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## *Suti Solo do Bina Bane:* Version IV from the Domain of Termanu

Some years later, in 1977, when I visited Rote with the filmmaker Tim Asch, I asked Pe'u Malesi to recite a number of *bini* including that of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*. To my surprise, his recitation took a different turn. This time, instead of a mortuary rendition of the chant, Malesi set out to recite *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* as an origin chant. This version was intended as a revelation.

Malesi's performance was not, however, straightforward. He initially hesitated on how to present the chant. He began with a comment: '*Suti Solo do Bina Bane*: our recitation comes from the west house—indeed from the deeds of the Almighty that extend to this day.'<sup>1</sup> Mention of the 'west house' is, I assume, a reference to the house of the dead, which is located in the west. In numerous mortuary chants, the deceased is described as setting sail to the west from whence there is, on specific occasions, the possibility of a return of the spirit on a visitation to the living. Malesi's comment thus indicates that his intention is to recite *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* as a mortuary chant.

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1 *Suti Solo do Bina Bane: Ita kokolakana neme uma muli—hu meme Manakuasa tata nonoin fo nakatok losa faik-ia.*

He then began by describing the storm that carried the shells to land, but after only 10 lines, he interrupted his recitation, apologised for beginning in the middle of the narrative, and began his recitation again, asserting that he would begin at the beginning. His first 10 lines were as follows:

- |     |                                  |   |
|-----|----------------------------------|---|
| 1.  | <i>Luli nala liun dalek</i>      | A storm arises in the ocean's depths      |
| 2.  | <i>Ma sangu nala sain dalek.</i> | And a cyclone arises in the sea's depths. |
| 3.  | <i>Liun neu na-edo</i>           | The ocean exudes                          |
| 4.  | <i>Ma sain neu na-pode.</i>      | The sea puts forth.                       |
| 5.  | <i>De pode heni Suti aten</i>    | It puts forth Suti's liver                |
| 6.  | <i>Ma edo heni Bina nggin.</i>   | And it exudes Bina's pods.                |
| 7.  | <i>De ana ele piko</i>           | He floats forth                           |
| 8.  | <i>Ma ana bonu boa</i>           | And he bobs along                         |
| 9.  | <i>Ana ele piko</i>              | He floats                                 |
| 10. | <i>Ma ana bonu boa ...</i>       | And he bobs along ...                     |

When he stopped his recitation, his comment was emphatic: 'Ah, this is the middle of the recitation. Sorry. I will trace things from the beginning ... Suti Solo do Bina Bane's origins from the very beginning.'<sup>2</sup>

He then continued for some 110 lines but at the point when the shells return to the sea, he interrupted himself again and began to recount how the shells were made into objects for dyeing and spinning. Thus, his telling of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is essentially a combination of two versions. The first half of the recitation is a mortuary chant; the second half is an origin chant rendition.

For this first rendition, Malesi began his recitation not unlike his other version, with the origin feast and the need to search for the required ritual fish at Tena Lai//Mae Oe.

## The Origin Feast and the Search for Tio Holu do Dusu La'e

- |    |                                     |                                |
|----|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | <i>Touk-a Kafi Dulu tina-na</i>     | The man Kafi Dulu's garden     |
| 2. | <i>Ma ta'ek-a Kule Langa osi-na</i> | And the boy Kule Langa's field |

<sup>2</sup> 'Ab! Kokolakana nai talada ia. Maaf dei. Tao neme hu-na mai dei, te au lilin ... Suti Solo no Bina Bane dadina makasosana.'

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|-----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 3.  | <i>Bete-kala dio hu'u</i>            | The millet has ripened grains               |
| 4.  | <i>Fo ala sanga ketu</i>             | So they are ready to pick                   |
| 5.  | <i>Ma pela-kala lona nggona</i>      | And the maize is full of cobs               |
| 6.  | <i>Fo sanga sei.</i>                 | So they are ready to pluck.                 |
| 7.  | <i>Boe-ma sanga peda poina</i>       | They want to celebrate 'placing on top'     |
| 8.  | <i>Ma sanga fua bafana.</i>          | And want to perform 'setting on the mouth'. |
| 9.  | <i>Boe ma ala lali lala Sama Dai</i> | So they bring forth Sama Dai                |
| 10. | <i>Do soko lala Kuku Nou</i>         | And they carry forth Kuku Nou               |
| 11. | <i>Tenga na ndai tasina</i>          | She takes a fishnet for the sea             |
| 12. | <i>Ndai mahamu lilok</i>             | A fishnet with a gold-weighted belly        |
| 13. | <i>Ma nggao na seko metina</i>       | And she picks up a scoop-net for the tide   |
| 14. | <i>Seko matei besik</i>              | A scoop net with iron-weighted insides      |
| 15. | <i>Neu seko sisi'u enggak</i>        | She goes to scoop, lifting seaweed          |
| 16. | <i>Nai Mae Oe loek lutun na</i>      | In Mae Oe's fish catch                      |
| 17. | <i>Ma ndai hubuka batu</i>           | And goes to net fish, turning rocks         |
| 18. | <i>Nai Tena Lai la'ok de'an na.</i>  | At Tena Lai's stone weir.                   |

