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Suti Solo do Bina Bane: Version II from the Domain of Termanu

Introducing the Second Text: *Suti Solo do Bina Bane II*

The second version in this successive investigation of the chant *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* was recited by the poet Eli Pellondou of clan Dou Danga, who was more commonly known by the name Seu Ba'i. In 1966, when I recorded this composition, Seu Ba'i was in his late 40s. He lived in the settlement of Namu Dale, not far from Old Meno's residence in Ola Lain, and I would often meet him at Old Meno's house, where he, too, was learning from the old man. Seu Ba'i belonged to a cluster of individuals in Namu Dale—including two of his younger cousins—who had obtained their earliest knowledge from senior clan relatives, but during the time of my first fieldwork, Seu Ba'i was involved in extending his knowledge by associating with Old Meno.



Figure 6: Eli Pellondou – ‘Seu Ba’i’

Not surprisingly, Seu Ba'i's version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* shows a clear relationship to Old Meno's version. Its narrative, however, is not as well structured as Old Meno's and it is shorter by one-third. Similarly, the names of the chant characters in Seu Ba'i's version are virtually the names in Old Meno's version, with only minor differences. Where Old Meno speaks of Kokolo Dulu//Manupui Peda, Seu Ba'i refers to this character as Boko Dulu//Manupui Peda. But the chant assumes knowledge of the relationships among these characters rather than making them explicit. Unlike Old Meno, who begins with a genealogical introduction, Seu Ba'i begins with the attempt to celebrate the origin feast that requires the woman Nggiti Seti//Peda Hange to prepare her scoop-net and go to fish in the receding tide.

The Origin Feast and the Preparation of the Fishing Net

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| 1. | <i>Boko Dulu hun-na</i> | Boko Dulu's origin feast |
| 2. | <i>Ma Manupui Peda sio-na.</i> | And Manupui Peda's feast of nine. |
| 3. | <i>Hus-sa ta laka-se</i> | The origin feast is not lively |
| 4. | <i>Ma lutu ta laka-doto.</i> | And the ringed stones do not resound. |
| 5. | <i>Boe te ala kedi-la mau-don-na</i> | So they cut a <i>mau</i> plant's leaves |
| 6. | <i>Ma ala pena-la pole-aban-na</i> | And they pluck a <i>pole</i> plant's cotton tufts |
| 7. | <i>Pole masa-fali pena</i> | A <i>pole</i> with repeated cotton bolls |
| 8. | <i>Mau ma-na'a do-na.</i> | A <i>mau</i> with a mouthful of leaves. |
| 9. | <i>Ala teli kokolo ndai</i> | They string and wind a fishnet |
| 10. | <i>Ma ala ane balu-bui seko la</i> | And they braid and twine scoop-nets |
| 11. | <i>Seko ma-tei besik</i> | A scoop-net with iron-weighted insides |
| 12. | <i>Ma ndai ma-hamu lilok.</i> | And a fishnet with a gold-weighted belly. |
| 13. | <i>Boe te ala fe inak-ka Pedu
Hange</i> | They give it to the woman Pedu Hange |
| 14. | <i>Ma fetok-ka Nggiti Seti.</i> | And the girl Nggiti Seti. |
| 15. | <i>Ana tenga-nala ndai tasi</i> | She takes up the fishnet for the sea |
| 16. | <i>Ma ana nggama-nala
seko meti.</i> | And she picks up the scoop-net for the tide. |

The next passage describes Pedu Hange//Nggiti Seti's encounter with Suti Solo do Bina Bane as she searches for the ritual fish Tio Holu//Dusu La'e. The chant makes clear that this occurs at the ritually important site Tena Lai//Mae Oe.

The Quest for the Ritual Fish at Tena Lai ma Mae Oe

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| 17. | <i>De siluk bei ta dulu</i> | Morning is not yet in the east |
| 18. | <i>Ma hu'ak bei ta langa.</i> | And dawn is not yet at the head. |
| 19. | <i>Tē ana tenga-nala ndai tasi</i> | But she takes up the fishnet for the sea |
| 20. | <i>Ma ana nggama-nala seko meti.</i> | And she picks up the scoop-net for the tide. |
| 21. | <i>De neu nafa-loe dea eik</i> | She goes to probe in the 'legs' of the stone weir |
| 22. | <i>Ma neu nafa-nggao lutu limak</i> | And goes to grope in the 'arms' of the fish catch |
| 23. | <i>Fo Tena Lai Laok dean</i> | Tena Lai Laok's stone weir |
| 24. | <i>Ma Mae Oe Loek lutun,</i> | And Mae Oe Loek's fish wall, |
| 25. | <i>Neu seko sanga Tio peda-poik</i> | Goes to scoop for a Tio to place on top |
| 26. | <i>Ma neu ndai sanga Dusu fua-bafak.</i> | And goes to fish for a Dusu for the basket's mouth. |
| 27. | <i>Fo Dusu La'e ma Tio Holu</i> | A Dusu La'e and a Tio Holu |
| 28. | <i>Tao neu peda-poik</i> | To place on top of the rice |
| 29. | <i>Ma tao neu fua-bafak.</i> | And to lay on the basket's mouth. |
| 30. | <i>Fo hus-sala laka-se</i> | So that the origin feast can be made lively |
| 31. | <i>Ma sio-la laka-doto.</i> | And the feast of nine can be made noisy. |
| 32. | <i>Seko basa-lek-kala</i> | She scoops in all the waterholes |
| 33. | <i>Ma ndai basa lifu-la</i> | And she fishes in all the pools |
| 34. | <i>Tē ta ndai nita Tio</i> | But she does not fish or see a Tio |
| 35. | <i>Ma ta seko nita Dusu fa.</i> | And does not scoop or see a Dusu. |
| 36. | <i>Ndai nita kada Suti Solo</i> | She fishes but sees only Suti Solo |
| 37. | <i>Ma seko nita kada Bina Bane.</i> | And she scoops but sees only Bina Bane. |

