funeral ceremony for the interment of the entire corpse.

An initially confusing feature of all ritual-language texts is the freedom of alternation between singular and plural forms. Several eminent chanters insisted that singular and plural were irrelevant in ritual language. One chanter advocated a convention, which he did not consistently follow in his own performances, of always coupling a single pronoun with a plural pronoun, or a ‘we-inclusive pronoun’ with a ‘we-exclusive pronoun’, thereby transforming Rotenese pronominals into distinct dyadic sets. The reason for the variation of singular and plural is that all personal names, all placenames, all objects, actions and events are dyadic while their reference, as in the case of elaborately allegorical funeral chants, is often to a singular individual and event. Therefore, rather than claim that a dyadic set is either a unity or merely the union of its elements, the chanters commit themselves to the view that it can be both.

Some chanters insist that whereas anything can be ‘translated’ into ritual language, ritual language itself cannot be ‘translated’. By this they do not mean that ritual language is unintelligible or meaningless. Rather, it is simply that they can take specimens of Indonesian (the medium of which they conceive of translation) and cast them into ritual verse, but Indonesian—as it is known on Rote—possesses none of the conventions of ritual language. Dyadic sets are haphazardly formed and thus lose their standard yet particular ‘metaphorical’ qualities. The following translation, therefore, is as literal as is possible to demonstrate the chant’s pervasive parallelism.

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12 Ritual language preserves many references to practices that have long since ceased. The hunting with bow and blowpipe, often mentioned in the chants, has waned to a mere child’s game since the introduction of firearms in the seventeenth century.
The text: *Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak*

Lae:

1. *Soku-la Pinga Pasa*  
   They carry Pinga Pasa
2. *Ma ifa-la So’e Leli.*  
   And they lift So’e Leli.
3. *De ana sao Kolik Faenama*  
   She marries Kolik Faenama
4. *Ma tu Bunak Tunulama.*  
   And weds Bunak Tunulama.
5. *De tein-na da’a-fai*  
   Her womb enlarges
   And her breasts darken.
7. *Boe-te ana ma-siu dodoki*  
   Her tongue craves for odd bits
8. *Ma metu-ape u’una.*  
   And her mouth waters for assorted things.
9. *De ma-siu bote aten*  
   The tongue craves goat’s liver
10. *Ma metu-ape tena ban.*  
    And the mouth waters for buffalo’s lung.
11. *De ala dodo bote-la leu*  
    They slaughter goats
12. *Ma pa’u tena-la leu*  
    And stab buffalo
13. *De ho’i-la bote aten*  
    They take the goat’s liver
    And take the buffalo’s lung.
15. *De dode se’ok no hade*  
    They cook and mingle rice
16. *De hade lutu bui-nggeo*  
    Black-tipped grains of rice
17. *Ma hopo balik no tua*  
    And dissolve and mix lontar sugar
18. *De tua batu meni-oek.*  
    White rock lontar sugar.
19. *De na’a te bei boe ma-siu*  
    She eats but still the tongue craves
20. *Ma ninu te bei boe metu-ape.*  
    And she drinks but still the mouth waters.
21. *De ma-siu faní-ana*  
    The tongue craves bees’ larvae
22. *Ma Metu-ape bupu-ana.*  
    And the mouth waters for wasps’ larvae.
23. *De leni faní-ana mai*  
    They bring bees’ larvae
    And they bring wasps’ larvae.
25. *De ala dode se’ok no hade*  
    They cook and mingle rice
26. *Fo hade lutu bui-nggeo*  
    Black-tipped grains of rice
27. *Ma Hopo se’ok no tua*  
    And dissolve and mingle lontar sugar
28. *Fo tua batu meni-oek.*  
    White rock lontar sugar.
29. *Te-hu na’a bei ma-siu*  
    She eats and the tongue still craves
30. *Ma ninu bei metu-ape.*  
    And she drinks and the mouth still waters.
31. *Boe-te ma-siu bia keak*  
    The tongue craves chunks of turtle [meat]
32. *Ma metu-ape lola liuk.*  
    And the mouth waters for strips of sea cow [flesh].
33. *De touk Kolik Faenama*  
    The man Kolik Faenama
34. *Ma ta’ek Bunak Tunulama*  
    And the boy Bunak Tunulama
35. *Ana ule sini tua-na*  
    He winds a lontar bundle
36. *Ma tata pele nanamo*  
    And splits a nanamo torch
37. *De neu pele ilelelu kea*  
    He goes around to torch-light fish for turtle
38. *Ma neu loti tetele luik.*  
    And goes about to search for sea cow.
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39. De leni bia keak mai
   They bring chunks of turtle [meat]

40. Ma leni lola liuk mai.
   And bring strips of sea cow [flesh].

41. De na’a te-hu bei ma-siu
   She eats but still the tongue craves

42. Ma ninu te bei metu-ape.
   And she drinks but still the mouth waters.

43. De ma-siu tema tolo
   The tongue craves a hawk’s egg

44. Ma metu-ape pua ana
   And the mouth waters for an eagle’s child

45. Fo Tetema Taoama nai nitas-sa lain
   Tetema Taoama on top of the nitas tree

46. Fo Taoama Dulu nitan
   Taoama Dulu’s nitas tree

47. Ma Balapua Loniama nai delas-sa lain
   And Balapua Loniama on top of the delas tree

48. Fo Loniama Langa delan.
   Loniama Langa’s delas tree.

49. De ana lino tolo nai lai
   He spies an egg above

50. Ma ana mete ana nai lai
   And sees a child above

51. Te-hu masa-keni kakodek
   But the tree is as slick as a kakodek tree

52. Ma manga-moi lalanok
   And as slippery as a lalanok tree

53. De ela lima tekek bai dei
   It needs the hands of a lizard

54. Ma ela kala kodek bai dei
   And needs the chest of a monkey

55. Fo dei laba kae-nala lain
   To mount and climb upward

56. Ma tinga hene-nala lain.
   And to step and ascend upward.

57. De ala dodo doak lon
   They think carefully

58. Ma ala ndanda sota lon.
   And they ponder deeply.

59. Besak-ka lada hade ma-modonna
   Now with tasty new ripening rice

60. Ma fole tua oe-bun-na
   And with good freshly tapped lontar juice

61. Ala solo neu teke ei-ku’u telu
   They buy a three-toed lizard

62. Ma upa neu lafo ma-nisi duak
   And hire a two-toothed mouse

63. Besak-ka kae-nala nitas lain
   And now climb the nitas tree

64. Ma hene-nala delas lain.
   And mount the delas tree.

65. Boe-te ana tete tetema ein
   He cuts the hawk’s leg

66. Ma nggute balapua lidan.
   And snips the eagle’s wing.

67. De tetema na-lai
   The hawk flees

68. Ma balapua tofomu.
   And the eagle escapes.

69. Besak-ka neni tetema tolon
   Now he brings the hawk’s egg

70. Ma neni balapua anan.
   And brings the eagle’s child.

71. De fe Pinga Pasa na’a
   He gives Pinga Pasa to eat

72. Ma fe So’e Leli ninu boe.
   And gives So’e Leli to drink.

73. Ma ta ma-siu
   And the tongue no longer craves

74. Do metu-ape sok.
   Or the mouth ceases to water.

75. Besak-ka te’in-na nama-sela
   Now her womb grows larger

76. Ma su’un-na nama-tua.
   And her breasts grow bigger.

77. De ana nggeo-lena
   They enlarge
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78. *Ma ana da’a-fai.*
And they darken.

79. *De bongi-na popi-koak*
She gives birth to ‘a cock’s tail feathers’ [a male child].

80. *Ma lae-na lano-manuk.*
And she bears ‘a rooster’s plume’ [a man child].

81. *De loke lae Dela Kolik*
They call him Dela Kolik

82. *Ma hule lae Seko Bunak.*
And they name him Seko Bunak.

83. *Faik esa manunin*
On one definite day

84. *Ma ledeko dua mateben*
And at a second certain dawn

85. *Boe-te inan-na Pinga Pasa*
His mother, Pinga Pasa,

86. *Ma te’on-na So’e Leli*
And his aunt, So’e Leli,

87. *Iifak Dela Kolik*
Carries Dela Kolik out

88. *Neme uma tisa-tetetin*
From under the thatch of the house

89. *Ma koko’ok Seko Bunak*
And cradles Seko Bunak

90. *Neme lo hedahu-hohonan.*
Away from the ladder of the home.

