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Language endangerment in Indonesia: the incipient obsolescence and acute death of Teun, Nila and Serua (Central and Southwest Maluku)

Engelenhoven, A.T.P.G. van; Janse, M.; Tol, S.

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LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT IN INDONESIA
THE INCIPIENT OBSOLESCENCE AND ACUTE DEATH OF TEUN, NILA AND
SERUA (CENTRAL AND SOUTHWEST MALUKU)¹

AONE VAN ENGELENHOVEN
Leiden University

1 Introduction

The province of Maluku comprises about 1000 islands in the east of Indonesia. The number of languages found on these islands is estimated 92 (Taber et al. 1996), depending on the definition of language versus dialect. The indigenous languages seem to share many typological features that are not found elsewhere in Indonesia, thus suggesting that insular East-Indonesia be a typological Sprachbund. The languages are either Austronesian or belong to one of the non-Austronesian or Papuan stocks, which makes this province one of the linguistically most complex parts in Indonesia from a comparative point of view. Florey & Van Engelenhoven (2001) found that, in terms of language ecology, Maluku forms one of the most severely endangered linguistic regions of Indonesia.

In this paper we focus on the isolects of Teun, Nila and Serua in Southwest Maluku which show patterns of language endangerment explanatory for entire Island Southeast Asia. Most examples are taken from the Serua isolects.

2 Genetics

The isolects of Teun, Nila and Serua (TNS, or TNS language for short) are originally spoken on three islands bearing the same name in Southwest Maluku. Although no consensus yet exists whether the reconstructed direct

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ancestor of TNS, Proto Central Malayo-Polynesian, really has existed or not (cf. Blust 1993 versus Hull 1998), most linguists agree that the TNS languages are genetically related to the Austronesian languages of Timor, either directly (Taber 1993) or indirectly (Hull 1998).

Based on shared phonological innovations, Collins (1982) concludes that the isolects on the two northern islands of Nila and Serua are dialects, whereas exclusive sound shifts set off the southernmost Teun isolect as a separate language. The dialect relation between Serua and Nila is confirmed by informant reports that consistently stress the mutual intelligibility of both isolects. Serua informants suggest that the lesser intelligibility of the Teun isolect be linked to the relative isolation of its speech community rather than to a divergent grammar or lexicon. Because a decisive classification awaits further comparative research, we adopt here the indigenous perception that all three isolects are dialects of a single TNS language.

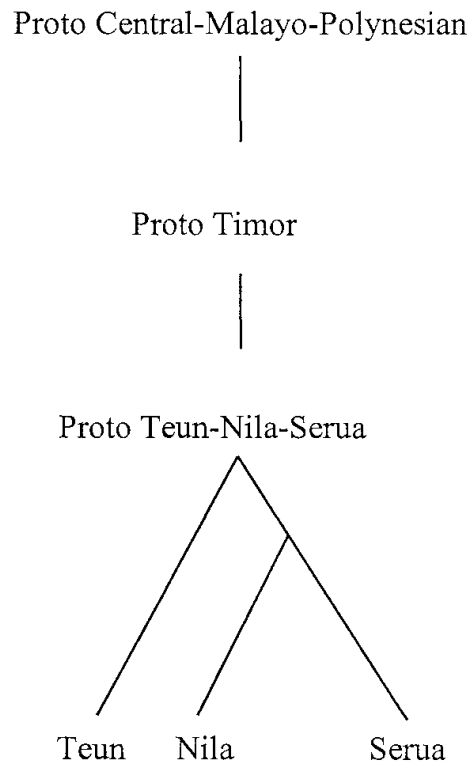
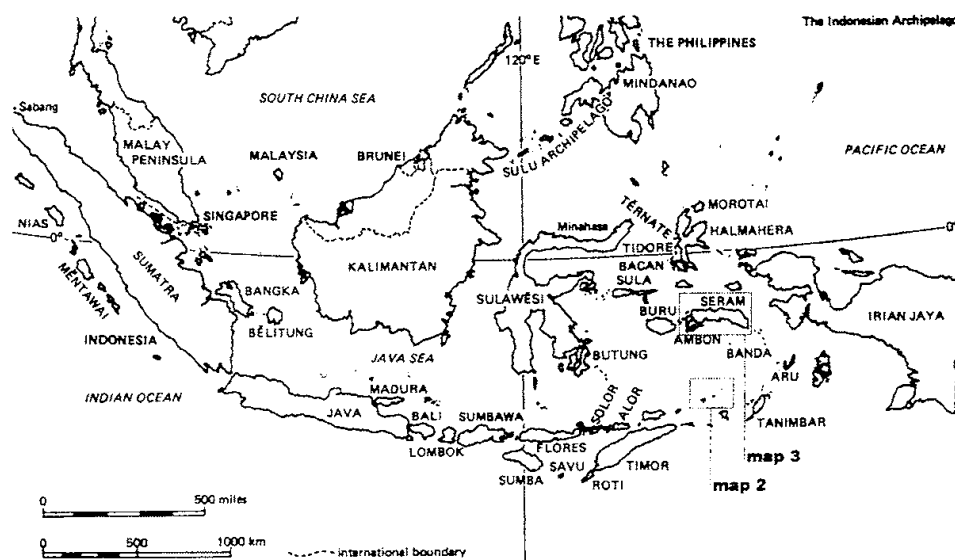


Figure 1: Genetic affiliations of the Teun, Nila and Serua isolects (after Collins 1982)

From an ethnolinguistic point of view, the TNS islands are typical members of the Southwest Malukan ethnolinguistic zone, in which the islands of Kisar and Luang function as cultural centers. Their society distinguishes between an

aboriginal and a migrant population, while local folklore acknowledges clan relations based on trade and war alliances between Banda and Serua, Leti and Nila, and between the Babar Islands and Nila. As on the other islands in Southwest Maluku, the migrant clans emphasize the memorization and retelling of narratives that explain their place and function inside the society. Although further fieldwork is required, we hypothesize that the TNS language like all other Southwest Malukan languages features extensive lexical pairing in its oral traditions (Van Engelenhoven 1997).

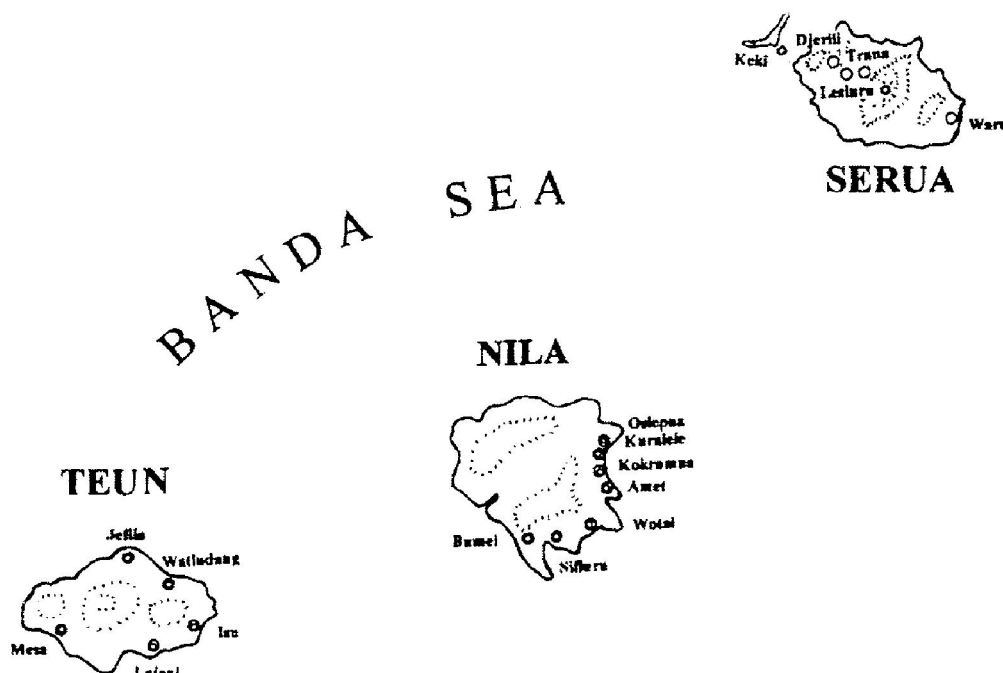


Map 1: The islands of Teun, Nila, Serua and Seram in Maluku (Indonesia).

