

A PAPER IN ONOMASTIC STUDIES

Naming and Message in the Mentawai Turuk Laggai

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Background

1

Names hold attitudes

The way a community gives names expresses how it sees and evaluates its world (Van Langendonck, 2007).

2

Turuk laggai holds the names

Every dance variant is named with the uniform pattern uliat "imitation" + the name of a creature, and is then elaborated by a chant that admonishes it.

3

The tradition is under threat

The regeneration of sikerei is slowing and performances are shifting towards tourism. The chant is the first part to be abandoned.

Losing the chant means losing the name — and losing the name means losing a way of seeing.

Anthroponym

Onomastics

The study of proper names, conventionally divided into anthroponyms (personal names) and toponyms (place names), with the derived classes of zoonyms and chrematonyms. This division is operational, not a rigid boundary.

TWO KEY FEATURES OF AN ANTHROPONYM

Vocative — used to address and to command

Evaluative — carries praise or blame

When both features attach to an animal name, it has functionally become an anthroponym.

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Research Method

TYPE

Descriptive qualitative

APPROACH

Ethnolinguistics

DATA

14 turuk laggai variants; data collected in Matotonan Village

Analytical workflow



Observation method with note-taking technique · Referential identity method and distributional method · Informal presentation (Sudaryanto, 2015)

Turuk is fundamentally a **ritual act, not entertainment**. It is danced in the context of *punen* (a feast or customary ceremony) and *lia* (a major ritual), as well as in healing ceremonies led by a *sikerei*. Its accompaniment is the *gajeuma*, a drum played in layered rhythms, and in a full ritual context the dancers are *sikerei*.

Inventory of Names at Two Levels

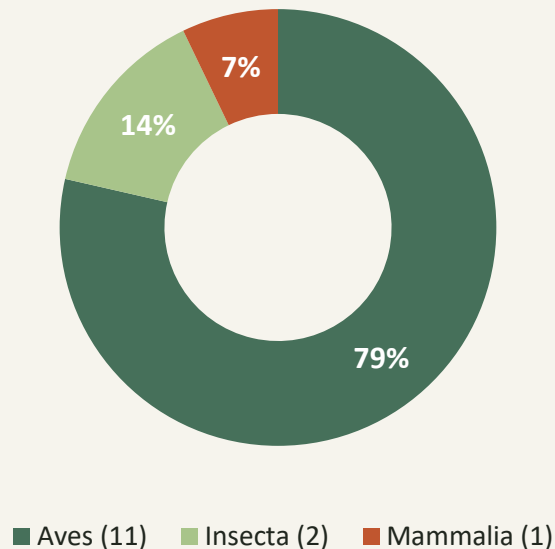
No	Dance Name	Name in the Chant	Referent	Life Domain
1	<i>Uliat Baila-baila</i>	<i>baila-baila mone</i>	butterfly	<i>garden field, riverbank</i>
2	<i>Uliat Bilou</i>	<i>togat bilou leleu</i>	monkey	<i>leleu (forest/hills)</i>
3	<i>Uliat Egguk</i>	<i>torogat egguk</i>	long-necked heron	<i>leleu, damp places</i>
4	<i>Uliat Gou-gou</i>	<i>magougou siboiki luglungen</i>	chicken	<i>Mone (garden field), luima (house)</i>
5	<i>Uliat Kemut</i>		coucal	<i>leleu, mone</i>
6	<i>Uliat Kuilak</i>		sparrow	<i>mone, house yard</i>
7	<i>Uliat Liddai</i>	<i>liddai</i>	a type of white-rumped shama	<i>buggei (river)</i>
8	<i>Uliat Manyang</i>	<i>togat malimanyang ka koiat</i>	large sea eagle	<i>koiat (sea/coast)</i>
9	<i>Uliat Ngorut</i>	<i>ngorut taingeungeu</i>	forest pigeon	<i>leleu, durian trees</i>
10	<i>Uliat Piligi</i>	<i>torogat simapiligi kaileleu</i>	small chicken-hunting hawk	<i>leleu (forest)</i>
11	<i>Uliat Satcat</i>		sparrow-like bird, long-billed nectar feeder	<i>leleu, coconut trees</i>
12	<i>Uliat Torobabag</i>	<i>matoropipi</i>	dragonfly	<i>shallow rivers, beside houses</i>
13	<i>Uliat Toubat</i>	<i>toubat manua rouroungat</i>	owl	<i>leleu, manau trees</i>
14	<i>Uliat Turu Gou-gou</i>	<i>simatiri geu-geu mone</i>	waterhen (ruak-ruak)	<i>mone, lakes</i>