91. *Boe-te Tetema Taoama*
Tetema Taoama

92. *Nafa-ndele lololo*
Continually remembers

93. *Ma Balapua Loniamia*
And Balapua Loniamia

94. *Nasa-neda ndanda*
Constantly recalls

95. *Neu tonon-na bai*
Her egg again

96. *Ma neu anan-na boe.*
And also her child.

97. *Boe-te ana la memeli mai*
She flies down quickly

98. *Ma tena mese-mese mai*
And sweeps down rapidly

99. *De lau mese-mese mai*
Seizes and carries off Dela Kolik

100. *Ma tena neni Seko Bunak*
And grasps and carries off Seko Bunak

101. *Leo nitas-sa lain*
Toward the top of a nitas tree

102. *Fo Sepe Ama-Li nitau*
Sepe Ama-Li’s nitas tree

103. *Ma neu delas-sa lain*
And to the top of a delas tree

104. *Fo Timu Tongo-Batu delan.*
Timu Tongo-Batu’s delas tree.

105. *De ana mamaman leo mafok*
She chews it like half-ripe fruit

106. *Ma mumumun leo latuk.*
And sucks it like a ripe plant.

107. *Boe-te inak-ka Pinga Pasa*
The woman Pinga Pasa

108. *Ma fetok-ka So’e Leli*
And the girl So’e Leli

109. *Ana sue totoko tenen*
She strikes her ribs in anguish

110. *Ma ana lai rabako paun.*
And she beats her thighs in distress.

111. *De neu tunga balapua*
She goes to follow the eagle

112. *Ma neu sanga tetema*
And she goes to seek the hawk

113. *Fo ela no falik Dela Kolik*
To bring back Dela Kolik

114. *Ma no tulek Seko Bunak.*
And to return Seko Bunak.

115. *De neu nitan ma neu ndan*
She goes to see him and goes to meet him

116. *Nai Sepe Ama-Li nitan lain*
High in Depe Ama-Li’s nitas tree
117. Ma nai Timu Tongo-Batu delan lain.  
   And high in Timu Tongo-Batu’s delas tree.

118. Boe-te inak-ka Pinga Pasa  
   The woman Pinga Pasa

119. Ma te’on-na So’e Leli  
   And his aunt, So’e Leli,

120. Boke ein neu nitas  
   Kicks her foot against the nitas tree

121. Ma bapa lima neu delas,  
   And slaps her hand against the delas tree,

122. Fo ela Dela Kolik, ana tuda  
   That Dela Kolik, he might fall

123. Ma Seko Bunak, ana monu.  
   And Seko Bunak, he might drop.

124. Boe-te tetema na-hala  
   Then the hawk answers

125. Ma bapaputa na-fada, nae:  
   And the eagle speaks, saying:

126. ‘O sue anam leo bek,  
   ‘Just as you love your child

127. Na au sue anang leo ndiak  
   So I love my child

128. Ma o lai tolemon leo bek,  
   And just as you cherish your egg

129. Na au lai tolong leo ndiak boe.  
   So I love my egg also.

130. De o mu’a au-anang-nga so  
   You have eaten my child

131. De besak-ia au u’a o-anam-ma  
   Now I eat your child

132. Ma o minu au-tolong-nga so  
   And you have drunk my egg

133. De au inu o-tolong-ma bai.’  
   So I drink your egg also.’

134. Boe-te tetema na seluk  
   Then the hawk flies once more

135. Ma balapua la pu bai.  
   And the eagle takes wing again.

136. De neu Taoama Dulu nitan  
   She goes to Taoama Dulu’s nitas tree

137. Ma neu Loniam Langa delan  
   And goes to Loniam Lang’s delas tree

138. Ka neni Dela Kolik  
   Chewing, while carrying, Seko Bunak

139. Ma mumu neni Seko Bunak.  
   And sucking, while carrying, Seko Bunak.

140. De ala boe neni Seko Bunak.  
   They go to follow her

141. Ma leu sangan.  
   And they go to seek her

142. De leu ndukun ma losan.  
   They reach her and approach her.

143. Boe-te tetema la seluk  
   The hawk takes wing once more

144. Ma balapua la bai.  
   And the eagle flies again.

145. De neu Loma-Loma Langa nitan  
   She goes to Loma-Loma Lang’a nitas tree

146. Ma Pele-Pele Dulu delan.  
   And Pele-Pele Dulu’s delas tree

147. Te inak-ka Pinga Pasa  
   The mother, Pinga Pasa,

148. Ma te’ok-ka So’e Leli  
   And the aunt, So’e Leli,

149. Bei boe neu tungan  
   Still she goes on following her

150. Ma neu sangan.  
   And goes on seeking her.

151. De losan ma ndukun.  
   She approaches her and reaches her.

152. Boe-te tetema la seluk  
   But the hawk takes wing once more

153. Ma balapua la seluk  
   And the eagle flies once more

154. De la Ana Iko neu  
   Continuously chewing Dela Kolik

155. Kaka’ak Dela Kolik  
   And continuously sucking Seko Bunak.

156. Ma mumumuk Seko Bunak.  
   She flies to Ana Iko [Deliha]
159. Ma lapu Dela Muli neu. And takes wing to Dela Muli [Delha].
160. Leo ndia te Pinga Pasa boe tungan So Pinga Pasa also follows her.
161. Ma So’e Leli boe sangan. And So’e Leli also seeks her.
162. De neu losa Dela Muli She goes toward Dela Muli.
163. Ma neu nduku ana Iko. And goes until Ana Iko.
164. Te tetema to poïn But the hawk does not loose him.
165. Ma balapua ta nggalin. And the eagle does not scatter him.
166. De tetema la seluk The hawk flies once more.
167. Ma balapua lapu bai. And the eagle takes wing again.
168. De leo sain posin-na neu Toward the sea’s sandy edge.
169. Ma liun unun-na neu. And toward the ocean’s rocky reef.
170. Te boe neu tungan She also goes to follow her.
171. Ma boe neu sangan. And she also goes to seek her.
172. De neu posi maka-mu mekon She goes to the edge resounding like a gong.
173. Ma unu ma-li labun-na. And the reef rumbling like a drum.
174. Boe-te tetema la seluk But the hawk flies once more.
175. Ma balapua lapu bai. And the eagle takes wing again.
176. De neu liun sasalin She goes toward the overflowing ocean.
177. Ma neu sain loloen. And toward the receding sea.
178. Boe-te inak-ka Pinga Pasa The mother, Pinga Pasa,
179. Ma te’on-na So’e Leli And his aunt, So’e Leli,
180. Ta neu lena li Cannot wade the waves.
181. Ma ta neu ladì nafa. And cannot cross the swell.
182. De ana falik leo una mai She returns to the house.
183. Ma tulek leo lo mai. And goes back to the home.
184. De ana lu mata She lets drop tears from the eyes.
185. Ma pinu idu And mucus from the nose.
186. Nai uma ma lo In the house and home.
187. Tunga faik ma nou ledok. Each day and every dawn [sun].
188. Te-hu nai liun sasalin But on the overflowing ocean.
189. Ma nai sain loloen-na And on the receding sea.
190. Ai ta nai ndia There is no stick.
191. Ma batu ta nai na. Nor is there stone.
192. De tetema ta saë The hawk does not perch.
193. Ma balapua ta lu’u And the eagle does not brood.
194. Fo ana kaka Dela Kolik So she may chew Dela Kolik.
195. Ma ana mumumu Seko Bunak. And she may suck Seko Bunak.
196. Boe-te ana la leo lain neu So she flies to the heavens.
197. Ma lapu leo poin neu And takes wing to the zenith.
198. De neu losa bulan nitan And goes to the Moon’s nitas.
199. Ma neu nduku ledo delan.  And goes to the Sun’s delas.
200. Besak-ka ana lino ba’e  Now she rests on a branch
201. Ma sa’e ndanak.  And perches on a limb.
202. De ana kukuta Dela Kolik  She continues to munch Dela Kolik
203. Ma mumumu Seko Bunak. And continues to suck Seko Bunak.
204. De na,a na-mada man  She eats to dry her tongue
205. Ma ninu na-meti aper-na  And drinks to slake her thirst
206. De henu tein-na boe  To fill her stomach
207. Ma sofe nutun-na boe  And to satisfy her gizzard
208. De ela kada dui manun  Leaving only chicken bones
209. Ma ela kada kalu kapan. And leaving only buffalo sinews.
210. De ana lino na-helen  She rests gripping him
211. Ma Luü na-nepen  And broods holding him
212. Nai bulan nitan lain  On top of the Moon’s nitas
213. Ma ledo delan-na lain. And on top of the Sun’s delas.
214. Fail esa manunin  One definite day
215. Ma ledo dua mateben  And a second certain dawn
216. Besak-ka Tetema Taoama  Now Tetema Taoama
217. Ma Balapua Lonima a  And Balapua Lonima
218. Nafa-ndele dae-bafok  Remembers the Earth
219. Ma nasa-neda batu-poin. And recalls the world.
220. De ana la falik  She returns flying
221. Ma ana lapu tulek.  And she wings her way back.
222. Besak-ka la neni dui manun  She flies carrying chicken bones
223. Ma lapu neni kalu kapan  And wings her way carrying buffalo sinews
224. Fo Dela Kolik duin  The bones of Dela Kolik
225. Ma Seko Bunak kalun. And the sinews of Seko Bunak.
226. De ana mai Sua Lai tolek mafon  She comes to Sua Lai’s dark shadow
227. Ma Batu Hun modok sa’on.  And to Batu Hun’s green shade.
228. Besak-ka tetema tapa henin  Now the hawk throws him away
229. Ma balapua tu’u henin.  And the eagle casts him away.
230. Boe-ma inak-ka Pinga Pasa  The mother, Pinga Pasa,
231. Ma te’on-na So’e Leli neu  And his aunt, Soë Leli,
232. De tenga do hele nenin.  Takes or picks him, carrying him.
233. De la-toi dui manun  They bury the chicken bones
234. Ma laka-dofu kalu kapan. And they cover with earth the buffalo sinews.

