

Sung Tales from the  
Papua New Guinea Highlands  
*Studies in Form, Meaning, and Sociocultural Context*

**Edited by Alan Rumsey & Don Niles**



# Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands

*Studies in Form, Meaning, and Sociocultural Context*

**Edited by Alan Rumsey & Don Niles**



---

E P R E S S



E P R E S S

Published by ANU E Press  
The Australian National University  
Canberra ACT 0200, Australia  
Email: [anuepress@anu.edu.au](mailto:anuepress@anu.edu.au)  
This title is also available online at: <http://epress.anu.edu.au>

---

National Library of Australian Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Title: Sung tales from the Papua New Guinea highlands : studies in form, meaning, and sociocultural context / edited by Alan Rumsey & Don Niles.

ISBN: 9781921862205 (pbk.) 9781921862212 (ebook)

Notes: Includes index.

Subjects: Epic poetry.  
Ethnomusicology--Papua New Guinea.  
Folk music--Papua New Guinea.  
Papua New Guinea--Songs and music.

Other Authors/Contributors: Rumsey, Alan.  
Niles, Don.

Dewey Number: 781.629912

---

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Cover design and layout by ANU E Press

Cover image: Peter Kerua (centre) performs a *tom yaya kange* sung tale for Thomas Noma (left) and John Onga (right) at Kailge, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea, March 1997. From a Hi8 video recorded by Alan Rumsey. A segment of the video is included among the online items accompanying this volume. The *tom yaya kange* genre and a particularly beautiful passage of it from a performance by Kerua are discussed by Rumsey in chapter 11; aspects of Kerua's performance style are discussed by Don Niles in chapter 12.

Printed by Griffin Press

This edition © 2011 ANU E Press

# Contents

Dedication . . . . .	vii
Contributors . . . . .	ix
Acknowledgements . . . . .	xiii
List of online items . . . . .	xv
1. Introducing Highlands Sung Tales . . . . .	1
<i>Don Niles and Alan Rumsey</i>	
2. Yuna <i>Pikono</i> . . . . .	39
<i>Kenny Yuwi Kendoli</i>	
3. Music and Language in Duna <i>Pikono</i> . . . . .	49
<i>Kirsty Gillespie and Lila San Roque</i>	
4. Parallelism in Duna <i>Pikono</i> . . . . .	65
<i>Michael Sollis</i>	
5. Sung Tales in Héla Húli . . . . .	75
<i>Gabe C. J. Lomas</i>	
6. An Ethnomusicological Discussion of <i>Bì Té</i> , the Chanted Tales of the Huli . . .	109
<i>Jacqueline Pugh-Kitingan</i>	
7. Enga <i>Tindi Pii</i> : The Real World and Creative Imagination . . . . .	151
<i>Philip Gibbs</i>	
8. Parallelism and Poetics in <i>Tindi</i> Narratives Sung in the Ipili Language. . . .	165
<i>Terrance Borchard and Philip Gibbs</i>	
9. The Structure of Chanted Ipili <i>Tindi</i> . . . . .	197
<i>Frances Ingemann</i>	
10. Skywalkers and Cannibals: Chanted Tales among the Angal. . . . .	207
<i>Hans Reithofer</i>	
11. Style, Plot, and Character in <i>Tom Yaya</i> Tales from Ku Waru . . . . .	247
<i>Alan Rumsey</i>	

Sung Tales from the Papua New Guinea Highlands

12. Metric Melodies and the Performance of Sung Tales in the Hagen Area . . . . .275

*Don Niles*

13. Bamboo Knives, Bows, and Waterfalls: The Presentation of  
“Traditional Knowledge” in Melpa *Kang Rom*, Duna *Pikono*,  
and the Works of Hesiod and Virgil . . . . .303

*Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart*

Index . . . . .317