

9

Suti Solo do Bina Bane: Versions VIII and IX from the Domain of Termanu

In 2010, some 45 years after I began my research on Rote, much had changed in Termanu. Most of the poets whose compositions I recorded had died and what remained of their poetry were memories and my recordings. One poet, Esau Markus Pono, whom I first met in 1965, spanned this period of change and was, at the time, regarded as Termanu's leading chanter. In 1965, 'Pak Pono' lived in the coastal settlement of Hala, a walk of some 40 minutes from the cluster of settlements, Sosa-Dale, Ufa-Len and Kola, where my wife and I were located. As a young man at that time, Pak Pono was involved in a protracted and eventually unsuccessful attempt to marry a woman from the clan Nggofa-Laik. We met and knew of each other but had no close association. By 1973, on my next long stay on Rote, Pak Pono had married and had begun to establish his reputation as a preacher and a poet. At that time, I was involved in sponsoring the final mortuary ceremony—erecting a ring of stones around a large living tree to create a *tutus*—in honour of Old Meno and needed someone to act as primary speaker at this ritual.¹

Pak Pono was the ideal person for this task because of his evident speaking skills and because, as a preacher, his presence would allay any Christian objections to my reviving so significant a traditional ritual. I was also

1 I have described this ceremony and set out, in detail, the background to it in Fox (1989).

interested in acquiring animals for the accompanying feast and was able to barter my watch for Pak Pono's largest pig. His performance at the *tutus* ceremony established what was to become our continuing relationship.

Some years later, in 1977 and again in 1978, I visited Rote with the filmmaker Tim Asch. By this time, Pak Pono was widely recognised for his use of ritual language in his preaching, and we were able to film him conducting a church service.² He was also a member of the groom's party in a bridewealth payment ceremony that we filmed. As a result of his close involvement in our filming efforts, we invited him for a visit to Canberra to help in the preparation of the film.³ One of his tasks was to transcribe a great deal of Rotenese that we recorded during filming.

By the 1980s, Pak Pono and I had become close friends and on all subsequent visits to Rote, he was my first point of contact in Termanu. For the past 30 years, as his own skills as an accomplished poet increased, he became my most dedicated advisor on all matters relating to ritual language. On all occasions when I gathered poets for recording sessions on Bali, he joined the group. In short, we two grew old together in a continual effort to document the beauty and intricacies of Rotenese ritual language.

Although I had heard Pak Pono recite *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* to other poets, I did not record him directly until 2008, and having recorded him in 2008, I asked to record him again (and video him at the same time) in 2009. With an interval of only a year, his two versions are similar to one another. Neither version is long. The 2008 version runs to 126 lines; the 2009 version is somewhat longer and comes to 150 lines. The 2008 version comprises 50 dyadic sets; the 2009 version shares 48 sets with the 2008 version but utilises a dozen additional dyadic sets including several additional longer formulae.

2 I have written on Pak Pono's use of ritual language in his preaching in Fox (1982).

3 A film was made of the bridewealth payment ceremony, *Spear and Sword: A Payment of Bridewealth* (Fox with Asch and Asch 1988), but no film was ever made from the footage of the church service. All of the footage is stored in the archives of the Smithsonian Institution.



Figure 9: Esau Markus Pono – ‘Pak Pono’

As compositions, the two versions are worth comparing one with the other: their use of constituent dyadic sets, their order of composition and their reliance on recognisable formulae can provide further insights into the art of composition.

I will therefore compare the two compositions in sequence with one another.

Introduction and Search for the Ritual Fish

2008 Version

1. *Faik esa manunin* On one particular day
2. *Do ledok esa mate'e-na* Or one certain time
3. *Inaka Mo Bisa* The woman Mo Bisa
4. *Ma fetoka Ole Masi* And the girl Ole Masi
5. *Ana nggao na seko meti-na* She takes up her tidal scoop-net
6. *Fo seko matei besin* The scoop-net with iron-weighted insides
7. *Ma tenga na ndai tasi-na* And picks up her sea fishing net
8. *Fo ndai mahamu lilo-na.* The fishing net with gold-weighted belly.
9. *De leu seko sisi'u enggak* They go to scoop lift the *enggak* seaweed
10. *Ma leu ndai hubuka batu.* And they go to uncover the rocks.
11. *De seko sanga Dusu La'e* They scoop in search of Dusu La'e fish
12. *Ma leu ndai sanga Tio Holu.* And they go to fish in search of Tio Holu fish.
13. *De ala ndai basa namo-la* They fish in all the harbours
14. *Ma seko basa lek-ala.* And they scoop in all the waterholes.
15. *Te ta hapu Tio Holu* But do not find Tio Holu
16. *Ma ta hapu Dusu La'e.* And do not find Dusu La'e.