Note A: A classification of Rotenese birds remains to be worked out. The principal criteria for native classification seem to be, in order of importance, size and colour markings, feeding and nesting habits, and cry or song. The same Linnaean species in different developmental phases may be classified under separate terms while several different Linnaean species may be included under the same term. Both balapua (pua) and tetema (tema) included a number of subcategories: balapua langa fula, balapua nggeok,
tema nggelak, tema ndiik and also selu or selu kolo. The balapua langa fula (‘white-headed balapua’) can, however, be identified as the ‘white-headed sea eagle’ or ‘brahminy kite’, Haliastur Indus (intermedius), in its adult phase.

Note B: The delas tree is the Indonesian dedap (Erythina spp.) and the nitas tree is the Indonesian kelumpang (Sterculia foetida).

In this analysis, the distinction is developed between the expression of dyadic sets in parallel verse and the underlying semantic organisation of the elements of these sets. I discuss the relation of dyadic expressions to ordinary language forms, their arrangement in lines of verse and their formation in complex expressions and formulaic chains. I then consider, more briefly, some directions for research suggested by the preparation, in its initial stages, of a dictionary of ritual language. These concern the combinatorial possibilities and potential range of elements of sets and the means for specifying an element as a locus of semantic relations.

Dyadic sets and ordinary language

The only explicit native rule concerning the bini is that words must ‘form dyads’. This is usually phrased in Rotenese using the verb laka-dudua, formed from the root dua (‘two’). In Indonesian, the rule is commonly paraphrased by statements that words must ‘be paired’ (berpasang) or that the ancestors were always ‘balancing or comparing’ (membanding). The consistent application of this rule is evident in the chant.

Omitting proper names and complex sets, the chant Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak (DK//SB) comprises just under 120 dyadic sets. (A list of these sets with simple glosses is appended to this chapter.) In general, nouns (ana//tolo: ‘child’//‘egg’; ate//ba: ‘liver’//‘lungs’), verbs (bapa//boke: ‘to slap with the hand’//‘to stamp with the foot’; bongi//lae: ‘to give birth’//‘to bear’), adjectives (beu//modo: ‘new’//‘ripening green’; -keni//-moi: ‘slippery’//‘smooth’) and adverbs (doa-//sota-: ‘carefully’//‘painstakingly’; lololo//ndanda: ‘constantly’//‘continually’) all form dyadic sets. However, a precise, predetermined syntactic specification of these elements of speech presents considerable difficulty.

In ordinary language, root elements, usually with the aid of prefixed or suffixed morphemes, can take on an array of syntactic forms. In ritual language, these
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morphemes can often be dispensed with entirely.\footnote{I avoid any claim that ritual language is simply a morphologically ‘bare’ form of ordinary language. Though superficially suggestive, the claim would then have to ignore certain verbal and adverbial stylised reduplications, which are characteristic only of ritual language.} Hence: 1) the membership of an element in a particular dyadic set, and 2) the context established by the word order of a line, serve to define an element’s use and its possible semantic significance. Judgments on a word’s use, however, based on its use in ordinary language, can be misleading since ritual language derives much of its ‘poetic character’ from systematic deviation from ordinary language usage. The following examples are intended to illustrate aspects of this relationship of ritual language to ordinary language. These examples do not constitute a systematic presentation but have been chosen to cover a variety of relationships that can be discussed by reference to *Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak*.

In lines 31 and 32, 39 and 40, *bia*/\textit{lola} form a dyadic set. Context as well as native exegesis establish these elements as nouns with the meaning ‘chunks or pieces’//’strips’ (of meat). In ordinary language (cf. Jonker 1908:48), *bia* serves as a verb meaning ‘to cut or chop into small pieces’: \textit{ana bia naka-lulutuk pa-a} (‘he cuts the meat into chunks’). A piece of chopped meat is \textit{pa bibiak}, but the shortened form, \textit{biak}, meaning ‘piece’ of meat, can also occur: \textit{ana ke pa-a neu biak dua} (‘he cuts the meat into two pieces’). In ordinary language (cf. Jonker 1908:322), *lola* takes the partially reduplicated form, \textit{lolola}, and as a verb means ‘to cut into slices or long strips’: \textit{ana lolola pa} (‘he cuts the meat into strips’). \textit{Lolola} can be used in an adjectival sense, as in the expression, \textit{pa lololak} (‘meat cut into strips’), but no shortened adjectival form, \textit{lola(k)}*, occurs nor is the word used as a noun. In ritual language, however, *lola* takes its form by analogy with *bia* and both serve as nouns, representing the results of their respective verbal actions.

31. *Boe-te ma-siu bia keak* The tongue craves chunks of turtle

The formation of one element by means of analogy with its paired member is a characteristic process in the creation of numerous dyadic sets.

A somewhat different example occurs in lines 35 through 38:

35. *Ana ule sini tua-na* He winds a lontar bundle
36. *Ma tata pele nanamo* And splits a nanamo torch
37. *De neu pele lelelu kea* He goes around to torch-light fish for turtle
38. *Ma neu loti teteo liuk.* And goes about to search for sea cow.

The crucial element is *pele*. In ordinary language, *pele* may refer to: 1) the dried leaves used to make a torch, 2) the torch itself, and 3), as a verb, the act of
hunting or fishing by torch-light. In lines 35 and 36, pele forms a set with sini, ‘bundles of dried leaves’ (usually used for thatching a roof). The significance of the set and its use as a noun are clear, but immediately after these lines, pele forms a set with loti, a verb that in ordinary language means ‘to look for something by torch-light’. The significance of this set and its use as a verb are also clear. The polysemy of pele in ordinary language is resolved into separate dyadic sets of ritual language.