## The Encounter and Dialogue with the Shells

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|-----|---|--|
| 19. | <i>Ana seko sanga Dusu La'e</i>           | She goes scoop fishing seeking Dusu La'e |
| 20. | <i>Fo seko nala meti dua</i>              | Scoop fishing in two tides               |
| 21. | <i>Na Suti nala meti dua</i>              | But Suti is there in the two tides       |
| 22. | <i>Ndai sanga Tio Holu</i>                | She goes net fishing, seeking Tio Holu   |
| 23. | <i>Fo ndai nala namo telu</i>             | Net fishing in three bays                |
| 24. | <i>Na Bina nala namo telu.</i>            | But Bina is there in the three bays.     |
| 25. | <i>Na ana ta hapu Dusu La'e</i>           | She does not get Dusu La'e               |
| 26. | <i>Ma ana ta hapu Tio Holu</i>            | And she does not get Tio Holu            |
| 27. | <i>Te ana seko nala Suti Solo</i>         | But she does scoop up Suti Solo          |
| 28. | <i>Ma ana ndai nala Bina Bane.</i>        | And she does fish forth Bina Bane.       |
| 29. | <i>Boe ma ana ndai neni<br/>Bina Bane</i> | So she fishes forth Bina Bane            |

30. *Ma seko neni Suti Solo* And she scoops up Suti Solo
31. *De mai enok telu tai-lolona* But coming to the three winding paths
32. *Ma dalak dua bobongona* And the two rounding roads
33. *Boe ma ana tu'u heni Suti Solo* She throws Suti Solo away
34. *Ma ana tapa heni Bina Bane.* And she casts Bina Bane away.
35. *Boe ma Bina Bane kokolak* So Bina Bane speaks
36. *Ma Suti Solo dedeak ma nae:* And Suti Solo talks and says:
37. *'Ah! Tu'u au neu eno teluna* 'Ah! Throw me to the three paths
38. *Ma tapa au neu dala duana* And cast me at the two roads
39. *De au Suti, au o se* Then I, Suti, with whom will I be
40. *Fo asalai o se* On whom will I recline
41. *Ma au Bina, au o se* And I, Bina, with whom will I be
42. *Fo au angatu'u o se?'* With whom will I sit?'
43. *De Bina bei pinu idu* Bina has snot coming from his nose
44. *Ma Suti bei lu mata.* And Suti has tears in his eyes.
45. *Boe ma inaka Kuku Nou* So the woman Kuku Nou
46. *Ma fetoka Sama Dai* And the girl Sama Dai
47. *Lole halana neu* Raises her voice
48. *Ma selu dasi na neu ma nae:* And lifts her speech and says:
49. *'Meu mo neka hade* 'Go with the rice basket
50. *Ma meu mo bou tuana.'* And go with the lontar syrup vat.'
51. *Boe ma Suti Solo nafada* Then Suti Solo talks
52. *Ma Bina Bane kokolak ma nae:* And Bina Bane speaks and says:
53. *'Ah, malole la so* 'Ah, that would be good
54. *Ma mandak kala so* And that would be proper
55. *[Te] bou tua la beok* But if the lontar syrup vats turn
56. *Ma neka hade la keko* And if the rice baskets shift
57. *Na au asalai o se* Then with whom shall I recline
58. *Ma au angatu o se?'* And with whom shall I sit?'
59. *Suti bei namatani* Suti continues to cry
60. *Ma Bina bei nasakedu.* Bina continues to sob.
61. *Boe ma inak leo Kuku Nou* So the woman like Kuku Nou
62. *Do fetok leo Sama Dai nae:* Or the girl like Sama Dai says:

63. *'Mu mo doa-lasi* 'Go with the forest cuckoo  
64. *Ma mo koloba'o le.'* And with the river woodcock.'  
65. *Boe ma Bina Bane kokolak* So Bina Bane speaks  
66. *Ma Suti Solo dedeak ma nae:* And Suti Solo answers and says:  
67. *'Ah, malole la so* 'Ah, such would be good  
68. *Ma mandakala so.* And such would be proper.  
69. *Hu koloba'o le la ba'o-ba'o* But if the woodcocks *ba'o-ba'o* down  
*tunga le* the river  
70. *Ma betu doa lasi la do'o-do'o* And the cuckoos *do'o-do'o* through  
*tunga lasi,* the forest,  
71. *Na Suti au o se* Then for me, Suti, with whom will I be  
72. *Fo au asalai o se* With whom will I recline  
73. *Ma Bina au o se* And with me, Bina, with whom will I be  
74. *Fo au angatu o se?'* And with whom will I sit?  
75. *De Bina bei nasakedu* Thus Bina continues to sob  
76. *Ma Suti bei namatani.* And Suti continues to cry.  
77. *Boe ma inaka Sama Dai* So the woman Sama Dai  
78. *Do fetoka Kuku Nou nae:* And the girl Kuku Nou says:  
79. *'Mu mo mafo ai* 'Go with the trees' shade  
80. *Ma mu mo sa'o tua.'* And go with the lontar palms' shadow.'  
81. *Boe ma Bina Bane kokolak* So Bina Bane speaks  
82. *Ma Suti Solo dede'ak ma nae:* And Suti Solo answers and says:  
83. *'Ah, malole la so* 'Ah, such would be good  
84. *Ma mandakala so* And such would be proper  
85. *Mafo ai la heok* [If] the trees' shade turns aside  
86. *Ma sa'o ai la hiluk* And the lontar palms' shadow recedes  
87. *Na au asalai o se* Then with whom will I recline  
88. *Na au angatu'u o se* Then with whom will I sit  
89. *Fo Suti Solo no se* With whom will Suti Solo be  
90. *Ma Bina Bane no se?'* And with whom will Bina Bane be?  
91. *De Bina bei nasakedu* Thus Bina continues to sob  
92. *Ma Suti bei namatani.* And Suti continues to cry.  
93. *Boe ma inaka Kuku Nou* Then the woman Kuku Nou  
94. *Do fetoka Sama Dai* Or the girl Sama Dai

