

# Phonological Variation in Lele (lle), a language of Manus Province

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# Previous Work on Lele

- ▶ A comprehensive linguistic study on Lele is seen in a PhD Study, by Juliane Boettger titled: Topics in the Grammar of Lele. (Boettger 2015)
- ▶ Other efforts at language documentation are translations of the Bible and publications of Hymns in Lele by the Liebenzell Missionaries.

# Motivations for Study

- ▶ On the dialect variations that exist in Lele, there have been no publications to date.
- ▶ Researcher is of Lele heritage (Ndranou-Yiringou) with an interest to work towards language documentation efforts in the community

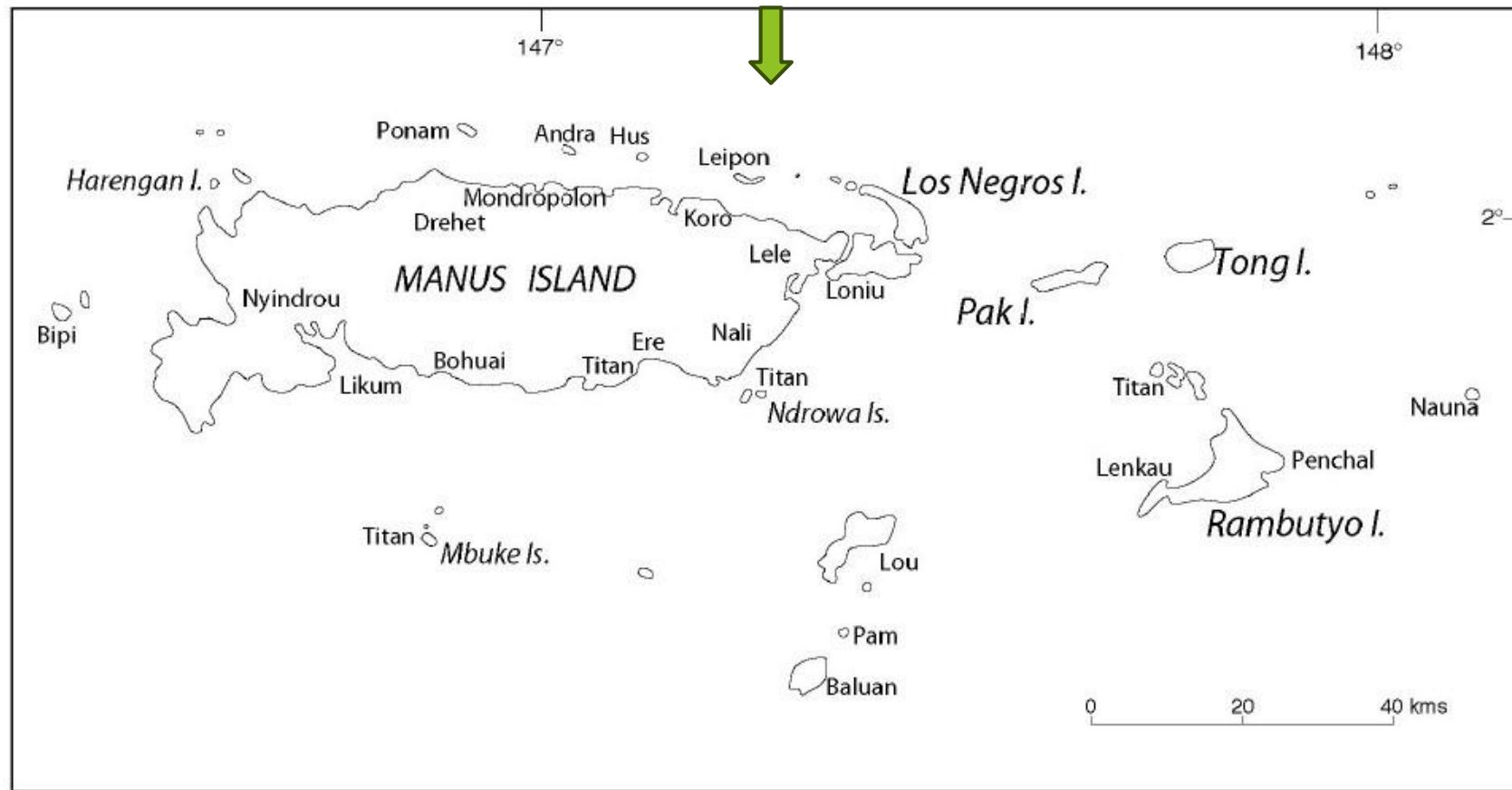
# Aim of Study and Presentation

- ▶ This is a work in progress for an overall research into the dialects of Lele.