A Genealogy of Suti Solo do Bina Bane

It is at this point that Seu Ba'i provides a short genealogical introduction to identify Suti//Bina.

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| 38. | <i>Solo Bane sain anan</i> | The child of Solo Bane of the sea |
| 39. | <i>Ma Bane Aka liun anan.</i> | And the child of Bane Aka of the ocean. |
| 40. | <i>Inak-ka Manu Koa Lasi</i> | The woman Manu Koa of the forest |
| 41. | <i>Fetok-ka Hali Siko Nula</i> | And the girl Hali Siko of the wood |
| 42. | <i>Ana tu Solo Bane sain</i> | She marries Solo Bane of the sea |
| 43. | <i>Ma sao Bane Aka liun.</i> | And she weds Bane Aka of the ocean. |
| 44. | <i>De lae Bina Bane</i> | She brings forth Bina Bane |
| 45. | <i>Ma bongi Suti Solo.</i> | And she gives birth to Suti Solo. |

Seu Ba'i reverts to recounting Nggiti Seti//Pedu Hange's fishing efforts.

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| 46. | <i>Seko basa lek-kala</i> | She scoops in all the waterholes |
| 47. | <i>Ma ndai basa lifu-la</i> | And she fishes in all the pools |
| 48. | <i>Te seko toko heni Bina</i> | But she fishes and throws Bina away |
| 49. | <i>Ma ndai ndano heni Suti.</i> | And she scoops and tosses Suti away. |

The Dialogue with the Shells

Suti Solo do Bina Bane addresses Nggiti Seti//Pedu Hange and asks to be taken home and to be used as the ritual substitute for the Tio Holu//Dusu La'e fish.

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| 50. | <i>Boe te Suti neu dede'ak</i> | So Suti begins to speak |
| 51. | <i>Ma Bina neu kokolak, nae:</i> | And Bina begins to talk, saying: |
| 52. | <i>'Ndai ndano mala au</i> | 'Fish catch and take me |
| 53. | <i>Ma seko toko mala au</i> | Scoop throw and take me |
| 54. | <i>Tao neu peda-poik</i> | To place on top of the rice |
| 55. | <i>Ma tao neu fua-bafak</i> | And to lay on the basket's mouth |
| 56. | <i>Fo hus-sala laka-se</i> | So that the origin feast can be made lively |
| 57. | <i>Ma sio-la laka doto.'</i> | And the feast of nine can be made noisy.' |

The Shells Call for Lole Holu//Lua Bafa

As soon as Suti//Bina are taken up into the house, the shells begin to cry and ask for Lole Holu//Lua Bafa. In this version of the chant, however, Lole Holu//Lua Bafa is not given any formal genealogical introduction.

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| 58. | <i>Boe-ma lo Suti mai uma</i> | So they bring Suti home |
| 59. | <i>Fo mai lao dale</i> | To the inner cooking fire |
| 60. | <i>Ma lo Bina mai uma lai.</i> | And they bring Bina to the upper house. |
| 61. | <i>Boe te Suti neu nama-tani</i> | But Suti begins to cry |
| 62. | <i>Ma Bina neu nasa-keđu</i> | And Bina begins to sob |
| 63. | <i>Nasa-keđu Lole Holu</i> | Sobs for Lole Holu |
| 64. | <i>Ma nama-tani Lua Bafa.</i> | And cries for Lua Bafa. |

It is at this point that the dialogue begins between Nggiti Seti//Pedu Hange and Suti//Bina as to where the shells should best be located in their quest for companionship. Lole Holu//Lua Bafa is invoked as the ideal companion. The first dialogue stanza is similar to that of Old Meno's version, although it lacks one parallel line.