Source: compiled from *turuk laggai* transcriptions (Appendix 1).

The fourteen variants map the entire lived space: *leleu*, *mone*, *buggei*, *koiat*, and *luima*.

Co de	Dance Name	Name in the Chant	Referent	Presumed Relation
D5	<i>Uliat Kemut</i>	<i>togat sinappot-nappot</i>	owl	title from the sound <i>ukukut</i>
D6	<i>Uliat Kuilak</i>	<i>togat poinenek</i>	kuilak bird	chant from the sound <i>unenek</i>
D1 1	<i>Uliat Satcat</i>	<i>togat bilitau</i>	sparrow-like bird	two different lexemes, same referent
D1 2	<i>Uliat Torobabag</i>	<i>matoropipi</i>	dragonfly	formal similarity, presumed variant

Referent Classification: Animal Classes



All referents are animals

No dance name refers to a plant, an object, or a natural phenomenon.

Aves dominate: 78.6%

Consistent with a rainforested island landscape bordering directly on the sea.

13 of 14 referents are winged

The sole exception, the bilou, is likewise arboreal and swings among the branches.

Turuk laggai is fundamentally a dance of winged creatures — which is why its naming rests on wings, tails, and sounds.

Eleven Avian Referents from Eight Orders

Order	Family	Data	Referent
Pelecaniformes	Ardeidae	D3	<i>egguk heron, long-necked</i>
Galliformes	Phasianidae	D4	<i>gou-gou village chicken</i>
Cuculiformes	Cuculidae	D5	<i>kemut coucal</i>
Passeriformes	several families	D6, D7, D11	<i>kuilak sparrow, liddai shama, satcat sunbird</i>
Accipitriformes	Accipitridae	D8, D10	<i>manyang sea eagle, piligi small hawk</i>
Columbiformes	Columbidae	D9	<i>ngorut forest pigeon</i>
Strigiformes	Strigidae	D13	<i>toubat owl</i>
Gruiformes	Rallidae	D14	<i>turu gou-gou waterhen</i>

Eight orders for eleven referents: water birds, terrestrial fowl, raptors, nectar feeders, fruit eaters, and nocturnal birds. This repertoire is better read as an inventory of environmental knowledge than as an aesthetic choice.

Order and family assignments are tentative, based on source information and on behavioural descriptions in the chants.

Linguistic Form of the Names in the Chants

Monomorphemic

liddai, egguk, bilou

Reduplication

baila-baila, sinappot-nappot

The dance name functions to designate and must therefore be concise; the name in the chant functions to depict and is therefore long and flexible. Because their functions differ, the two need not be identical.

MESSAGE AND CONCLUSION

To name is a way of admonishing

Moral

A prohibition against arrogance (9 data), always countered by pointing to dependence.

Ecological

An oral encyclopaedia of habitat, food, activity times, and behaviour.

Religious

The formula "our plaything" marks the dance as an offering to the spirits.

Pedagogical

The addressees are named explicitly in the text: children and wives.

Advice addressed to the birds is in truth addressed to the people who sing it.

Classification completes the picture: because the repertoire is arranged as an interconnected system, its message is systemic too. Naming supplies its voice; classification supplies its structure.

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