The TNS communities are traditionally seafaring and established an economic network that connected the Banda Islands in Central Maluku to the Kei and Aru archipelagos in Southeast Maluku and to the other Southwest Malukan islands. Informants generally consider the TNS dialects to be heavily influenced lexically by languages from islands with which a trading relation was maintained, for example Leti, one of the Luangic-Kisaric languages off the coast of East-Timor (Van Engelenhoven 1995). Indeed, the speech in one village on Teun Island, Layeni, has been identified as a dialect originating from Wetan Island in the Babar archipelago (Collins 1982). Interestingly, while Taber (1993) analyzed it as another Wetan dialect, informants in the Netherlands identify the speech spoken in Isu on Teun Island rather as a Serua dialect.

The Teun dialect was spoken in three villages on Teun Island and in one village, Bumei, in Southwest Nila. The Nila dialect (or North-Nila in Collins'

(1982) analysis) was spoken in at least three villages in Northeast Nila, whereas the Serua dialect was spoken in three villages in Southeast Nila and on entire Serua Island. Beside that, Serua has been reported to function as a lingua franca among the three islands and among TNS islanders on sea-travels.



Map 2: The islands Teun, Nila and Serua.

3 Typology

From a typological point of view, Southwest Maluku is part of the larger Timor region. The TNS language therefore displays features that are typical for this region (cf. Van Engelenhoven & Hajek 2000). Like all Austronesian languages in the region it displays a subject-verb-object word order and has two first person plural pronouns signaling whether the hearer is implied or not. Its phoneme inventory is relatively simple: /p, m, f, w, t, n, s, d, l, r, k, ', i, u, e, o, a/. No instances of geminate vowels or consonants have been attested.

Plurality is indicated on the noun by means of a suffix *-rV*. Table 1 shows that the final vowel of the stem is copied into the vowel slot of the suffix. On stems ending in *Va#*, the suffix is simply added. Stems ending in *VCV#* or *VV#* in which the final vowel is not /a/ delete the final vowel. In stems ending in *VCCV#* the final vowel metathesizes with the preceding consonant. Stems ending in *ra#* also trigger metathesis between /a#/ and /r/, and additionally delete the suffix's consonant. This is displayed in Table 1.

GLOSS		+ -rV	GLOSS
'banana'	<i>wia</i>	<i>wia-ra</i>	'bananas'
'child'	<i>wakoi</i>	<i>wako-ri</i>	'children'
'pig'	<i>wawi</i>	<i>waw-ri</i>	'pigs'
'stone'	<i>watu</i>	<i>wat-ru</i>	'stones'
'forest'	<i>letna</i>	<i>letan-ra</i>	'forests'
'lip'	<i>iwti</i>	<i>iwit-ri</i>	'lips'
'mountain'	<i>wura</i>	<i>wuar-a</i>	'mountains'
'bamboo'	<i>temra</i>	<i>temar-a</i>	'bamboos'

Table 1: Plural inflection in Serua

The metathesis attested between final vowels and preceding consonants in plural inflection (e.g. *letan-ra* 'forests' / *iwit-ri* 'lips' from *letna* 'forest' / *iwti* 'lip' + *-rV* 'PL', respectively) also occurs on the phrase level between words. This type of metathesis groups the TNS language with most Luangic-Kisaric languages of Southwest Maluku and the Austronesian isolects of Central and West Timor. The rules for metathesis remain unclear for the time being. The phonological context that triggers metathesis seems to be that the right side morpheme begins in #CV and the left side morpheme ends in VCCV#.

GLOSS		+ <i>lapna</i> 'big'	GLOSS
'boat'	<i>wroa</i>	<i>wro=lapna</i> / <i>wroa lapna</i>	'big boat'
'work'	<i>karei</i>	<i>karei lapna</i>	'lot of work'
'goat'	<i>pipi</i>	<i>pip=lapna</i> / <i>pipi lapna</i>	'big goat'
'island'	<i>nusa</i>	<i>nus=lapna</i>	'big island'
'fish'	<i>ina</i>	<i>ian=lapna</i>	'big fish'
'rain'	<i>usna</i>	<i>usan=lapna</i>	'huge rain'

Table 2: Metathesis, apocope or adposition in Serua phrases

However, some stems ending in VCV# also metathesize into VVC# (e.g. *wura* ~ *wuar* 'mountain' in Table 1 and *ina* ~ *ian* 'fish' in Table 2). In most cases, however the final vowel is deleted (e.g. *nusa* ~ *nus* 'island' in Table 2). No rule has been found yet for VV#, where final high vowels seem always preserved, whereas final /a/ is sometimes deleted.

The TNS language features two possessive constructions that distinguish between alienable and inalienable possession. Table 3 shows that in constructions designating alienable possession, the possessor noun or pronoun precedes

the possession noun. Possessor pronouns directly procliticize onto the possession noun and delete their final vowel before nouns with initial single consonants (e.g. *ruma* ‘house’) or vowels (e.g. *asu* ‘dog’).²

	PRON	POSS	X’s boat	X’s house	X’s dog
1sg	<i>a’u</i>	<i>sa’u</i>	<i>sa’u wroa</i>	<i>sa=ruma</i>	<i>sa’=asu</i>
2sg	<i>oa</i>	<i>mu</i>	<i>mu wroa</i>	<i>m=ruma</i>	<i>m=asu</i>
3sg	<i>ia</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>ni wroa</i>	<i>n=ruma</i>	<i>n=asu</i>
1plinc	<i>ita</i>	<i>tita</i>	<i>tita (ni) wroa</i>	<i>tit=ruma</i>	<i>tit=asu</i>
1plex	<i>ami</i>	<i>sama</i>	<i>sama wroa</i>	<i>sam=ruma</i>	<i>sam=asu</i>
2pl	<i>imi</i>	<i>mira</i>	<i>mira (ni) wroa</i>	<i>mir=ruma</i>	<i>mir=asu</i>
3pl	<i>ira</i>	<i>rira</i>	<i>rira (ni) wroa</i>	<i>rir=ruma</i>	<i>rir=asu</i>

Table 3: Possessive pronouns and alienable possessive construction in Serua

The third person singular possessor pronoun may be inserted as an intermediate possessive particle – indicated by brackets in the table – between the possession noun having an initial consonant cluster and first inclusive, second and third plural possessor pronouns. The third person singular possessive pronoun also functions as an intermediate particle between nominal possessors and possession nouns, which corresponds with most Austronesian languages found in this region³, e.g. *mani n=ruma* (man 3sg.POS=house) ‘(the) house of the man/(the) man’s house’.

Most Austronesian languages of Southwest Maluku formally distinguish alienable nouns from inalienable nouns by inflecting an obligatory possessive pronominal suffix on the latter. A few lemmas in Anonymous (1937)⁴ and Workala (1993) suggest that a similar pattern may exist or has existed in Nila and Serua. However, ongoing research and a comparison with Taber’s (1993) wordlist rather suggest that the same construction, originally exclusively for alienable possession is now also used for inalienable possession. In this list, many Teun, Nila and Serua nouns that are eligible for inalienable status display

² The TNS language generally disallows V’CV, hence deleting the glottal stop.

³ Notable exceptions are the Luangic languages, e.g. Leti (Van Engelenhoven 1995) and Luang (Laidig 1993:340-341) that only feature possessive suffixes and the Wetar languages that only feature prefixes, e.g. Tugun (Laidig 1993:342). These languages therefore do not formally distinguish between alienable and inalienable possession anymore. Rather, inalienability is indicated by the permanent possessive affixation of nouns.

⁴ The Anonymous 1937 ‘Niala’ wordlist compiled at Riring, nowadays at the west bank of the Sapalewa River in Northwest Seram (Taniwel District), and republished in Stokhof (ed.) 1981 was identified as Nila by Collins (1982).

the 3sg pronominal proclitic. Interestingly, some kinship terminology occurs unmarked in the wordlist, whereas others display a possessive suffix.