- ▶ For this seminar, I present a work in progress focusing on phonological variation in Lele.
- ▶ The aim of this presentation is to present 2 phonological variables in Lele, the phonemes /l/ and /r/, present their reflexes across Lele dialects, the conditioning environments for their shifts and exceptions.

# Background (Classification)

- ▶ Austronesian
  - ▶ Malayo Polynesian
    - ▶ Oceanic
      - ▶ Admiralty Islands Higher Order Subgroup
        - ▶ Eastern Admiralties
          - ▶ Manus subgroup
            - ▶ Lele

# Background (Location)



# Background (Speakers, Status)

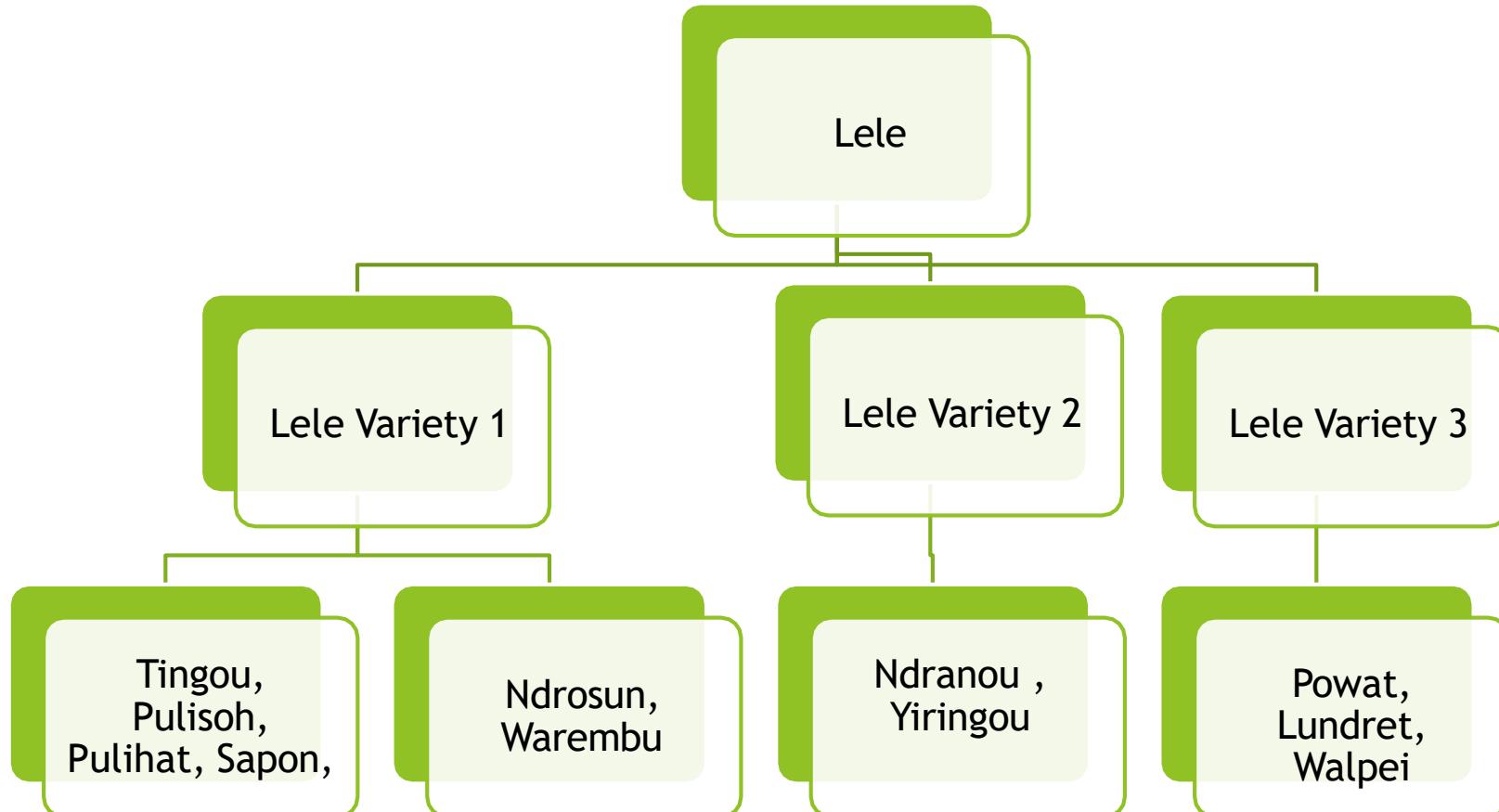
- ▶ No. of Speakers:
  - ▶ Approximately 4000
- ▶ Language code:
  - ▶ 'lle'
- ▶ Status:
  - ▶ Endangered language
  - ▶ Used as first language by all adults in ethnic community but not all young people.