In ritual language, the numbers combine to form dyadic sets. In Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak, there are two such sets: esa//dua (‘one’/‘two’) and dua//telu (‘two’/‘three’). An odd number occurs with an even number and their combination might be expressed by the formula: X//X + 1. This rule excludes use of the numbers five (lima) and six (ne). The set lima/ne does occur in ritual language but never in a context in which its significance could possibly be numeric. This is because lima, in ordinary language, has two meanings: ‘five’ and ‘hand’. Thus in ritual language, lima may also form a set with ei (‘foot’), as in lines 121 and 122:

121. Boke ein neu nitas [She] kicks her foot against the nitas tree
122. Bapa lima neu delas And slaps her hand against the delas tree

Wherever lima//ne occur, lima is always used to mean ‘hand’ or ‘other hand’. Hence in ritual language, the polysemy of lima is suppressed in the very form that might best express it.

It is evident from the preceding examples that one element of a set may be used to clarify the form and the meaning of its pair.\textsuperscript{15} In ritual language, there exists a class of sets, one of whose elements does not occur in the ordinary spoken language of that particular speech community. (In the case of Dela Kolik ma Seko Buna, this would be the dialect community of the domain of Termanu.) Some examples of these sets in are: 1) sao//tu (‘to marry’/‘to wed’); 2) bongi//lae (‘to give birth’/‘to bear [a child]’); 3) fali//tule (‘to return’/‘to turn back’); 4) bote//tena (‘goat’/‘buffalo [small/large, female animal]’).

The initial elements of the first three sets, sao, bongi and fali, are common ordinary-language verbs while the second elements of these sets, tu, lae and tule, neither occur nor appear to be related to any forms in ordinary language. Most native commentators, therefore, argue on formal grounds that set membership and context make it apparent that the unknown element must be interpreted in terms of its known pair. Some commentators, however, suggested conceivable

\textsuperscript{15} For many sets, it could be analytically useful to distinguish between a dominant element that tends to establish the meaning or form for the set and a dependent element whose meaning or form can be interpreted only by reference to its paired element.
ordinary-language forms to which unknown elements might be related. (*Tu*, it was remarked, might be related to *-tu*, ‘to sit.’) That some of these suggestions were implausible, even to those who made them, ought not obscure the fact that the Rotenese assume that ritual language elements derive from ordinary language. Elements, or some portion of these elements, however obscure, are not regarded as some special ‘secret’ vocabulary. Furthermore, unknown or unrelated elements decrease in number as knowledge of ordinary language and of the rules for the derivation of ritual elements increases.\(^\text{16}\)

The set *bote//tena* offers further problems in exegesis. According to Jonker (1908:620), *tena* is a classifier for young, female animals and can apply to any animal, whether buffalo or chicken. Native commentators insisted (to me) that *tena* could apply only to large, female livestock (horses or water buffalo) and, in the context of sacrifice, this could mean only a water buffalo (*kapak*); while *bote*, for which there seemed to be no ordinary-language form, designated smaller livestock, especially the goat (*bii-hik*) and the sheep (*bii-lopo*). The assuredness with which these commentators provided their exegesis was probably based on the fact that *bote//tena* occurred in other chants in a more complex form: *bote bi’ik//tena kapak*. Here again, it is set membership that resolves any obscurity of meaning.

Analytically, there is another class of sets, whose member elements are synonymous dialect variants. The dialect situation on Rote is complex. On phonetic grounds, Jonker (1913) recognised nine dialect groupings on the island. Rote’s 18 domains vie among each other to possess distinguishing speech characteristics. It is regarded as appropriate that each domain has its own ‘language’ (*dede’ak*). In addition, the Rotenese divide their island conceptually into two named territorial divisions: an eastern division, Lamak-anan, and a western division, Henak-anan. The natively recognised dividing line for these divisions cuts through the middle of the expansionist domain of Termanu. These divisions are said to be distinguished by a variety of supposed characteristics, one of which is a broad difference in key dialect words. Certain ritual-language sets utilise, and consequently correspond with, this bipartite dialect division. These sets combine an element from the eastern division with an element from the western division. In ritual language, for example, the dyadic set for ‘man’ is *hataholi//daehena* (*dahena*). *Hataholi* is ‘man’ in Termanu and in western Rote; *daehena* (*dahena*) is ‘man’ in most domains of eastern Rote. Examples of these kinds of sets in *Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak* are *henu//sofe* and *li//nafa*; *henu* is ‘to be full, sufficient, satisfied’ in Termanu and in eastern Rote, but is replaced with *sofe* throughout most of western Rote. *Li* is ‘wave, waves (of the sea)’ in Termanu

\(^{16}\) It is possible that many of the sets with an element unrelated to some form in ordinary language would be clarified if the dialect variations of ordinary language were better known. In fact, it seems difficult to distinguish in all cases between sets with an ‘unknown’ element and sets composed of dialect variants.
and western Rote, while *nafa* takes its place in areas of eastern Rote. Although Termanu may or may not be the most strategic area for the recognition of sets of this kind, it should be noted that these sets, composed of dialect variants, are those about which ordinary Rotenese (and not just the chanters) readily offer exegesis, labelling elements as either eastern or western terms. Dialect difference is a subject of common awareness and ritual language exploits this knowledge.\(^{17}\)

On the basis of these preceding examples, it is possible to make a number of comments on the general nature of ritual language. First, ritual language is a developed and elaborated speech form and its dyadic sets are astonishingly rich, varied vehicles of expression. Its occurrence cannot be attributed to some simple reiterative mentality. Second, all dyadic sets are formulaic in the sense that each set is a traditionally fixed unit. It is from the stock of these units that the *bini* are composed. Although it is impossible to demonstrate this by recourse to just one text, it is possible to assert that all the sets in *Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak* recur in other texts. They are neither unique nor confined to this single chant. Third, ritual language is ‘poetic’ and ‘metaphoric’ but its metaphors are systematically ordered and constrained by their dyadic structure. The ambiguity in the use of elements in ritual language is often less than the use of those same elements in ordinary language. Fourth, the semantic study of any language raises problems of polysemy, homonymy and synonymy. What ritual language provides is a highly formalised native reflection on ordinary language. Ritual language can suggest a means of resolving problems in the semantics of ordinary language.

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17 In this study of Dusun ‘sacred language’, Evans (1953:495–6) distinguished five classes of words that made up this sacred language: 1) ‘ordinary Dusun words’; 2) ‘special but easily recognizable forms of ordinary words—poetic forms—derived from ordinary Dusun words’; 3) ‘words not usually current in the village... but found in other villages, near or far away’; 4) ‘loan words from Malay’; and 5) ‘words used, as far as known, only in the sacred languages, for which derivations are not obtainable’. This classification resembles that of Hardeland (1858:4–5). He distinguished: 1) ordinary or slightly altered Dajak words; 2) Malay words, also slightly altered; and 3) special words, whose meaning or form confined them to sacred language. Hardeland, however, used the term Basa Sangiang to refer to the sacred language as a whole and to its distinctive, special words, which made up only a part of its total vocabulary. In his dictionary (1859), Hardeland included about 900 of these Basa Sangiang words. Scharer (1966:8), using Hardeland’s textual material, discovered that ordinary Dajak words of Hardeand’s time had come to be regarded, within 100 years and in the areas where Scharer worked, as special Basa Sangiang terms. (This observation does not necessarily imply that the vocabulary of Basa Sangiang as a whole had changed radically—in fact, Scharer makes several statements to suggest that it had not—but rather that, as changes occurred in the ordinary language and culture of the Ngadju groups, the relationship of Basa Sangiang to ordinary language had altered.) It appears that what Scharer intended to include as the conclusion to his fourth volume was a word list of special Basa Sangiang terms. Two points ought to be emphasised. First, the philological concern with the origin of particular words in these Indonesian sacred languages tends to obscure their essential dyadic structure. Scharer (1966:6) indicated that his principal means of translating obscure words was by reference to their parallel elements. In this way, he was able to ‘translate’ all but five words of his enormous corpus. Second, judgments on the origin of particular words (whether as altered or ancient ordinary words, dialect or Malay loan words, or special terms) are fraught with difficulty and can never be made certain. Working with a number of chanters from different dialect areas and many elders, it is possible to obtain some explanation of nearly all elements of ritual language. This does not, however, always make clear the origins of these elements.
Finally, it seems that dyadic sets are not simply systematically derived from related elements in ordinary speech, but are systematically related among themselves. This area of investigations offers promising possibilities.