2009 Version

1. *Au kokolak Suti Solo* I speak of Suti Solo
2. *Ma au dede'ak Bina Bane.* And I tell of Bina Bane.
3. *Neu faik esa manunina* On one particular day
4. *Ma ledok esa mate'ena,* And at a certain time,
5. *Boe ma inaka Mo Bisa* The woman Mo Bisa
6. *Ma fetoka Masi Tasi* And the girl Masi Tasi
7. *Tenga la ndai tasi-na* Pick up their sea fishing net
8. *Ma nggao la seko meti-na* And take up their tidal scoop-net
9. *Fo seko matei besik* The scoop-net with iron-weighted insides

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|--|
| 10. | <i>Ma ndai mahamu lilok.</i> | And the fishing net with gold-weighted belly. |
| 11. | <i>Neu lelek fo meti la si unu</i> | At a time when the tide begins to ebb |
| 12. | <i>Ma tasi la buka papa</i> | And the sea shows its shallows |
| 13. | <i>Boe duas leu seko meti</i> | The two go to scoop in the tide |
| 14. | <i>Ma duas leu ndai tasi.</i> | And the two go to fish in the sea. |
| 15. | <i>Leu seko sisi'u enggak</i> | Go to scoop and lift the <i>enggak</i> seaweed |
| 16. | <i>Ma leu ndai huhuka batu,</i> | And go to fish and uncover the rocks, |
| 17. | <i>Seko sanga Dusu La'e</i> | Scoop in search of Dusu La'e fish |
| 18. | <i>Ma ndai sanga Tio Holu.</i> | And fish in search of Tio Holu fish. |
| 19. | <i>Tehu ala seko basa lifu la</i> | But they scoop in all the pools |
| 20. | <i>Ma ala ndai basa lek ala,</i> | And they fish in all the waterholes, |
| 21. | <i>Te ta hapu Tio Holu</i> | But they do not find Tio Holu |
| 22. | <i>Ma ta hapu Dusu La'e.</i> | And do not find Dusu La'e. |

The Gathering of Suti Solo do Bina Bane

2008 Version

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 17. | <i>Te lala lifu dua na</i> | But when they look in two pools |
| 18. | <i>Suti nala lifu dua</i> | Suti is in the two pools |
| 19. | <i>Ma lala lek telu</i> | And when they look in three waterholes |
| 20. | <i>Na Bina nala lek telu.</i> | Bina is in the three waterholes. |
| 21. | <i>Boe ma ala seko ndano
leni Suti</i> | So they scoop up and take Suti |
| 22. | <i>Ma ala ndai ndano leni Bina.</i> | And they fish forth and take Bina. |

2009 Version

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| 23. | <i>Te ala seko lala lifu dua</i> | But when they scoop in two pools |
| 24. | <i>Na Bina nala lifu dua</i> | Bina is in the two pools |
| 25. | <i>Ma ndai lala lek telu</i> | And when they fish in three waterholes |
| 26. | <i>Na Suti nala lek telu.</i> | Suti is in the three waterholes. |
| 27. | <i>Boe ma ala dudu'a</i> | So they ponder |

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 28. | <i>Ma ala a'afi</i> | And they think |
| 29. | <i>De lae le baik</i> | It would be better if |
| 30. | <i>Seko teni Suti Solo</i> | We scoop and take Suti Solo |
| 31. | <i>Ma ndai teni Bina Bane.</i> | And we fish and take Bina Bane. |
| 32. | <i>Boe ma ala ndai ndano</i> | So they fish forth |
| 33. | <i>Leni Bina Bane</i> | Taking Bina Bane |
| 34. | <i>Ma ala seko toko</i> | And they scoop up |
| 35. | <i>Leni Suti Solo.</i> | Taking Suti Solo. |