(Source: Ethnologue of World's Languages)

# Mini Dialect Survey Workshop (Data elicitation)

- ▶ 14 participants (30 - 70 years)
- ▶ Lele Dialect Map - Perceptual Dialectology - Mapping Exercise (3 hours)
- ▶ Lele Comparative Word List - Word Collection Task - Modified Swadesh List (Blust)- 208 words (20 hours)
- ▶ Audio recordings of Lele Discourse - (Android Phone Recorder)- Traditional Legends, Myths, Migration Stories, Traditional Belief systems (Death) (8 hours)

# Dialect Mapping





**Mini Lele Dialect Survey**  
4 Day Workshop: 3rd - 6th January 2024  
14 Participants, representing 7 Lele speaking villages



- Participants worked in 3 groups, representing the Lele varieties.
- Each group presented their dialect maps on Day 1 Session 2.
- Each group spent at least 5 hours per day working on 7 word lists and confirming words with facilitator before recording sessions.

# Consonant Phonemes (Boettger 2015)

	Bilabial	Apico-alveolar	Lamino-palatal	Dorso-velar	Glottal
Plosives	p	t		k	
-Prenasalised p		nd			
-Prenasalised Mß		ndr			
P with trilled release					
-Labialised P	p <sup>w</sup>			k <sup>w</sup>	
Nasals	m	n		ŋ	
-Labialized N	m <sup>w</sup>				
Trill		r			
Fricative		s			h
Approximant			j	w	
Lateral		l			
Approximant					

# Consonant Phonemes with Variations

	Bilabial	Apico-alveolar	Lamino-palatal	Dorso-velar	glottal
Plosives	p	t		k/n	
-Prenasalised p		nd/n			
-Prenasalised P with trilled release	mb	ndr			
-Labialised P	p <sup>w</sup>			k <sup>w</sup>	
Nasals	m	n		ŋ	
-labalised N	m <sup>w</sup>				
Trill		r/l			
Fricative		s			h
Approximant			j	w	
Lateral Approximan t		l / j (y) / i			

## 4.2.2 Vowel Phonemes (Boettger 2015)

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

# Vowel Phonemes with variations

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u/ <b>ou</b>
Mid	e/i		o/ <b>i/ e/</b>
Low		a/l	

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

- ▶ According to Boetgger, in Lele (Variety 1), Liquids comprise the apico-alveolar lateral approximant 'l' and the apico-alveolar trill 'r'. Both sounds may occur in all positions in words.
- ▶ From the Lele Mini Dialect Survey, there occurs a sound shift for both phonemes observed across Varieties 2 and 3 in Lele.