	'bone'	'fat'	'tongue'	'mother'	'grandrelative' ⁵
Teun	<i>ro</i>	<i>ni=mina</i>	<i>ni=mau</i>	<i>yina</i>	<i>pai</i>
Nila	<i>n=kui</i>	<i>mina</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>ina</i>	<i>wem-ni</i>
Serua	<i>n=kui</i>	<i>n=mina</i>	<i>n=ma</i>	<i>ina</i>	<i>up-nu</i>

Table 4: Alienable and inalienable possessive marking in TNS (Taber 1993)

Table 5 shows that possessive suffixation is gradually becoming obsolete in Serua. Only the first and second singular inflections were attested in Workala (1993), whereas under elicitation the alienable construction was used. 1plinc and 2pl combine their pronominal proclitics with the one of 3sg. This suggests that the TNS language undergoes the neutralization of the alienable-inalienable distinction that is attested on several places throughout Maluku (Laidig 1993).

	'X's mother' (<i>ina</i>)		
	Serua		Atauru ⁶
1sg	<i>ina-ku</i>	<i>sa'=ina</i>	<i>ánu</i>
2sg	<i>ina-mu</i>	<i>m=ina</i>	<i>(o) miam</i>
3sg	?	<i>n=ina</i>	<i>(ni) ina-n</i>
1plinc	?	<i>tita n=ina</i>	<i>(ita) ina-kre</i>
1plex	?	<i>sam=ina</i>	<i>(im) ina-m</i>
2pl	?	<i>mira n=ina</i>	<i>(mi) ina-m</i>
3pl	?	<i>rira n=ina</i>	<i>(si') ina-kre</i>

Table 5: Possessive suffixes and inalienable possessive constructions in Serua and Atauru

For comparative purposes the possessive paradigm has been added of the Atauru language on nearby Atauru Island (East-Timor) where possessive suffixation is still productive.

⁵ Like most other Southwest Malukan languages the TNS language uses the so-called 'Hawaiian' system, which only stresses generational differences, thus using the same term for grandchildren and grandparents. Gender differences may additionally be indicated by either adding 'man' or 'woman' (e.g. Nila *wem-ni mana* (grandrelative-POS man) 'grandfather', *wem-ni fata* (grandrelative-POS woman) 'grandmother').

⁶ Duarte (1990) reports separate lexical forms for the 1sg and 2sg possessive forms of 'mother' and 'father'.

Another Southwest Malukan regional feature is that subjects are cross-referenced on the verb by means of pronominal prefixation or ‘iconic linking’ (Collins 1991). The data in Collins (1991) indicate that verbal stems featuring an initial consonant cluster take CV prefixes. Ongoing fieldwork suggests that there are two parallel inflections in Serua, as is displayed in Table 6.

	I	II
1sg	<i>u-klei</i>	<i>u-klei</i>
2sg	<i>mu-klei</i>	<i>mu-klei</i>
3sg	<i>ne-klei</i>	<i>ne/ni-klei</i>
1plin	<i>te-klei</i>	<i>tit=ne-klei</i>
1plex	<i>ame-klei</i>	?
2pl	<i>mi-klei</i>	<i>mir=ne-klei</i>
3pl	<i>re-klei</i>	<i>rir=ne-klei</i>

Table 6: Pronominal inflection of #CC stems in Serua: ‘to see’

Column II in Table 6 shows that alternatively in plural conjugation the alienable possessive pronouns are procliticized to the 3sg-inflection. This is also attested on verbs beginning with a vowel or a single consonant. Collins’ (1982) claim that pronominal inflection involves stem-internal vowel changes

	Collins 1991	Workala 1993	
		I	II
1sg	<i>a='-ena</i>	<i>ti='-ena</i>	<i>a'-n-ena</i>
2sg	<i>o=m-ona</i>	<i>ti=m-ona</i>	<i>m=n-ena</i>
3sg	<i>i=n-ena</i>	<i>ti=n-ena</i>	<i>n=n-ena</i>
1plin	<i>i=t-ena</i>	?	<i>tit=n-ena</i>
1plex	<i>a=m-ena</i>	<i>a=ti=m-ena</i>	?
2pl	<i>i=m-ena</i>	<i>ti=m-ena</i>	<i>mir=n-ena</i>
3pl	<i>i=r-ena</i>	?	<i>rir=n-ena</i>

Table 7: Pronominal inflection and procliticization on ‘to sleep’ in Serua

has only been attested sporadically but has not yet been confirmed solidly in fieldwork sessions. This is exemplified in Table 7 by the Serua verb *ena* ‘to sleep’, which takes C prefixes. Collins (1991) reports an /e/ to /o/ change for 2sg, which in Workala’s (1993) manuscript is attested only after the verb *ti* ‘to

go'. Elicitation, however, rather produced the II column, in which the verb form inflected for 3sg is either once again inflected with a singular prefix, or procliticized by a possessive pronoun.

Although Collins (1991) reports that all verbs feature a pronominal marker, pronominal inflection on verbs seems partly constrained in Serua. Verbs beginning in #CV that are preceded by lexical subjects are never inflected.

- (1) *kok=ea tia noa me?* (Serua)
 man=this go where Q
 'Where does this man go to?'

The fact that the aspectual verb *ti* 'to go' in Table 7 separates /a/ from *m-ena* '1plex-sleep' indicates that *a* is not part of the pronominal inflection, but rather a proclitic functioning as a subject, like in Leti (Van Engelenhoven 1995:127). As has been attested in Meher (Kisar Island, Blood 1992), inflection is only possible, when the C-prefix docks as a coda on a vocalic proclitic (e.g. pronominal subjects, negators, aspectual verbs, etc.).

- (2) *ta=n-tia n=ruma me?* (Serua)
 NEG=3sg-go 3sg.POS=house Q
 'Did he not go home?'

For the time being we uphold the above hypothesis that the constraint is lexico-syntactically motivated in Serua. We assume that pronominal inflection requires pronominal subjects that are procliticized to the verb, and that lexical subjects suppress cross-referencing. The formal similarity between prefixes and proclitics in the 2sg and 3sg sets enables the reanalysis of inflected verbs (3a) as procliticized verbs instead (3b).

- (3) *mtiwait na Walanta naye?* (Serua)
 a. *m-tia=wait na Walanta naye?*
 2sg-go=PERF DIR Holland Q
 b. *m=tia=wait na Walanta naye?*
 2sg.POS=go=PERF DIR Holland Q
 'Have you gone to Holland (yet)?'

Our data show that this formal similarity, which started between the 2sg and 3sg sets gradually has spread to the other pronominal sets. The following sentence was attested only with the 1sg possessive proclitic and not with the conforming prefix ('-).

- (4) *sa'u payer=wua-ra sea* (Serua)
 1sg.POS pay=fruit-PL DEM
 'I pay those fruits'

The use of possessive proclitics is also featured by predicatively used adjectives⁷, as can be seen in example (5). All adjectives occur reduplicated in predicates in Serua. However, whereas possessive marking in Luangic Leti, where a similar construction by means of possessive suffixation exists (Van Engelenhoven 1995:110), creates nominal predicates, the occurrence of the possessive proclitic in Serua before dynamic verbs as *payer* 'to pay' suggests that the pronominal set in Serua has entered a process of simplification in which the possessive notion of the proclitics is bleaching. This element is elaborated in section 6.

- (5) *salna ni k-lo-lola* (Serua)
 road 3sg.POS RED-long
 'The road is long'

4 *Demographic history in Indonesia and in the Netherlands*

As already said above, the TNS language was originally spoken on the islands of Teun, Nila and Serua in Southwest Maluku. These islands in fact emerged from volcanic activity, which explains the fertility of the soil. It counterbalanced the small size of the islands and surely increased their economic value in the region as a permanent food source. Throughout Southwest Maluku it is acknowledged that the TNS islands were frequented especially during periods of famine and drought. Their small size, however, prevented the population to grow. For example, a census taken in the late 19th century mentions a total of 3,940 individuals who were distributed among the islands in like amounts.

Informants acknowledge the social division of society into a dominant group of 'newcomer' clans, who came from surrounding islands by boat, and a submissive group of 'aboriginal' clans.⁸ Although Riedel (1886) does not provide any evidence, the small size of the islands and their important contribution in interinsular trading certainly must have had a permanent influence on the demographic and social composition of their societies. The small population required that marriages were contracted with people outside the own is-

⁷ Many Austronesian languages in the region categorize adjectives as a type of intransitive verb rather than as an independent word class.