Initial Dialogue and First Directive

2008 Version

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|---|
| 23. | <i>De ala mai dalak dua bobongo</i> | They come to where two roads circle |
| 24. | <i>Ma mai enok telu tai lolona.</i> | And come to where three paths cross. |
| 25. | <i>Boe ma Suti neu kokolak</i> | Suti begins to speak |
| 26. | <i>Ma Bina neu dede'ak, nae:</i> | And Bina begins to talk, saying: |
| 27. | <i>'Ndele mafa ndendelek</i> | 'Remember, do remember |
| 28. | <i>Ma nesa masa nanedak</i> | And keep in mind, do keep in mind |
| 29. | <i>Bo inango nou</i> | My dear mother |
| 30. | <i>Ma bo te'ongo nei</i> | And my dear aunt |
| 31. | <i>O mu losa lo</i> | [When] you go to your home |
| 32. | <i>Ma o mu nduku uma</i> | And you go to your house |
| 33. | <i>Na boso masu ndalu au</i> | Do not smoke me |
| 34. | <i>Ma boso pila nuli au,</i> | And do not burn me, |
| 35. | <i>Te au daehena</i> | For I am a human being |
| 36. | <i>Ma au ia hataboli.</i> | And I am indeed a person. |
| 37. | <i>Au ia ana-mak</i> | I am indeed an orphan |
| 38. | <i>Ma au ia falu-inak.'</i> | And I am indeed a widow.' |
| 39. | <i>Boe ma ala kokolak</i> | So they speak |
| 40. | <i>Ma ala dede'ak ma lae:</i> | And they talk, saying: |
| 41. | <i>'Sona mu dalak dua bobongon</i> | 'Then go to where two roads circle |
| 42. | <i>Ma mu enok telu tai lolon.'</i> | And go to where the three paths cross.' |

43. *Boe ma Suti Solo do Bina Bane* So Suti Solo or Bina Bane
 44. *Ala kokolak* They speak
 45. *Ma ala dede'ak ma lae:* And they talk and say:
 46. *'Malole basa sila* 'All this is good
 47. *Ma mandak basa sila.* And all this is proper.
 48. *Tehu hataholi mai* But if people come
 49. *Ma daehena mai* And humans come
 50. *Na ala momolo tatabu ami* They will step and tread upon us
 51. *Na ami kokolak mo se* Then with whom will we speak
 52. *Ma ami dede'ak mo se?'* And with whom will we talk?'

2009 Version

36. *De ala mulai* They then begin
 37. *Ala tulek do ala falik,* They go back or they return,
 38. *Falik mai leo uma* Return to the home
 39. *Ma tulek mai leo lon.* And go back to the house.
 40. *De ala bela'o* As they go
 41. *Boe ma Suti ana dede'ak* Suti, he talks
 42. *Ma Bina ana kokolak, nae:* And Bina, he speaks, saying:
 43. *'Bo inango nou* 'My dear mother
 44. *Do bo te'ongo nou* Or my dear aunt
 45. *Neda masa-nenedak* Keep in mind, do keep in mind
 46. *Ma ndele mafu ndendelek* And remember, do remember
 47. *Fo teu losa uma sona,* When we reach the house,
 48. *Boso pila nuli ami* Do not burn us
 49. *Do boso masu ndalu ami,* Or do not smoke us,
 50. *Te ami ia dae-hena* For we indeed are human beings
 51. *Ma ami ia hataholi,* And we indeed are people,
 52. *Ami falu-ina Bina Bane la* We are the widows, Bina Bane
 53. *Ma ami ana-ma Suti Solo la.'* And we are the orphans, Suti Solo.'
 54. *Boe ma ala dede'ak* So they talk
 55. *Ma ala kokolak lo duas lae:* And they speak with the two, saying:
 56. *'Ita nai enok dua bobongon* 'We are where two paths circle

57. *Ma nai dalak telu tai lolona* And where three roads cross
 58. *Ela emi dua meme ia.* Let us leave you here.
 59. *Boe ma nae:* So he says:
 60. *'Malole ndia so* 'That would be good
 61. *Ma manda ndia so,* That would be proper,
 62. *Tebu daehena mai* But if humans come
 63. *Ma hataboli mai* And people come
 64. *Na ala momolo ami* They will step on us
 65. *Ma ala tatabu ami,* And they will tread on us,
 66. *Na ami maka bani neu se* Then on whom will we rely
 67. *Ma ami mama hena neu se?* And on whom will we depend?