**Dyadic sets and parallel verse**

Whereas the Rotenese are emphatic about the need for the pairing of elements in ritual language, they do not formulate explicit rules themselves about the arrangement of these pairs into poetic lines of verses. Consequently, any assessment of poetic form must be based on observed regularities in the texts.

First, it is apparent that dual structure does not encompass all words. There exist a limited number of recurrent elements that do not form dyadic sets. The single text *Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak* contains a high proportion of all such unpaired forms. They can be classed as follows: 1) connectives such as *ma* (‘and’), *de* (‘or’), *te* (te-hu) (‘but’), *de, boe, boe-ma, boe-te*, which, if translated at all, can be glossed by ‘and’, ‘then’ or ‘also’; 2) pronouns, such as *au, o, ana, ala* (‘I’, ‘you’, ‘he, she, it’, ‘they’); 3) inflected ‘prepositions’ (Jonker’s term) such as *nai///lai* (third-person singular/plural) (‘to be at, on, upon’), *no///lo* (‘to be with’), *neni///leni* (‘to bring with’), *neu///leu* (‘to go toward’); and 4) invariable, uninflected elements, such as *be* (‘what’), *bei* (‘still’), *leo* (‘to, toward’), *kada* (‘always, still’) and the exclamation *na*. (A fuller list of these elements is also appended to this chapter.)

For some elements, dyadic sets are optional. *Boe*, when used as a ‘filler’ in the middle and especially at the end of a line, may form a set with *bai* (‘again’). The demonstrative pronoun *ndia* (‘there’) may form a set with the demonstrative *na* (‘there’), but this is variable within the same chant and even within successive lines. The verb *fe* (‘to give’) rarely forms a dyadic set, nor does the negative *ta(k)*. Whether or not these elements form dyadic sets is, to judge from discussion with chanters, a matter of individual style. The chanter’s goal is not to produce a monotony of parallel forms in successive lines.

In composition, the overwhelmingly most apparent poetic form is the distich or couplet. Nearly the whole of *Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak* consists of either consecutive or alternative parallel lines. Using *a, a1, b* and *b1* to designate lines (and not elements of sets), these two forms may be illustrated as follows:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
a & 1. \text{Soku-la Pinga Pasa} \quad \text{They carry Pinga Pasa} \\
a' & 2. \text{Ma ifa-la So’e Leli} \quad \text{And they lift So’e Leli} \\
b & 3. \text{De ana sao Kolik Faenama} \quad \text{She marries Kolik Faenama} \\
b' & 4. \text{Ma tu Bunak Tunulama.} \quad \text{And weds Buna Tunulama.} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
a & 15. \text{De dode se’ok no hade} \quad \text{They cook and mingle rice} \\
b & 16. \text{De hade lutu buinggeo} \quad \text{Black-tipped grains of rice} \\
a' & 17. \text{Ma hopo balik no tua} \quad \text{And dissolve and mix lontar sugar} \\
b' & 18. \text{De tua batu meni-oek.} \quad \text{White rock lontar sugar.}
\end{array}
\]
Elements that form dyadic sets should, in parallel lines, correspond exactly in position and, as far as possible, in morphological structure. An element that does not form a dyadic set may, in the second of two parallel lines, be omitted and its sense is understood. (In lines 3 and 4, the pronoun ana, ‘she’, is not repeated. Other instances of this tendency can be seen in the text in lines 11/12, 25/26, 35/36, 55/56.)

The only potential exception to the rule of position in Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak is the dyadic expression ma-siu/metu-ape. The expression is composed of two dyadic sets. Ma/ape (‘tongue’/'saliva’) form a set, as do siu/metu. Siu is the verb ‘to crave’ (said of a pregnant woman), but metu corresponds with no recognisable ordinary-language verb and, according to the chanters, has the meaning ‘to salivate or crave’ only in the expression metu-ape. Hence, while ma/ape may occur on its own (as in lines 204 and 206), siu/metu may not. Since ma-siu/metu-ape is an unalterable expression, ma and ape do not violate the positional rule on the arrangement of dyadic elements in parallel lines. The poetic play on this expression and its component set are used with great effectiveness in Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak. The eagle and hawk’s devouring of the child revenges the cravings of Pinga Pasa and So’e Leli. Lines 19/20:

19. De na’a te bei boe ma-siu  
   She [Pinga Pasa] eats but still the tongue craves

20. Ma ninu te bei boe metu-ape  
   She [So’e Leli] drinks but still the mouth waters

are answered by lines 204/205:

204. De na’a na-mada man  
   She [the eagle] eats to dry her tongue

205. De ninu na-meti apen-na  
   She [the hawk] drinks to slake her thirst

The rule on the parallelism of morphological structures does not necessarily include number. Although singular forms usually parallel each other as do plural forms, singular forms may occasionally and acceptably combine with plural forms. Morphological parallelism can be illustrated best by the reduplication of verbs. (In general, the partial reduplication of verbs, with or without prefix, indicates an intensified, repetitive or continuing action.) Ka (kaka)/mumu (‘to chew’/'to suck’) form a dyadic set. The set is first used in unreduplicated form (lines 138/139) and thereafter in reduplicated form (lines 156/157, 194/195):

138. Ka neni Dela Kolik  
   Chewing (while carrying) Dela Kolik

139. Ma mumu neni Seko Bunak.  
   And sucking (while carrying) Seko Bunak.

156. Kaka’ak Dela Kolik  
   Continuously chewing Dela Kolik

157. Ma mumumuk Seko Bunak.  
   Continuously sucking Seko Bunak.
Any element whose pair is expressed in reduplicated form must be similarly reduplicated. This rule extends to adverbs, although, unlike verbs, partial reduplication may parallel total reduplication. In lines 97/98, for example, the set meli//mese (‘quickly’//’rapidly’) is expressed as memeli//mese-mese.

The rule of morphological parallelism is of considerable importance given the processes by which ritual language dispenses with standard morphological forms of ordinary language and develops it own elaborate forms. In lines 92/94 and 218/219, the set neda//ndele (‘to remember’//’to recall’) is expressed as nasa-neda//nafa-ndele. Each element of this expression would pass as an acceptable ordinary-language usage. In other chants, however, neda//ndele is expressed more emphatically as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{De neda masa-nenedak} & \quad \text{Recall, do continually recall} \\
\text{Ma ndele mafa-ndendelek} & \quad \text{And remember, do continually remember}
\end{align*}
\]

Such a distinctively styled expression can occur only in ritual language. The length of a parallel line and the number of its constituent dyadic elements are rigidly fixed. Disregarding elements that do not pair, the maximum number of dyadic elements of any line of Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak is four:

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{a} & \text{b} & \text{c} & \text{d} \\
\text{a}^1 & \text{b}^1 & \text{c}^1 & \text{d}^1
\end{array}
\]

An example of this is:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{b}^1 & \quad \text{Ala solo neu teke ei-ku’u telu} & \quad \text{They hire a two-toothed mouse} \\
\text{b}^2 & \quad \text{Ma up neu lafo ma-nisi duak} & \quad \text{They buy a three-toed lizard}
\end{align*}
\]

The majority of lines in Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak have either two or three elements:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a} & \quad \text{b} & \quad \text{a} & \quad \text{b} & \quad \text{c} \\
\text{or} \\
\text{a}^1 & \quad \text{b}^1 & \quad \text{a}^1 & \quad \text{b}^1 & \quad \text{c}^1
\end{align*}
\]

Several examples of three-element lines have already been quoted (lines 1–4, 15–18, 204–5). Examples of two-element lines are:

\[
\begin{align*}
11. \text{De alla dodo bote-la leu} & \quad \text{They slaughter goats} \\
12. \text{Ma pa’u tena-la leu} & \quad \text{And stab buffalo} \\
67. \text{De tetema na-lai} & \quad \text{The hawk flees} \\
68. \text{Ma balapua tofomu} & \quad \text{And the eagle escapes}
\end{align*}
\]
There also occur, in *Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak*, several single lines that have no parallel. Some of these lines are:

153. *De losan ma ndukun*  
She approaches her and reaches her

186. *Nai uma ma lo*  
In the house and home

187. *Tunga faik ma nou ledok*  
Each day and every dawn [sun]

232. *De tenga do hele nenin*  
Takes or picks him, carrying him

These lines are neither incomplete nor incorrect, stray forms. Rather each is composed of one or more dyadic sets, which makes it complete and entire in itself. The form of these lines is either: a a₁ or a b a₁ b₁. The fact that these single lines are acceptable demonstrates that parallel line structure is not primary in Rotenese; it is the product of composition in terms of dyadic sets.

