

LOTA CHARACTERS IN ENDE, FLORES

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1. INTRODUCTION

This article is intended to inform and explain the Ende characters, which are also referred to as the *lota* characters. They are used by the Ende ethnic group occupying Central Flores, East Nusa Tenggara.

This article is written based on the result of the study conducted in 1993 which has been published entitled *Deskripsi Naskah dan Sejarah Perkembangan Aksara Ende Flores Nusa Tenggara Timur* (2005) [Description of the Text and History of the Development of the Ende Characters, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara].

Three important things will be informed; they are:

- a) The short history of the existence of the *lota* characters;
- b) The *lota* characters;
- c) The current existence of the *lota* characters.

2. THE SHORT HISTORY

Initially, the written information on the *lota* characters was provided by S. Ross entitled *Controleer Onder Afdeelingen Endeh* in 1872. It was published as part of “De Taal” of TBG XXIV (Table of S. Ross) of the *Encyclopaedisch Bureau Endeh Flores* from page 221 to 250 by Suchtelen in 1921. He described the Ende characters and manuscripts completely and clearly. The Ende ethnic group does not have any original characters. The characters developing in Ende are derived from Bugis (Suchtelen, 1921: 222).

Other information was provided by Emuch Hermansoemantri entitled “Identifikasi Naskah” [The Identification of Texts] (Emuch, 1986: 53). The Ende characters, the Makasar

characters, the Bugis characters and the Bima characters used in East Sumbawa are derived from the Sumatran characters. In *Ritumpanna Welenrenge Telaah Filologis Sebuah Episode Sastra Bugis Klasik Galigo*, it is stated that Ende and Bima used to have the characters which were similar to the Bugis characters, meaning that there had been a long and in-depth relationship among them (Ambo Enre, 1986: 177).

Jan Djou Gadi Ga'a investigated the Ende *lota* characters in 1959, 1978, and 1984. The results were in the form of two simple books entitled "Lota Huruf Ende" [the Lota Ende Characters] and "Belajar Membaca dan Menulis Selama 30 Jam" [Learning to Read and Write Within 30 Hours] (1991). In the first study, Jan Djou compared the table of the Ende characters prepared by S. Roos, Suchtelen, Siti Saleha, and Muhamad Pua Sembila to the table he made. From such a comparison, the Ende *lota* characters which were worth developing were determined. In the second study how to learn to read and write using the Ende characters was explained.

In 1993 the study which was intended to find out the Ende *lota* characters was comprehensively conducted by Maria Matildis. The secondary data used as the basis in this study were obtained from all the findings of the studies previously conducted, and the primary data were taken from the *lota* texts available in community.

The Ende manuscripts were transliterated using the Ende *lota* characters. Initially, the texts were written on what is called *wunu koli* (palm leaf). The Ende *lota* characters which have been inherited from generation to generation by the Ende ethnic group have not been written on *wunu koli* any longer; they have been written on paper. A text is hand written (Teew, 1986: 2) both original and copied (Sudjiman, 1986: 52). It contains the idea, feeling and knowledge of a state or a socio-cultural group which bears testimony to us through the language used (Ekadjati, 1988: 1).

Added together, twenty one *lota* manuscripts were found in 1993. What is meant by the *lota* text in the present study is paper whose contents are written using the *lota* characters and tell things related to kinship relation, marriage, letters addressed to children, circumcision, and earthquake.

The twenty one *lota* manuscripts were identified using the criteria proposed by Emuch Hermansoemantri (1986). Based on the condition of the Ende manuscripts, the title of every manuscript, where it was preserved, where it came from, how it was written, what it looked like, and what language was used are described as follows.

Titles of the Manuscripts

Several manuscripts found in Ende were without any titles. The titles were provided based on what they contain.

1. *Ana Eru Kombe* (Go to bed my child)

It is narrated that a mother is praying that her child would sleep comfortably without being disturbed by any bad spirit.

2. *Ata Tembo Tarho* (Being Powerless)

It is narrated that paying attention to kinship relation, parents, and relatives is important, and that without any relatives life will become lonely.

3. *Sura Pati Ali* (Letter Addressed to Child)

It is narrated that a letter is addressed to a child named Ali so that he will always remember and never forget his mother. The mother's prayers for children will be eternal.

4. *Napa Sura* (Waiting for News)

It is narrated that someone is waiting for a letter or news.