Second Dialogue Directive

2008 Version

53. *Boe ma lae:* So they say:
 54. *'Sona mu mo sa'o tua* 'Then go be with the lontar shadow
 55. *Ma mu mo mafo ai.'* And go be with the tree shade.'
 56. *Boe ma Suti Solo nahala* So Suti Solo gives voice
 57. *Ma Bina Bane nadasi ma nae:* And Bina Bane lifts words and says:
 58. *'Ami [mo] mafo ai* 'We [can] go with the tree shade
 59. *Tē mafo ai la heok* But if the tree shade shifts
 60. *Ma ami mo sa'o tua* And we can go with the lontar shadow
 61. *Fo sa'o tua lahiluk.* But if the lontar shadow moves
 62. *Na ami kokolak mo se* Then with whom will we speak
 63. *Ma ami dede'ak mo se?* And with whom will we talk?'

2009 Version

68. *Boe ma lae:* So they say:
 69. *'Sona dua ma* 'So the two of you
 70. *Meu mo mafo tua* Go with lontar shade
 71. *Ma meu mo sa'o ai.'* And go with the tree shadow.'

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 72. | <i>Boe ma lae:</i> | Then they say: |
| 73. | <i>'Ndia boe o malole ndia</i> | 'That indeed would be good |
| 74. | <i>Tehu neu faik</i> | But during the day |
| 75. | <i>Mafō ai la beok</i> | If the tree shade shifts |
| 76. | <i>Ma sa'o tua hiluk,</i> | And the lontar shadow moves, |
| 77. | <i>Na ami kokolak mo se</i> | Then with whom will we speak |
| 78. | <i>Ma ami dede'ak mo se?'</i> | And with whom will we talk?' |

Third Dialogue Directive

2008 Version

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|--|
| 64. | <i>'Na sona mu mo neka hade</i> | 'Then go with the rice basket |
| 65. | <i>Ma mu mo bou tua.'</i> | And go with the lontar syrup vat.' |
| 66. | <i>Boe ma lae ndia:</i> | So they say this: |
| 67. | <i>'Boe o malole ndia so</i> | 'Oh, that would be good |
| 68. | <i>Ma mandak ndia so,</i> | And that would be proper, |
| 69. | <i>Tehu fui-ana la kae</i> | But if strangers climb up [into the house] |
| 70. | <i>Ma ae-ana la hene na</i> | And if neighbours ascend [into the house] |
| 71. | <i>Basa bou tua la</i> | The syrup vat will be finished |
| 72. | <i>Ma basa neka hade la.</i> | And the rice basket emptied, |
| 73. | <i>Na ami kokolak mo se</i> | Then with whom will we speak |
| 74. | <i>Ma ami dede'ak mo se?'</i> | And with whom will we talk?' |

2009 Version

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 79. | <i>Boe labala ma lae: 'A sona</i> | So they give voice and say: 'If so, |
| 80. | <i>Dua ma meu mo neka hade</i> | Then you two go with the rice basket |
| 81. | <i>Ma dua ma meu mo bou tua.'</i> | And you two go with the lontar syrup vat.' |
| 82. | <i>Boe ma lae:</i> | So they say: |
| 83. | <i>'Tete'ek ndia nde malole</i> | 'Truly, that would be good |
| 84. | <i>Ma na nde mandaka</i> | And that would be proper |
| 85. | <i>Tehu neu fai-na ma ledona</i> | But on a certain day and time |
| 86. | <i>Fo fui ana la kae</i> | If strangers climb [into the house] |

87. *Ma ae ana la hena* And neighbours ascend [into the house]
 88. *Na basa neka bade* Then the rice basket will be emptied
 89. *Ma basa bou tua,* And the syrup vat finished
 90. *Na ami mama hena neu se* Then on whom will we depend
 91. *Ma ami maka bani neu se?* And on whom will we rely?’