⁸ The term 'submissive' in fact is deceptive, since on many Southwest Malukan islands it is the 'aboriginal' clans that own the land in most cases. Social structure, however, is generally considered to be imported into the insular communities by the 'newcomer' clans (cf. Van Engelenhoven 1999).

land, as is attested on most Southwest Malukan islands, with the notable exception of Wetar. This type of ethnic diversity explains why most Leti and Kisar islanders are bilingual: as children they had the opportunity to learn the languages of both parents – and sometimes of one of the grandparents too, if one of them originated from a different ethnolinguistic group. However, it remains unclear in how far this Southwest Malukan demographic picture applied to the TNS islands. A census taken among the households of the initial TNS migrants in the Netherlands rather reveals that the partners in most marriages originated from the same island (Van Engelenhoven 2002).

As has been explained elsewhere (Van Engelenhoven & Hajek 2000), language is not emblematic for ethnic identity in Southwest Maluku. If no cultural restrictions apply⁹, Southwest Malukans easily swap languages. According to Hull (1998), who reports the same phenomenon in East-Timor, it is the grammatical similarity of the regional languages that facilitates this type of multilingualism.

Around 1980, the TNS islands were involved for the first time in the transmigration policy of the Indonesian government. This policy, which was introduced during the Dutch colonial rule, intends to relieve the demographic tension in densely populated regions – as for example the island of Java – by redistributing the population in regions with few inhabitants. In the case of the TNS islands, the relocation of the population was motivated by possible volcanic hazard. Ellen (1993) reports that in 1979 1175 households from the islands were transported to the Northeast coast of the Elpaputih Bay in Amahai District (South Seram, Central Maluku). In 1982 and 1983 the remaining population on the TNS islands was moved to Seram. The islanders kept their

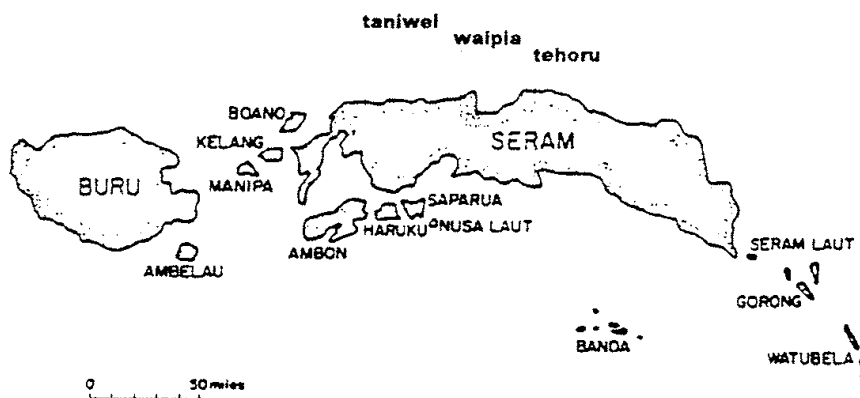
transmigration	households	Location
1964	60	Letwaru (Masohi)
1976	50	Ruatan Valley (Makariki)
1977	50	Ruatan Valley (Makariki)
1979	1175	Waipia
1982	150	Waipia
1983	remaining individuals	Waisiru (Waipia)

Table 8: Transmigration from the TNS islands to Amahai District (after Ellen 1993)

⁹ Non-Austronesian Oiratans in the Netherlands, for example, are denied access to learning materials of Austronesian Meher on Kisar Island (Florey & Van Engelenhoven 2001).

municipal independence and a separate TNS District around Waipia was carved out of the Amahai District.

The initial construction of the TNS District at Waipia reflected the original geography on the islands. The 17 original villages are represented as quarters in three island clusters. Three Serua-speaking villages, clustered in Northwest Serua, are grouped together south of the Pia River. Waru, which was located on the east shore of Serua, is found on the north bank of the river. To its west it borders on the quarters that represent the Nila-speaking villages of North Nila. The river runs through the Amet quarters, one of the Serua-speaking villages of South Nila. The two remaining Serua-speaking Nila quarters, Sifluru and Wotai, are located at the south bank of the Pia River. The Teun villages are enclosed by the Serua-speaking quarters of Terana and Lesluru (from Serua Island) in the East and of Sifluru, Wotai and Bumei (from Nila Island) in the North. The latter is a Teun-speaking exclave. North of the river the fourth Teun quarter, Mesa, is found, which on Teun Island was isolated in the extreme West.



Map 3: Seram island.

Although we presume the distribution of the quarters into island clusters to be motivated on traditional village alliances, it additionally enabled the initial maintenance of the TNS dialects in Waipia. By accident or on purpose, the location of Teun-speaking Mesa and Serua-speaking Waru outside the own island cluster prevented possible mutual exclusions based on 'incrowd sentiments'. Waipia inhabitants perceive themselves as TNS people, rather than Teunese, Nilanese or Seruans. The mutual comprehensibility of the Nila and Serua dialects enabled their initial maintenance, albeit probably under heavy mutual influence. Thanks to its relative isolated position in Southwest Maluku,

Teun Island managed to function as a 'linguistic haven' for the Teun dialect. In Waipia, however, the three indigenous Teun-speaking quarters, Watuludang, Yefila and Mesa were crushed between the Serua-speaking quarters. The situation turned out worse for the Wetan-speaking enclaves Isu and Layeni from Teun Island. Whereas in the original setting they were adjacent to each other, in Waipia they are separated by Teun-speaking Yefila and surrounded by Serua-speaking quarters. In 1980 only in nearby Awaysa, on the north coast of the Elpaputih Bay, a related vernacular was spoken by settlers from Southwest Malukan Leti and Moa.

The only language-related demographic information on TNS is provided by Taber (1993)¹⁰, based on fieldwork in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Taber has incorporated the figures of the Teun-speaking Bumei quarter of Nila Island into his calculation of Teun speakers. Although they are mentioned in passing in another paragraph, Taber does not mention the amount of speakers of the Luangic isolects of Isu and Layeni. He is not clear about the composition of the figure of Nila speakers, which probably was motivated by the ambivalence of his informants on the mutual comprehensibility and status of the Nila and Serua dialects. Taber does not relate to the correspondence between Serua /v/, South-Nila /f/ and North-Nila /h/ that Collins mentions as the chief phonetic difference between the three isolects (Collins 1982:124). His Nila figure therefore seems to reflect ethnic sentiments rather than linguistic motivation. A comparison with the census in Riedel (1886), which was confined to a count of island inhabitants and did not consider their ethnolinguistic background, suggests a slight increase of 6% and 5% of Serua and Nila people, against a decrease of 11% of Teun people. As already said earlier, it is unclear what the positions of Isu, Layeni and Bumei are in these calculations.

The ethnic and religious riots throughout Indonesia in 1998 and 1999 drastically changed the demographic composition of the TNS District. The World Food Programme (WFP 2000) reports a massive influx of fugitives into the Waipia area, from February 1999 through July 2000. These 'Internally Displaced Persons' or IDPs as they are labeled in the report, acknowledge to have come from the adjacent districts Tehoru, Amahai (specifically the city of Masohi) and Taniwel on South and Northwest Seram, and from the Banda Islands District about 150 kilometers south of Seram.

All fugitives acknowledge to be Christians on the run for the Christian-Islamic violence in their home districts. According to the WFP, the known Southwest Malukan allegiance to the Protestant Church motivated them to seek refuge in the TNS District. Thus far it remains unclear, whether the IDPs fled

¹⁰This information was adopted unchanged in Taber et al. (1996) and Grimes et al. (1996).

in groups or individually – in August 2000 individuals from Wahai (North Seram District) have been reported to have crossed the inland jungles and mountains in order to arrive in the TNS District.

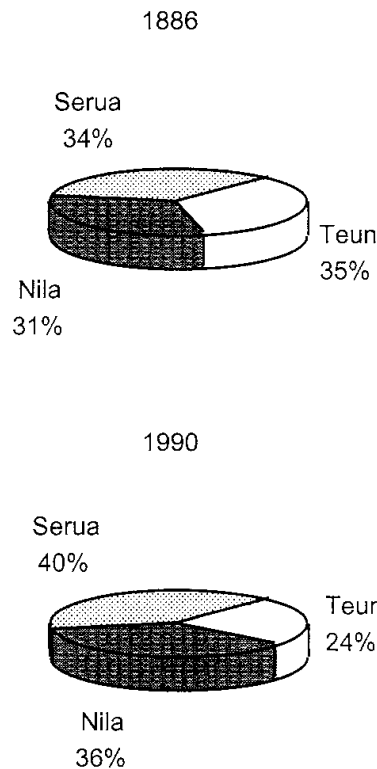


Figure 2: 'Ethnolinguistic' proportion of the TNS population in 1886 and 1990

The fear for Muslim violence, perhaps in combination with a feeling of obligation towards fellow-Christians, made the TNS people provide shelter for these fugitives. The WFP (2000) reports that IDPs stay with volunteer host families. All households in the district are said to accommodate one or more refugees. The impact on the TNS community is obvious. The arrival of a reported 8,650 IDPs increased the population with 50% and as such completely destabilized society.