5. *Ana Jao* (My Child)

It contains an expression a mother who highly loves her child has in her heart. Her love is expressed through her prayers.

6. *Ine Dhadi* (A Mother Giving Birth to a Baby)

It contains the prayers of a mother who gives birth to a baby. Any child should never forget her mother who has given birth to her/him.

7. *Mesi Ebe Wee* (If Available Here)

It is narrated that a mother is highly longing for her child who lives so far from her.

8. *Ma'e Kerho jaji* (Keeping the Promise)

It contains how to do something quickly and on time. It is also reminded that any promise should always be kept so when the sun rises nothing will obstruct.

9. *Nara Ja'o Ali* (Ali My Brother)

It contains the advice addressed to Ali and his siblings that they should always be honest and feel guilty if taking others' belonging. The parent will feel unhappy and seriously sad when being informed that his/her child living far is not honest.

10. *Lota apu* (Earthquake)

It contains that how sad it is if earthquake occurs and leads to salvation and misery.

11. *Lota apu* (Earthquake)

It is narrated that how sad it will be if any earthquake destroys all the properties.

12. *Lota apu* (Earthquake)

It is narrated that the earthquake occurring in Flores Island on 12 December 1992 led to powerlessness and full submission to God, the Almighty.

13. *Bapa ata Dhadhi* (the Biological Father)

It contains that the parent, the biological father should be respected.

14. *Ada Suna* (Circumcision)

It contains the circumcision party; the condition of the family and the personal life of those who will be circumcised; the parent's hope that the ritual will go well.

15. *Ata Suna* (Circumcision)

It contains the circumcision party. It completely narrates the history of the child whom will be circumcised, what is hoped by the parent, and the support provided by the family.

16. *Lota Ine Rego Ata Kelo Mbe'o*

It contains what is advised to the child that he/she will never underrate his/her parent, leave his/her home area either to make his/her way in life or to study, be humble and respect those who are older than him/her.

17. *Dhoko Ata Fai* (Elopement)

It contains the love made by a couple of adolescents ending with elopement.

18. *Lota Ata Mata* (Death)

It contains a warning that when someone dies, what he/she will bring when he/she is buried is a piece of white cloth.

19. *Serha Ana* (Circumcision)

It contains the hope that all family members are happy and support those who will be circumcised.

20. *Serha Ana* (Circumcision)

It contains what is necessarily prepared for the ritual of circumcision.

21. The only manuscript which is completed with the title is *Ratu Jie No'o Ratu Re'e* which contains the people's stories of *Ratu Jie* and *Ratu Re'e*.

The Place Where the Texts Were Stored

The *lota* texts were found to spread in different places; however, the limited number of the texts shows that the *lota* characters have not been well developed. The owners stated that the texts were derived from Bugis. The palm leaf manuscripts which are still stored as heirloom, according to the owners, contain, among other things, genealogies.

It is not difficult to trace where the Ende paper manuscripts already collected came from. The owners are the writers of the manuscripts.

The Way of Writing the Manuscripts

Each manuscript is made up of two pages; the front and back pages. The Ende manuscript was written on one side instead of on the two sides of the page. The characters were written as follows: the text was written from the right to the left, parallel with the width of the text, line by line filling the length of the text. The way of writing the *lota* characters is the same as the way of writing the Latin characters; from the right to the left.

The layout of the writing space cannot be separated from the layout of the text; the text layout depends on the writing space. The manuscript space of the Ende *lota* is full with texts; neither left margin nor right margin.

The Text Form

The Ende text is in the form of poems referred to as *woi* or mourning poems. The text is written in the form of narrative prose.

All the manuscripts found in this field research are those in the form of *woi*. The only manuscript with the text in the form of prose is *Ratu Jie and Ratu Re'e*.

The Language of the Manuscript

The Ende language is spoken in Ende District, South Ende, and Nangapanda. Culture and language are so closely related that it is sometimes difficult for us to identify the relationship between them as they influence each other, fill up each other and go side by side (Sibarani, 1992: 101).

The Ende manuscript has cultural functions; it is used as a means of development, as a means of passing things on, and as an inventory of cultural characteristics. Understanding the Ende *lota* manuscript cannot be separated from discussing the Ende language used to write the Ende *lota* characters and the texts in the manuscript. The language used in the Ende *lota* manuscript is the Ende language, which is a language whose syllables always end with vowels.