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|------|--|---|
| 95.  | <i>Lole di'u doe halana</i>                | Raises her voice softly                   |
| 96.  | <i>Ma hele tai boni dasina<br/>ma nae:</i> | And lifts her voice gently and says:      |
| 97.  | <i>Ah, mu oli titian</i>                   | 'Ah, go along the estuary's edge          |
| 98.  | <i>Ma mu le tatain</i>                     | And go along the river's bank             |
| 99.  | <i>Fo timu lamatua dulu</i>                | So when the wind increases in the east    |
| 100. | <i>Do fak lamanalu langana</i>             | And the monsoon arises in the headlands   |
| 101. | <i>Na timu nggefu Suti Solo</i>            | The east wind sweeps Suti Solo away       |
| 102. | <i>Do fak foki Bina Bane.'</i>             | Or the west wind carries Bina Bane away.' |

## The Return of the Shells to the Sea

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|------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 103. | <i>De fak fupu Bina Bane</i>        | The west wind blows Bina Bane               |
| 104. | <i>De dilu neu [mu] liun dalek</i>  | Descending into the sea's depths            |
| 105. | <i>Timu nggefu Suti Solo</i>        | The east wind sweeps Suti Solo              |
| 106. | <i>De loe neu [mu] sain dalek.</i>  | Turning down into the ocean's depths.       |
| 107. | <i>Tama ota neu liun</i>            | Crowded together in the sea                 |
| 108. | <i>Ma tesa bela [isi] neu sain.</i> | And packed tightly in the ocean.            |
| 109. | <i>Boe ma luli nala sain dalek</i>  | Then a cyclone arises in the ocean's depths |
| 110. | <i>Ma sangu nala sain dalek.</i>    | A storm strikes the ocean's depths.         |

## Malesi's Further Interruption and the Redirection of the Chant

Having carried his recitation to this point, Malesi interrupted his performance with the following interjection: 'Our Lord wishes to do this tale to the present.'<sup>3</sup> The term 'Our Lord' has to be taken as a Christian reference and his remark can be interpreted to mean that Malesi sees himself as the vehicle of revelation on God's behalf. What follows is sacred revelation.

3 *'Ita Lamatua sanga tao dede'a nakatok losa faikia.'*

The resumed recitation gives the genealogy of the woman who scoops up the shells and is the first to use them for spinning cotton and preparing indigo dye as ‘whorl shell’ (*ifā bina*) and ‘indigo pot’ (*tena tau*). This is not, however, the woman who then does the tying and dyeing of the cloth. Another woman is named who performs this task and, when it is completed, a search is begun to find yet another woman who can weave. This search leads to the far eastern end of Rote where there is a woman who can weave particular named textile patterns. The chant concludes by naming a succession of places—all in eastern Rote.

In the general context of Rotenese culture, this revelation of the origin of weaving is notable because other origin chants that recount the origin of weaving, including one from Old Meno, give another account of the origin of weaving and specifically name a woman associated with the west of the island. Across the island, the assertion of different origins is common. Specifically, for Malesi as a chanter, this revelation confirms what many in Termanu said to me about him: that his knowledge came from eastern Rote where he was said to have spent some time before he was married and settled down in Termanu.

Not all of the lines in what follows are in strict canonical parallelism: Malesi seems more intent on conveying the narrative of his revelation than in maintaining its proper form. As he proceeds to his conclusion, the composition becomes a recitation of the ritual names of the various domains of the eastern side of the island.

This version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* proceeds as follows (continuing with the numbering from before the interruption):

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|------|---------------------------------|--|
| 111. | <i>Ana fe luli a mai</i>        | He causes a cyclone to come            |
| 112. | <i>De luli neu liun dalek</i>   | The cyclone moves on the sea's depths  |
| 113. | <i>Ma ana fe sangu mai</i>      | And he causes a storm to come          |
| 114. | <i>De sangu neu sain dalek.</i> | The storm moves on the ocean's depths. |
| 115. | <i>De sain neu napode</i>       | The ocean moves, extending forth       |
| 116. | <i>Ma liun neu naedo</i>        | The sea moves, exuding forth           |
| 117. | <i>De edo heni Suti nggina</i>  | Exuding forth Suti's pod               |
| 118. | <i>Ma pode heni Bina atena.</i> | Extending forth Bina's liver.          |
| 119. | <i>Nate inaka Pasa Paku</i>     | The woman Pasa Paku                    |
| 120. | <i>Ma fetoka Finga Fiti</i>     | And the girl Finga Fiti                |

