In 1972, after an absence of more than six years, I returned to Rote to continue my research. As soon as I arrived back on the island, I began to record new ritual language recitations. During the period of my first fieldwork, I had gathered three versions of the chant *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*. On my return, I decided that I would try to gather additional recitations for comparative purposes.

By 1972, Old Meno had died. Another of the great master poets of Termanu, Stefanus Amalo, had also died. Although I had recorded other chants from him, I had never recorded a version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* and this has always been a considerable regret. On the other hand, Seu Ba’i was still alive, but during my second fieldwork, I saw him only on a few occasions. He was particularly concerned to provide me with material that he felt was connected with my previous work with Old Meno. For example, Old Meno had recited a beautiful chant, *Dela Koli do Seko Buna*, which I published as my first example of a long ritual language recitation (Fox 1971). Old Meno had structured his recitation as a mortuary chant and Seu Ba’i was aware of this fact. He wanted me, however, to recognise

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1 I gathered my third version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from the blind master poet of the domain of Ba’a, L. Manoeain. His version of this recitation will be discussed with versions of this text from other non-Termanu dialect areas.
that *Dela Koli do Seko Buna* was in fact an origin chant connected with the two prominent rock formations known as Sua Lai and Batu Hun that dominated the entrance to the harbour of Namodale, near where he lived. He therefore recited a version of this chant to make explicit its origin foundations.

In 1965–66, I had begun to record recitations by the relatively young poet Petrus Malesi or Pe’u Malesi, who was usually referred to simply as Malesi.\(^2\) During that first fieldwork, I recorded three chants from Malesi. One of these was a chant that recounted the origin of fire, a version of which I had also recorded from Old Meno; the second was a mortuary chant of less than 100 lines; the third was a version of the origin of rice and millet, whose transcription I showed to Old Meno. He regarded Malesi’s recitation as inadequate and, as a consequence, extended it to make it acceptable. Thus, in 1965–66, Pe’u Malesi was only beginning to demonstrate his skills as a poet; he was not yet regarded as a mature *manahelo*. But by 1972–73, with only Seu Ba’i as his rival, Malesi was coming into his prime. During my second period on Rote, Malesi, who lived nearby, became a regular visitor at Ufa Len ma Batu Bongo, where I lived, and for a time, he provided me with more material than any other poet in Termanu. He was available for all rituals we carried out, including the mortuary performance, the *Lutu Tutus*, that Meno’s son and I sponsored in honour of Old Meno.\(^3\)

Thus in 1973, I recorded a version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from Pe’u Malesi. This recitation is constructed to portray a cycle that carries Suti Solo do Bina Bane from the sea through the land and back to the sea. No genealogy is provided for any of the chant characters and no explanation is given for the expulsion of the shells from the sea. Nor is there any attempt to link these shells to a transformation into implements for dyeing and spinning. This version is not an origin recitation but rather is presented as a mortuary recitation: a widow and orphan chant.

\(^2\) Malesi was sometimes also called Suara Malesi (‘Voice of Malesi’) in mock recognition of Suara Malaysia (‘Voice of Malaysia’) whose broadcasts could occasionally be heard by those who had a radio. My first fieldtrip coincided with the period of ‘Confrontation’ with Malaysia and listening to ‘Voice of Malaysia’ was supposedly forbidden. Since no one in Termanu (that I know of) had a radio, listening to ‘Voice of Malaysia’ was hardly an issue but one could joke that no one needed to listen to ‘Suara Malaysia’ because we had ‘Suara Malesi’, which was much better and certainly clearer.

\(^3\) I have described this performance and the chanting associated with it in Fox (1989).
Figure 7: Petrus Malesi chanting at the mortuary ceremony for Old Meno

The Ocean Storm that Carries the Shells to Tena Lai ma Mae Oe

The recitation begins with the storm that drives the two shells from the ocean and then describes the search for the ritually required fish that results only in the scooping forth of the shells, Suti Solo do Bina Bane.