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| 65. | <i>Boe te ana dede'ak no Suti</i> | So she speaks with Suti |
| 66. | <i>Ma ana kokolak no Bina, lae:</i> | And she talks with Bina, saying: |
| 67. | <i>'Mo tua bou</i> | 'Go with the syrup vat |
| 68. | <i>Ma mo neka hade</i> | And go with the rice basket |
| 69. | <i>Fo masa-lai tua bou.'</i> | That you may lean on the syrup vat.' |
| 70. | <i>[Line missing]</i> | [And that you may sit with rice basket]. |
| 71. | <i>Boe te Bina neu kokolak</i> | But Bina begins to talk |
| 72. | <i>Ma Suti neu dede'ak, nae:</i> | And Suti begins to speak, saying: |
| 73. | <i>'Au u o tua bou</i> | 'I will go with the syrup vat |
| 74. | <i>Ma au o neka hade.</i> | And I go with the rice basket. |
| 75. | <i>De malole ndia so</i> | This is good |
| 76. | <i>Do mandak ndia so.</i> | Or this is proper. |
| 77. | <i>Te neka lama-kako bafa</i> | But if the baskets overflow at the mouth |
| 78. | <i>Fo soka lo lulunun</i> | So that the sacks must be rolled up |
| 79. | <i>Ma tua lama-lua fude</i> | And the syrup runs over with froth |
| 80. | <i>Fo bou lo totonon,</i> | So that the vats must be overturned, |
| 81. | <i>Au dede'ak o se</i> | With whom will I speak |

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82. *Ma au kokolak o se* And with whom will I talk
 83. *Sama leo Lua Bafa* [With someone] just like Lua Bafa
 84. *Ma deta leo Lole Holu?* And exactly like Lole Holu?’

For the study of oral composition, the next passage, which conflates two consecutive dialogue stanzas, is particularly revealing. The stanza that refers to ‘boundary tree and border stone’ and that which refers to ‘pig chews and monkey plucks’ are combined in a way that does not make much sense. However, the knowledge that Seu Ba’i was trying to model this version on Old Meno’s version allows one to recognise the conflation that has occurred. These flaws provide insight into a poet’s approach to composition.

85. *Boe te dede’ak no Suti bai* But she speaks with Suti again
 86. *Ma kokolak no Bina bai, lae:* And she talks with Bina again, saying:
 87. *‘Mu mo peu ai lasi* ‘Go with boundary tree of the forest
 88. *Ma mu mo to batu nula.’* And go with border stone of the wood.’
 89. *Boe te Bina, ana kokolak* But Bina, he talks
 90. *Ma Suti, ana dede’ak, nae:* And Suti, he speaks, saying:
 91. *‘Malole ndia so* ‘This is good
 92. *Ma mandak ndia so.* And this is proper.
 93. *Au o peu ai lasi* I will be with boundary tree of the forest
 94. *Ma au o to batu nula* And I will be with border stone of the wood
 95. *Tē bafi ka’a neni pelak* But if the pig chews the maize
 96. *Au dede’ak o se* With whom will I speak
 97. *Ma kode ketu neni betek* And if monkey plucks the millet
 98. *Au kokolak o se* With whom will I talk
 99. *Do se’ek o se* Or be noisy with whom
 100. *Ma oku-boluk o se* And shout with whom
 101. *Sama leo Lua Bafa* [With someone] just like Lua Bafa
 102. *Ma deta leo Lole Holu?’* And exactly like Lole Holu?’

Seu Ba'i follows this passage with another that introduces a set stanza of dialogue that does not occur in Old Meno's chant but does often occur in other versions. Thus Seu Ba'i's recitation is not simply an attempt at replication but rather one that combines Seu Ba'i's previous knowledge with what he has derived from Old Meno.

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| 103. | <i>Boe te ala dede'ak lo Suti</i> | So they speak with Suti |
| 104. | <i>Ma ala kokolak lo Bina, lae:</i> | And they talk with Bina, saying: |
| 105. | <i>'Mu mo pila kumea letek</i> | 'Go with the red <i>kumea</i> grass on the hill |
| 106. | <i>Ma mu mo nggeo kuku telas.'</i> | And go with the black <i>kuku</i> shrub in the underbrush.' |
| 107. | <i>Boe te Suti lolé halan-na neu</i> | But Suti lifts his voice |
| 108. | <i>Ma Bina ae dasin-na neu
ma nae:</i> | And Bina raises his speech and says: |
| 109. | <i>'Au o pila kumea letek</i> | 'I will go with the red <i>kumea</i> grass on the hill |
| 110. | <i>Ma au o nggeo kuku telas.</i> | And I go with the black <i>kuku</i> shrub in the underbrush. |
| 111. | <i>Malole ndia so</i> | This is good |
| 112. | <i>Ma mandak ndia so.'</i> | And this is proper.' |
| 113. | <i>Boe te ala dede'ak lo Suti ma
lae:</i> | But they speak with Suti and say: |
| 114. | <i>'Mu mo pila kumea letek</i> | 'Go with red <i>kumea</i> grass on the hill |
| 115. | <i>Ma mu mo nggeo kuku telas.'</i> | And go with black <i>kuku</i> shrub in the underbrush.' |
| 116. | <i>Boe te Suti lolé halan-na neu</i> | But Suti lifts his voice |
| 117. | <i>Ma Bina ae dasin-na neu:</i> | And Bina raises his speech: |
| 118. | <i>'Au o pila kumea letek</i> | 'I will be with red <i>kumea</i> grass on the hill |
| 119. | <i>Ma au o nggeo kuku telas.</i> | And I will be with black <i>kuku</i> grass in the underbrush |
| 120. | <i>De malole a so</i> | It is good |
| 121. | <i>Ma mandak a so.</i> | And it is proper. |
| 122. | <i>Te timu lama-tua dulu</i> | But when the east monsoon grows great in the east |
| 123. | <i>Ma fak lama-nalu langa</i> | And the west monsoon lengthens at the head |
| 124. | <i>Fo pila kumea letek-kala</i> | The red <i>kumea</i> grass on the hill |