121. *[Ana] tu Kokolo Dulu* She marries Kokolo Dulu  
 122. *Ma ana sao Manupui Peda.* And she weds Manupui Peda.  
 123. *De Manupui Peda osina* Manupui Peda's garden  
 124. *Ma Kokolo Dulu tinana.* Kokolo Dulu's field.  
 125. *Tauk-ala mofa ndana* The indigo grows grey branches  
 126. *Ma abas-ala sai oka.* The cotton lets out its tendrils.  
 127. *Boe ma inaka Pasa Paku* The woman Pasa Paku  
 128. *Ma fetok Finga Fiti* And the girl Finga Fiti  
 129. *Ana pena na abasa* She picks the cotton  
 130. *De naleo nan.* And draws it out.  
 131. *Tehu ifa binan bei ta* But there is no winding stick shell  
 132. *Ma tena taun bei ta.* And there is no indigo pot.  
 133. *Boe ma neu seko pepepi oli* So she goes to scoop deliberately in the estuary  
 134. *Ma ndai ndondolo le* And she goes to fish steadily in the river  
 135. *De neu hapu Suti louna* She finds Suti's shell  
 136. *Ma neu tongo Bina louna.* And she encounters Bina's shell.  
 137. *Boe ma ana hai neni Suti louna* She picks up Suti's shell  
 138. *Ma ana tenga neni Bina louna, fe mai* And she takes up Bina's shell, bringing it back  
 139. *De besaka ana dipo ine* Then she turns the spindle on its base  
 140. *Ma ana lole aba.* And she winds the cotton.  
 141. *Boe ma kolu tauk* So she picks the indigo  
 142. *De ana dopo lifu,* She stirs the liquid,  
 143. *De tao neu Suti dea-na* She puts it into Suti's outside  
 144. *Le'a na abasa.* Draws the cotton forth.  
 145. *De ana dadi aba do.* It becomes cotton thread.  
 146. *Boe ma ana lolo nan,* So she stretches it out,  
 147. *De ana dadi futus.* It becomes a bundle of thread.  
 148. *Boe ma ana du'a sanga manabenge.* So she thinks and plans to be the one who ties.  
 149. *Inaka Kuku Dula* The woman Kuku Dula  
 150. *Boe ma pila nggeon,* She wishes to use red and black dyes,

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|------|---|---|
| 151. | <i>Fetoka Lima Le'u.</i>                        | The girl Lima Le'u.                             |
| 152. | <i>Kuku Dula ana henge nan ndia dale dulak,</i> | Kuku Dula ties a pattern in it,                 |
| 153. | <i>De ana tao nan,</i>                          | So she works it through,                        |
| 154. | <i>De ana dadi futus.</i>                       | It becomes a bundle of thread.                  |
| 155. | <i>Tebu pila-nggeon bei ta.</i>                 | But it is not yet red and black.                |
| 156. | <i>Boe ma inaka Lima Le'u,</i>                  | So the woman Lima Le'u,                         |
| 157. | <i>Ana tao pilana</i>                           | She makes it red                                |
| 158. | <i>Fo pila manukudu-na</i>                      | Making it <i>morinda</i> -red                   |
| 159. | <i>Ma ana tao nggeona</i>                       | And she makes it black                          |
| 160. | <i>Fo tao nggeo tau isi-na.</i>                 | Making it indigo-black.                         |
| 161. | <i>Tata nan boe ma.</i>                         | When this is done.                              |
| 162. | <i>Boe ma ala sanga ina manando selu</i>        | Then they seek a woman who can work the shuttle |
| 163. | <i>Ma feto mananggiti atis.</i>                 | And a girl who can weave on a loom.             |
| 164. | <i>De ala losa Dulu Balaha oli-na</i>           | They go to the estuary of Dulu Balaha           |
| 165. | <i>Fo losa Diu Dulu</i>                         | All the way to Diu Dulu                         |
| 166. | <i>Ma Langa Mangaledo le-na</i>                 | And to the river of Langa Mangaledo             |
| 167. | <i>Fo losa Kana Langa.</i>                      | All the way to Kana Langa.                      |
| 168. | <i>Ina bei Lata Nae la</i>                      | The woman still at Lata Nae                     |
| 169. | <i>Inaka Adu Pinga</i>                          | The woman Adu Pinga                             |
| 170. | <i>Ma [feto] bei Pinga Dai la</i>               | And the girl still at Pinga Dai                 |
| 171. | <i>Fetoka Leo Lapa</i>                          | The girl Leo Lapa                               |
| 172. | <i>Lole halana neu</i>                          | Raises her voice                                |
| 173. | <i>Ma selu dasi na neu, nae:</i>                | And lifts her words, saying:                    |
| 174. | <i>'Ah, au ta alelak tetenuka.</i>              | 'I do not know how to weave.                    |
| 175. | <i>De nggele boo nggenggele</i>                 | Rage, do not rage                               |
| 176. | <i>Ma nasa boo mamasana.'</i>                   | Angry, do not be angry.'                        |
| 177. | <i>Boe ma besak fetoka Kuku Dula</i>            | So then the girl Kuku Dula                      |
| 178. | <i>Ma inaka Lima Le'u</i>                       | And the woman Lima Le'u                         |
| 179. | <i>Latane seluk bai</i>                         | They ask once again                             |
| 180. | <i>Fo latane manatenu</i>                       | Asking for someone who can weave                |

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181. *Ma ala teteni seluk bai* And request once again
182. *Fo teteni managgiti atis.* Requesting someone who can weave on a loom.
183. *Boe ma leo Dulu Balaha olina* So at the estuary of Dulu Balaha
184. *Fo Pota Popo delan* Is Pota Popo's *delas* tree
185. *Ma Langa Mangaledo le-na* And at Langa Mangaledo's river
186. *Fo Solu Oebau nitan* Is Solu Oebau's *nitas* tree
187. *Leu te inaka Menge Solu* There the woman Menge Solu
188. *Ana ndo selu nai ndia* She works the shuttle there
189. *Fetoka Li Pota* The girl Li Pota
190. *Ana nggiti ati nai ndia.* She weaves on the loom there.
191. *Besaka inaka Kuku Dula* Now the woman Kuku Dula
192. *De fetoka Lima Le'u fe futusa neu.* And the girl Lima Le'u gives her the thread bundle.
193. *De inaka Menge Solu* The woman Menge Solu
194. *Ma fetoka Li Pota, ana tenun.* And the girl Li Pota, she weaves.
195. *De ana tenu nan dadi pou* She weaves it to become a woman's cloth
196. *Fo lae pou dula selu-kolo* They call this woman's cloth the *selu-kolo* pattern
197. *Ma ana tenu nan dadi lafa* And she weaves it to become a man's cloth
198. *Fo lae lafa dula tema-nggik* They call this man's cloth the *tema-nggik* pattern
199. *Losa faik ia.* To this day.
200. *Pou dula selu-kolo la* Women's cloths with the *selu-kolo* pattern
201. *Bei lai Dulu Balaha olin* Are still [found] at the Dulu Balaha's estuary
202. *Fo bei lai Diu Dulu* Still at Diu Dulu
203. *Ma lafa langa tema-nggika la* And men's cloths with the *tema-nggik* pattern
204. *[Bei] lai Langa Mangaledo le-na* Are still [found] at Langa Mangaledo's river
205. *Fo bei Kana Langa* Still at Kana Langa
206. *Fo bei lai Bolo Tena* Still at Bolo Tena