1. *Luli nala liun dale*  
   A storm arises in the ocean’s depths

2. *Ma sangu nala sain dale*  
   And a cyclone arises in the sea’s depths

3. *Bina nama-toko isi*  
   Bina puts out its insides

4. *Suti nama-edo nggi*  
   Suti exudes its pods

5. *Suti Solo namatani*  
   Suti Solo cries

6. *Ma Bina Bane nasakedu*  
   Bina Bane sobs

7. *De ele piko basa meti*  
   Floating forth through all the tides
The Preparation of the Scoop-Net and the Search for the Ritual Fish

13. Faik esa manunin
On a certain day
14. Ma ledok dua matebe
And at a particular time
15. Tēke Hulu Hutu tina na
Tēke Hulu Hutu's garden
16. Ma Sio Pale Enge osi na
And Sio Pale Enge's field
17. Pelak ka nggona-hano
The corn cobs have ripened
18. Ma betek kala dio-hu.
And the millet stalks have matured.
19. Ana doko-doe peda-poi na
He seeks to perform the peda-poi ritual
20. Ma ana tai-boni fua-bafa na
And he requests to do the fua-bafa ritual
21. Ana lulua Lole Holu
He selects Lole Holu
22. Ma ana heheli Lua Bafa.
And he chooses Lua Bafa.
23. Boe ma inak kia Sama Dai
So the woman Sama Dai
24. Ma fetok kia Kuku Nou
And the girl Kuku Nou
25. Ana pena na pole aba
She picks bolls of cotton
26. De pole dai lena aban
Bolls enough for thread
27. Ma kedi na lata do
And cuts strips of lontar leaf
28. De lata tolesi don
Leaf enough for strips
29. Ana neni neu seko
She makes them into a scoop-net
30. Fo seko matei besi
A scoop-net with iron-weighted insides
31. Ma tale na neu ndai
And fashions them into a fishnet
32. Fo ndai mahamu lilok
A fishnet with a gold-weighted belly
33. Neu seko sanga Dusu La’e
She goes to scoop for a Dusu La’e
34. Ma ndai sanga Tio Holu
And goes to fish for a Tio Holu
35. Mai Tena Lai Laok lutun
In Tena Lai Laok's fish catch
The Dialogue with the Shells

It is at this point that the dialogue with Suti Solo and Bina Bane begins.

45. **Suti Solo dede’ak**
    Suti Solo speaks
46. **Ma Bina Bane kokolak ma nae:**
    And Bina Bane talks and says:
47. ‘**Seko heni Suti Solo**’
    ‘If you scoop but throw away Suti Solo
48. **Ma ndai heni Bina Bane**
    And fish but throw away Bina Bane
49. **Ma Suti au o se**
    I, Suti, with whom will I be
50. **Ma Bina, au o se?**
    And I, Bina, with whom will I be?’
51. **Inak kia Sama Dai**
    The woman Sama Dai
52. **Lole halan na neu**
    Lifts her words
53. **Ma fetok kia Kuku Nou**
    And the girl Kuku Nou
54. **Selu dasin na neu:**
    Raises her voice:
55. ‘**Mu mo timi di’i**’
    ‘Go with the *timi* post
56. **Ma mu mo lungu tua.’**
    And go with the *lungu* beam.’
57. **Bina Bane kokolak**
    Bina Bane speaks
58. **Ma Suti Solo dede’ak ma nae:**
    And Suti Solo replies and says:
59. ‘**Malole la so**’
    ‘That would be good
60. **Ma mandak kala so**
    And that would be proper.
61. **Au o timi di’i**
    I will go with the *timi* post
62. **Ma au o lungu tua,**
    And I will go with the *lungu* beam,
63. **Te hu lungu tua natahi**
    But if the *lungu* beam sags
64. **Ma timi di’i na so’o**
    And the *timi* post tilts
65. Au asalai o se      On whom will I recline
66. Ma au angatu o se   And on whom will I sit
67. Fo se-tele o se     With whom will I laugh
68. Ma ata-dale o se?   And with whom will I take heart?’
69. Inak kia Sama Dai  The woman Sama Dai
70. Ma fetok kia Kuku Nou And the girl Kuku Nou
71. Ana lole lele halan She lifts her words encouragingly
72. Ma selu doko-doe dasin, nae: And raises her voice coaxingly, saying:
73. ’Mu no bou tua  ‘Go with the lontar syrup vat
74. Ma mu mo neka bade.’ And go with the rice basket.’
75. Bina Bane kokolak Bina Bane speaks
76. Ma Suti Solo dede’ak ma nae: And Suti Solo replies and says:
77. ’Malole la so  ‘That would be good
78. Ma mandak kala so And that would be proper
79. Bou tua na tono [But if] the syrup vat is overturned
80. Ma neka hade lulumu And the rice basket is rolled up
81. Na au asalai o se Then with whom will I recline
82. Ma au angatu o se?’ And with whom will I sit?’
83. Inak kia Sama Dai The woman Sama Dai
84. Ana lole lekek halan She lifts her words sweetly
85. Ma fetok kia Kuku Nou And the girl Kuku Nou
86. Selu doko-doe dasin, nae: Raises her voice coaxingly, saying:
87. ’Mu mo peu ai  ‘Go with the boundary tree
88. Ma mu mo to batu.’ And go with the border stone.’
89. Bina Bane kokolak Bina Bane talks
90. Ma Suti Solo dede’ak ma nae: And Suti Solo speaks and says:
91. ’Malole la so  ‘That would be good
92. Ma mandak kala so And that would be proper.
93. Au u o to batu I will go with the border stone
94. Ma ami meu mo peu ai And we will go with the boundary tree
95. Te hu ala ketu benu ndoto osin But if they snap off spreading beans
96. Ma se beni tuli hena And they clear away the pigeon peas
97. Na to ai la hiluk Then the border tree will go down
4. VERSION III FROM THE DOMAIN OF TERNANU