The small district (35 km²) appeared not to be able to provide enough food for everybody, while riots in the surrounding districts cut off the connections across land and sea with the Provincial capital on Ambon Island. Food and medication became difficult to supply, which explains the recent reports of starvation in the region.

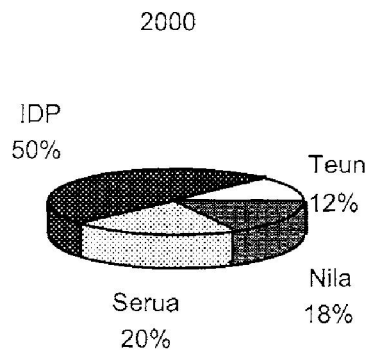


Figure 3: Proportion of 'Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) in the TNS District

When in 1950 the government of the Republic of East Indonesia acceded into the unitary Republic of Indonesia, an independent Republic of the South Moluccas, *Republik Maluku Selatan* (RMS), was proclaimed on Ambon Island, on April, 24th. At that time, units of the Dutch colonial army, the KNIL¹¹, were still encamped on the island of Java. In order to disband its colonial army, the Dutch government proposed its soldiers to enlist in the Indonesian Army. Most soldiers of Malukan origin, however, refused to do so. Because the Dutch Court of Justice disallowed any demobilization of Dutch army units abroad, the Dutch government had to transfer the remaining soldiers to Dutch territory. As a result, 12,500 Malukan soldiers and their families were transported to the Netherlands in 1951.

A majority of these soldiers originated either from the Central Malukan islands (76%) or from the Southeast Malukan islands (21%). A small minority of 3%, 330 households, came from Southwest Maluku. As has been explained elsewhere (Van Engelenhoven 2002), their numerical insignificance compared to the other Malukan households, and their ethnolinguistic complexity determined the linguistic behavior of these families. Especially the Babar households typically reflected the ethnolinguistic diversity of the home archipelago. In most Southwest Malukan marriages, both partners came from different language areas in the home region. Malay, the official medium in the colonial army and the traditional contact vernacular in Southwest Maluku, was the natural candidate to gain first language status in these households.

The TNS families (approximately 110 households) appear to differ drastically from the other Southwest Malukan families in the Netherlands. Firstly, most marriages in the TNS group were contracted between partners

¹¹ *Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger*, 'Royal Netherlands-Indies Army'.

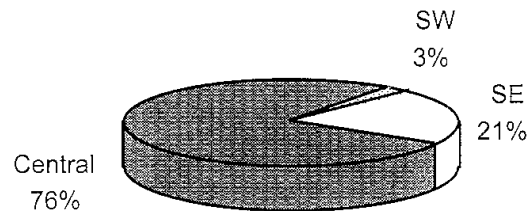


Figure 4: Ethnic composition of Malukan migrants in the Netherlands¹²

from the same dialect group.¹³ Beside that, the similarity between the Serua and Nila dialects – and the first mentioned functioned as a contact vernacular among the islands – made cross-dialect communication possible. A quick glance at the ethnolinguistic composition of the Babar and TNS groups in Figure 5 immediately shows the unfeasibility for any Babar language and the principally good chances for the Nila and Serua dialects to survive.

Secondly, the migration history of the TNS people in the Netherlands slightly differs from the other Malukan soldiers. The latter were initially accommodated in temporary hostels, which had either been concentration camps during the German occupation, or former convents and the like. The soldiers and their families were distributed among these hostels according to religious conviction and geographic origin¹⁴ rather than ethnolinguistic background. In Van Engelenhoven (2002) it is explained how the initial accommodation of Protestant Southwest Malukans among Roman-Catholic Southeast Malukan residences. When in 1964 the Indonesian army had eliminated the final hearths of RMS resistance in Maluku, this resulted in a political segregation in the Malukan exile community of supporters and adversaries of an independent

¹² Central = Central Malukans, SE = Southeast Malukans, SW = Southwest Malukans.

¹³ Admittedly, the TNS figures in Van Engelenhoven (2002) represent island affiliations rather than linguistic allegiances. It is therefore still not entirely clear what the proportions among the dialect speakers are. Whereas the Teun people (9%) almost all returned to Indonesia, at least one Teun-speaking family from Bumei has remained in the Netherlands.

¹⁴ Only in 1999 the Southwest Malukan islands became an independent regency (van Dijk 2000:25, footnote 2). At the time of the arrival in the Netherlands, the Southwest Malukan islands belonged to the Regency of Southeast Maluku, because of which Southwest Malukans were categorized as Southeast Malukans.

Malukan republic. These contrasts were crystallized in the populations of the respective Malukan hostels and quarters, because of which several families were forced to move to other locations. As a consequence most Southwest Malukan families now live scattered throughout

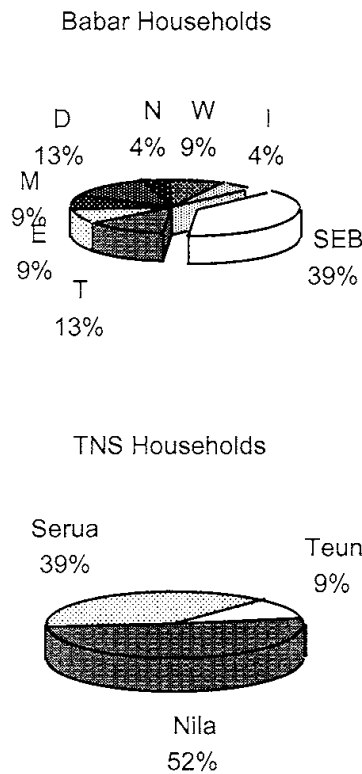


Figure 5: Ethnolinguistic composition of the Babar and TNS groups in the Netherlands.¹⁵

the Netherlands. Most TNS soldiers, however, joined the navy and not the land-forces as the majority of Malukan exiles did. As such, they were not accommodated along with the other Malukan soldiers in the initial hostels, but instead were concentrated in the quarters of navy personnel in Den Helder, the main harbor of the Dutch Royal Navy.

Both elements, the shared ethnolinguistic origin of the marriage partners, implying a monocultural household, and the geographic concentration of the TNS households gave the TNS people more possibility to maintain their own cultural identity. The other Southwest Malukan families, scattered throughout the Netherlands, either had to adopt and adapt to the ‘Alifuru Concept’ – the

¹⁵ Legend: D: Dawlor-Dawra; E: Emplawas; I: Imroing; M: Marsela; N: North Babar; SEB: Southeast Babar; T: Tela; W: Wetan.

political and cultural framework of the Central Malukan majority in the hostels – or, alternatively, had to integrate into the Dutch society.

5 *Language economy in the Indonesian and Dutch settings*

The different demographic histories of the TNS people caused separate language economies in the Indonesian and the Dutch settings. As already mentioned earlier, we hypothesize that the TNS language was a typical Southwest Malukan language in its original setting on the islands of Teun, Nila and Serua. Like in most Southwest Malukan island communities, traditional knowledge about society must have been stored in the lexicon as word pairs, or lexical parallelisms (Van Engelenhoven 1997). Verbal arts, story-telling and songs primarily functioned as a means to divulge this specific type of knowledge (Van Engelenhoven 1999). Ongoing research shows that the Serua lexicon has special items for planting, harvesting etc., which demonstrate the importance of agriculture in the traditional TNS communities. Seafaring, however, had a far more important economic impact on society. Highly specialized terminology in the Serua lexicon, for example *tomra wroa* (stare boat) ‘watch a departing boat until it has passed the horizon’, emphasizes the importance of seafaring in insular economy and its impact on the communities. Malay, both the local variant and its standard counterpart Indonesian, functioned as the official vernacular in schooling, sermons and government as everywhere throughout Indonesia.

