18. Present and future research

These essays represent paths I have taken in the study of semantic parallelism. My explorations were initiated during my first period of fieldwork on Rote in 1965–66 and, as particular pieces of research, these essays began to appear in print in the early 1970s. Each was originally intended to examine a specific aspect of parallelism. I continued in this fashion, over a period of more than 40 years, to the present.

A characteristic of exploratory paths is that they open onto new paths and hint at other directions for further research. Rather than conclude this volume with an attempted summation, I will discuss some of the new work that I am currently involved in and consider the implications of this work for the continuing study of semantic parallelism.

Over the years, I have done my research on parallelism in bursts punctuated by quiet periods when I have turned my attention to other research interests. These quiet periods, however, seemed to have revived my interests and directed them to new avenues for exploration. I now feel that I am well into another burst of research.

The research I am presently pursuing was initiated at about the time of my formal retirement in 2006. Until that time, most of my work of recording, translating and analysing Rotenese parallel compositions was focused on a single dialect: that of the domain of Termanu. This concentrated focus on a single speech community offered both advantages and disadvantages for the study of parallelism. Over time, it led to a reasonably comprehensive understanding of the repertoire of Termanu’s traditional corpus of ritual compositions, but by the same token, it left me with relatively little knowledge of the ritual-language traditions of the rest of the island. During fieldwork in 1966 and again in 1973, I had managed to record a substantial corpus of recitations from two remarkably able poets in the southern domain of Thie, but this second point of reference provided only a hint of the diversity of styles and traditions of parallel recitation on Rote.

The ‘Rotenese’ language consists of a dialect chain that extends across the island. As a consequence the linguistic diversity on Rote is considerable. This diversity consists of more than just phonological and grammatical differences. There are significant semantic differences across the speech communities of the island. Speech communities in neighbouring areas on the island can understand each other but intelligibility declines between more distant areas to the extent that speakers of Rotenese at the eastern end of the island find it difficult to comprehend speakers of Rotenese at the western end of the island.
Underlying these differences is a social and political dynamic that continues to operate to the present. Rote comprises some 18 traditional domains, each of which is named and claims to have its own social and cultural identity. Traditionally each of these domains (or *nusak*) once had its own ruler and celebrated its distinctive ritual traditions. Each domain also claimed to have its own ‘language’ (*de’deak*). In a variety of my other writings, I have documented the historical existence of these domains and their formal recognition by the Dutch East India Company (VOC) dating back to the middle of the seventeenth century. An initial group of domains—Termanu, Dengka, Korbaffo and Bilba—was first recognised in a treaty with the Dutch in 1662. Another group of domains—Thie, Oenale, Landu, Loleh, Ringgou, Oepao, Bokai and Lelain—was given treaty recognition in 1690, while yet other domains were accorded recognition in stages throughout the eighteenth century. Although in the twentieth century, the Dutch attempted to amalgamate these domains, the domains remain to this day the basic units of social identity for all Rotenese and many of these domains have re-emerged in the twenty-first century as official subdistricts (*kecamatan*) of the island (see Fox 2011:143–8). In short, there is an enormous historical diversity of traditions on Rote and this diversity is reflected in and, as I would argue, utilised in the parallel traditions of the island.

**Master poets, ritual masters project**

Having concentrated my research on the domain of Termanu, my decision to try to record and analyse the parallel traditions of the other domains was a major undertaking and, as I became engaged in this effort, I came to realise just how large an undertaking this was. I was fortunate in being able to obtain an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Grant, which provided me with initial funding for three years to begin this research. My ARC grant was entitled ‘The Semantics of Canonical Parallelism: An Analysis of the Bases of Oral Composition among the Poets of the Island of Roti in Eastern Indonesia’, but was gradually recast with a good parallel name, ‘The Master Poets, The Ritual Masters Project’. From the outset, among other things, I proposed to record, transcribe, translate and eventually archive the ritual-language compositions of leading oral poets from different dialect areas of the island. The project was enormously ambitious and hopelessly overoptimistic in estimating the time that the research would take. I was able to stretch my ARC funding to an additional two years and thereafter had to find other funding to continue the work. At present, after more than seven years of recording, transcribing and translating, the project is still taking shape.

It was impossible in the field, particularly in Termanu, to set out to record recitations systematically. Virtually all recordings I made relied on local events, were recorded on ritual occasions, or offered to me unexpectedly, often after
repeated requests, and frequently given in a revelatory mode not to me but to my tape recorder. In 1965, I brought to Rote the first tape recorder—as the Rotenese called it, the first ‘voice-catcher’ (penangkap suara) to reach the island.

A key feature of my proposed new research was to overcome the ritual restrictions and social hindrances that allowed me only opportunistic local recording of parallel compositions. I proposed to remove Rote’s master poets from their local communities and to bring them to Bali, where I hoped and suspected local social constraints would tend to diminish. Moreover, the idea was to bring several master poets together from different dialect areas to demonstrate their abilities on behalf of their domain. Historically, rivalry among poets has always been a feature of public recitation.

Bringing the Rotenese poets to Bali proved successful. Most of the poets were elderly, some had never left the island, and the airplane journey—‘above the clouds’—served my purposes. On separate occasions, one or another elderly poet confided in me that their experience in the plane was like travelling to heaven. Bali was considered as a place removed to which they gave the dual
name *Bali Dae ma Nusa Dewata*: ‘Land of Bali and Island of the Gods’. In Bali, the poets were both willing and eager to recite—especially in the company of other poets whose knowledge and ability rivalled their own.

When I began this new research, I had two tasks: the first was to achieve a basic coverage of the dialect diversity on Rote and the second was to identify who were the master poets of Rote. Only in the course of my research was I able, slowly, to succeed in these tasks.