207.	<i>Ma bei lai Soti Mori</i>	And still at Soti Mori
208.	<i>Bei lai Londa Lusi</i>	Still at Londa Lusi
209.	<i>Ma bei lai Batu Bela</i>	And still at Batu Bela
210.	<i>Bei lai Tua Nae</i>	Still at Tua Nae
211.	<i>Ma bei lai Selu Beba</i>	And still at Selu Beba
212.	<i>Bei lai Fai Fua</i>	Still at Fai Fua
213.	<i>Ma bei lai Ledo Sou</i>	And still at Ledo Sou
214.	<i>Bei lai Oe Manu</i>	Still at Oe Manu
215.	<i>Ma bei lai Kunu Iko</i>	And still at Kunu Iko
216.	<i>Leo faik ia</i>	To this day
217.	<i>Ma leo ledok ia.</i>	And to this time.
218.	<i>Pou dula selu-kolo</i>	The woman's cloths with <i>selu-kolo</i> pattern
219.	<i>Do lafa langa tema-nggikala</i>	Or the men's cloths with <i>tema-nggik</i> pattern
220.	<i>Bei lai Diu Dulu</i>	Are still [found] in Diu Dulu
221.	<i>Ma bei lai Kana Langa</i>	And are still [found] in Kana Langa
222.	<i>Fo bei lai Lamak-anan fo losa faika.</i>	Still [found] in Lamak-anan to this day.

## Composition Analysis: Malesi Versions I and II—Old Meno—Seu Ba'i Comparisons

Malesi's second version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* consists of 222 lines. If one adds the additional 10 lines with which he began his recitation, the entire chant extends for 232 lines. It is shorter than Meno's composition (299 lines) but longer than either Seu Ba'i's composition (209 lines) or his own first version (164 lines) of this chant. It is composed on the basis of 75 dyadic sets and shares 23 sets with Meno's version, 19 sets with Seu Ba'i's version and 28 sets with the first version of his composition.<sup>4</sup> Although there are a few passages that closely resemble his first version,

4 In counting the number of dyadic sets for each composition, ritual names are not included. In Meno's composition with its dyadic genealogies and in Malesi's second recitation with its interwoven succession of ritually named people and places, there are a considerable number of additional dyadic sets.

the composition as a whole is a distinctive chant. As an origin chant, it is in accord with Meno's composition in linking the use of the shells to spinning and dyeing. In this, it is more explicit than Meno's composition, but in the naming of places and of textile patterns, it points to eastern Rote, whereas Meno's composition, though not explicit, suggests an association with western Rote.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the evident difference among these four chants, it is useful to focus, at least initially, on compositional similarities. Perhaps most notable are the opening lines of both of Malesi's versions, which are similar and, in certain formulaic phrases, virtually identical to the passages in Meno's and Seu Ba'i's compositions.

The opening lines of both of Malesi's versions describe the storm that expels the shells—or, more specifically, expels the 'insides' of these shells. The first version consists of four lines; the second has six lines. The first two lines in each passage are identical.

### Malesi I

- |    |                                |  |
|----|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. | <i>Luli nala liun dale</i>     | A storm arises in the ocean's depths     |
| 2. | <i>Ma sangu nala sain dale</i> | And a cyclone arises in the sea's depths |
| 3. | <i>Bina nama-toko isi</i>      | Bina puts out its insides                |
| 4. | <i>Suti nama-edo nggi</i>      | Suti exudes its pods                     |

### Malesi II

- |    |                                  |   |
|----|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. | <i>Luli nala liun dalek</i>      | A storm arises in the ocean's depths      |
| 2. | <i>Ma sangu nala sain dalek.</i> | And a cyclone arises in the sea's depths. |
| 3. | <i>Liun neu na-edo</i>           | The ocean exudes                          |
| 4. | <i>Ma sain neu na-pode.</i>      | The sea puts forth.                       |
| 5. | <i>De pode heni Suti aten</i>    | It puts forth Suti's liver                |
| 6. | <i>Ma edo heni Bina nggin.</i>   | And it exudes Bina's pods.                |

Meno and Seu Ba'i rely on a similar phrasing.

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5 This is a judgement that cannot be made on the basis of Meno's version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* alone, but rather in the context of his recitation of the origin of weaving, which constitutes a separate composition.