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125. *Lama-dilu leu kalen* Bends down its heavy top
 126. *Ma nggeo kuku telas* And the black *kuku* shrub in the underbrush
 127. *Lama-sesu leu bu'un-na* Breaks its heavy joints
 128. *Au dede'ak o se* Then with whom will I speak
 129. *Ma au kokolak o se* And with whom will I talk
 130. *Sama leo Lua Bafa* [With someone] just like Lua Bafa
 131. *Ma deta leo Lole Holu?'* And exactly like Lole Holu?'

The final segment of dialogue is again similar to that in Old Meno's version. In this stanza, Nggiti Seti//Pedu Hange advises the shells to follow 'the current through the river' and 'the rain through the forest' to return to the sea.

132. *Boe te ala dede'ak seluk lo Suti* So they speak once more with Suti
 133. *Ma kokolak seluk lo Bina, lae:* And they talk once more with Bina, saying:
 134. *'Mu mo doa lasi* 'Go with the forest cuckoo
 135. *Ma mu mo koloba'o le* And go with the river watercock
 136. *Fo ba'o-ba'o tunga le* To [cry] *ba'o-ba'o* along the river
 137. *Ma do-do tunga tunga lasi* And *do-do* through the forest
 138. *Fo udan tunga-tunga lasi* So when the rain passes through the forest
 139. *Ma fa tunga-tunga le* And the current passes down the river
 140. *Bonu boa fo mu* Then bobbing like *boa* wood, you may go
 141. *Ma ele piko fo mu.* And drifting like *piko* wood, you may go.
 142. *Leo sain mu* To the sea you may go
 143. *Ma leo liun mu.'* And to the ocean you may go.'
 144. *Boe te Suti neu dedeak* But Suti begins to speak
 145. *Ma Bina neu kokolak, nae:* And Bina begins to talk, saying:
 146. *'Malole ndia so* 'This is good
 147. *Ma mandak ndia so.* And this is proper.
 148. *Au bonu boa fo au u* I will bob like *boa* wood and go
 149. *Ma au ele piko fo u.'* And I will drift like *piko* wood and go.'
 150. *Boe te nae:* But she says:
 151. *'Mu le bibifan* 'Go to the lip of the river

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| 152. | <i>Ma mu oli tatain</i> | And go to the edge of the estuary |
| 153. | <i>Nene-fino mu ndia</i> | Go to stop and listen there |
| 154. | <i>Ma dei-dongo mu ndia.</i> | And go to stand and wait there. |
| 155. | <i>Udan tunga-tunga lasi</i> | The rain passes through the forest |
| 156. | <i>Ma fa tunga-tunga le</i> | And the current passes down the river |
| 157. | <i>Fo bonu boa fo mu</i> | Then bobbing like <i>boa</i> wood, you may go |
| 158. | <i>Ele piko fo mu.'</i> | And drifting like <i>piko</i> wood, you may go.' |

The Shells' Return to the Sea

Suti Solo do Bina Bane follows this advice and returns to the sea. It is only at this point in this recitation that Seu Ba'i proceeds to tell of the origin feast in the sea's depths and the shaming of the two shells that occurs when Mouldy Pau Trees//Withered Kai Leaves attempts to dance beside Suti Solo do Bina Bane as 'wife and spouse'. The Heavens grow angry and, as a result, the shells exude their insides, thus becoming the empty creatures that are found on the beaches and tidal flats of Rote. Seu Ba'i ends his recitation with a common formula that emphasises that what he has recounted has consequences 'to this day and until this time'.