I began in Termanu by inviting my oldest living informant, Esau Pono, who, over the years that I have known him since 1965, had become one of Termanu’s leading poets. Through him, I was able to recruit two more notable poets from Termanu. But I also travelled to the domain of Ringgou to contact another poet, Ande Ruy, whose reputation as a poet and singer was known throughout Rote. The first trial recording session (29 June to 12 July 2006) on Bali included only four poets and was heavily weighted to voices from Termanu but it set the stage for subsequent recording sessions. Reports of this first session spread on Rote and the two poets, Esau Pono and Ande Ruy, helped recruit poets from other domains. They also joined all subsequent recording sessions.

The second recording session (14 to 21 October 2007) included poets from Landu and Bilba; the third session (26 October to 2 November 2008) brought three poets from Dengka and a poet from Talae. It also included an able schoolteacher to help with transcriptions of the dialect of Dengka. The fourth session (7 to 14 June 2009) concentrated on the dialect of Thie, bringing four poets from that domain plus one of the poets who had previously come from Dengka. In addition to Pak Pono and Pak Ruy, the fifth session (4 to 11 October 2009) included poets who had previously come from Thie and Dengka plus four new poets from Bilba, a couple of poets from Korbaffo and one from Oenale. As these recording groups grew larger, the coverage of dialects expanded, but also critically, it became clearer which poets were genuine master poets.

Five years into this research, I ventured my first tentative demarcation of the dialect geography of Rote. While the poets would each maintain the distinctiveness of the dialect of their domain, they would also recognise similarities among neighbouring areas. As a consequence, I distinguished six ‘dialect areas’ on Rote. In drawing up this demarcation, I took into account previous research (Manafe 1889; and Jonker 1913) as well as historical developments including subsequent cross-domain migration, but above all I tried to base this delineation on the semantics of the ritual-language compositions that I had recorded. I grouped Ringgou and Oepao (and one part of Landu) as part of Dialect Area I, even though there are notable differences among these domains; I then grouped the rest of eastern Rote—Bilba, Diu, Korbaffo and Lelenuk (with another part of Landu)—together as Dialect Area II; the central domains of Termanu, Bokai, Talae, Keka with Ba’a and Lelain
as Dialect Area III; the southern domains of Thie and Loleh as Dialect Area IV; Dengka as Dialect Area V; and Oenale and Delha as Dialect Area VI. There are ambiguities in this demarcation. For example, the domain of Landu was ruthlessly depopulated in 1756 on orders of the Dutch East India Company and has slowly repopulated with speakers of other domains (Pellu 2008). At the other end of the island, although I have grouped Oenale and Delha together, Oenale shares much with Dengka just as Delha shares features with Thie.

I have assumed that, as recording continues, it will be possible to further refine this dialect map. There were various domains for which I continue to search for a master poet to record. After five years of recording sessions on Bali, I felt that I had only begun to fathom the diversity of Rote’s parallel traditions.

Session six (21 May to 2 June 2010) was an experiment. I brought to Bali a number of poets from Bilba along with other Rotenese poets whose families had migrated from Bilba to live on the neighbouring island of Semau. In addition, I invited two Helong-speaking poets from Semau, hoping perhaps to see some ‘blending’ of ritual-language traditions as a consequence of close social interaction and co-residence over a period of more than 100 years. The recordings were prolific: the Rotenese poets from Semau capably maintained the ritual-language traditions of Bilba while the Helong poets retained their own distinct traditions. It was difficult to discover anything in common between the two language traditions.

![Dialect Map of Rote](image)

**Figure 18.2: Dialect Map of Rote**
Session seven (23 to 30 October 2011) returned to an exclusively Rotenese focus. I brought together poets who, on the basis of previous sessions, were the most knowledgeable and capable poet-chanters from their respective domains: from Landu, Ringgou, Bilba, Termanu, Thie and Oenale plus a new poet from the domain of Oepao. The session lacked a master poet from Dengka. One remarkable poet from Dengka, who joined the group in 2007, had died and another poet who had accompanied him in 2007 declined to join the group because he was ill. As a recording session, the gathering was enormously productive. Had Dengka been represented, it would have encompassed almost the full range of the dialect areas on Rote.

Session eight (6 to 14 April 2013) took yet another turn. It included most of the master poets who had joined session seven—from Landu, Ringgou, Bilba, Termanu and Thie—but no poets from Dengka and Oenale. In addition, this session included two remarkably able poets from the Tetun ritual centre of Wehali on Timor. A well-known Rotenese folk tradition insists that the ancestors of eastern Rotenese, particularly those in Bilba, came from the Tetun-speaking area of Belu on Timor. As a consequence, the Rotenese poets treated the poets from Wehali with great respect and quickly began comparing similar ritual-language expressions with one another, which, for the assembled group, satisfactorily established their relatedness. Linguistically, this session opened yet another path for the study of parallelism.

The organisation and logistics of these eight recording sessions over seven years were a substantial but productive undertaking that provided many new insights into the nature of parallel composition. Each session was intensive. Recordings would begin early in the morning by nine o’clock and continue for at least a couple of hours, usually with another recording session in the afternoon and often another in the evening. Following Rotenese custom, most poets would take a drink of gin before their recitation and another at its conclusion and would generally be joined in this drinking by several other poets. Hence there was a need to break for lunch and dinner to continue the flow of words. Many of the best poets were specifically reinvited to join the group for two or more visits to Bali. Thus, after the first two years of recording, a good deal of time was devoted to correcting, deciphering and discussing the interpretation of previous recitations with their poet composers and with the other poets as well.

Two recordings were made of each recitation: one a digital recording, the other a tape recording. Someone in the group, generally one or another of the local schoolteachers who were invited to join the group, was assigned to do the initial transcription. For the first four sessions until his death, my student and colleague Tom Therik joined the group, having from the beginning helped with the logistics of getting the poets from Rote to Kupang and on to Bali; during the fourth session and for each subsequent session, this task was taken up by
another of my students, Lintje Pellu. Born in Termanu, Lintje wrote her ANU PhD thesis on Landu in the east of Rote and, during her fieldwork, gained a reasonable command of the dialects of Landu and Ringgou. She eventually took charge of transcriptions from these dialects.