98. Ma lane batu la keko
And the marker stone will shift

99. Na ami masalai mo se
Then with whom will we recline

100. Ma ami magatu mo se?’
And with whom will we sit?’

101. De Bina bei nasakedu
So Bina continues to sob

102. Ma Suti bei namatani.
And Suti continues to cry.

103. Boe ma Sama Dai kokolak
Then Sama Dai speaks

104. Ma Kuku Nou nafada na nae:
And Kuku Nou replies, saying:

105. ‘Meu mo kumea letek
‘Go with the kumea grass on the hill

106. Ma meu mo kuku telas.’
And go with the kuku shrub in the underbrush.’

107. Boe ma nae:
Then he says:

108. ‘Malole la so
‘That would be good

109. Ma mandak kala so
And that would be proper.

110. Te hu pila kumea letek
But if the red kumea on the hills

111. Lamadilu neu kalen
Bends at its top

112. Ma nggeo kuku telas
And the black kuku of the underbrush

113. Lamasesu leu bu’un
Breaks at its joints

114. Bina Bane neu se
To whom will Bina Bane go

115. Fo setele no se
With whom to laugh

116. Ma Suti Solo no se
And with whom will Suti Solo go

117. Fo nata-dale no se?’
With whom to take heart?’

118. Fo Suti bei namatani
So Suti continues to cry

119. Ma Bina bei nasakedu.
And Bina continues to sob.

120. Boe ma inak ka Sama Dai
The woman Sama Dai

121. Ma fetok ka Kuku Nou
And the girl Kuku Nou

122. Ana lole halan na neu
She lifts her words

123. Ma selu dasin na neu ma nae:
And raises her voice and says:

124. ‘Mu mo doa lasi
‘Go with the forest cuckoo

125. Ma mu mo koloba’o le.’
And go with the river woodcock.’

126. Boe ma Bina Bane nahala
Then Bina Bane gives voice

127. Ma Suti Solo nafada ma nae:
And Suti Solo speaks and says:

128. ‘Au o koloba’o le
‘I will go with the river woodcock

129. Na malole la so
Such would be good
130. Ma mandak kala so. And such would be proper.
131. Te timu lamatua dulu But if the wind increases in the east
132. Ma hu’ak [fak] lamanalu And the monsoon extends at the
lanza
133. Na kulu kolobao le Then the river woodcock
134. Ba’o-ba’o tunga le [Cries] ba’o-ba’o along the river
135. Ma betu doa lasi la And the forest woodcock
136. Do’o-do’o tunga lasi [Cries] do’o-do’o through the forest
137. Na Bina Bane no se Then with whom will Bina Bane be
138. [Fo] setele no se With whom to laugh
139. Ma Suti Solo no se And with whom will Suti Solo be
140. Fo nata-dale no se? With whom to take heart?’
141. Boe Bina bei pinu idu So Bina still drips snot from the nose
142. Ma Suti bei lu mata. And Suti still drops tears from the eyes.