The complete removal of the TNS population to South Seram from 1979-1983 may have had little direct influence on the communities in first instance. As has been mentioned above, the original villages were rebuilt as separate quarters in the Waipia area. The quarters were clustered into island groups as an asset to safeguard the traditional alliances between the villages. For the Wetan-speaking Teun enclaves of Isu and Layeni, however, the new location appeared to be a set-back. In the original setting on Teun Island both villages were isolated together from the Teun-speaking villages, whereas a strait between Teun Island and Nila Island barred any possible direct influence from the latter. In the new setting the Wetan enclaves are completely surrounded by Serua-speaking quarters. In the case of Layeni, the speakers of the Serua dialect (Jerili and Wotai) and the Teun dialect (Yefila) live across the street.

In a personal communication, Mr. P. Sullivan, who stayed in Waipia for his PhD research from 1998 through 1999, indicates that the TNS language in that period was confined to gatherings where representatives of the original villages met to discuss traditional topics. Interestingly, Mr. Sullivan specifically mentions the use of the indigenous language in interinsular meetings. This means that each speaker either used his own dialect, or a ‘creolized’ or koine variant

of the TNS dialects. Another option is that the Serua dialect functioned as an intermediate vernacular, since it had that function in the original setting too. In a Southwest Malukan context, traditional affairs in an interinsular setting are highly formal, even when the vernacular is a creole (cf. the 'Sung Language' in Southwest Maluku, Van Engelenhoven & Hajek 2000:120). Indonesian is confined to the formal registers of the government, church and school domains, as it already was in the original setting. Ambonese Malay is the vernacular used in informal speech in school, in church and on television and radio. This has been epitomized in Table 9.

Mr. Sullivan reports that, just before the massive inflow of refugees, TNS people started to reconsider their ethnic background. Should they identify themselves as TNS, or as either Malukans from the Central or Southeast Regency, or perhaps even as North Malukans? Affiliation to the original grounds on Teun, Nila and Serua encourage inhabitants of Waipia more and more to return to their islands, either legally or illegally. A census held by Mr. Sullivan in three quarters revealed that nearly 50% of the population has been born on Seram. Whereas Malay in the original setting was confined to the church, school and government, it now entered domains traditionally belonging to the TNS language. Dutch informants report that the TNS language in Waipia is still used in the home domain among those who experienced the removal to Seram as adults. P. Sullivan reports that the strong influence of Malay in daily life frustrates the transfer of the TNS language from these adults¹⁶ to their children.

The Waipia district is located where the North and East coast of Elpapatih Bay meet. Two indigenous languages are spoken in the coastal region: Amahai and Yalahatan. Amahai is reported to be known by a few of the oldest generation in nearby Makariki. Collins (1982:110) reports that Yalahatan, or Atamanu as he labels it, is still spoken by a few elderly in Haruru near Masohi. Both languages are highly endangered and respectively had 50 and 1,000 speakers around 1996 (Taber et al. 1996:55, 66). The only remaining indigenous language in the interior is South Nuaulu. Ellen (1993) describes how its speakers, nowadays a reported 1,000 (Taber et al. 1996:59), are found in several small settlements at the Banda Sea coast and in the area further east where Amahai District borders on the Tehoru District.

The east coast of Elpapatih Bay was developed as the initial transmigration area of Seram. For that purpose, a new administrative center for entire Seram and the Uliase Islands (Ambon, Haruku, Saparua and Nusalaut) was set up at Masohi. This explains the high amount of immigrants in this region. The major

¹⁶ P. Sullivan specifically mentions mothers trying to teach the TNS language to their children.

immigrant group originates from Buton (Southeast Sulawesi) and is found especially in the town areas of Makariki, Masohi and Amahai. They have also settled among the other immigrants in most locations along the eastern shore of Elpaputih Bay. The other settlers came from the Selayar archipelago (Southwest Sulawesi), Java, Saparua, the Banda Islands, and the Kei and Tanimbar archipelagos (Southeast Maluku). In this complex ethnolinguistic scenario, Ambonese Malay, the traditional contact language in the region, naturally functions as the vernacular for interethnic communication, pushing the use of the indigenous languages back into the household.

The WFP (2000) report identified the fugitives in the Waipia District in 2000 to have come from Masohi, the adjacent Districts of Tehoru (around Teluti Bay) and Werinama (Southeast Seram), the Taniwel District (Northwest Seram) and the Banda Islands District, approximately 150 kilometers south of Seram. Teluti (or East Littoral in Collins 1982, 1983) and Bobot are the biggest indigenous languages in the first two districts with about 17,000 and 4,000 speakers, respectively (Taber et al. 1996:57, 64). The major indigenous languages in the Taniwel District are Alune and North Wemale¹⁷, which, however, are mostly spoken in the interior. On the Banda Islands a Malay dialect is spoken, which varies slightly from Ambonese Malay (Adelaar et al. 1996).

NETHERLANDS						WAIPIA		
Dutch	Malay	TNS	Domain	Register	Domain	Ind	Malay	TNS
*			state government		state government	*		
*			tradition		tradition			*
*	*		church	Formal	church	*		
*	*		school		school	*		
*			radio television		radio television	*	*	
*			local government		local government		*	
*	*		tradition	Informal	tradition		*	
*	*		church		church		*	
*	*		home		home		*	*

Table 9: Language use in Waipia and the Netherlands in 1998-99

¹⁷ Taber et al. 1996 reports 13,000 and 5,000 speakers for Alune and North Wemale, respectively (pages 42 and 52). These figures, however, do also include speakers in the adjacent Districts of Kairatu and North Seram.

Above it was already explained that in 1998 and 1999 Ambonese Malay had taken over most domains in the Waipia community and hindered the teaching of the TNS language to younger generations. The TNS language – besides being used among elderly people – was at that time already confined to traditional topics like marital law and reciprocal village obligations. We hypothesize that the massive influx of refugees into the Waipia District will further restrict the use of the TNS language. The WFP (2000) elaborates that each TNS household in Waipia hosts at least one up to five fugitives. In the case of Isu, for example, this implied a population increase from 546 to 2,352 people. Before their arrival the TNS language already was becoming obsolete in the home, being used only between spouses who were adults at the time of emigration from Teun, Nila and Serua. In this context in which households were expanded with speakers from other ethnolinguistic regions, the use of the TNS language can only have come to a complete stand-still.

The linguistic economy of the TNS people in the Netherlands is partly different from the other Southwest Malukan migrants. As elaborated above, unlike the other Southwest Malukan migrants, the TNS group is fairly homogeneous culturally and linguistically. Most TNS soldiers had joined the Dutch Royal Navy and as such were housed in the naval base of Den Helder. Other Southwest Malukans were scattered throughout the Netherlands and stayed in hostels where the majority was either ardent adherents or adversaries of an independent Malukan republic.

Van Engelenhoven (2002) explains how initially an anticipated return to a liberated *Republik Maluku Selatan* (RMS), the Republic of the South Moluccas, dominated daily life. A special committee, the CRAMS¹⁸ maintained law and order in the hostels and had constituted itself as the official representative of the guerilla government on Seram Island. It developed an RMS ideology, which was based on the cultural conceptions of the Central Malukan majority. The main function of the ‘Alifuru Concept’ as it is labeled by Van Engelenhoven (2002) was to present the Malukan migrants to the Dutch community as one people having one language and one culture. This would facilitate a swift return to Maluku after it was liberated from the Indonesian occupying forces. According to the ‘Alifuru Concept’, Seram is the origin of all Malukan islands and the cultures and societies found on them. The Seramese mountain tribes (called *Alifuru* in Ambonese Malay) are acknowledged as the original inhabitants of Seram. Because of their relative isolation from the coastal peoples their societies are perceived as reflecting the purest form of Malukan culture. Similarly, their languages, narratives and songs are expected to contain original

¹⁸ *Commissie voor de Rechtspositie van Ambonese Militairen en Schepelingen* ‘Committee for the Legal Status of Ambonese Military and Naval Soldiers’.

Malukan knowledge that dates from before the time Christianity and Islam were introduced in the region. Exactly these properties are seen as displays of retardedness and ignorance in the Indonesian setting, where *Alifuru* became a denigrating term. In the Dutch setting, however, they enhanced their function as role model for the citizen of the future RMS.