**Dyadic sets and complex expressions**

To this point, discussion has centred on the formulaic features of dyadic sets as traditionally fixed units of expression. One of the further features of these simple dyadic sets is that they are neutral, unordered pairs. Although chanters tend to establish patterns for themselves in their compositions, it is largely irrelevant which element of a set occurs first or second in a single line or in parallel lines. For example, the verbs of the set *la* // *lapu* may be interchanged:

145. *Boe-te tetema lapu seluk*  
The hawk takes wing once more

146. *Ma balapua la bai.*  
And the eagle flies again.

174. *Boe-te tetema la seluk*  
The hawk flies again

175. *Ma balapua lapu bai.*  
And the eagle takes wing again.

Dyadic sets may also combine in more complex sequences. These expressions may vary from double dyadic expressions to longer formulaic chains. In complex expressions, the combination of sets and the ordering of elements within them are constrained and, depending on the type of expression, these follow recognisable patterns.

A double dyadic expression involves the combination of two simple dyadic sets. It is possible to distinguish three types of these expressions: 1) unrestricted expressions whose component sets are freely separable and whose significance is not altered in separation; 2) restricted idiomatic sets whose significance is

---

18 A possible exception to this statement is the expression of ritual numbers. A lower number seems always to precede a higher number in expression.
dependent on a unique combination of sets and whose meaning cannot be derived by analysis of its components; and 3) names whose component sets have their own rules of ordering.

An example of an unrestricted double dyadic expression in Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak is the following:

55. Fo dei laba kae nala lain
To mount and climb upward
56. Ma tinga hene nala lain.
And to step and ascend upward.

The components of this expression are laba//tinga (‘to climb [a tree using a back-strap]’//’to step [up a tree, using carved niches]’) and kae//hene (‘to ascend [in short steps]’//’to mount’ [often used in the sense of increase]). Each of these sets may be used separately (as, for example, kae//hene, in lines 63/64), but commonly they occur as a complex unit. Another example of this type of expression is tona ofa//balu pau, which is composed of two dyadic sets, each of whose elements is another name for a kind of boat or watercraft. The way in which the verbs ‘to bite’, ‘to chew’, ‘to suck’ and ‘to munch’ occur in Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak suggests that kaka mamma//kukuta mumumu might also be a double dyadic expression.

Examples of idiomatic double dyadic expressions are: da’a-fai//nggeo-lena (‘to enlarge’ [said of the womb]//’to darken’ [said of the breasts]); ma-siu//metu-ape (‘to crave with the tongue’//’to salivate’); bui-nggeo(k)//meni-oe(k) (‘black-tipped’//’white sugared’); popi-koak//lano-manuk (‘a cock’s tail feathers’//’a rooster’s plume’), the ritual expression for a male child (the equivalent expression for a female child is ke-jetok//tai-inak); and dae-bafok//batu-poik, the ritual expression for the Earth (literally, ‘the Earth’s mouth or valley’//’the rock’s points’). These double expressions must be considered as wholes since any literal analysis of their dyadic components renders them incomprehensible. Furthermore, a rearrangement of the elements of these components (such as da’a-lena//nggeo-fai*, popi-manuk//lano-koak*, dae-poik//batu-bafok* or bui-oek//meni-nggeok*), although strictly correct by rule of the ordering of simple dyadic sets, is unacceptable in ritual language.

Names form by far the largest class of double dyadic expressions. Personal names always assume this form, while placenames usually assume it. Rotenese names are complex and most individuals have a minimum of three distinct names accorded them by several interrelated naming procedures. Naming in ritual language resembles the system of Rotenese ‘genealogical naming’. Ordinary genealogical names are binomials and, provided bride-wealth is paid, a person receives the first element of his father’s binomial as the second element of his personal binomial. (The first element of a person’s binomial is—or was once—determined by divination from a large selection of former ancestral names.) The difference between ordinary names and ritual-language names is that, in ordinary naming,
a person has a single binomial while, in ritual language, a chant character has two binomials or, in other words, a double dyadic name. Another feature of ritual naming not found in ordinary genealogical naming is the frequent use of placename dyadic sets as components of personal names. Ritual names therefore often suggestively locate as well as distinguish a chant character.

Features of ritual naming are well illustrated in Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak. To begin with, the set Buna//Koli (in the name Buna Tunulama//Koli Faenama) is the ritual name for the domain of Termanu or Pada. Pasa//Leli (in the name Pinga Pasa//Soë Leli) is the ritual name for an area on the northern coast of Termanu (including the present village area of Leli) near two conspicuous coastal rock formations, known in ritual and ordinary language as Batu Hun//Sua Lain. The set Dulu//Langa (‘East’//‘Head’, in the name Loniami Langa//Taoama Dulu) and the set Sepe//Timu (‘Pink, the colour of the dawn’//‘East, the direction of the island of Timor’, in the name Sepe Ami-Li//Timu Tongo-Batu) indicate that the pursuit of the eagle and hawk, which begins in Termanu, turns first towards the eastern end of the island and then moves towards Rote’s westernmost domain, Delha, known in ritual language as Ana Ikio//Dela Muli. (The set Muli//Iko, ‘West’//‘Tail’, which matches Dulu//Langa, is indicative of the Rotenese cosmological conception of their island as a creature, a crocodile, with its head in the east and its tail in the west.) In Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak, the context in which action occurs is clearly implied by the names used in the chant.

A man from Termanu therefore, Buna Tunulama//Koli Faenama, marries a girl from Leli, Pinga Pasa//Soë Leli (native exegesis supplied the further information that Pinga Pasa//Soë Leli is the child of Pasa Bobio//Leli Kekeo). Their child receives the first elements of his father’s binomials and is named Dela Koli//Seko Buna. By this same system, the eagle and hawk (balapua//tetema) is named Balapua Loniami//Tetema Taoama and is the child of Loniami Langa//Taoama Dulu. Although no native commentator mentioned this obvious fact, it was clear from the rules of the naming system that another character in the chant, Loma-Loma Langa//Pele-Pele Dulu, was the sibling of Loniami Langa//Taoama Dulu.

The importance of ritual names and the lengths to which these names are elaborated cannot be overemphasised. Whole chants (those on the origin of rice and millet and on weaving) consist lately of what seems to be a boring recitation of names. Each of the 18 domains of Rote has several ritual names and each domain, in turn, is subdivided into numerous ritually named areas.

19 Historically, it is interesting to note that Pasa//Leli was formerly (in the seventeenth century) a separate domain, which eventually became incorporated within Termanu (Fox 1971).
One reason for this concern with names is that the chanters are the genealogists of the Rotenese, especially the noble Rotenese. The sharpest criticism in any chanter’s collection of deprecating remarks about his rivals is that the man confuses names. In some chants, a succession of marriages and births is recited before the birth of the main chant character. The following six-generation, double-dyadic genealogy gives some idea of the length of this elaboration in ritual naming:

In the genealogy, the simple dyadic sets (Bula//Ledo, ‘Moon’//‘Sun’; Patola//Mandete, the names of two ‘noble’ cloth motifs; Mata//Idu, ‘eye’//‘nose’; Buna//Boa, ‘flower’//‘fruit’) are regularly ordered and systematically transmitted. In the analysis of ritual language, what is significant about naming is that it forms a highly important subsystem within the language with its own rules, formulae and constraints on the combination of simple dyadic sets.20

Rotenese ritual language is formulaic at yet another level. Simple dyadic sets are fixed units; double dyadic expressions further constrain the ordering of simple dyads. In addition, however, there occur certain lines that vary so little from chant to chant that they can be interpreted only as standardised formulaic chains. These formulaic chains are particularly important in beginning and ending chants and in indicating new, important episodes or new stages of events within chants. The simplest example of this in Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak is the three-set chain that occurs in lines 83/84 and again in lines 214/215 and, at each point, announces a further development in the narration:

83/214. Faik esa manunin
On one definite day

84/215. Ma ledo dua mateben.
And at a second certain dawn [sun].