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| 159. | <i>Boe te sama leo halak</i> | So precisely according to the voice |
| 160. | <i>Boe ma deta leo dasik</i> | And exactly according to the speech |
| 161. | <i>Boe nene-fino neu ndia</i> | He stops and listens there |
| 162. | <i>Ma dei-dongo mu ndia</i> | And he stands and waits there |
| 163. | <i>Neu oli tatain</i> | Goes to the estuary's edge |
| 164. | <i>Ma neu le bibifan.</i> | And goes to the river's lip. |
| 165. | <i>Fa oek lali namo</i> | The current's water moves harbour |
| 166. | <i>Ma uda hedu(?) tunga le</i> | And rain's flow(?) follows the river |
| 167. | <i>Ma bonu boa de neu</i> | And bobbing like <i>boa</i> wood, he goes |
| 168. | <i>Ma ele piko de neu</i> | And drifting like <i>piko</i> wood, he goes |
| 169. | <i>Neu Liun dale na-taladan</i> | Goes to the bounded ocean [depths] |
| 170. | <i>Neu Sain dale naka-ton.</i> | And goes to the bordered sea [depths]. |
| 171. | <i>Boe neu tongo lololo</i> | Then he encounters with arms |
| 172. | <i>Ma neu nda lilima</i> | And he meets with hands |
| 173. | <i>Mila-Ana Daik labun</i> | Mila Ana Daik's drum |
| 174. | <i>Ma O-Ana Selan mekon-na.</i> | And O Ana Selan's gong. |

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175. *Ala delu laka-ndu'un hu na* They strike a steady beat at the origin feast
176. *Ala sali laka-sasaän [sio-na].* And they beat a continuing flurry [at the feast of nine].
177. *Boe te ala fe Bina neu pela* Then they make Bina dance
178. *Ma ala fe Suti neu sodok.* And they make Suti sing.
179. *De Suti ta sodok nalelak* But Suti knows not how to sing
180. *Ma Bina ta longe nalelak.* And Bina knows not how to dance the *ronggeng*.
181. *Boe te Ina Po'o Pau Ai lasi* Then the woman Mouldy Pau Trees of the Forest
182. *Feto Latu Kai Do nulan* And the girl Withered Kai Leaves of the Woods
183. *Neu sodo do neu pela.* Goes to sing or goes to dance.
184. *De ana pela seli Suti Solo* She dances beside Suti Solo
185. *Ma ana leno seli Bina Bane.* And she turns beside Bina Bane.
186. *Boe te Suti bi neu dedein* But for Suti there is fear on his forehead
187. *Ma Bane mae neu mata-boan.* And for Bane there is shame in his eyes.
188. *Boe te halak esa nae neme dea neu ma nae:* But a voice speaks from outside and says:
189. *'Ina Po'o Pau Ai lasi-la* 'The woman Mouldy Pau Trees of the Forest
190. *Do fetok Latu Kai Do nula-la* And the girl Withered Kai Leaves of the Woods
191. *De ala pela seli Suti Solo na ndia* She dances beside Suti Solo there
192. *Sanga na-seti [setu?] tu* Trying to appear intimate like a wife
193. *Ma ala leno seli Bina Bane na ndia* And she turns beside Bina Bane there
194. *Sanga na-hope sao.'* Trying to be close like a spouse.'
195. *Boe te halak-a leo Lain neu* But a voice goes to Heaven
196. *Ma dasik-kala leo Poi leu lae:* And speeches go to the Heights and it is said:
197. *Te Poin nggenggele* The Heights rage
198. *Ma Lain nama-nasa.* And the Heavens grow angry.
199. *Ala fe ni ledok kala mai [?]* [Unintelligible line]

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| 200. | <i>Poin neu nama-nasa</i> | The Heights grow angry |
| 201. | <i>Ma Lain nggenggele.</i> | And the Heavens rage. |
| 202. | <i>De luli nala liun dale</i> | A storm strikes the ocean depths |
| 203. | <i>Ma sangu nala sain dale</i> | And a cyclone strikes the sea depths |
| 204. | <i>Liun dale na-hopo</i> | The ocean depths are upset |
| 205. | <i>Ma sain dale na-foki.</i> | The sea depths are shaken. |
| 206. | <i>Boe te Suti nama-toko isi</i> | So Suti expells his insides |
| 207. | <i>Ma Bina [nama-]edo nggi</i> | And Bina exudes his pods |
| 208. | <i>Losa faik-ka</i> | To this day |
| 209. | <i>Ma nduku ledok-ka.</i> | And until this time. |

Composition Analysis: Old Meno–Seu Ba’i comparisons

Seu Ba’i’s version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* consists of 209 lines and is composed of 85 dyadic sets, 49 of which are identical to those in Old Meno’s version of this composition. It is appropriate to begin by noting some of the common formulae used in both these compositions. These formulae are not specific to these two compositions but are among the most common formulae that occur in ritual language.

Similar Formulae

The first of these formulae is used to indicate the day’s dawn. In Seu Ba’i’s composition, this formula occurs early.