The imposition of this Central Malukan model was the main drive behind the maintenance of the own language and culture among the Southeast Malukan Keiese, who rejected the 'Alifuru Concept'. Like the Southeast Malukans, the cultural patterns of the Southwest Malukans diverged from the Central Malukan model. Instead of openly disassociating from the RMS ideology and the 'Alifuru Concept' as Southeast Malukans did (e.g. the collective Indonesian naturalization of Keiese in the 1970s), most Southwest Malukans chose to conceal their cultural identity, a phenomenon typical for their home region (Van Engelenhoven 1999, Van Engelenhoven & Hajek 2000). Numerical insignificance, internal ethnolinguistic pluriformity and the tradition-based culture concealment barred the transfer of the own languages and cultures to younger generations. Songs and dances were not performed and children encouraged their parents not to speak their own language in public, often paraphrased in Malay as *Jangan bikin malu* ('Do not embarrass me').

Their relative isolation as naval soldiers shielded the TNS soldiers from the 'Alifuru Concept' as it had developed in the RMS-oriented hostels of the other Malukan soldiers. TNS people always were aware of the fact that their culture diverged from the RMS model. Up to the 1980s, therefore, they were in general reluctant to demonstrate their cultural heritage outside the own group, which was considered to be 'inappropriate'. Whereas cultural concealment among other Southwest Malukans meant a complete ban on 'un-Alifuru' dances and songs, these kinds of cultural displays became typical 'in-law' events not to be performed outside the family. Disassociation with radical expressions of RMS ideology (e.g. the train hijackings (1975, 1977) and especially the occupation of a primary school (1978)), the independence of the only remaining Dutch colony, Surinam, in 1975 and the demographic consequences of the government's family reunion policy for foreign laborers caused TNS people to more and more disseminate their own cultural heritage in the 1980s. In the 1990s there was at least one foundation, *Letra Natu* 'The Four Villages' that guarded the interests of especially the Seruans in the Netherlands. After 50 years of exile the 'Alifuru Concept' has lost its impact on the Malukan community. Ethnolinguistic diversity is now considered to be an asset to the Malukan identity. The public performance of a TNS dance group on the commemoration of the arrival of the first Malukan families in Rotterdam (April 21st, 2001) would have been impossible during the 1960s and 1970s.

A comparison of the language use in the Indonesian and Dutch settings in Table 9 reveals that the TNS language completely disappeared in the Netherlands, whereas it was mainly confined to formal discussions on traditional topics in Waipia up to 1999. Informally it was used only among adult peers. In the Dutch setting marriage partners may have spoken a TNS dialect with each other in the home. Outside the home it was completely suppressed during the first thirty years of their stay in the Netherlands.

The use of Malay in the formal register in the Netherlands slightly distorts the overall language use picture. Dutch primary schools indeed offer Malay language courses to Malukan children. This Malay variant, *bahasa Melayu Maluku*, 'Malukan Malay' was developed at a Dutch teaching program as an alternative for Indonesian, which among Malukan migrants was still perceived as the 'language of the enemy'. These courses, however, are additional to the school curriculum, in which Dutch is still the only language of instruction. This Malay variant is confined to schools. The Malay used in sermons depends on the political affiliation of the church. RMS-oriented churches, as for example the Malukan Evangelic Church, use bibles and song books that display the Malay orthography of the Netherlands-Indies period, while Ambonese Malay and Dutch alternate in sermons. In the Southeast Malukan Protestant Church and the Malukan Protestant Church Indonesian is the official medium in printed materials. The use of Indonesian in sermons is promoted by flying-in ministers from Indonesia. Already in the barracks in Indonesia Malay had taken over the lingua franca function among TNS people that traditionally was assigned to the Serua dialect. It therefore does not come as a surprise that Malay and not the TNS language became the first language among adults in the Netherlands, just as in the other Southwest Malukan groups.

6 *Language obsolescence or linguistic innovation?*

As already explained in section 4, TNS people are traditionally bilingual. This factor must be taken in consideration in order to appreciate the type of obsolescence that their dialects are and have been subjected to. In a Southwest Malukan context a language does not necessarily occupy each register and each domain. Rather, one language, for example Malay, may be used for one or two domains (education and religion), whereas in Oslepan (North-Nila) the Nila dialect would be used for daily speech and the Serua dialect for trading purposes or tradition-based politics with villages on Teun and Serua. This is why in the original setting the TNS language was not considered emblematic for the ethnolinguistic identity. A speaker's command of a language in question reflected his involvement in and acquaintance with a certain domain, for example trade, rather than his representativeness as a member of his people. The previ-

ous section outlined how language allegiance has shifted from the indigenous language to either Malay in Waipia or to Dutch in the Netherlands. Are there formal features in the language that corroborate this obsolescence, if in fact one might question whether the TNS language ever had an ‘ideal speaker’ in the Chomskyan sense?

In section 3 it was suggested that the pronominal system in Serua had entered a process of simplification. Table 5 showed that in Serua pronominal suffixation of nouns indicating inalienable possession became obsolete. In elicitation no possessive suffixes were found and in Workala’s (1993) manuscript only the words for mother and father were attested with the suffix of 1sg or 2sg. More interestingly, possessive pronouns are more and more used as subject markers instead of the appropriate pronominal prefixes. Tables 6 and 7 showed that in plural conjugation possessive pronouns are procliticized onto verbs that are inflected with the 3sg subject prefix. Possessive pronouns are also procliticized onto predicative adjectives where they cross-reference with the subject (6):

- (6) *sa’u rapi ni lapanwait.* (Serua)
sa’u rapi ni lapna=wait
 1sg.POS boy 3sg.POS big=PERF
 ‘My son is already big.’

For comparison example (7) displays an attributively used adjective:

- (7) *tamkonianlapna a’o?* (Serua)
ta=m-konu=ina=lapna a’a=o
 NEG=2sg-eat=fish=big DEM=Q
 ‘Do you not eat that big fish?’

This use of possessive pronouns deviates from what is generally known about Southwest Malukan languages. Luangic languages, as for example Leti, only have a few adjectives, which are always verbalized by means of a pronominal prefix when used predicatively. Process verbs are derived into adjectives through reduplication. Such deverbal adjectives may fill the predicate in equational clauses (8), which, however, is not very common. Normally, process verbs feature a pronominal prefix in the predicate. Only when they indicate a state instead of a process they are nominalized by means of a pronominal suffix (9):

- (8) *asu mèmètme* (Leti)
asu mè-mètma=e
 dog:DET RED-black=DET
 'The dog is a black one'

- (9) *asu mètamne* (Leti)
asu mètma-nV
 dog:DET black-3sg.POS
 'The dog is black'

The construction is not attested in the indigenous languages of the Waipia area. In South Nuaulu adjectives may function as predicates in equational clauses and as such are intonationally marked (10, taken from Bolton 1990:106-107). By means of a phrase-final demonstrative subjects can formally be separated from predicates. Ongoing research suggests this to be obligatory in Amahai non-verbal clauses as shown in the following Amahai example provided by Margaret Florey (p.c.):

- (10) *asu mainae* (Nuaulu)
 dog big
 'The dog is big'

- (11) *asuro ne ahia kio!* (Amahai)
 dog DEM rotten EXC
 'This dog is bad, you know!'

Ambonese Malay does feature a similar construction. These, however, are mere expletive phrases and not clauses, as in (12):

- (12) *kapal pung kancang!* (Malay)
 ship POS fast
 'Is this ship fast! (literally: the fastness of the ship)'

Simplification of the pronominal paradigm is attested throughout Maluku and need not necessarily indicate language obsolescence. None of the Luangic languages (e.g. Leti, Luang, Wetan etc.) formally distinguish between alienable and inalienable possession, but they are just as vital as their relatives to the West (e.g. Meher, Roma and East-Damar) where alienable possession is encoded differently from inalienable possession. The severely endangered Laha language on Ambon Island on the other hand only has one suffix for all inalienably possessed nouns and cannot distinguish person, but it still has a full set of pronominal proclitics to indicate alienable possession (Laidig 1993).

Collins (1980) explains this type of language erosion to be induced by the pressure of Ambonese Malay. All Laha speakers are bilinguals who are just as fluent in Ambonese Malay as in their native tongue. A similar type of language erosion has been attested in the Keiese migrant community in the Netherlands.