Every session was a learning experience. At the most general level, Rote shares broad cultural traditions. Each of the poets would offer recognised compositions drawn from this shared canon, but these versions would differ from domain to domain. Many poets would also provide compositions that belonged to the rituals of their particular domain. A majority of recitations followed the chanting pattern of Termanu but occasionally a poet would recite or sing in a different style. The poet Ande Ruy was a master of various such styles. On his first visit to Bali, he brought a drum to accompany his chanting, and on other visits he improvised to chant in this drumming (bapa: ‘beating’) style. Occasionally he would perform the same chant both in normal chant style and in drumming style. In both versions, the semantics of the chant would remain the same. Dramatic emphasis would be created in the drumming style by the statement of the first two words of each line to the beat of the drum followed by the complete line.

This drumming style can be illustrated with a few lines taken from Ande Ruy’s recitation of the narrative of the first Rotenese rulers’ journey to Batavia in search of Christianity:

\[
\begin{align*}
Hene ralahene rala balu lain & \quad \text{They climb, they climb aboard the boat} \\
Tika rala, tika rala tonda lain & \quad \text{They step, they step aboard the perahu} \\
Balu nade, balu nade Saka Rolu & \quad \text{The boat named, the boat named Saka Rolu} \\
Ma ofa nade ofa nade Tungga Lela a. & \quad \text{And the vessel named, the vessel named Tungga Lela.} \\
Fai na pale uli, pale uli fo reu ma & \quad \text{That day, they guide the steering board, they guide the steering board forward} \\
Leko la, leko la fo reu o & \quad \text{They set the sail, they set the sail to go forward} \\
Tati nafa, tati nafa dua-dua & \quad \text{They cut the waves, they cut the waves two-by-two} \\
Ma lena ri'i, lena ri'i telu-telu fo. & \quad \text{And they mount the crests, they mount the crests three-by-three.}
\end{align*}
\]

Termanu has a wide variety of funeral chants (see Chapters 4, 10, 13 and 14) that are intended to cover all manner of social positions and possibilities: there exist specific chants for elders, or widows and orphans, for men rich with livestock, for nobles or commoners and even for young girls who die prematurely before they marry. The deceased is likened to the chief character in these chants and thus
the life, death and journey of the deceased to the other world can be recounted. Similar chants are found throughout most of Rote. Ande Ruy, however, provided a variety of funeral chants that were a variant on this theme. Each was shaped to fit a different category of person whose life could be described but a key feature of these chants was the way they were directly addressed to the deceased and guided the deceased through all stages of Rotenese mortuary rituals. These chants gave the impression of an older tradition that may have been the basis for Termanu’s more ‘literary’ funeral compositions.

Perhaps, for me, most striking was the discovery of just how widespread the use of ritual language was, particularly in eastern Rote, in retelling the Scriptures. I had recorded one chant in Termanu that retold the story of Adam and Eve in ritual language (Chapter 16), but I was struck by just how this ritual-language rendering of the Scriptures was taking shape as the dominant mode of parallel composition in some parts of Rote. For one of the most able of the poets from Landu, who was himself a lay preacher, this was his principal focus. He was able to take almost any passage from Scripture and retell it in beautiful parallelism. Many of the poets also had their own repertoire of scriptural compositions. My addition of Chapter 15 to this volume represents my attempt to document the development of the use of parallelism for such religious purposes. Although as far as can be determined, this tradition may only have begun a little more than 100 years ago, it is likely in the future that this use of parallelism will come to predominate throughout Rote.

Although in the end I was able to record 26 Rotenese poets from 10 different domains/speech communities on Rote, my coverage of the island as a whole remains incomplete. The recording of material from Dengka began well and gave hints of a rich tradition with many interesting and possibly distinctive aspects, but it ended abruptly. Similarly, the quality of recordings from Oenale was excellent but these recordings, too, hinted at much more. I made reasonably representative recordings from Landu, Ringgou, Bilba, Termanu and Thie but as of now, none from Loleh—situated between Termanu and Thie—nor any from the small domains, particularly on the south coast of the island. Inevitably, as long as it is possible, this research needs to be continued.

**Suti Solo do Bina Bane project**

Soon after I arrived on Rote in 1965, I met ‘Jap’ Amalo, the elder brother of Ernst Amalo, who was both the district head (*camat*) of Rote and the ruler (*manek*) of Termanu. In preparing for my fieldwork, I had seen Dutch Government documents that indicated that ‘Jap’ would have been appointed ‘Radja Rote’ had it not been for his nationalist, anticolonial political views. By 1965, Jap had
Present and future research

retired and was, after decades away from Rote, rediscovering Rotenese culture. He knew that his younger brother was about to take me to Termanu to meet an assembly of the elders of Termanu. Ernst’s idea was to introduce me and my wife, to give his formal support to our plans to live in the domain and to declare that I was to become the historian of the domain. Jap’s advice to me was different to that of his brother. History was important but even more important were the ritual language and poetry of Termanu. It was this poetry that he told me he was himself just beginning to appreciate. His advice was in fact quite specific. There was one particular ritual composition—a composition called *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*—which he considered the most beautiful of Rotenese chants. He urged me to record this chant and use it to understand ritual language.

As a consequence of this advice and without further knowledge of what I was asking, I was able to declare, on my first meeting with Termanu’s elders in Feapopi, that I wanted to record *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*. In response, one of my very first recordings was indeed that of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, recited by Stefanus Adulanu, the Head of the Earth (*dae langak*) in Termanu.

Unwittingly my declaration in Feapopi became the starting point of a recording project that has continued for more than 45 years. To date, I have recorded 21 separate versions of this chant from Termanu and seven other domains on Rote. Initially most of my recordings were from Termanu but when I began to gather poets in Bali from different domains, I was able to expand my repertoire of recordings across the dialects of Rote.