Seu Ba’i

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| 17. | <i>De siluk bei ta dulu</i> | Morning is not yet in the east |
| 18. | <i>Ma hu’ak bei ta langa.</i> | And dawn is not yet at the head. |

Old Meno’s use of this formula occurs further on in his composition.

Old Meno

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| 101. | <i>Siluk bei ta dulu</i> | When morning is not yet in the east |
| 102. | <i>Ma hu’ak bei ta langa dei</i> | And dawn is not yet at the head |

The formula is based on two dyadic sets: 1) *siluk//bu'ak* ('morning'/'dawn'); and 2) *dulu//langa* ('east'/'head'). The combination of 'east' and 'head' reflects the Rotenese directional system. Rote is a long, relatively narrow island. The eastern end of the island is conceived of as the island's head (*langa*) and its western end its tail (*iko*). Although Rote is mostly flat, these directional coordinates imply that one goes 'up' to the east and 'down' to the west. In mortuary chants, the west is the direction of death: the ship of the dead sails westward to the afterworld.

Another formula used frequently in both compositions is perhaps the single most common formula used in virtually all compositions. Seu Ba'i uses this formula five times at different points in his composition. Three of these uses are identical: lines 91–92, 111–12 and 146–47; the two other uses are phrased with a slight change.

Seu Ba'i

91/111/146.	<i>Malole ndia so</i>	'This is good
92/112/147.	<i>Ma mandak ndia so.'</i>	And this is proper.'
75.	<i>'De malole ndia so</i>	'This is good
76.	<i>Do mandak ndia so.'</i>	Or this is proper.'

Old Meno relies on this same formula, but in his composition, he uses the formula in its plural form.

Old Meno

144.	<i>'De malole-la so</i>	'These things are good
145.	<i>Ma mandak-kala so.'</i>	And these things are proper.'
161.	<i>'O malole-la so</i>	'Oh, these things are good
162.	<i>Ma mandak-kala so.'</i>	And these things are proper.'

Meno, however, also uses the *malole//mandak* set in another context:

274.	<i>'Sena mandak kia</i>	'This is a proper companion
275.	<i>Ma tia malole ia.'</i>	And this is a good friend.'

In addition to these common formulae, both poets use the same formula for speaking and make use of the same refrain that is a distinctive feature of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*.

Old Meno

127. *Boe ma Suti, ana kokolak* Then Suti, he talks
 128. *Ma Bina, ana dede'ak nae:* And Bina, he speaks, saying:

Seu Ba'i

89. *Boe te Bina, ana kokolak* But Bina, he talks
 90. *Ma Suti, ana dede'ak, nae:* And Suti, he speaks, saying:

Where Meno phrases his refrain one way:

150. *'Na Bina, au o se* 'Then I, Bina, with whom will I be
 151. *Ma Suti, au o se* And I, Suti, with whom will I be
 152. *Fo au kokolak o se* With whom will I talk
 153. *Ma au dede'ak o se?'* And with whom will I speak?'

Seu Ba'i extends this refrain in another way:

96. *'Au dede'ak o se ...* 'With whom will I speak ...
 98. *Au kokolak o se* With whom will I talk
 99. *De se'ek o se* Or be noisy with whom
 100. *Ma oku-boluk o se'* And shout with whom'

Similarities in Differently Phrased Passages

There are various passages in Seu Ba'i's composition that closely resemble those in Meno's composition and yet follow a slightly different arrangement and use somewhat different dyadic sets. Several of these passages are worth careful examination for what they reveal about the processes of composition.

Preparing the Scoop-Net

Old Meno

83. *Ala kedi-la mau don* They cut a *mau* plant's leaves
 84. *De mau mana'a don* A *mau* with a mouthful of leaves
 85. *Ma ala pena-la pole aban* And they pluck a *pole* plant's cotton tufts
 86. *De pole masapena aban.* A *pole* bursting with cotton tufts.

87. *De ala teli kokolo ndai* They string and wind a fishnet
 88. *De ndai ma hamu lilok* A fishnet with a gold-weighted belly.
 89. *Ma ala ane seko, bui seko* They braid a scoop-net, twine a scoop-net
 90. *De seko ma tei besik.* A scoop-net with iron-weighted insides.

Seu Ba'i

5. *Boe te ala kedi-la mau-don-na* So they cut a *mau* plant's leaves
 6. *Ma ala pena-la pole-aban-na* And they pluck a *pole* plant's cotton tufts
 7. *Pole masa-fali pena* A *pole* with repeated cotton bolls
 8. *Mau ma-na'a do-na.* A *mau* with a mouthful of leaves.
 9. *Ala teli kokolo ndai* They string and wind a fishnet
 10. *Ma ala ane balu-bui seko la* And they brand and twine scoop-nets
 11. *Seko ma-tei besik* A scoop-net with iron-weighted insides
 12. *Ma ndai ma-hamu lilok.* And a fishnet with a gold-weighted belly.

In these two passages, there is a host of similarities, although the arrangement of lines is different. For comparison, Seu Ba'i's composition is in bold.