The Final Directive to Return to the Sea

143. Boe ma inak ka Sama Dai So the woman Sama Dai
144. Do fetok ka Kuku Nou Or the girl Kuku Nou
145. Lole hala na neu Lifts her words
146. Lole hala di’u dua Lifts words to repeat
147. Ma selu dasi nasafali ma nae: And raises her voice to say again:
148. ‘Mu le titian ‘Go along the river’s bank
149. Ma mu oli tatain.’ And go along the estuary’s edge.’
150. Besaka ifa-la Suti Solo So she lifts Suti Solo
151. Ma ko’o-la Bina Bane And she cradles Bina Bane
152. De leu le titian Then they go to the river bank
153. Ma leu oli tatain And they go to the estuary’s edge.
154. Boe ma besak ka timu Now the wind increases in the east
lamatua dulu
155. Ma hu’ak [fak] lamanalu And the monsoon extends at the
langa
156. Boe ma timu nggefu neu The monsoon blows Suti Solo
Suti Solo
4. VERSION III FROM THE DOMAIN OF TERMANU

157. *Ma ani fupu neu Bina Bane*  
And the wind strikes Bina Bane

158. *De ele piko neu liun*  
Floating forth like *piko* wood to the sea

159. *Ma ana bonu boa neu sain*  
And bobbing forth like *boa* wood to the ocean

160. *Nde lili dela neu sain*  
He likes going to the ocean

161. *Ma neka nita neu liun*  
And enjoys going to the sea

162. *De lea faik ia dalen*  
As on this day

163. *De neka nita nai liun*  
He likes it in the sea

164. *Ma lea ledok ia tein.*  
And as at this time.

**Composition Analysis: Old Meno–Seu Ba’i–Malesi Comparisons**

Malesi’s composition is shorter than either Meno’s or Seu Ba’i’s compositions. It consists of 164 lines based on 73 dyadic sets. Of these 73 sets, 31 are shared in common with Meno’s composition, which comprises 103 sets. Some 31 sets, although not all the same, are shared with Seu Ba’i’s composition, which comprises 85 sets. Only 27 of the same sets are used in all three compositions. Based on shared dyadic sets, Malesi’s composition is more closely related to that of Seu Ba’i than to that of Meno.

**Ritual Names: People and Places**

Malesi introduces new chant characters in his composition. In both Meno’s and Seu Ba’i’s compositions, the woman who scoops up the shells is Pedu Hange//Nggiti Seti. In Malesi’s composition, this woman is named Sama Dai//Kuku Nou. All three compositions indicate the need to search for ritual fish in order to carry out the ceremony of the *peda-poi//fiua-bafa* harvest ritual. But each chant differs as to whose ritual this is. For Meno, this is Manupui Peda//Kokolo Dulu’s origin feast//feast of nine; for Seu Ba’i, it is Manupui Peda//Boko Dulu’s ceremony. For Malesi, it is Teke Hulu Hutu//Sio Pale Enge’s ritual. All three compositions agree, however, on the importance of Lole Holu//Lua Bafa. Meno’s composition provides her genealogy, but only Malesi makes clear her significance. She is the woman designated to perform the critical harvest ritual. All three compositions also agree on the sacred site of Tena Lai//Mae Oe as the place where the encounter with the shells occurs and where they are
scooped from the sea. In his composition, Malesi identifies this site by making it into the personal name of the ‘owner’ of the fish weir, Tena Lai Laok//Mae Oe Loek, where the shells are found.