Although *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is well known by name throughout most of Rote, its narrative content varies from area to area. In most domains, *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is considered an origin chant and therefore belongs to the cycle of origin chants. Everywhere on Rote, these origin chants tell of the encounter and creative involvement of the Sun and Moon and their heavenly descendants with the Lords of the Sea, represented as Shark and Crocodile, and their realm of sea creatures. In this regard, *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* refers to a pair of shells: Suti is a nautilus shell and Bina a baler shell. How these shells fit within a narrative of origins, however, varies. In Termanu, for example, Suti becomes the shell container for indigo dye while Bina becomes the shell that forms the base for winding cotton into thread; by contrast, in the domain of Ringgou, both Suti and Bina become a pair of clappers for warding off birds from planted fields.

Despite these different endings, almost all versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* are concerned with the journey of these shells from the sea across the land, and in some versions, back to the sea again. The journey of the shells involves their ‘emplacement’ in different symbolic niches. Thus the chant can be and indeed is regarded as an allegorical search for appropriate companionship. In the course of the search for this companionship, Suti and Bina continually refer
to themselves as ‘orphan and widow’—an expression that serves as a metaphor for the human condition (see Chapter 10). As a consequence, *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* as a chant can be excerpted from its moorings in the cycle of origin chants and recited as a funeral chant.

I am now preparing a monograph on all my recorded versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*. In these different versions, I analyse, in detail, similarities in the use of canonical pairs and formulaic phrasing as well as differences including distinctive usages that arise in particular speech communities. Among these versions are recordings I obtained from the same master poet at different times as well as recordings by related poets within the same community. At a fine-grained level, it thus becomes possible to discern different local traditions as well as individual styles of recitation. Chapter 8 in this volume provides an indication of this analysis. It examines a single short passage from five separate versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, four of which are from Termanu. Most versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* are more than 100 lines and many of the most elaborate of these versions range from more than 200 to 400 poetic lines. The monograph is well advanced; comparison among the texts is a formidable task but this kind of analysis provides a unique opportunity to examine the use of formulaic expression over a period of almost half a century and across the range of local traditions and dialects that form the basis of Rotenese ritual language.

The semantics of dialect concatenation

Early in my research on Rotenese ritual language (see Chapter 5), I noted the consistent use of terms from different dialects to form synonymous dyadic sets. In traditions of canonical parallelism, this is by no means unique. Various scholars have similarly commented on and/or documented the particular use of lexical elements from different dialects or even different languages in the formation of canonical pairs (see, for example, Prentice 1981 for Murut; Mannheim 1986 for Quechua; Holm 2003 for Zhuang; and Hull 2012 for a variety of Mayan languages). All of these studies cite selected examples to identify the phenomenon. To date, no extended study has yet been undertaken on the use of such pairs within any tradition of parallelism. Such an examination could well provide a further perspective on canonical parallelism. It shifts focus from the perspective of a single speech community to that of possible clusters of intercommunicating speech communities and, perhaps more significantly, to other related speech communities that have ceased to communicate with one another. The ritual language of Rote with its significant dialect variation offers the possibilities for such an examination.
It was only when I began recording recitations from poets from different dialects that I began to appreciate the significance of this use of dialect terms as a pervasive linguistic feature of ritual language. I coined the term 'dialect concatenation' to describe the complex intertwining of dialect expressions involved in this usage.

The dialects of Rote have diverged from one another and are certainly semantically more divergent than I had originally imagined from my time in the domain of Termanu. The capacity to understand one another among non-contiguous speech communities and particularly those at either end of the island's dialect chain is often limited. Yet the ritual language of each of these communities retains a considerable semantic reservoir of terms and expressions that remain current in other dialects but have fallen out of use in ordinary everyday speech of that particular community. This reservoir of largely synonymous terms allows greater intelligibility when speakers of different communities utilise ritual language in formal gatherings. As one elderly poet remarked: 'Ritual language is our international language' (bahasa internasional)

The first step in this research has been to recognise the intricacies of dialect concatenation. In my earlier discussion of this phenomenon, I was only able to represent it from the perspective of Termanu. The following examples illustrate this phenomenon from the perspective of seven different speech communities across the island.

An Illustration of Dialect Concatenation among the Ritual Languages of Rote

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>‘Human being’</th>
<th>‘Name’</th>
<th>‘Dry field’</th>
<th>‘To divide’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landu</td>
<td>hataholi//lahenda</td>
<td>nade//bo’o</td>
<td>oka//tine</td>
<td>pala//bati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringgou</td>
<td>hataholi//lahena</td>
<td>nade//bo’o</td>
<td>oka//tine</td>
<td>pala//bati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilba</td>
<td>hataholi//dahena</td>
<td>nade//bo’o</td>
<td>oka//tine</td>
<td>pala//bati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Termanu</td>
<td>hataholi//daehena</td>
<td>nade//tamo</td>
<td>tina//osi</td>
<td>tada//ba’e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thie</td>
<td>hatahori//andiana</td>
<td>nade//bo’o</td>
<td>lane//tine</td>
<td>ba’e//bati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dengka</td>
<td>hataholi//andiana</td>
<td>nade//tola</td>
<td>osi//mamen</td>
<td>pala//ndu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oenale</td>
<td>hatahori//andiana</td>
<td>nade//nara</td>
<td>tine//osi</td>
<td>banggi//ba’e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although this illustration provides only a few examples, it does give some hint of the complexity of the phenomenon. The domains of Landu, Ringgou and Bilba share related dialects. Lexical differences appear less than might be the case if other examples had been chosen. Termanu in central Rote, Thie in southern Rote, Dengka in the west and Oenale at the far western end of the island all show a variety of lexical differences in the composition of these dyadic sets.