Fourth Dialogue Directive

2008 Version

75. *Boe ma nae:* So she says:
 76. *‘Mu mo lete nalu kala* ‘Go be with the high hills
 77. *Mu mo mo loa kala.’* And go be with the wide fields.’
 78. *Boe ma nae:* So he says:
 79. *‘Ndia boe malole* ‘That would be good
 80. *Ma ndia boe o manda-kala* And that would be proper
 81. *Tebu neu fai-na fo bote-la mai* But some day a flock of goats will come
 82. *Ma neu ledo na tena-la mai* And at a certain time a herd of buffalo will come
 83. *Fo ala hebeta [ami]* They will trample us into the mud
 84. *Ma habapa ami* And they will tread us into the dirt
 85. *Na ami dedé’ak mo se* Then with whom will we speak
 86. *Ma ami kokolak mo se?’* And with whom will we talk?’

2009 Version

92. *Boe ma nae: ‘Sona,* So she says: ‘If so,
 93. *Dua ma meu mo mo naluk* You two should go with the long field
 94. *Ma meu mo lete lepak.’* And go with the mountain ridge.’
 95. *Boe ma nae:* Then he says:
 96. *‘Auwe, sona ndia faik* ‘Oh dear, if that day
 97. *Fo bote la lama da’a mai* Goats come and scatter about
 98. *Ma tena la lama nggela main a* And buffalo come and spread out
 99. *Nau ta nau fa o* Wish it or not
 100. *Ala hebeta do habapa ami so,* They will tramp or tread upon us,

101. *Sona ami nama henak ta* For us, there is nothing to depend on
 102. *Ma ami naka banik ta.* And for us, there is nothing to rely upon.'

Fifth and Final Dialogue Directive

2008 Version

87. *'Sona mu le tatai-na* 'Then go to the edge of the river
 88. *Ma mu oli titiana* And go to the side of the estuary
 89. *Fo ela leo bena* So that it may be so
 90. *Faik fo betu doa lasi* Each day the forest cuckoos
 91. *Ala bedoa tunga lasi* They cry *doa-doa* through the forest
 92. *Na udan tunga lasi* As the rain comes through the forest
 93. *Ma koloba'o le la taona* And the river woodcocks do the same
 94. *Bebao tunga le* [They] cry *bao-bao* along the river
 95. *Na fa tunga-tunga le.* As the monsoon flood moves down the river.
 96. *Sona dilu mu sain dale* So that descending, you go into the sea
 97. *Ma loe mu liun dale.'* And lowering, you go into the ocean.'
 98. *Boe ma nae:* So he says:
 99. *'Malole ndia so* 'That would be good
 100. *Ma mandak ndia.* And that would be proper.
 101. *Fak ala foki le na* When the monsoon rains beat the river
 102. *Foki leni ami* They will beat and carry us
 103. *Meu leo sain dale* That we may go into the sea
 104. *Ma ami meu liun dale.* And we may go into the ocean.
 105. *De ami bonu boa fo liun* We will bob like *boa* wood to the ocean
 106. *Ma ami ele piko fo sain.'* And we will drift like *piko* wood to the sea.'

2009 Version

103. *Boe ma nae: 'Sona mai,* So she says: 'If that happens,
 104. *Fo meu le titiana* Then go to the side of the river

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 105. | <i>Ma meu oli tatai-na</i> | And go to the edge of the estuary |
| 106. | <i>Fo meu faik fo de'eka [?]</i> | So that you go each day |
| 107. | <i>Doa lasi la bedoa</i> | The forest cuckoos cry <i>doa-doa</i> |
| 108. | <i>Fo lae betu doa lasi la</i> | Thus the forest cuckoos |
| 109. | <i>Bedoa tunga lasi na</i> | They cry <i>doa-doa</i> through the forest |
| 110. | <i>Udan tunga tunga lasi,</i> | As the rain comes through the forest, |
| 111. | <i>Boe ma kolo ba'o le la</i> | So the river woodcocks along the river |
| 112. | <i>Ala beba'o tunga tunga le</i> | They cry <i>bae-bae</i> along the river |
| 113. | <i>Na fa tunga tunga le.</i> | And the monsoon flood moves down the river. |
| 114. | <i>De neu faik fo betu doa lasi la,</i> | So each day the forest cuckoos, |
| 115. | <i>Ala bedoa tunga lasi</i> | They cry <i>doa-doa</i> through the forest |
| 116. | <i>Boe ma udana boe</i> | Just as the rain comes |
| 117. | <i>Tunga tunga lasi</i> | Following through the forest |
| 118. | <i>De fa boe ana mai</i> | Just as the monsoon flood comes |
| 119. | <i>Menik koloba'o a</i> | To carry away the woodcock |
| 120. | <i>Ana ba'o-ba'o tunga le.'</i> | Who cries <i>bae-bae</i> along the river.' |
| 121. | <i>Lae: 'Malole ndia.'</i> | They say: 'That is good.' |
| 122. | <i>De duas lae:</i> | The two say: |
| 123. | <i>'Ia sona nda dalek ma tesa teik.'</i> | 'This is pleasing and satisfying.' |