Among recently immigrated Ewaw speakers only one of the fourteen numeral classifiers is still used. Keiese of the second and third generations born in the Netherlands no longer speak the language and use semantically bleached clichés like *Fel be?* ‘How are you?’ as shibboleths of Keiese identity (Van Engelenhoven 2002). Florey (1997) noted a comparable simplification among Alune speakers in Taniwel District (Northwest Seram). Here, speakers in the coastal communities either no longer distinguish formally between alienable and inalienable possession, or use the 3sg suffix for all persons on inalienably possessed nouns.

Collins’ (1991) conservative Serua data were collected during several field-work trips from 1977 to 1979 in the Letwaru village near Masohi (Collins 1982:135, footnote 2, 1983:135-6). Because this settlement dated before the TNS transmigration, we can therefore safely consider Collins’ data to reflect the original grammatical structure of these isolects. Workala’s (1993) data have been collected in the early 1990s in Waipia and consequently reflect the Serua grammar about ten years after the foundation of TNS District (see Table 7). Florey (p.c.) mentions the removal of the villages to the coast from their original setting in the mountains as an important activator of the simplification in genitive constructions in Alune. From this perspective the complete removal of the TNS people from their islands and their relocation in South Seram probably also initiated the attested structural changes in the Serua isolect: the loss of the pronominal suffixes indicating inalienable possession and the restructuring of possessive pronominal proclitics as markers cross-referencing subjects on verbs (see section 3).

Subject cross-referencing by means of possessive pronouns in adjective clauses has been attested neither in the languages indigenous to South Seram nor in the local lingua franca, Ambonese Malay. Although a similar construction has been attested in Leti, albeit that this language uses possessive suffixes rather than proclitics, this construction may very well be an innovation that is exclusive for the Serua dialect. Elicitation revealed that unlike Leti (13), it is impossible for adjectives, or deverbal adjectives for that matter, to function as adverbs. In order to encode a similar notion in Serua, the verb is placed in the subject slot of an adjective predicate (14). Further research is required to determine whether this is an original grammatical structure or another ‘migration-induced’ innovation.

- (13) *n-kari* *pèppèrte.* (Leti)
n-kari *pè-ppèrta=e*
 3sg-work RED-heavy=DET
 ‘He works hard’

- (14) *sa'u karei ni ferferta.* (Serua)
sa'u karei ni fer-ferta
 1sg.POS work 3sg.POS RED-heavy
 'I work hard (lit. my work is hard).'

7 *What to salvage in acute language death?*

Steinhauer (1994) explains how the shift of an indigenous language, or regional language as he labels it, to Indonesian is effectuated not only by education, but also through exposure and interethnic contacts in which Indonesian or Malay is the lingua franca. The importance and influence of Indonesian and Ambonese Malay in South Seram is evident. Although Waipia was founded as a separate district for TNS people, it has always been economically dependent on the nearby port of multiethnic Makariki. Indonesian has always been the language for the official register. Ambonese Malay, the lingua franca of the region, easily replaced the Serua dialect as the vernacular for interethnic communication among TNS people themselves, leaving the home as the only place to speak the TNS language. The fact that around 1998 about 50% of the population had been born in Waipia pushed it even further back in the home to communications between grandparents, and perhaps between parents that were born on the islands. Mr. Sullivan's observation that mothers tried but not succeeded in teaching the TNS language to their children indicates that around 1998 this language was about to take the path of obsolescence as Ewaw had done in the Netherlands. The confinement of the TNS language to the formal register in traditional affairs on the one hand safeguards a high status for this language. Because it is not equipped for most topics in discourse, the preoccupation with their ethnic identity as reported by Mr. Sullivan predicts a scenario in which Malay-speaking TNS youth will use stock-phrases in the TNS language as a linguistic means to express their non-Seramese or non-Central Malukan ethnicity.

The TNS people are aware that they lose their language. Already in 1996 during a conference at Pattimura University (Ambon), a lecturer of Nilanese origin informed the author that the elderly in Waipia were looking for academic help to save their language. In 2000, before the first reports of starvation caused by the ongoing instream of fugitives in Waipia, the author received a letter from Mr. M. Workala on behalf of the Letra Natu foundation, proposing a project among TNS people in the Netherlands that was similar to the one

begun with Ewaw-speakers in Zwolle¹⁹, of which I want to quote a few lines here:

‘After 25 years the Serua language is threatened. Elderly people who can still speak the language are dying. Indonesian is taught to youngsters at school. ... The language used to be transferred from generation to generation. Nothing has ever been reported about our language. ... We hope to maintain our language for the generations of Seruans to come and for everybody who is interested in the Serua language. ... Our means are limited; therefore we address you in order to record our endangered language.’

The ongoing state of *kerusuhan* ‘disturbance’, as the ethno-religious civil war in Central and Southeast Maluku is labeled by Dutch and Indonesian Malukans, has changed an incipient process of language shift among TNS people into an acute thread of language death, simply because its speakers are either killed in the riots or dying because of starvation (see section 5). What can a linguist do in such a context? In how far is linguistic support and research legitimate? Obviously, the main concern of the inhabitants of Waipia now is how to stay alive, while their present weal and woe worries their relatives in the Netherlands.

Securing the lives of the TNS people must now be done before anything else. Nevertheless the fear of losing their language is an element where linguistics can help. M. Florey (p.c.) observed that inside the village people could speak either Malay or Alune or both as one liked it. On the shore, outside the village, however, the main function of speaking the language was to mark oneself off as an Alune from the other non-Alune road-users. Whereas the ‘Alifuru Concept’ in the Netherlands precluded such language attitude, it can be anticipated in Waipia. In Central Maluku, especially on the Uliase islands off the Elpaputih Bay, indigenous language now only functions as a vernacular for traditional affairs, which is either sung or recited. It is, however, not longer used for daily communication. The loss of knowledge of their language may lead young TNS people to perceive their own language also as a source of traditional knowledge, which must be cherished and protected. Speakers of the TNS language in Indonesia and in the Netherlands therefore need to be taught that ‘freezing’ their oral traditions in the end will only add to the extinction of their language. The TNS language has always shared the sociolinguistic stage

¹⁹ The Zwolle project was executed within the framework of the international research project *Language Maintenance for Endangered languages: an active approach*, funded by the Australian Research Council (A59803475). The result of the Zwolle research, a learner’s grammar of Ewaw plus texts is planned to be published at the Utrecht-based *Landelijk Steunpunt Educatie Molukkers* (National Malukan Education Support).

with other languages, like Indonesian and Ambonese Malay, and as such was not the only receptacle of knowledge.

Nevertheless I acknowledge the need to document the dialects of Teun, Nila and Serua. Steinhauer (1994) pointed out that a fair knowledge of the languages in use is necessary for a better understanding of the present linguistic mosaic of Indonesia. Certainly within the narrower scope of East Indonesia, the TNS language is indispensable for a better understanding of the many historical linguistic relationships and the many typologies in the region.

Suppose, the civil war may one day settle down, what can linguists do to save the TNS language before it is too late? One of the things that can be done now is commencing research in the Netherlands among the few remaining initial migrants who still know parts of their language. Another option is to fly-in people to the Netherlands from either the war zone or, perhaps much easier, people who migrated to other areas in Indonesia that are not yet affected, for example Kupang (Timor), or Surabaya (East Java). These informants, who certainly would have a better command of their language than the Dutch migrants, could help in compiling a dictionary that would contain all lexical pairs in the TNS language. These are the main leads of indigenous knowledge management in the Southwest Malukan conception (van Engelenhoven 1997) and would be directly acknowledged as the major task for any language salvage program by TNS people. Alongside this dictionary project grammatical research could be easily conducted.

The amount of speakers of the TNS language has always been too small to guarantee its existence in the modern Indonesian society. However, as has been elaborated by Slomanson (1996), the high esteem that TNS people have of their own language gives the language a chance to survive in some domains next to Malay or Indonesian. The compilation of a dictionary containing all lexical data for three dialects would only emphasize the importance of the TNS language for its speakers and would certainly contribute to its maintenance.

Appendix: List of quarters in Waipia & their island and language affiliation

Dialect/language	Teun Island	Nila Island	Serua Island
Wetan	Isu Layeni		
Teun dialect	Mesa Yerfilai Watuludang	Bumei	
Serua dialect		Wotai Sifluru	Waru Jerili Lesluru Terana
Nila dialect		Amet Kokroman Kuralele	

List of quarters in Waipia and their island and language affiliation

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