---

20 Names will make up a separate subsection in the dictionary of ritual language. While many elements of names are intelligible and occur also as elements outside the naming system, many elements are obscure and become the subject of multiple, speculative exegeses on the part of the Rotenese.
To introduce the main chant character, many funeral chants begin with the marriage of the character’s mother, her pregnancy and the eventual birth of the main character. Some chants elaborate this through several generations (that is, the marriage of the grandmother, her pregnancy, the birth of the father, the marriage of the mother and father, the mother’s pregnancy, the birth of the main character, and so on). These genealogical introductions constitute a necessary but highly standardised format in many funeral chants. The formulaic chains of lines 5/6 or lines 75/76 appear, in other chants, as part of formats of this kind.

```
5. De tein-na da’a-fai
Her womb enlarges

6. Ma suü-na nggeo-lena
Her breasts darken
```

Similarly, because a mother’s cravings are regarded as indicators of an unborn child’s character, the repeated lines about Pinga Pasa and So’e Leli’s desire for various foods are also formulaic chains. What differs from chant to chant is the food that is craved.

Most interesting of all, from the point of view of composition, are those formulaic chains that relate the marriage and birth of specific chant characters. In each of these lines, there occurs the name of a new chant character. Nearly always, these chains consist of three sets, one set of which is a verb and two sets of which are components of proper names. To illustrate the formulaic pattern of genealogical introductions, the following six lines are rendered in an alphabetical notation that may be applied to express correctly any genealogical introduction. The fact is, however, that this notation expresses only one format of which there can be several variations. The lines are:

```
1. Ala soku-la Pinga Pasa
They carry Pinga Pasa

2. Ma ifa-la So’e Leli
And they lift So’e Leli

3. De ana sao Kolik Faenama
[Then] she marries Kolik Faenama

4. Ma tu Bunak Tunulama
And she weds Bunak Tunulama

5. De ana bongi-na Dela Kolik
[Then] she gives birth to Dela Kolik

6. Ma lae-na Seko Bunak
And she bears Seko Bunak
```

Variations that might be inserted—one after the first and the other after the second line—are:

```
Fo Pasa Boboi anan
Pasa Boboi’s child

Fo Leli Kekeo anan
Leli Kekeo’s child
```
Research directions in the study of ritual language

A further crucial aspect of the analysis of ritual language relates not to the expression of dyadic sets in parallel lines but to the organisation of elements in dyadic sets. An element is not restricted to inclusion in only one dyadic set. In fact, it is common for an element to form dyadic sets with more than one element. The combinatorial possibilities of any element vary and these constitute its range. Included in an element’s range are all those other elements (and only those elements) with which it forms dyadic sets. Its full range may be expressed by the number of all sets with which it combines.22

A dictionary of ritual language, including all the sets of the naming system, could consist of several thousand dyadic sets. The 120-some sets of Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak are therefore hardly sufficient to do more than illustrate the limited ranges of selected elements. The simplest illustration is that of the numbers ‘one’ (esa), ‘two’ (dua), ‘three’ (telu) and ‘four’ (ha). Esa has a range of one; it forms a set only with dua. Dua, however, has a range of two, since it may form sets with esa and telu. Telu, in turn, also has a range of two, since it

22 A possible means of dealing with those elements, such as bei, boe and ndia, which may optionally form dyadic sets, would be to allow the combination of an element with itself to be included in its range.
may form sets with *dua* and *ha*. *Ha*, however, is confined to a range of one; it forms a set only with *telu*, since *lima* (as the numeral ‘five’) is not included in the number system of ritual language.

Elements vary considerably in range. Certain elements have highly restricted (sometimes ‘unique’) ranges while other elements have wide (potentially ‘open’) ranges. Names for animals, for example, in certain sets that are central to Rotenese cosmology, appear to be highly restricted. (It is possible that their occurrence in sets of the naming system belies this appearance.) The elements, therefore, of sets such as *foe//iu* (‘shark’//’crocodile’), *kea//luik* (‘turtle’//’sea cow’), *koa//nggia* (‘honeybird’//’parrot’) have a narrow range while animal names such as *kapa* (‘water buffalo’), *manu* (‘chicken’) and *kode* (‘monkey’) have a much wider combinatorial range.

The study of the combinatorial range of elements in dyadic sets also provides a formal means of tracing the (systematic) interrelation of sets and their elements. In *Dela Kolik ma Seko Bunak*, *batu* (‘rock, stone’) has a range of three. It forms sets with *dae* (‘earth, ground’), *ai* (‘wooden stick, tree’) and with *lutu* (‘pebble, grain, granule’). In ritual language, each of these elements, in turn, forms sets with other elements. *Dae* forms a set with *lai(n)* (‘sky, heaven’), which in turn forms a set with *poi(n)* (‘point, heights’); *dae* also forms a set with *oe* (‘water, liquid’), which in turn forms a set with *tasi* (‘sea’). *Ai* combines with *na’u* (‘grass, straw, tinder’) and *lutu* with *dea* (‘stone, seawall’). An illustration of the simple network of semantic elements linked to *batu* would be the following:

![Figure 4.2: Semantic elements linked to batu](image)

In this way, it is possible to construct networks of related elements based solely on the criterion of their occurrence in dyadic sets. Every element in ritual language can thereby be specified as a location or a node in a particular network of semantic relations.

**Conclusions: Dyadic language and dual cosmologies**

In Indonesian mythological studies, scholars have focused attention on coordinate systems of complementary dualism. Wherever these systems are most
impressively evidenced (Nias, Ngadju, Toradja, Sumba, Timor and the islands of eastern Indonesia), their means of expression is an elaborate tradition of pervasive parallelism. Of enormous importance is research into the relationship of these dual cosmologies to their medium of expression in dyadic language.

Some descriptions of the religious and cosmological systems of the Indonesian peoples rely on the analysis of a select number of important complementary dual oppositions. For example, Rotenese ritual language includes, among its dyadic sets, such familiar dual oppositions as:

- sun // moon
- right // left
- sky // earth
- male // female
- land // water
- elder // younger
- east // west
- red // green
- odd number // even number

An even longer selection of such oppositions would, however, hardly do justice to the parallelism of ritual language. To do this would require a list of all dyadic sets—a column of several thousand units. Furthermore, an emphasis on a limited number of these sets renders rigid and static what is, in fact, a flexible system of symbolic classification. Dual elements need not be confined to a single form of complementary opposition. Their range, though always constrained, can add appreciably to their symbolic potential. Contrarily, a parallelism, however pervasive, does not on its own constitute a dual cosmology. A dual cosmology is characterised not by the simple pairing of elements but by the analogical ordering of elements within pairs according to some criterion of asymmetry. The rules of parallelism provide no such criterion. Dyadic sets are essentially neutral pairs; one element in a set is not ‘superior’ to another element and either element may precede the other in expression. Extra linguistic evaluations are required to transform the elements of dyadic sets into the elements of a dual cosmology.

Rotenese annunciate such evaluations, some of which are explicitly, almost syllogistically, formulated. The following two aphorisms provide some idea of the native criteria by means of which elements of sets may be ordered analogically. For the set dae // lain (‘earth’//’heaven’) there is this aphorism: Lain loa dae, dae loa lain, tehu Manetua nai lain, de lain loa lena dae (‘Heaven is as broad as the Earth, Earth is as broad as Heaven, but the Great Lord is in Heaven, therefore Heaven is broader than Earth’). For the set dulu//mulik (‘east’//’west’) there is this aphorism: Dulu nalu muli, tehu ledo neme dulu mai, de dulu ba’u lena muli (‘The east is as long as the west, but the Sun comes from the east, therefore the east is much greater than the west’). Using similar aphorisms based on the native concept of ‘greater than’ (lena), it is possible to construct the ordered directional
coordinates of Rotenese cosmology. These provide a basis for a further ordering of other sets and the systematic foundation for a dual cosmology. Not all sets, however, can be linked to these directional coordinates. For some sets, other criteria are invoked and for many sets—perhaps a majority—there appear to be no clear criteria for ordering. Hence, whereas linguistic parallelism can offer the underlying basis for dual cosmology, not all elements of this language need necessarily be taken up and ordered within this framework.