III. LOTA CHARACTERS

Lota characters explored by S. Roos, the Bugis characters explored by Van Suchtelen, and the Ende characters investigated by Maria Matildis Banda which are used in the present study are presented as follows. Then, the Bugis characters are compared to the Ende characters. Where the Bugis characters are adapted to the Ende language forming the specific Ende characters are also presented.

The Ende *lota* characters taken from what was noted down by S. Roos (1871).

The Ende characters written by S. Roos in 1871 are as follows											
Latin	Lota	Latin	Lota	Latin	Lota	Latin	Lota	Latin	Lota	Latin	Lota
a	∨	fa	∨, G	sah	○	nde	∩x	ruh	≈	eh	∩x
ah	x	gar	∩	ta	∧	nge	∩∩	rge	∩∩	oh	x∩
ba	g	la	∩	wa	∩	ki	//	so	∩∩	ih	∩x
bah	∩	ma	∩	a	∩	ku	//	si		uh	x
mba	∩	na	∩	e	∩∩	mo	∩∩	su	!	dok	∩∩
sa		nya	∩	o	∩∩	no	∩∩	to	∩∩		
da	∩	pa	∩	i	∩	mi	∩	tu	∩		
dah	S, ∩	ra	∩	u	∩	pi	∩	we	∩∩		
ja	∩, ∩, ∩	rah	≈	jo	∩∩	re	∩∩	wi	∩		
nda	x	ga	∩, ∩	ji	∩	roh	∩∩	ah	x		

(Suchtelen, 1921: 227).

The Ende *lota* characters in accordance with Van Suchtelen (1921).

No	Voiceless Syllables	Characters with Vowels					Remarks
		a	i	U	e	o	
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	a	ᄁ	ᄂ	ᄃ	ᄄ	ᄅ	
2	b	ᄆ	ᄇ	ᄈ	ᄉ	ᄊ	
3	t	ᄋ	ᄌ	ᄍ	ᄎ	ᄏ	
4	j	ᄐ	ᄑ	ᄒ	ᄓ	ᄔ	
5	c	ᄕ	ᄖ	ᄗ	ᄘ	ᄙ	Not Ende language but foreign language
6	h	ᄚ	ᄛ	ᄜ	ᄝ	ᄞ	
7	d	ᄟ	ᄠ	ᄡ	ᄢ	ᄣ	
8	d	ᄤ	ᄥ	ᄦ	ᄧ	ᄨ	
9	r	ᄩ	ᄪ	ᄫ	ᄬ	ᄭ	
10	r	ᄮ	ᄯ	ᄰ	ᄱ	ᄲ	
11	s	ᄳ	ᄴ	ᄵ	ᄶ	ᄷ	
12	ghr	ᄸ	ᄹ	ᄺ	ᄻ	ᄼ	
13	ng	ᄽ	ᄾ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	
14	f	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	
15	p	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	
16	k	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	
17	g	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	
18	l	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	
19	m	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	ᄿ	

20	n	Λ	Λ̇	Λ̣	Λ̂	Λ̃	
21	w	Μ	Μ̇	Μ̣	Μ̂	Μ̃	
22	h	Μ̣	Μ̣̇	Μ̣̣	Μ̣̂	Μ̣̃	
23	y	٪	٪̇	٪̣	٪̂	٪̃	Not Ende language but foreign language
24	ny	Ϟ	Ϟ̇	Ϟ̣	Ϟ̂	Ϟ̃	Not Ende language but foreign language
25	bp	Λ̣	Λ̣̇	Λ̣̣	Λ̣̂	Λ̣̃	
26	mb	Μ̣	Μ̣̇	Μ̣̣	Μ̣̂	Μ̣̃	
27	ngg	Λ̣̣	Λ̣̣̇	Λ̣̣̣	Λ̣̣̂	Λ̣̣̃	
28	nd	Λ̣̣̣	Λ̣̣̣̇	Λ̣̣̣̣	Λ̣̣̣̂	Λ̣̣̣̃	

The Bugis Characters (Kridalaksana, 1993: XXIII)

No.	Latin Characters	Bugis Characters	No	Latin Characters	Bugis Characters
1	a		12	pa	
2	ba		13	ra	
3	ca		14	sa	
4	da		15	ta	
5	ga		16	wa	
6	ha		17	ya	
7	ja		18	mpa	
8	ka		19	nga	
9	la		20	ngka	
10	ma		21	nra	
11	na		22	nya	
			23	nyca	

The Ende *lota* characters (Maria Matildis Banda) (1993) and their comparison to the Bugis characters and Ende characters.