The Return to the Sea and Concluding Lines

2008 Version

- | | | |
|------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 107. | <i>Boe ma neu nduku sain</i> | So he goes to the sea |
| 108. | <i>Ma leu nduku liun.</i> | And they go to the ocean. |
| 109. | <i>Boe ma liun na e'edo</i> | The sea continually casts out |
| 110. | <i>De ana edo heni Suti nggi</i> | It casts forth Suti's pod |
| 111. | <i>Ma ana toko heni Bina isin.</i> | And it throws out Bina's contents. |
| 112. | <i>Ana edo heni Suti nggi</i> | It casts out Suti's pod |

113. *Ma ana toko heni Bina isin.* And throws out Bina's contents.
 114. *Boe ma ana bonu boa* He bobs like *boa* wood
 115. *Ma ana ele piko* And he drifts like *piko* wood
 116. *Basa namo la* [Through] all the harbours
 117. *Ma basa tasi la.* And all the seas.
 118. *De losa faika* So to this day
 119. *Ma nduku ledo ka* And until this time
 120. *Mita kada Bina loun* We see only Bina's shell
 121. *Ma hapu kada Suti loun.* And find only Suti's shell.
 122. *Te isin ta.* But no contents.
 123. *Bina bei ma-isik* Bina still has contents
 124. *Tehu Suti isin ta.* But Suti has no contents.
 125. *Losa faik ia* To this day
 126. *Ma nduku ledok ia.* And until this time.

2009 Version

124. *De dua leu* So the two go
 125. *Le tatai-na ma oli titiana.* To river's edge and estuary's side.
 126. *De faika fo fa ana mai* Then one day the monsoon comes
 127. *Nafa foki neni Bina* The waves beat and carry Bina
 128. *Ma nafa foki neni Suti.* And the waves beat and carry Suti.
 129. *De ala bonu boa de [neu] liu* They bob like *boa* wood and go to the ocean
 130. *Ma ala ele piko de [neu] sain.* And they drift like *piko* wood and go to the sea.
 131. *Tehu leu sain boe ma* But when they are in the sea
 132. *Liun neu na-pode* The ocean throws them back
 133. *Ma sain boe o na-edo* And the sea casts them out
 134. *Nai fak lama nalu langa* When the monsoon lengthens its head
 135. *De liun pode heni Bina isin* The ocean throws away Bina's contents
 136. *Ma sain edo heni Suti nggin.* And the sea casts away Suti's pods.
 137. *Nalak duas bonu boa selu* Then the two bob back like *boa* wood
 138. *De ala dae mai* They come to land
 139. *De ala madak mai.* They come to dry land.

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 140. | <i>Tehu Bina bei ma isik</i> | But Bina still has some contents |
| 141. | <i>Ma Suti isi ta.</i> | And Suti has no contents. |
| 142. | <i>De losa besaka.</i> | So it is to the present. |
| 143. | <i>Ala tao Bina neu dipo ina</i> | They make Bina into a spinning base |
| 144. | <i>Ma tao Suti neu tena tauk</i> | And make Suti into an indigo container |
| 145. | <i>Fo ina mana pa'a abasala</i> | So the woman who winds cotton |
| 146. | <i>Ma fetu ma feo futusala</i> | And the girl who dyes the threads |
| 147. | <i>Tao neu dipo inak</i> | They make a spinning base |
| 148. | <i>Ala tao neu tena tauk.</i> | And they make an indigo container. |
| 149. | <i>De losa besaka Bina bei
ma isik</i> | Until now, Bina still has content |
| 150. | <i>Te Suti isin ta kada louna.</i> | But Suti has only its shell. |