## Meno

56. *Boe ma sangu nala liun dale* A storm striking the ocean's depths  
 57. *Ma luli nala sain dale.* And a cyclone striking the sea's depths.  
 58. *Boe ma besak ka Suti lama-  
edo nggi* Now Suti exudes his pods  
 59. *Ma Bina lamatoko-isi* And Bina puts out his insides

## Seu Ba'i

202. *De luli nala liun dale* A storm strikes the ocean depths  
 203. *Ma sangu nala sain dale* And a cyclone strikes the sea depths  
 204. *Liun dale na-hopo* The ocean depths are upset  
 205. *Ma sain dale na-foki.* The sea depths are shaken.  
 206. *Boe te Suti nama-toko isi* So Suti expels his insides  
 207. *Ma Bina [nama-]edo nggi* And Bina exudes his pods

In their first lines, all three poets combine the set *luli/sangu* with the set *liun/sain*. Malesi and Seu Ba'i combine *luli* with *liun* and *sangu* with *sain* to create an alliterative formula, whereas Meno does not. The rules of composition allow either possibility.

Interestingly, in his first version, Malesi combines the set *-tokol/-edo* with the set *isi/nggi*. This is the same formulaic combination as Meno and Seu Ba'i use. In his second version, however, Malesi uses a different combination of sets: *-edol/-pode* with *atel/nggi*. This combination allows him to use the same verbal set, *-edol/-pode*, to describe the eruption of the sea and expulsion of the shells' insides.

Another similarity in composition across all versions is one that describes the scoop-net used to fish forth Suti Solo do Bina Bane. All compositions refer to this simple apparatus, with the same recognisable formula, as 'a scoop-net with iron-weighted insides'/'a fishnet with gold-weighted belly' (*seko matei besi/ndai mahamu lilok*).

## Malesi I

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

## Malesi II

- |     |                                |   |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|
| 11. | <i>Tenga na ndai tasina</i>    | She takes a fishnet for the sea           |
| 12. | <i>Ndai mahamu lilok</i>       | A fishnet with a gold-weighted belly      |
| 13. | <i>Ma nggao na seko metina</i> | And she picks up a scoop-net for the tide |
| 14. | <i>Seko matei besik</i>        | A scoop-net with iron-weighted insides    |

## Meno

- |     |                                  |   |
|-----|----------------------------------|---|
| 87. | <i>De ala teli kokolo ndai</i>   | They string and wind a fishnet            |
| 88. | <i>De ndai mahamu lilok.</i>     | A fishnet with a gold-weighted belly.     |
| 89. | <i>Ma ala ane seko, bui seko</i> | They braid a scoop-net, twine a scoop-net |
| 90. | <i>De seko matei besik.</i>      | A scoop-net with iron-weighted insides.   |

## Seu Ba'i

- |     |                                    |   |
|-----|------------------------------------|---|
| 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. |

## Compositional Comparison: Malesi I – Malesi II

The most noticeable differences between Malesi's two versions are in the way in which the dialogue directives to the shells are reworked. Malesi's first version contains five distinct proposals directing the shells to: 1) house post//cross beam, 2) syrup vat//rice basket, 3) boundary tree//border stone, 4) *kumea* grass//*kuku* shrub, and 5) forest cuckoo//river watercock. The fifth proposal directs the shells to follow the cuckoo and watercock through the forest and along the river to 'the estuary's edge and river's bank' and then out to sea.

Malesi's second version retains the rice basket//syrup vat directive but not the boundary tree//border stone or the *kumea* grass//*kuku* shrub directives. Instead, in his second version, Malesi introduces a new directive to go with the trees' shade//lontar palms' shadow—a directive also used by Meno in his chant. Malesi also recomposes the long directive in his first version to

follow the forest cuckoo and river watercock into two separate directives: first to the cuckoo//watercock and then to the river bank//estuary's edge. In his second version, Malesi's four directives are the following:

- |     |                              |  |
|-----|------------------------------|--|
| 49. | <i>Meu mo neka hade</i>      | 'Go with the rice basket               |
| 50. | <i>Ma meu mo bou tuana.'</i> | And go with the lontar syrup vat.'     |
| 63. | <i>'Mu mo doa-lasi</i>       | 'Go with the forest cuckoo             |
| 64. | <i>Ma mo koloba'o le.'</i>   | And with the river woodcock.'          |
| 79. | <i>'Mu mo mafo ai'</i>       | 'Go with the trees' shade              |
| 80. | <i>Ma mu mo sa'o tua.'</i>   | And go with the lontar palms' shadow.' |
| 97. | <i>'Ah, mu oli titian</i>    | 'Ah, go along the estuary's edge       |
| 98. | <i>Ma mu le tatain</i>       | And go along the river's bank          |

Comparison of Malesi's composition of the directives to rice basket//syrup vat in the two versions is particularly instructive. The eight lines of these two compositions are virtually identical except for the use of two particular dyadic sets. The two compositions are as follows:

### Malesi I

- |     |                                     |                                      |
|-----|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 73. | <i>'Mu no bou tua</i>               | 'Go with the lontar syrup vat        |
| 74. | <i>Ma mu mo neka hade.'</i>         | And go with the rice basket.'        |
| 75. | <i>Bina Bane kokolak</i>            | Bina Bane speaks                     |
| 76. | <i>Ma Suti Solo dede'ak ma nae:</i> | And Suti Solo replies and says:      |
| 77. | <i>'Malole la so</i>                | 'That would be good                  |
| 78. | <i>Ma mandak kala so.</i>           | And that would be proper.            |
| 79. | <i>Bou tua na tono<sup>6</sup></i>  | [But if] the syrup vat is overturned |
| 80. | <i>Ma neka hade lulunu</i>          | And the rice basket is rolled up     |
| 81. | <i>Na au asalai o se</i>            | Then with whom will I recline        |
| 82. | <i>Ma au angatu o se?'</i>          | And with whom will I sit?'           |

### Malesi II

- |     |                              |                                    |
|-----|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 49. | <i>Meu mo neka hade</i>      | 'Go with the rice basket           |
| 50. | <i>Ma meu mo bou tuana.'</i> | And go with the lontar syrup vat.' |

6 It is worth noting that here one would expect the semi-reduplicated form *totono* in order to conform with the semi-reduplicated *lulunu*. Whether this is simply a minor mistake in performance or, possibly, a mistake in the transcription of Malesi's words cannot be determined.