**Directives in the Dialogue with the Shells**

Most of Malesi’s composition consists of the dialogue with the shells. This dialogue contains five separate directives, whereas both Meno’s and Seu Ba’i’s compositions have six distinctive directives. Of Malesi’s five directives, three are shared with Meno and four with Seu Ba’i. It could also be argued that Malesi’s first directive to the house shares a similarity to the other compositions. Meno’s first directive is for the shells to make their home with Lole Holu//Lua Bafa, whereas Seu Ba’i designates a part of the house, the cooking fire//upper house, which is a different part of the house to that designated by Malesi. Malesi’s five directives are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: A Comparison of Dialogue Directives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meno</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) house post//floor beam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) syrup vat//rice basket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) boundary tree//border stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) kumea grass//kuku shrub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) forest cuckoo//river watercock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of these various passages, it is worth comparing the three compositions in relation to boundary tree//border stone. Whereas for Meno this passage is only eight lines, for Seu Ba’i and for Malesi, their equivalent passages comprise 15 to 16 lines.

**Old Meno**

195. ‘*Te na mu mo peu ai*’
196. ‘*Ma mu mo to batu.*’
197. ‘*Boe ma Suti boe kokolak*’
198. ‘*Ma Bina boe dede’ak ma nae:*’
199. ‘*Te hu ai dede’an ta*’
200. ‘*Ma batu kokolan ta.*’
201. ‘*Bina boe nasakedu*’
202. ‘*Ma Suti boe namatani.*’

‘Then go with boundary tree’
‘And go with border stone.’
‘Still Suti talks’
‘And still Bina speaks and says:’
‘But a tree does not talk’
‘And a stone does not speak.’
‘Still Bina sobs’
‘And still Suti cries.’
4. VERSION III FROM THE DOMAIN OF TERNANU

Seu Ba‘i

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. Te bafi ka‘a neni pelak But if 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 le o Lolu?’ And [someone] exactly like Lolu?’

Malesi

87. ‘Mu mo peu ai ‘Go with the boundary tree
88. ‘Ma mu mo to batu.’ And go with the border stone.’
89. Bina Bane kokolak Bina Bane talks
90. Ma Suti Solo dede‘ak ma nae: And Suti Solo speaks and says:
91. ‘Malole la so ‘That would be good
92. Ma mandak kala so. And that would be proper.
93. Au u o to batu I will go with the border stone
94. Ma ami meu mo peu ai And we will go with the boundary tree
95. Te bu ala ketu heni ndoto osin But if they snap off spreading beans
96. Ma se heni tuli hena And they clear away the pigeon peas
97. Na to ai la hiluk Then the border tree will go down
98. Ma lane batu la keko And the marker stone will shift
99. Na ami masalai mo se Then with whom will we recline
Old Meno

195. ‘Te na mu mo peu ai’ ‘Then go with boundary tree
196. Ma mu mo to batu.’ And go with border stone.’

Seu Ba’i

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.’

Malesi

87. ‘Mu mo peu ai’ ‘Go with the boundary tree
88. Ma mu mo to batu.’ And go with the border stone.’

In a comparison of the three compositions, Malesi’s lines directing the shells on where to go are virtually the same as those of Old Meno. Seu Ba’i’s lines require some consideration because he attaches a place marker to ‘boundary tree//border stone’ as if to imply that this is a personal name. His personification of each entity to which the shells are directed is more explicit than either Meno’s or Malesi’s. Each entity is, in effect, given a name.

Following this directive, the response in Meno’s composition is blunt and to the point:

199. ‘Te hu ai dedean ta’ ‘But a tree does not talk
200. Ma batu kokolan ta.’ And a stone does not speak.’

In Seu Ba’i’s and Malesi’s compositions, by contrast, the following six lines are more similarly extended:

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:
91. ‘Malole ndia so’ ‘This is good
Although these particular lines resemble each other closely, Malesi adds a flourish that some poets utilise to enhance the parallelism of their composition. Thus, in Malesi’s composition (lines 93–94), the shells reply by combining a singular ‘I’ with a plural ‘we’.

After these similar lines, their compositions diverge. Seu Ba’i invokes the image of a bounded corn and millet field that is pillaged by pig and monkey, whereas Malesi invokes the image of a temporary bean and pea garden that is harvested. In the end, in Malesi’s composition, the shells are left on their own to sob and to cry. And eventually they return to the sea.