83. *Ala kedi-la mau don* They cut a *mau* plant's leaves
 5. ***Boe te ala kedi-la mau-don-na*** **So they cut a *mau* plant's leaves**
 85. *Ma ala pena-la pole aban* And they pluck a *pole* plant's cotton tufts
 6. ***Ma ala pena-la pole-aban-na*** **And they pluck a *pole* plant's cotton tufts**
 84. *De mau mana'a don* A *mau* with a mouthful of leaves
 8. ***Mau ma-na'a do-na.*** **A *mau* with a mouthful of leaves.**
 86. *De pole masa pena aban.* A *pole* bursting with cotton tufts.
 7. ***Pole masa-fali pena*** **A *pole* with repeated cotton bolls**

Seu Ba'i's line seven differs from that of Meno in a way that seems to violate the expected pairing of *don//aban* ('leaves'/'cotton tufts'). Moreover, *masa-fali* is not a term that normally pairs with *mana'a*; it implies a notion of 'return', which I have had to translate awkwardly as 'repeated'. Comparison of the lines therefore suggests that this is probably a simple mistake in composition.

87. *De ala teli kokolo ndai* They string and wind a fishnet

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| 9. | <i>Ala teli kokolo ndai</i> | They string and wind a fishnet |
| 89. | <i>Ma ala ane seko, bui seko</i> | They braid a scoop-net, twine a scoop-net |
| 10. | <i>Ma ala ane balu-bui seko la</i> | And they braid and twine scoop-nets |
| 88. | <i>De ndai ma-hamu lilok.</i> | A fishnet with a gold-weighted belly. |
| 12. | <i>Ma ndai ma-hamu lilok.</i> | And a fishnet with a gold-weighted belly. |
| 90. | <i>De seko ma-tei besik.</i> | A scoop-net with iron-weighted insides. |
| 11. | <i>Seko ma-tei besik</i> | A scoop-net with iron-weighted insides |

The Sequence of Dialogue Directives

In both versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, Pedu Hange//Nggiti Seti offers the shells six distinct directives. These directives, however, differ. Four of these dialogue directives are similar but two are different and they are proposed in a different sequence.

In Meno's version, the shells are directed first to: 1) Lole Holu//Lua Bafa as companion; and then in sequence to 2) syrup vat//rice basket, 3) millet grains//ears of maize, 4) palm shadow//tree shade, 5) boundary tree//border stone, and 6) forest cuckoo//river watercock, before following the passage of the rains and flow of the river to the sea.

In Seu Ba'i's version, the shells are first taken home to: 1) cooking fire//upper house, which is, in some ways, the equivalent to being taken to Lole Holu//Lua Bafa, though in this version, the shells continue to cry for these two as companions. Thereafter they are directed to 2) syrup vat//rice basket, and 3) boundary tree//border stone. They are then directed to 4) *kumea* grass//*kuku* shrub, and finally to 5) forest cuckoo//river watercock, before drifting to the sea. Thus, in Seu Ba'i's composition, the *kumea* grass//*kuku* shrub passage replaces palm shadow//tree shade.¹

Of the four directives shared by these two compositions, it is most useful to compare similar passages in Pedu Hange//Nggiti Seti's proposal to the shells to join the forest cuckoo and river watercock. It is the longest and, in terms of composition, the most complex of any of the directives.

1 Since these dialogue directives are one of the distinctive aspects of this composition, the way different poets phrase these passages will be a continuing focus of subsequent chapters. Here only one passage has been selected for this comparison between Seu Ba'i and Old Meno.

In Meno's composition, this passage comprises 18 lines. In Seu Ba'i's composition, this passage occurs in two parts, the first of which comprises 10 lines, the second eight lines.

Old Meno

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| 204. | <i>'Mo doa lasi</i> | 'Go with the forest cuckoo |
| 205. | <i>Ma mo koloba'o le</i> | And go with the river watercock |
| 206. | <i>[Fo] fa tunga-tunga le</i> | So that as current passes down the river |
| 207. | <i>Ma fo ela udan tunga-tunga lasi</i> | And rain passes through the forest |
| 208. | <i>Fo mu oli tatain</i> | You may go to the edge of the estuary |
| 209. | <i>Ma mu le bibifan,</i> | And you may go to the lip of the river, |
| 210. | <i>Fo ela fa oek ana mai</i> | So that when the current's water arrives |
| 211. | <i>Ma ela epo oek ana mai</i> | And when the eddy's water arrives |
| 212. | <i>Na bonu boa fo mu</i> | That bobbing like <i>boa</i> wood, you may go |
| 213. | <i>Ma ele piko fo mu,</i> | And drifting like <i>piko</i> wood, you may go, |
| 214. | <i>Leo sain dale mu</i> | To the sea, you may go |
| 215. | <i>Ma leo liun dale mu.</i> | And to the ocean, you may go. |
| 216. | <i>Te hu mu posi makamu mekon</i> | Thus go to the sea's edge, resounding like a gong |
| 217. | <i>Fo nene fno tata</i> | To stop and listen there |
| 218. | <i>Ma mu unu mali labun</i> | And go to the reef, rumbling like a drum |
| 219. | <i>Fo dei dongo meme ndia</i> | To stand and wait there |
| 220. | <i>Fo dei loe sain dale mu</i> | And then descend into the ocean |
| 221. | <i>Ma dilu liun dale mu.'</i> | And turn downward into the sea.' |