Compositional Analysis

As is evident from the very beginning, there are various subtle differences between Pak Pono's 2008 and 2009 recitations. Most notably, in terms of the ritual knowledge of names, Pak Pono gives slightly different names to the women who scoop up Suti Solo do Bina Bane. In the 2008 version, they are named Mo Bisa//Ole Masi, while in the 2009 version, they are named Mo Bisa//Masi Tasi. Significantly as well, the 2009 version is longer, and to reach each equivalent point in the chant narrative, this version utilises more lines. Thus illustratively, in its initial sequence, the 2009 version has six more lines than the 2008 version, beginning with the opening lines: 'I speak of Suti Solo and I tell of Bina Bane.' For each of the 16 lines in the 2008 version, however, there is a similar equivalent line. Although the ordering of these lines varies, they are all—with one exception—composed of the same dyadic sets.

There is yet another significant difference between these two versions. Given the dyadic nature of compositions, poets have the option of presenting their recitation in single or plural format—or, as commonly occurs, in a mix of singular and plural formats. Thus, for example, in its early lines and throughout the narrative, the 2008 version mixes singular and plural. Thus, on line five, *ana* is the singular, third-person pronoun 'she', while in line 13, *ala* is the plural, third-person pronoun 'they'. (As a consequence, verbal agreements, where necessary, are either singular

or plural.) By contrast, the 2009 version is consistently presented in the plural. In lines seven and eight, for example, both verbs *tenga-la* and *nggao-la* are plural forms; in lines 13, 14, 15 and 16, the plural form *leu* of the verb ‘to go’ is used, and the third-person plural pronoun is used throughout the composition.

As a consequence of these differences and the order of composition, the various lines in the two recitations differ slightly, even though they are, for the most part, based on the same dyadic sets. In the initial sequence, only lines 13 and 14 of the 2008 version use a different dyadic set from lines 19 and 20 in the 2009 version. The 2008 version uses the dyadic set *namo//lek* (‘harbour’//‘waterhole’), whereas the 2009 version uses the set *lifulllek* (‘pool’//‘waterhole’). Notably, however, several lines further on in the 2008 version (lines 17–20), Pak Pono uses the set *lifulllek*, as he does consistently in his 2009 version.

As a simple illustration, it is useful to compare the first 16 lines of the 2008 version with their equivalent lines in the 2009 version.

The First 16 Lines of the 2008 Version Compared

1.	<i>Faik esa manunin</i>	On one particular day
(3)	<i>Neu faik esa manunina</i>	On one particular day
2.	<i>Do ledok esa mate'e-na</i>	Or one certain time
(4)	<i>Ma ledok esa mate'ena,</i>	And at a certain time,
3.	<i>Inaka Mo Bisa</i>	The woman Mo Bisa
(5)	<i>Boe ma inaka Mo Bisa</i>	The woman Mo Bisa
4.	<i>Ma fetoka Ole Masi</i>	And the girl Ole Masi
(6)	<i>Ma fetoka Masi Tasi</i>	And the girl Masi Tasi
5.	<i>Ana nggao na seko meti-na</i>	She takes up her tidal scoop-net
(8)	<i>Ma nggao la seko meti-na</i>	And take up their tidal scoop-net
6.	<i>Fo seko matei besin</i>	The scoop-net with iron-weighted insides
(9)	<i>Fo seko matei besik</i>	The scoop-net with iron-weighted insides
7.	<i>Ma tenga na ndai tasi-na</i>	And picks up her sea fishing net
(7)	<i>Tenga la ndai tasi-na</i>	Pick up their sea fishing net