Robert Lowth, in the first study on parallelism, distinguished three sorts of parallels: 1) synonymous parallels, 2) antithetic parallels, and 3) synthetic parallels. It might be possible to further subdivide Lowth’s antithetic parallels into complementaries, contraries and contradictories. The overwhelming majority of parallels in Rotenese are, however, ‘synthetic’. They reflect the correspondence of elements recognised by a specific speech community, its stock of prescribed social ‘metaphors’. What is important in ritual language is neither the form, which is dyadic, nor the content of compositions, which may vary, but the overall and highly detailed view of the world communicated by the structure of thousands of dyadic sets.

**Appendix 4.1**

**Simple dyadic sets**

1. *ana*///*tolo*, child///egg.
2. *ape*///*ma*, spittle///tongue.
3. *ate*///*ba*, liver///lungs.
4. *ba’e*///*ndana*, branch///limb.
5. *baf*///*poi*, mouth, valley///tip, peak.
6. *bako (babaco)*/*toko (totoko)*, to clap///to slap.
7. *balapua (pua)*/*tetema (tema)*, eagle///hawk.
8. *bai*///*boe*, again///also.
9. *bai*///*seluk*, again///once more.
10. *bali*///*se’o*, to blend///to mix.
11. *bapa*///*boke*, to slap///to stamp.
16. *bia/lola*, to cut into chunks//to slice into strips.
17. *bongi/lae*, to give birth//to bear (a child).
21. *dela/nita*, delas tree (*Erythina spp.*)//nitas tree (*Sterculia foetida*).
22. *do(dodo)/nda (ndanda)*, to think//to ponder.
23. *doa-/sota-*, carefully//painstakingly.
24. *dode/hopo*, to cook (rice)//to mix (lontar syrup).
25. *dodo/pau*, to cut the throat//to stab.
26. *doki (dodoki)/una (uüna)*, all sorts (of things)//all kinds (of things).
27. *-dofu/-toi*, to fill with earth//to bury.
28. *dua/esa*, two//one.
29. *dua/telu*, two//three.
34. *ei-ku’u/nisi*, toe//tooth.
35. *-fada/-hala*, to speak//to say.
37. *fali/tule*, to return//to turn back.
38. *feto/ina*, girl//woman.
4. Semantic parallelism in Rotenese ritual language


41. **hele//tenga**, to pick up//to grasp.

42. **-hele//-nepe**, to hold tight//to make firm.

43. **hene//kae**, to mount//to ascend.

44. **henu//sofe**, to be full//to be sufficient.

45. **hona (hohona)//teni (teteni or titini)**, foot of ladder//edge of roof.

46. **ho‘i//(la‘e)**, to take//to touch.

47. **hule//noke**, to ask//to call.


49. **ifâ (iifâ)//ko‘o (koko‘o)**, to cradle in the lap//to carry in the arms.

50. **idu//mata**, nose//eye.


52. **ka (kaka)//kuta (kukuta)**, to bite//to munch.

53. **ka//mumu**, to bite//to suck.


55. **kapa//manu**, water buffalo//chicken.


57. **-keni//-moi**, slippery//smooth.

58. **koa//manu**, cock’s tail feather//chicken, cock.


60. **kuta//mumu**, to munch//to suck.

61. **la//lapu**, to fly//to take wing.

62. **labu//tinga**, to climb//to step.

63. **labu//meko**, drum//gong.

64. **lada//lole**, tasty//good, pleasing.

65. **ladi//lena**, to cross//to wade through.
66. lafo//teke, mouse//gecko, lizard.
67. lai//sue, to love/to like.
68. lain//poin, heaven, heights//top, peaks.
69. lai//tolomu, to flee/to run away.
70. lali//soku, to move/to leave, to lift.
71. lano//popi, feather plume/lontar-leaf garland.
72. latu//mafo, ripe/half-ripe.
73. la’u//tenga, to seize in flight/to grasp.
74. lelu (lelelu)//teo (teleo), to glance/to look around.
75. li//nafa, wave/wave, swell.
76. -li/-mu, to sound (of drum or gong)/to resonate, hum.
77. lima//kala, hand/chest.
78. lino//luui, to rest/to brood (of birds), to settle.
79. lino//mete, to spy/to watch.
80. lino//sae, to rest/to sit (of birds).
81. liun//sain, sea/ocean.
82. lo//uma, house/house.
83. loe (loloe)//sali (sasali), receding/overflowing.
84. lolo (lololo)//nda (ndanda), constantly/continually.
85. losa//nduku, toward/up to.
86. loti//pele, to search by torch-light/to fish by torch-light.
87. lu//pinu, tears/mucus, snot.
88. -mada/-meti, to dry/to ebb.
89. mafo//sa’o, shade/shadow.
90. mama (mamama)//mumu (mumumu), to chew/to suck.
91. meli (memeli)//mesi (mesimesi), quickly/rapidly.
4. Semantic parallelism in Rotenese ritual language

92. modo//tole, green//dark.
93. monu//tuda, to fall//to drop.
94. na//ndia, that there//there.
95. naâ//ninu, to eat//to drink.
96. nanamo//tua, nanamo plant//lontar palm.
97. -nedâ//-ndele, to remember//to recall.
98. (n)ita//nda, to see//to meet.
99. noü//tunga, each//every.
100. nutu//tei, gizzard//stomach.
101. nggali//po‘i, to scatter//to set loose.
102. nggute//tete, to snip//to cut.
103. pau (pu)//tene, thigh//ribs.
104. pele//sini, palm-leaf torch//dried leaves.
105. pinga//so’e, plate//coconut-shell dish.
106. posi//unu, shore’s edge//reef.
107. sa’e//tai, to sit (of birds)//to grip, hold on.
108. sanga//tunga, to seek//to follow.
109. sao//tu, to marry//to wed.
110. -sela//-tua, to be large//to be big.
111. sepe//timu, dawn red//east.
112. solo//upa, to pay//to hire.
113. su’u//tei, breast//stomach.
114. ta’e//tou, boy//man.
115. tapa//tu’u, to throw//to cast.
116. tata//ule, to split, chop//to wind.
117. tebe//(n)uni, true//certain.
Complex dyadic expressions

Unrestricted expressions

118. *laba kae*//*tinga hene*, to climb, ascend//to step, mount.

Restricted expressions

120. *bui-nggeo*//*meni-oe*, black-tipped//white-sugared.
121. *da’a-fai*//*nggeo-lena*, to enlarge (of the womb)//to darken (of the breasts).
122. *lano-manu*//*popi-koa*, male child//boy child.
123. *ma-siu*//*metu-ape*, to crave with the tongue//to salivate.

Personal names

125. Buna Tunulama//Koli Faenama.
126. Dela Koli//Seko Buna.
127. Loma-Loma Langa//Pele-Pele Dulu.
128. Loniama Langa//Taoama Dulu.
129. Pinga Pasa//Soë Leli.
130. Sepe Ama-Li//Timu Tongo-Batu.

Placenames

132. Batu Hun//Sua Lain, twin rock formations in Termanu.
Connectives, pronouns, prepositionals and invariable elements

Connectives
1. *besak-ka* (*besak-ia*), now.
2. *boe* (*boe-ma, boe-te*), then, and, but, also.
3. *de*, then.
4. *do*, or.
5. *fo*, that (indicator of an appositional phrase).

Pronouns
8. *ala*, they.
9. *ana*, he, she, it.
10. *au*, I.
11. *o*, you.

Prepositionals (third-person singular/plural forms only)
12. *nae*/lae*, to speak to.
13. *nai*/lai*, to be at, on, upon.
14. *neme*/leme*, to come from.
15. *neni*/leni*, to bring with.
16. *neu*/leu*, to go toward.
17. *no*/lo*, to be with.

Invariable elements
18. *be*, what.
21. *ela (fo-ela)*, so that.
22. *fe*, to give.
24. *leo*, to, toward.
25. *mai*, to come.
27. *ta*, no, not.
28. *so(k)*, finished (indicator of past action).