The Ende *lota* characters (Maria Matildis Banda) (1993)

No	Latin characters	lota characters	Example		
			Ende Language	lota characters	Indonesian Language
1	a	⌒	ana	⌒ ⌒	anak
2	ba	⌒	boti	⌒ ⌒	botol
3	bha	⌒	bharo	⌒ ⌒	tidak mau
4	da	∨	dari	∨ ⌒	berdiri
5	dha	∞	dhoko	∞ ⌒ ⌒	bawa
6	fa	∪	fai	∪ ∴	istri
7	ga	⌒	gibe	⌒ ⌒	buta
8	gha	3	mogha	∨ ⌒ 3	juga
9	ha	0	holo	0 ⌒ ⌒	kepala
10	ja	∩	ja'o	∩ ⌒ ⌒	saya
11	ka	∥, =	kerho	∥ ⌒ ⌒	lupa
12	la	⌒	lo'o	⌒ ⌒ ⌒	kecil
13	ma	∨	mere	∨ ⌒ ⌒	besar
14	mba	⌒	mbana	⌒ ⌒ ⌒	pergi
15	na	⌒	napa	⌒ ⌒	tunggu
16	nda	∞	ndia	∞ ∴	ini
17	nga	⌒	ngambe	⌒ ⌒	duduk
18	ngga	⌒	nggena	⌒ ⌒ ⌒	kena

19	pa	∩	paru	∩ ∩	lari
20	ra	∩	mbira	∩ ∩	sobek
21	rha	∩	rhatu	∩ ∩	ada
22	sa	∩, —	mesa	∩ ∩	sendiri
23	ta	∩	to'o	∩ ∩	bangun
24	wa	∩	warho	∩ ∩	pulang
	a	∩	ate	∩ ∩	hati
	i	∩	iru	∩ ∩	hidung
	u	∩	ura	∩ ∩	hujan
	e	∩	eru	∩ ∩	tidur
	o	∩	ote	∩ ∩	otak

The Comparison of the Ende Characters and Bugis Characters

No.	Latin Characters	Ende Characters	Bugis Characters	Remarks	No.	Latin Characters	Ende Characters	Bugis Characters	Remarks
1.	a			the same	16	mpa			
2.	ba				17	na			
3.	bha				18	nda			
4	ca				19	nga			
5	da				20	ngga			
6	dha				21	ngka			
7	fa				22	nra			
8	ga				23	nya			
9	gha				24	nyca			
10	ha				25	pa			the same
11	ja				26	ra			the same
12	ka				27	rha			
13	la				28	sa			
14	ma			the same	29	ta			the same
15	mba				30	wa			the same
					31	ya			

Notes:

1. The Bugis language has 23 forms of characters such as /a/, ba, ca, da, ga, ha, ja, ka, la, ma, na, pa, ra, sa, ta, wa, ya, mpa, nga, nra, nya, nyca.
2. The Ende language has 24 forms of characters such as /a/, ba, bha, da, dha, fa, ga, gha, ha, ja, ka, la, ma, mba, na, nda, ngga, pa, ra, rha, sa, taw a.
3. There are 10 similar characters. The *lota* characters are written using rigid lines, whereas the Bugis characters are written using bent lines. The ten similar characters are a, ba, ma, na, pa, ra, ta, wa, ya and ka.
4. There are 8 Bugis characters which are not included in the Ende *lota* characters. They are ca, nga, mpa, nra, nyca and nya.
5. The Bugis characters are part of the Ende culture. The adjusting process of characters is in line with the system of language and cultural environment.
6. The difference in forms of characters can be seen from the characters da, ga, ha, ja, la, sa, nga.
7. The form of the character ga in the Bugis language is almost the same as the character gha in the Ende language. The character gha is not listed in the Bugis characters.
8. The character ha is written as one circle in the Ende *lota* characters whereas in the Bugis characters it is written as two circles attached to each other.
9. In the Bugis characters, the sounds /i/, /u/, /e/, and /o/ are formed by adding a full stop above the character representing /i/, and below the character representing /u/, half opening bracket before the character representing /e/, and half closing bracket after the character representing /o/. In the Ende language, the same rules apply. All the characters are pronounced with the sound /a/. The sounds /i/, /u/, /e/, and /o/ are created by adding *iru nia ko lota* (the *lota* face), that is, *rateh*. The sound /i/ is created by adding a full stop on top; the *rawa* /u/ is created by adding a full stop at the bottom; the *rolo* /e/ is created using half opening bracket; the *rolo* /o/ is created using half closing bracket.