If one takes the example of the word for ‘name’ (nade), ‘name’ is linked to the word for ‘aroma’ or ‘smell’. In Rotenese understanding, the memory of personal names lives on after death and this memory is commonly referred to as ‘the
aroma of the name’. The domains of eastern Rote—Landu, Ringgou and Bilba—share this dyadic set with the domain of Thie in southern Rote. Termanu links the word for ‘name’ with another word for name, _tamo—one’s genealogical name, formerly determined by divination from a stock of ancestral names. Whether speakers in the domains of eastern Rote still remember this tradition is unclear, hence in this case, Termanu stands out in preserving an old tradition. Similarly, Dengka’s use of the term _tola as synonymous with _nade evokes the term _tola-no—used in Termanu and other domains—as a word for ‘relative’. By contrast, Oenale at the western end of Rote links _nade with _nara. _Nara is not a term known in eastern, central or southern Rote but this form is retained as the term for ‘name’ in other languages on Timor, such as Tetun. In fact, _nade and _nara are both cognate forms of the Proto-Malayo-Polynesian (PMP) term for ‘name’, *ŋajan.

A speaker in a particular speech community may vary in his knowledge of the lexical elements in the pairs he uses in ritual language. He will know one of the lexical elements in a pair depending on the community in which he lives and will assume from this pair the meaning of the other lexical element. It may be a term that exists in his dialect but is not in frequent use, or it may be a term from another dialect. It could also be a term whose metaphoric meaning is based on local tradition. While he may only know one of the two lexical items, it is also possible, given his experience, that he may know the meaning of both terms of a particular pair. He might even, in some cases, recognise that one such term derives from another dialect. But knowledge of the origin of such terms is not necessary for proper local recitation.

This dialect concatenation becomes more complex in many formulaic expressions that are used in ritual language. A couple of examples may illustrate this further complexity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>‘Stop, wait/stand, listen’</th>
<th>‘Strong legs/powerful arms’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landu</td>
<td><em>niku pu mahani//nene fino tata</em></td>
<td><em>pu huk tere//lima boa neke</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringgou</td>
<td><em>ni’a fo tata//manene mahani</em></td>
<td><em>pu huk tere//lima boa neke</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilba</td>
<td><em>mapadeik//mahani [stand//wait]</em></td>
<td><em>biti boa makapi//lima boa balakai</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Termanu</td>
<td><em>dei-dongo//nene-fino</em></td>
<td><em>biti boa manu tola//lima boa balakai</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thie</td>
<td><em>ni’a fo nenene//tak fo mahani</em></td>
<td><em>biti boa manu tola//lima boa nefeo</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Landu, a common formulaic expression links the activity of ‘tapping a lontar palm’ with ‘working a dry field’. The expression for ‘tapping a lontar’ is _pei tua_. Other domains also use the same or a similar expression (in Ringgou, the expression is _peu tua_). Focusing on _pei tua_, it is possible to trace various formulaic expressions associated with this expression in different dialects as far as Termanu:
In Landu, however, the expression *pei tua* can also be linked with the expression for ‘working (in) a rice field’, *rele hade*. A similar pairing occurs in Ringgou but in Termanu there is a different pairing.

*Rele [Lele] Hade as constant:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Dual expression</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landu</td>
<td>Rele hade/pei tau</td>
<td>‘Work a rice field’/’tap a lontar palm’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringgou</td>
<td>Lele hade/pei tau</td>
<td>‘Work a rice field’/’tap a lontar palm’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Termanu</td>
<td>Lele hade/o’oko bete</td>
<td>‘Work the rice field’/’harvest a millet field’</td>
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</table>

As these examples indicate, the interrelation between forms and expressions in the distinct ‘ritual languages’ of the separate speech communities of Rote is deeply intertwined. Rotenese ritual language as a whole consists of all these distinct but interrelated versions of ritual speech. The lexical resources of Rotenese ritual language embrace the whole of the island, but the particular expression of these resources varies. Their use allows ritual language to be understood across ever diverging dialects of Rote. This divergence may already be at the point at which it could be said that Rotenese ritual language is actually communicating across different languages.

This situation points to another fundamental feature of ritual language. A distinction can be made between lexical pairing and semantic pairing. Rotenese ritual language retains some of its basic semantic pairings even as lexical pairing continues to diverge. Semantic pairing is category pairing; lexical pairing is the constituent aspect of semantic pairing. The canonical pairs in Rotenese are categorically based semantic pairings made up of various, often different, lexical pairs. This distinction is fundamental to an understanding of the continuing traditions of canonical parallelism. Here one can draw a comparison between the traditions of Rotenese parallelism and that of the Mayans.

In an examination of the opening stanzas of the Mayan ‘Book of Counsel’ (*The Popul Vuh*), Munro Edmonson (1973) attempted to assign the canonical pairs that begin this composition to a categorical continuum from universal to particular. Some pairs he classified as ‘widespread categories’ and thus common to many but not all cultures. Many of the canonical pairs in *The Popul Vuh* were, in his view however, distinctive to the traditions of Middle America while others were more specifically categories pertinent to the culture of the Quiche.
Maya of the sixteenth century. In a similar fashion, Kerry Hull has traced the continuity—or what he calls the ‘poetic tenacity’—of various general Mayan canonical pairs from the now deciphered early Mayan hieroglyphic inscriptions through texts preserved in the colonial period to present-day Mayan ritual performances. Although the lexical items that make up these canonical pairs may vary, the continuity of these general Mayan categories provides evidence for a tradition of shared parallel categorisation that extends over more than a millennium (Hull 2012:73–132).

A similar exercise can be done with the canonical pairs in Rotenese ritual language. For many canonical pairs, the semantic pairing could be considered universal: ‘sun’//’moon’, ‘head’//’tail’, ‘rock’//’tree’ or ‘trunk’//’root’. The numerical pairs ‘seven’//’eight’ or ‘eight’//’nine’ could be considered as general categories, though most traditions of parallelism rely on only a few possible numerical pairs. In other cases, this categorisation is less general but certainly widespread and thus could be common to many cultures: ‘pestle’//’mortar’, ‘drum’//’gong’, ‘spear’//’sword’, ‘betel’//’areca nut’ or ‘orphan’//’widow’. For many other canonical pairs, however, pairing is more specific. Thus, for example, ‘shame’ forms a pair with ‘fear’, ‘lung’ forms a pair with ‘liver’, while a great number of specific plants and animals form specific (and highly symbolic) pairs: ‘banana’//’sugar cane’, ‘yam’//’taro’, ‘friarbird’//’parrot’, ‘turtle’//’dugong’, or ‘dedap’//’kelumpang’ trees. This list of specific pairs could be substantially extended to particular Rotenese verbs, adverbial terms and many other nouns.