- |     |                                     |                                   |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 51. | <i>Boe ma Suti Solo nafada</i>      | Then Suti Solo talks              |
| 52. | <i>Ma Bina Bane kokolak ma nae:</i> | And Bina Bane speaks and says:    |
| 53. | <i>Ah, malole la so</i>             | 'Ah, that would be good           |
| 54. | <i>Ma mandak kala so</i>            | And that would be proper          |
| 55. | <i>[Te] bou tua la heok</i>         | But if the lontar syrup vats turn |
| 56. | <i>Ma neka hade la keko</i>         | And if the rice baskets shift     |
| 57. | <i>Na au asalai o se</i>            | Then with whom shall I recline    |
| 58. | <i>Ma au angatu o se?</i>           | And with whom shall I sit?        |

Where in lines 75–76, Malesi uses the set *kokolak//dede'ak* ('to speak'/'to reply'), in lines 51–52 of his second version, he uses an alternative set, *kokolak//na-fada* ('to speak'/'to talk').

Similarly, but more unusually, where in lines 79–80, Malesi uses the common set *tono//lunu* ('to overturn'/'to roll up'), whereas in lines 55–56 he uses the set *heok//keko* ('to turn aside'/'to shift').

Both Meno and Seu Ba'i use the formulaic set *tono//lunu* in their compositions, as does Malesi in his first version.

## Meno

- |      |                           |                                    |
|------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 165. | <i>Fo bou lo totonon</i>  | So that the vat must be overturned |
| 166. | <i>Ma soka no lulunun</i> | And the sack must be rolled up     |

## Seu Ba'i

- |     |                           |                                     |
|-----|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 78. | <i>Fo soka lo lulunun</i> | So that the sacks must be rolled up |
| 80. | <i>Fo bou lo totonon</i>  | So that the vats must be overturned |

Malesi's use of *heok//keko* is highly idiosyncratic. The verb *keko* generally occurs in two sets, either with *lali* (*keko//lali*), when describing the transfer of a bride after marriage, or with *hiluk*, in reference to the shifting of shadows, as in the directive regarding the lontar palms' shadow//trees' shade.

Meno, for example, uses the set *keko//hiluk*:

- |      |                                |                                 |
|------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 186. | <i>Te leo mafa ai la hiluk</i> | But if the trees' shade recedes |
| 187. | <i>Ma sa'o tua la keko</i>     | And the lontars' shadow shifts  |

By contrast, Malesi Version II uses the set *heok//hiluk*:

85. *Mafo ai la heok* [If] the trees' shade turns aside  
 86. *Ma sa'o ai la hiluk* And the lontar palms' shadow recedes

In all of the chants I have gathered from Termanu, this is the only occurrence of *keko//heok* as a set. The use of this set has to be considered idiosyncratic and not part of recognisable formulaic convention.

Malesi's use in both versions of the set *nasa-lai//na-ngatu* ('to recline'/'to sit') in the shells' plaintive refrain 'with whom shall I recline//with whom shall I sit' is distinctive of his composition but the use of this set is not uncommon.

Both Meno and Seu Ba'i use the plaintive query about speaking in their compositions. Thus in Meno, the shells utter this refrain:

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?

By contrast, Malesi Version II uses a refrain that evokes a sense of resting in a secure location:

39. *'De au Suti, au o se* 'Then I, Suti, with whom will I be  
 40. *Fo asalai o se* On whom will I recline  
 41. *Ma au Bina, au o se* And I, Bina, with whom will I be  
 42. *Fo au angatu'u o se?* With whom will I sit?

In cultural terms, reclining and sitting are closely linked; reclining, however, is superior to sitting. In a traditional house, the head of the household is entitled to recline on a resting platform located at the eastern end of the house. This honour may also be accorded to an esteemed guest, whereas most guests will sit on other raised platforms arrayed under the extended roof of the house. Standing is reserved for those outside or for those who serve within the house.

## The Second Half of Malesi's Composition: An Origin Chant

Malesi's second version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is, in effect, two chants. The first 110 lines are a mortuary chant conceived as a metaphoric journey of two shells through a variety of symbolic locations from the sea and back to the sea; the second 115 lines are an origin chant that recounts the transformation of these same two shells—the nautilus shell, Suti, into a container for dyes and the bailer shell, Bina, into a base on which to spin cotton. Although more explicit on the transformation of the shells than Meno's origin chant, much of the second half of Malesi's composition is elusive. It is a text that requires some exegesis to be deciphered.

The second half begins with the storm at sea and the expulsion of the shells, as do the first eight lines with which Malesi began his composition before starting over again. Malesi then introduces new chant characters. Instead of Kafi Dulu//Kule Langa, with his field of corn and millet, and the woman (presumably his wife) Sama Dai//Kuku Nou, in the first half, Malesi invokes Manupui Peda//Kokolo Dulu with his field of indigo and cotton and his wife, Pasa Paku//Finga Fiti. Manupui Peda//Kokolo Dulu is the same chant character identified in Meno's chant, but where Meno speaks of Nggiti Seti//Pedu Hange, Malesi has Pasa Paku//Finga Fiti. It is Pasa Paku//Finga Fiti who scoops Suti Solo//Bina Bane from the sea.