IV. THE CURRENT CONDITION OF THE ENDE CHARACTERS

In general, the Ende manuscript is used when the ritual of circumcision is performed. First, those who perform the ritual ask the writer and reader (read: someone who recites the poem) to write down the biography and the family situation of the boy who will be circumcised in the form of what is referred to as *woi* (the mourning narrative poem) containing the history of a natural disaster, environment, someone's life, or the relation to the Almighty). The *woi* is always written in the Ende *lota* characters. It is read before a Moslem ceremony is performed.

Second, the relatives who take part in making the ritual successful come to the house of the boy whom will be circumcised bringing rice, sugar and the other things needed for the ritual. Before what they bring is given, the *woi* is recited. It generally contains the information why the relatives come, why the two families are related, the prayers that the ritual will be well performed, and the sadness they have ever had. The *woi* is always recited in such a sad tone that those who listen to it will cry. When such a ritual is performed, not only one family comes with their *woi* but more than one. In this opportunity, the listeners may evaluate which *woi* and reader are the best. The best reader may raise his family in such a ritual and their socio cultural environment.

The *woi* manuscript they bring is usually rolled up and inserted in the beak of the bird made of woven palm leaves. The beak is made open so that the manuscript can be inserted in it. Such a bird is put on rice or another thing brought for the ritual. However, the number of such manuscripts was found to be too limited for several reasons.

Such a fact happened until the end of 1950s. Based on what was stated by Shoria and Musa Arif Abdullah, the manuscripts used in every ritual of circumcision were not necessarily documented. The ritual would be performed even if no manuscript was available. This fact shows that the tradition of the *lota* manuscript has not been developed in the socio-cultural activities of the Ende ethnic group.

Nowadays, the *woi* tradition in the ritual of circumcision and other rituals is still maintained. Those who can read the *woi* are referred to as *ata mbeo lota* (those who are able to read the *lota*).

The journalistic investigation conducted by Chairil Anwar and Samuel Oktora from Kompas (2007/2008) found that it was highly difficult to find the Ende people who could write the Ende *lota* characters. Apart from that, it was highly difficult to find someone who was able to recite the *woi* (mourning song?), of which the content used to be written using the *lota* characters. Fortunately, Mustofa, who came from Ende, was found to be able to do that. Along the south coastal area of Ende Regency he was popularly known as what is referred to as *ata mbe'o lota*. He could read the *lota* characters but he was not so good at writing.

On 29 December 2013 Fatima, who was 54 years old, coming from Brai village which is located along the coastal area, was found to be able to write and read the *lota* characters. No further information was obtained on the existence of the Ende *lota* characters and manuscripts used in the socio-cultural activities of the Ende community.

The local government of Ende in general and the related institutions in particular had not paid any attention to the existence of the Ende characters and manuscripts since Jan Djou Gadiga'a was retired (1991). It can be stated that now the *lota* Ende characters and manuscripts are 'getting extinct' if not 'having been extinct'.

V. CLOSING

Attempts should be made to save and strengthen the revitalization and the system of bequeathing the Ende *lota* characters and manuscripts, which may feature and enrich the treasure of Ende culture. They may be "revitalized" to be one of the subjects which may meaningfully contribute to the development of the human resources of the Ende ethnic community.

Through this seminar, it is hoped that the tradition of making use of the Ende characters may be learned in order to obtain the knowledge of the culture during which they were used, although partial and not complete (Syakir, 1985: 88). Such an attempt can be made through philological studies in which the old manuscripts are paid attention to (Djamaris, 1977: 21; Robson, 1978: 18; Ikram, 1980: 1; Saidi, 1981: 2; Sudjiman, 1984: 29; Baried, 1985: 3; Teeuw, 1986: 2).

From what was explained above, it is highlighted that the existence of the Ende *lota* characters and manuscripts in Ende should be maintained by intensifying the use of the Ende manuscripts, developing the written tradition, and preserving the *lota* characters.

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