Many of the more general pairs are shared by all the dialects of Rote, but they may have different lexical constituents. Many of these same canonical pairs are also found in other languages of the Timor region. Rote’s tradition of canonical parallelism is thus part of a larger regional tradition. As evidence of this wider regional tradition, I provide here a short, select list of shared canonical pairs in Rotenese (Termanu dialect), Tetun (Lia Tetun) and Atoni (Uab Meto). These canonical pairs contain many shared lexical cognates since both Lia Tetun and Uab Meto are languages related to Rotenese.

Rotenese, Tetun and Atoni Canonical Pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dede’a Lote</th>
<th>Lia Tetun</th>
<th>Uab Meto</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. sun//moon</td>
<td>ledo//bulan</td>
<td>loro//fulan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. rock//tree</td>
<td>batu//ai</td>
<td>fatu//ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. trunk//root</td>
<td>hu//oka</td>
<td>hun//abut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. areca//betal</td>
<td>pua//manus</td>
<td>bua//fuik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. seven//eight</td>
<td>hitu//walu</td>
<td>hitu//walu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. eight//nine</td>
<td>walu//sio</td>
<td>walu//sio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. pestle//mortar</td>
<td>alu//nesu</td>
<td>alu//nesung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. shame//fear</td>
<td>mae//tau</td>
<td>moe//tauk</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
This kind of comparative evidence points to a shared tradition that goes beyond—but also links—the speech communities of the Timor area and eastern Indonesia in general.

### Network analysis of the lexicon of Rotenese dyadic language

From the beginnings of my work on Rotenese ritual language, I have argued that the semantics of canonical parallelism could and should be viewed not simply in terms of the dyads that constitute its constituent elements but also within a network framework: tracing the way particular semantic elements link to a range of other semantic elements. As such, canonical parallelism offers the opportunity to consider meaning within definable, potentially large and relatively stable semantic fields. Thus in an early paper, published in 1974 (Chapter 5), I examined the semantic network formed among 21 verbs for forms of speaking: ‘stating’, ‘asserting’, ‘revealing’, ‘requesting’, ‘cajoling’ and ‘questioning’. Similarly in another paper, published the following year, in 1975 (Chapter 6), I tried to set out the semantic network that appeared to be at the core of Rotenese language. Formally this core consists of those semantic elements that have the greatest number of linkages with each other and with other semantic elements in ritual language.

The exploration of these analytic possibilities is based on the occurrence of semantic relations that extend beyond the pairing of particular terms. In my terminology, I refer to the set pairing of ‘particular terms’ or ‘semantic elements’—I have been prone to use these two phrases interchangeably—as ‘dyadic sets’. A majority of semantic elements are not confined to a single dyadic set. Thus term A may form a set with terms B, C and D; similarly, in

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<tr>
<td>9. banana//sugar cane</td>
<td>huni//tefu</td>
<td>hudi//tohu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. tuber//tales</td>
<td>ufi//talas</td>
<td>fehuk//talas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. lung//liver</td>
<td>ba//ate</td>
<td>afak//aten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. thigh//navel</td>
<td>pu//puse</td>
<td>kelen//husar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. turtle//dugong</td>
<td>kea//lu</td>
<td>kea//lenuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. friarbird//parrot</td>
<td>koa//nggia</td>
<td>kawa//birus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. orphan//widow</td>
<td>ana ma//falu ina</td>
<td>oa kiak//balu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. dedap//kelumpang</td>
<td>delas//nitas</td>
<td>dik//nitas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. waringin//banyan</td>
<td>keka//nunu</td>
<td>halu//hedan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. spear//sword</td>
<td>te//tafa</td>
<td>diman//surit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. drum//gong</td>
<td>labu//meko</td>
<td>bidu//tala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. head//tail</td>
<td>langa//iku</td>
<td>ulun//ikun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
addition to the set it forms with A, B may form a dyadic set with terms F, G, H and so on. The number of other terms with which any one semantic element forms a dyadic set constitutes the ‘range’ of its semantic linkages. Some semantic elements in ritual language have an extended range of linkages; others have a more limited range and others have a range that is restricted to a single dyadic set. Documenting linkages between semantic elements provides an insight into the overall semantic fields entailed in the use of canonical parallelism. If one charts the interrelation among the semantic elements of ritual language, it is possible to trace a complex network of relations.

The semantic networks that I first constructed and analysed were based on the compositions that I had gathered during my first fieldwork on Rote in 1965–66. I prepared a so-called *Dictionary of Rotinese Formal Dyadic Language* (1972) to accompany a volume of *Rotinese Ritual Language: Texts and Translations* (1972) during my time at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in 1971–72 prior to a second trip to Rote and before the recording of yet another body of ritual-language recitations. This dictionary, which was exclusively based on Termanu dialect, was hardly a full or proper dictionary. Although it had more than 1300 entries, many of these entries could technically be considered duplicates because I entered complex sets (two-part formulaic pairs with special meanings) as entries in their own right while also providing separate entries for their constituent elements. Thus, for example, the dictionary had separate entries for the complex set *ina-lenak*, which forms a pair with *feto lesik*, as well as entries for *ina* and *feto* plus *lena(k)* and *lesi(k)*. The critical aspect of the dictionary was to document the linkages between semantic elements. Hence every entry included all of the other elements with which that particular element paired.