Seu Ba'i

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| 134. | <i>'Mu mo doa lasi</i> | 'Go with the forest cuckoo |
| 135. | <i>Ma mu mo koloba'o le</i> | And go with the river watercock |
| 136. | <i>Fo ba'o-ba'o tunga le</i> | To [cry] <i>ba'o-ba'o</i> along the river |
| 137. | <i>Ma do-do tunga-tunga lasi</i> | And <i>do-do</i> through the forest |
| 138. | <i>Fo udan tunga-tunga lasi</i> | So when the rain passes through the forest |
| 139. | <i>Ma fa tunga-tunga le</i> | And the current passes down the river |

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| 140. | <i>Bonu boa fo mu</i> | Then bobbing like <i>boa</i> wood, you may go |
| 141. | <i>Ma ele piko fo mu.</i> | And drifting like <i>piko</i> wood, you may go. |
| 142. | <i>Leo sain mu</i> | To the sea you may go |
| 143. | <i>Ma leo liun mu.'</i> | And to the ocean you may go.' |
| | ... | |
| 151. | <i>'Mu le bibifan</i> | 'Go to the lip of the river |
| 152. | <i>Ma mu oli tatain</i> | And go to the edge of the estuary |
| 153. | <i>Nene-fino mu ndia</i> | Go to stop and listen there |
| 154. | <i>Ma dei-dongo mu ndia.</i> | And go to stand and wait there. |
| 155. | <i>Udan tunga-tunga lasi</i> | The rain passes through the forest |
| 156. | <i>Ma fa tunga-tunga le</i> | And the current passes down the river |
| 157. | <i>Fo bonu boa fo mu</i> | Then bobbing like <i>boa</i> wood, you may go |
| 158. | <i>Ele piko fo mu.'</i> | And drifting like <i>piko</i> wood, you may go.' |

The first two lines in both compositions are similar. While Old Meno relies only on a verbal phrase, Seu Ba'i uses both verb and verbal phrase, which mean 'to go' and 'to go with'.

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| 204. | <i>Mo doa lasi</i> | Go with the forest cuckoo |
| 134. | <i>Mu mo doa lasi</i> | Go with the forest cuckoo |
| 205. | <i>Ma mo koloba'o le</i> | And go with the river watercock |
| 135. | <i>Ma mu mo koloba'o le</i> | And go with the river watercock |

Seu Ba'i then adds two lines that take their meaning from the sounds made by these birds.

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| 136. | <i>Fo ba'o-ba'o tunga le</i> | To [cry] <i>ba'o-ba'o</i> along the river |
| 137. | <i>Ma do-do tunga tunga lasi</i> | And <i>do-do</i> through the forest |

The next lines are again virtually identical, though they occur in different order.

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| 206. | <i>[Fo] fa tunga-tunga le</i> | So that as the current passes down the river |
| 207. | <i>Ma fo ela udan tunga-tunga lasi</i> | And rain passes through the forest |
| 138. | <i>Fo udan tunga-tunga lasi</i> | So when the rain passes through the forest |
| 139. | <i>Ma fa tunga-tunga le</i> | And the current passes down the river |

218. *Ma mu unu mali labun* And go to the reef, rumbling like a drum
219. *Fo dei-dongo meme ndia* To stand and wait there
220. *Fo dei loe sain dale mu* And then descend into the ocean
221. *Ma dilu liun dale mu.* And turn downward into the sea.

Among these six lines are two lines that Seu Ba'i uses in his composition.

153. *Nene-fino mu ndia* **To stop and listen there**
154. *Ma-dei dongo mu ndia.* **And to stand and wait there.**

Seu Ba'i then concludes his second passage of dialogue by repeating lines that he previously used in his first passage.

155. *Udan tunga-tunga lasi* **The rain passes through the forest**
156. *Ma fa tunga-tunga le* **And the current passes down the river**
157. *Fo bonu boa fo mu* **Then bobbing like *boa* wood, you
may go**
158. *Ele piko fo mu.'* **And drifting like *piko* wood, you
may go.'**

Although composed and arranged somewhat differently, in Seu Ba'i's composition, 12 of 18 lines are nearly identical to those of his mentor, Old Meno.

This text is taken from *Master Poets, Ritual Masters: The Art of Oral Composition Among the Rotenese of Eastern Indonesia*, by James J. Fox, published 2016 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.