What follows is a narrative of the transformation of the two shells that runs from line 147 to line 163. These lines are, however, for the most part not in strict parallelism. They have the appearance of parallelism by the use of a number of canonical dyadic sets—*fetollina* ('girl'/'woman'), *nggeollpila* ('black'/'red') and the chant character Kuku Dula//Lima Le'u—but many seeming pairs in these lines do not follow the canon. Thus, for example, in line 139, *dipo ine* ('to turn the spinning stick on its base') should pair with *ifu lolek* ('to cradle the winding rack') (see Meno: lines 255–57); *kolu* ('to pick or pluck') should pair with *ketu* ('to break, pluck or snap').

The canonical format resumes with line 163 and continues, with a few orphan lines, to the end of the composition.<sup>7</sup> These lines describe a search for a woman who can weave the cloth that has been dyed by Kuku Dula//Lima Le'u. At first sight, they offer a confusing succession of both personal chant character names and specific place names. The place names, all in eastern Rote, form an ordered succession of identifiable locations—an interpretable topogeny of particular places.<sup>8</sup>

The whole of Rote is blanketed in ritual names. Some of these names are specific and only locally known; others are more generally known and are taken to represent the various domains and prominent landmarks on the island. Knowledge of these names is essential for all poets, but some poets, like Malesi, are noted for the extensive knowledge of these names and the frequent insertion of topogenies in their recitations.

In this recitation, Malesi identifies the initial area in which the search for a woman to weave begins:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 164. <i>De ala losa Dulu Balaha<br/>oli-na</i> | They go to the estuary of Dulu Balaha |
| 165. <i>Fo losa Diu Dulu</i>                   | All the way to Diu Dulu               |
| 166. <i>Ma Langa Mangaledo le-na</i>           | And to the river of Langa Mangaledo   |
| 167. <i>Fo losa Kana Langa.</i>                | All the way to Kana Langa.            |

Dulu Balaha//Langa Mangaledo refers to eastern Rote.<sup>9</sup> Diu Dulu//Kana Langa refers to the domain of Diu located to the east of Termanu. Both names are formed around the same set, *dulu//langa*, which links the idea of 'east' (*dulu*) with the 'head' (*langa*) of the island. The island extends physically in an east–west direction, so that by a similar directional

7 Even though line 156 is an 'orphan' line ('So the woman Lima Le'u'), its pair ('And the girl Kuku Dula') is implied by the use of these same lines just a few lines earlier. (Another 'orphan' line occurs at line 174.)

8 I have coined the word 'topogeny' to refer to the recitation of an ordered succession of place names, the equivalent to a genealogy, which consists of the recitation of an ordered succession of personal names. See Fox (1997b). In this article, as an example of a topogeny, I examine an origin chant by Malesi that recounts the origin of rice and millet and includes a topogeny of 32 distinct places that moves in a cycle around the island of Rote from the ritual site Tena Lai//Mae Oe, in eastern Rote, which is mentioned in virtually all versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, back to this same ritual site.

9 Translated literally, *Dulu Balaha//Langa Mangaledo* means 'East Tomorrow//Head Dawning'. Another name for eastern Rote is Timu Dulu ma Sepe Langa, which, translated, literally would be 'Eastern East//Brightening Head'. See Fox (1973: 356–64) for a further discussion of the Rotenese orientation system and its ritual significance.

logic the ‘west’ (*muli*) is linked with the ‘tail’ (*iko*) of the island. Rote is often spoken of as if it were a living creature—generally associated with the body of a crocodile floating in the sea. Thus, Rote’s southern coast (*kona*) is synonymous with ‘right’ (*kona*) and its northern coast (*ki*) is synonymous with ‘left’ (*ki*). Ritual names often reflect this quadripartite orientation/directional system.

The first woman to be contacted, Adu Pinga//Leo Lapa, at the site Lata Nae//Pinga Dai, apparently within the domain of Diu, states that she cannot weave, so Kuku Dulu//Lima Le’u go to find the woman Menge Solu//Li Pota, the daughter of Solu Oebau//Pota Popo. This woman is able to weave and she creates a special design pattern, *selu-kolo*, on the woman’s cloth that she weaves and another design pattern, *tema-nggi*, on the man’s cloth she weaves.<sup>10</sup> This pattern, Malesi asserts, is still found in the domain of Diu and in other domains in eastern Rote. This assertion is then reiterated in a short topogeny that recalls the names of the different domains of eastern Rote:

- |    |                              |         |
|----|------------------------------|---------|
| 1. | <i>Bolo Tena//Soti Mori</i>  | Landu   |
| 2. | <i>Londa Lusi//Batu Bela</i> | Ringgou |
| 3. | <i>Tua Nae//Selu Beba</i>    | Ringgou |
| 4. | <i>Fai Fua//Ledo Sou</i>     | Oepao   |
| 5. | <i>Oe Manu//Kunu Iko?</i>    | Bilba?  |
| 6. | <i>Diu Dulu//Kana Langa</i>  | Diu     |

As a poet, Pe’u Malesi demonstrates his standing as a ‘man of knowledge’ through recitations that explicitly embrace the island of Rote as a whole rather than simply the domain of Termanu.

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10 Neither *tema-nggi* nor *selu-kolo* is a textile pattern in Termanu, but since both *tema* and *kolo* occur in the names of various birds, there would appear to be some association of these patterns with bird-like motifs.

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.