The dictionary was keyed to the Termanu texts in my volume of *Rotenese Ritual Texts* and each entry contained a reference to a specific text in which that particular entry or set occurred. The dictionary provided an English gloss for each term but only occasionally offered notes on a term’s cultural usage and significance. Finally, wherever possible, an entry included a specific reference to where that term was to be found in J. C. G. Jonker’s *Rottineesch-Hollandsche woordenboek* (1908).

For many years, this dictionary remained a working reference document; however, I was eventually persuaded and assisted by Charles Grimes to transfer the dictionary to an electronic format using Tool-Box. The basic focus of the dictionary—namely, its attention to semantic linkages—was retained, but in the new format, it became easier to edit and correct previous entries, add notes, distinguish complex sets from their constituent elements, create a special subset of the dictionary for dual personal names and placenames and, most importantly, to expand the dictionary by adding new semantic elements.
When I undertook to refocus my research on the various dialects of Rote, I also determined to continue my research on the dialect of Termanu. From the beginning, my close friend and collaborator Esau Pono joined the gathering of poets as a key participant and he was often accompanied by other poets from Termanu. This has meant that my corpus of compositions in Termanu dialect has continued to expand, and with a steady addition of new compositions, I have been able to continue to expand my *Dyadic Dictionary* based on the Termanu dialect. The dictionary remains a working document but its expansion has made possible a more extended analysis of the semantic networks in Rotenese ritual language.

**Complex network analysis: Work in progress**

From my first attempts at network analysis, I was convinced that this kind of analysis would provide insights into the semantic structure underlying Rotenese ritual language. My first illustrative analyses on the verb for speaking and on a symbolic core offered promising insights. Even with simple pencil-and-paper analysis, I could trace the emergence of several large semantic clusters. As a result, I became interested in the research on small-world/scale-free networks and realised that this research opened up the possibilities for the application of new forms of analysis to these semantic networks (Watts 1999, 2003; Barabási 2002). Scale-free networks, unlike random networks, are characterised by multi-linked nodes (‘hubs’) with a distribution of linkages that follows a decreasing function. These seemed to be precisely the features that characterised the semantic networks that I was trying to trace for Rotenese ritual language. On a brief visit to the Santa Fé Institute in 2004, where I presented some of my ideas on parallelism, I was alerted to the existence of *Pajek: Program for Large Network Analysis* as an analysis program, and given a demonstration, with a small set of my data, on how useful it might be to my needs.

*Pajek* offered everything one might wish for in a network analysis program but it was not the easiest of programs to learn and to use properly. A more serious challenge to my grand ambitions, however, was the fact that my *Dyadic Dictionary* was only a work in progress. Network analysis based on an incomplete set of data, though interesting, was not what I was aiming for.

At the beginning of my research, I speculated on just how many dyadic sets a poet would need to know to begin to recite and how many more dyadic sets that poet would then have to comprehend to be recognised as a ‘man of knowledge’ (*hataholi malelak*), a true master of ritual language. I guessed that 1000 dyadic sets would provide an initial competence. The first version of my *Formal Dyadic Dictionary*, with its 1300 or so entries, had in fact just more than 1000 dyadic sets and was therefore, to my mind, a good start. On the basis of my current...
work on existing compositions in Termanu dialect, I consider it probable that
the dictionary will double: 2500 to 2700 entries—or approximately 2000 dyadic
sets—is the point at which a proper network analysis would make sense. This
would certainly provide a relatively comprehensive representation of the parallel
semantics of ritual language and would, I speculate, see the formation of a
single large semantic network from what now appear to be various independent
semantic clusters.

As a start towards a more comprehensive analysis and with the assistance of David
Butterfield, who had just finished his PhD thesis at the University of Melbourne
(Butterworth 2008), dealing with a tradition of parallelism among the Krowé
population of Flores, I was able to make a preliminary attempt at using Pajek to
analyse Rotenese semantic networks. This exploration was based on just less than
1600 entries in the dictionary, constituting just more than 1200 dyadic sets: in
Pajek network terminology—1595 vertices and 1211 lines. The results gave some
indication of what a more extended analysis might reveal. Unsurprisingly the
analysis highlighted the ‘symbolic core’ I had previously noted: this consisted
of such terms as tua (‘lontar palm’), ai (‘tree’), dae (‘earth’), batu (‘rock’) and oe
(‘water’) plus plant parts such as boa (‘fruit’), dok (‘leaf’) and huk (‘trunk’), body
parts such as lima (‘hand’) and langa (‘head’), te’i (‘stomach’) and eik (‘leg’), all
of which are linked to—one another and to numerous other terms (see Chapter 6: Figure 6.1).

Using Pajek, it was possible to identify several large semantic clusters; however,
there remained also numerous smaller clusters as well as an array of 336
‘isolated’ dyadic sets. These dyadic sets stood on their own as specific dyadic
sets, neither of whose constituent elements is connected to any other terms.
The high proportion of these dyadic sets would, it seems, militate against any
possible all-embracing semantic network.

The existence of these numerous dyadic sets, as indicated in the Pajek analysis,
prompts consideration of these dyadic sets as a distinct semantic class. Perhaps
in a language register that is so emphatically dyadic, the presence of these fixed
paired terms should not seem surprising. On inspection, they include an array
of highly specific pairings of plant names, animal (including bird, fish, even
insect) names as well as a considerable number of synonymous pairs in which
one of the terms is derived from another dialect. Whereas a poet has some
flexibility in pairing terms like ‘tree’, ‘earth’, ‘rock’ or ‘water’ that have multiple
combinatorial possibilities, learning highly specific pairs and being able to use
them appropriately are the real marks of a master poet.
Perhaps one of the great values of *Pajek* is its capacity to produce impressive graphic visualisations of different network clusters that can then be carefully considered. As an example, the following *Pajek* visualisation shows a semantic cluster with some 470 connected vertices.