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

- ▶ Based on the Lele Comparative Word List obtained during the Lele Mini Dialect Survey, the following are findings and discussions relating to the phonological variation of
- ▶ 1) the apico alveoloar lateral approximant /l/ and
- ▶ 2) the apico alveolar trill /r/

# Phoneme /l/ - Palatalisation

- (1) In word initial positions, preceding any vowel

$/l/ \rightarrow [j] / \# \_ V$

Found in 8 out of 208 words in Lele comparative list in word initial positions

Number	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	11	Tooth	lehen	yehen	yehen
2 .	48	Grass	lumndriu	yimndriu	yimdriu
3.	56	Housefly	lekmat	yikmat	yukumat
4.	76	Sky	lang	yang	yang

# Phoneme /l/ - Palatalisation

(2) In word medial positions, intervocally

/l/ → [j] / V\_\_V

Number	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	185	fall	ilos	iyos	lyos
2 .	201	Three	-toloh	-toyoh	-tiyoh
3.	32	(his/her) spouse	nambrulu-n	nambruyu-n	nawe-n

# Phoneme /l/ - Palatalisation

(3) In word medial positions, before nasals, often with vowel epenthesis.

/l/ → [j] / V \_\_ n

No.	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	7	(his/her) head	pal-n	paiya-n	paiyi-n
2 .	13	(his/her) throat	perkol-n	perkoyo-n	perkoyi-n
3.	139	many	soln	soyon	soyun

# Phoneme /l/ - Palatalisation

(4) In certain lexical items, in word medial positions, with vowel-glide coalescence.

/l/ → e+j → ei

No.	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	49	egg	neltun	neitun	Neitun

# Phoneme /l/ - Vocalisation

(5) Word finally, /l/ vocalizes to l, perhaps also through a process of vowel coalescence.

► /l/ → [i] / \_\_ #

No.	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	33	man	kaml	kamai	kami
2 .	40	Road/path	sal	saii	saii
3.	135	hungry	mundrul	mundrui	mundrui
4.	149	He/she laughs	ihel	ihei	Ihei

# Phoneme /r/ - Lateralisation

- (1)  $r \rightarrow l / \# \underline{\phantom{a}}$
- (2)  $r \rightarrow l / \underline{\phantom{a}} \#$
- (3)  $r \rightarrow l / V \underline{\phantom{a}} V$

No.	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	81	Day	rang	Lang	Lang
2.	99	Black	ruktañ	luktañ	luktañ
3.	101	red	ramn	laman	lamin
4.	153	vomit	romut	lumut	lumut

No.	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	68	Earth	kor	kol	kol
2 .	160	Sleep	metir	metil	metil

No.	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	85	moon	warah	walah	Walah
2 .	100	white	peren	pelen	Pelen
3.	119	short	murai	molai	Molai
4.	189	grow	hirek	ilek	Hilek

# Phoneme /r/ - Epenthesis and Lateralisation

- ▶ 4) In rC clusters, an epenthetic vowel is added leading to a VrV sequence.
- ▶ This results again in intervocalic lateralization as described previously.

No.	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	91	(his/ her) name	ŋarn	ŋalan	Dalin
2 .	111	rotten	pwarn	pwalan	pwalin

# Phoneme /r/ - Preservation

- ▶ 5) The phoneme /r/ is seen to be retained in rC clusters

No.	Wordlist No.	English Gloss	Variety 1	Variety 2	Variety 3
1.	8	eye	marn	maran	marin
2 .	13	throat	perkолн	perkoyon	perkoyun
3.	57	bird	ndorkan	nurkan	Nurkan

- ▶ Across the 3 Lele Varieties, it is observed that Variety 1 speakers retain the /l/ phoneme whilst Varieties 2 and 3 show systematic change of /l/ to [j] in specific phonological environments, plus a separate final vocalisation process.

- ▶ Varieties 2-3 of Lele show lateralization of /r/ to [l] word-initially and word-finally, and strong—though not universal—intervocalic lateralization.
- ▶ There are also a great deal of retention of /r/ in words, which seem to be used more frequently.

# Conclusion

- ▶ As this is still a work in progress, there is more work yet to be completed in the area of phonological variation in Lele.
- ▶ More emphasis on vowel length, and stress will be included in further transcribing data for analysis of conditioning environments.
- ▶ The other phoneme consonants and vowels displaying variation will be discussed next in this research.

► *Thank you for your kind attention!*