Figure 18.3: Semantic Cluster with 470 Vertices
New and continuing research: Rotenese within the parallel traditions of Timor

I have been fortunate to have had many good students. Most of those who have done their research in eastern Indonesia were able to focus significant attention on other regional traditions of canonical parallelism. Their contribution to the comparative study of parallelism has been considerable. Three of my students—Eriko Aoki, E. Douglas Lewis and Satoshi Nakagawa—doing research on Flores contributed to the volume *To Speak in Pairs* (1988). Eriko Aoki studied parallelism among a Lio-speaking population, Satoshi Nakagawa parallelism among the neighbouring Endenese. Besides his paper in the 1988 volume, Douglas Lewis has written extensively on the traditions of parallelism of the populations of Tana ‘Ai and of Sikka. His ethnography *People of the Source: The social and ceremonial order of Tana Wai Brama on Flores* (1988b) draws extensively on Tana ‘Ai canonical parallelism and his study *The Stranger-Kings of Sikka* (2010) includes a number of parallel texts in Sikkane. Two other students of mine, Penelope Graham and Michael Vischer, have written masterfully on other traditions of parallelism in Flores. Penelope Graham’s thesis, ‘To Follow the Blood: The path of life in a domain of eastern Flores’ (1991), is an ethnography of the Lamaholot-speaking domain of Lewo Tala in eastern Flores, while Michael Vischer’s thesis, ‘Children of the Black Patola Stone: Origin structures in a domain on Palu’e Island’ (1992), is an ethnography of the small island of Paluê off the northern coast of Flores. Similarly Philipus Tule’s study of Christian–Muslim relations among the Kéo of central Flores, *Longing for the House, Dwelling in the House of the Ancestors* (2004), has a substantial selection of Kéo prayers and ritual narratives in canonical parallelism.

Just as in Flores, those students of mine who have done research on Timor have also written on the parallelism and ritual traditions of the island. Elizabeth Traube’s classic study *Cosmology and Social Life: Ritual Exchange among the Mambai of East Timor* (1986) provides a brilliant representation of the Mambai of Aileu from a perspective phrased in the formulaic parallelism of their origin narratives. Andrew McWilliam’s ethnography of the Ationi Pah Meto, *Paths of Origin: Gates of Life: A study of place and precedence in southwest Timor* (2002), with its focus on the domain of Nabuasa in west Timor, makes extensive use of the parallelism from the south–western dialect of Meto. The narrative of the expansion of Nabuasa clan is an extended topogeny, in parallelism, that recounts the walk of the Nabuasa name through Timor (see also McWilliam 1997). In his book *We Seek Our Roots: Oral tradition in Biboki, West Timor* (2011), Gregor Neobasu offers a study of the diverse oral traditions of the domain of Biboki. As something of a Meto poet, Gregor Neobasu gives great attention to various Meto genres of Biboki that utilise canonical parallelism. Yet another important work
highlighting the importance of the ritual use of parallelism on Timor is Tom Therik’s *Wehali, the Female Land: Traditions of a Timorese ritual centre* (2004). Working with the elders in the ‘female centre and source’ of the Tetun-speaking population of Timor, Therik’s work opened up new vistas for the study of a rich and extensive tradition of parallelism.

Tom Therik’s family—the Therik lineage—originates from the domain of Bilba, but Tom himself was raised in Atambua on Timor and his first language was Tetun. His book on Wehali is a study of the ritual traditions of Wehali. Tom grounds his ethnography in the interpretation of parallel recitations he recorded, quoting excerpts from these compositions throughout his book. To support this ethnography, however, he also includes some 40 pages of the narratives and recitations in parallelism that he recorded during fieldwork—the largest collection of its kind of Tetun parallelism.

Tom Therik joined me for the first three gatherings of Rotenese poets on Bali. Tom had the idea that our gatherings would eventually include master poets from Wehali and he would in fact tease the various Rotenese poets by claiming that they would certainly be bested in any poetic competition with the ritual masters of Wehali. Unfortunately Tom became ill and died in Kupang before he could see his ambition carried out, but several of the Rotenese remembered the challenge that he had put to them.

As the gatherings of the poets continued and as attention to dialect concatenation emerged as a research focus, it became theoretically compelling to consider Rotenese ritual language in a chain of ritual languages extending across Timor. To the extent that Tetun is closely related to Rotenese, a study of Tetun ritual language can be regarded as a good strategic step in understanding the traditions of parallelism across Timor. Like Rotenese, Tetun is divided into a variety of dialects whose contours are barely understood (see van Klinken 1999). These dialects extend in a broken pattern along the southern half of Timor-Leste as far as the once great domain of Luca in the district of Viqueque. If dialect concatenation is a critical feature of Rotenese ritual language then a study of dialect concatenation among Tetun dialects would offer a valuable comparative perspective on this phenomenon. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the Tetun populations of Timor, even as far as Luca, still acknowledge Wehali as their ‘source’ of origin. To bring the various long-separated Tetun-speaking populations back into dialogue with Wehali would in itself be a major achievement. In a Tetun cultural idiom, this would require Wehali as ‘mother’ to call upon her ‘children’ to return.

It was with these ideas in mind that in April 2013, I invited two master poets, Ferdy Seran and Piet Tahu Makoan from Wehali, to join the gathering of poets on Bali. That April gathering included a select group of master poets from
different dialect areas of Rote. The two Tetun poets were comfortable in joining their Rotenese counterparts. Both poets knew Tom Therik well and they were accompanied by Gabriel Bria, another of Tom’s close Tetun colleagues. The gathering went brilliantly.

The Wehali poets provided numerous recitations and frequently engaged the Rotenese poets in specific poetic comparisons. They embraced the idea of inviting other Tetun poets from Timor-Leste to future gatherings and were particularly intent on determining who from among the Tetun-speaking populations of Timor-Leste would need to be invited to represent Wehali’s conception of its departed children. By the end of a week’s recitation, the two poets had produced an enormous outpouring—what amounted to more than 40 pages of texts, which Gabriel Bria managed to transcribe.

As a result, the call had gone out from Wehali and, with it, a new phase in the exploration of comparative forms of canonical parallelism has, I hope, begun.