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| 8. | <i>Fo ndai mahamu lilo-na.</i> | The fishing net with gold-weighted belly. |
| (10) | <i>Ma ndai mahamu lilok.</i> | And the fishing net with gold-weighted belly. |
| 9. | <i>De leu seko sisi'u enggak</i> | They go to scoop lift the <i>enggak</i> seaweed |
| (15) | <i>Leu seko sisi'u enggak</i> | Go to scoop and lift the <i>enggak</i> seaweed |
| 10. | <i>Ma leu ndai hubuka batu.</i> | And they go to uncover the rocks. |
| (16) | <i>Ma leu ndai hubuka batu,</i> | And go to fish and uncover the rocks, |
| 11. | <i>De seko sanga Dusu La'e</i> | They scoop in search of Dusu La'e fish |
| (17) | <i>Seko sanga Dusu La'e</i> | Scoop in search of Dusu La'e fish |
| 12. | <i>Ma leu ndai sanga Tio Holu.</i> | And they go to fish in search of Tio Holu fish. |
| (18) | <i>Ma ndai sanga Tio Holu.</i> | And fish in search of Tio Holu fish. |
| 13. | <i>De ala ndai basa namo-la</i> | They fish in all the harbours |
| (19) | <i>Tehu ala seko basa lifu la</i> | But they scoop in all the pools |
| 14. | <i>Ma seko basa lek-ala.</i> | And they scoop in all the waterholes. |
| (20) | <i>Ma ala ndai basa lek ala,</i> | And they fish in all the waterholes, |
| 15. | <i>Te ta hapu Tio Holu</i> | But do not find Tio Holu fish |
| (21) | <i>Te ta hapu Tio Holu</i> | But they do not find Tio Holu fish |
| 16. | <i>Ma ta hapu Dusu La'e.</i> | And do not find Dusu La'e fish. |
| (22) | <i>Ma ta hapu Dusu La'e.</i> | And do not find Dusu La'e fish. |

As these recitations proceed, the play on singular and plural continues. Thus, in Suti Solo do Bina Bane's first dialogue, the 2008 version uses the singular 'I' (*au*) while the 2009 version begins with the use of the third-person singular pronoun (*ana*) and a first-person singular possessive pronoun (*-ngo*) but then uses the plural 'we' (*ami*) throughout the actual dialogue.

It is useful to compare the slightly different ways in which these passages are composed. The only compositional flaw that is apparent in comparing the passages is in the 2009 version, which lacks a corresponding line for line 47. Lines 31 and 32 in the 2008 version reveal the expected and appropriate pairing of the sets *losa//nduku* ('up to'/'towards, until, at') and *uma//lo* ('house'/'home'). The arrangement of the lines is similar but not entirely identical. The lines with 'My dear mother and my dear aunt' either precede or follow the lines with 'Remember, do remember and keep in mind, do keep in mind'.

2008 Version: Initial Dialogue

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 25. | <i>Boe ma Suti neu kokolak</i> | Suti begins to speak |
| 26. | <i>Ma Bina neu dede'ak, nae:</i> | And Bina begins to talk, saying: |
| 27. | <i>'Ndele mafa ndendelek</i> | 'Remember, do remember |
| 28. | <i>Ma nesa masa nenedak</i> | And keep in mind, do keep in mind |
| 29. | <i>Bo inango nou</i> | My dear mother |
| 30. | <i>Ma bo te'ongo nei</i> | And my dear aunt |
| 31. | <i>O mu losa lo</i> | [When] you go to your home |
| 32. | <i>Ma o mu nduku uma</i> | And you go to your house |
| 33. | <i>Na boso masu ndalu au</i> | Do not smoke me |
| 34. | <i>Ma boso pila nuli au,</i> | And do not burn me, |
| 35. | <i>Te au dae-hena</i> | For I am a human being |
| 36. | <i>Ma au ia hataholi.</i> | And I am indeed a person. |
| 37. | <i>Au ia ana-mak</i> | I am indeed an orphan |
| 38. | <i>Ma au ia falu-inak.'</i> | And I am indeed a widow.' |

2009 Version: Initial Dialogue

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 41. | <i>Boe ma Suti ana dede'ak</i> | Suti, he talks |
| 42. | <i>Ma Bina ana kokolak, nae:</i> | And Bina, he speaks, saying: |
| 43. | <i>'Bo inango nou</i> | 'My dear mother |
| 44. | <i>Do bo te'ongo nou</i> | Or my dear aunt |
| 45. | <i>Neda masa-nenedak</i> | Keep in mind, do keep in mind |
| 46. | <i>Ma ndele mafa ndendelek</i> | And remember, do remember |
| 47. | <i>Fo teu losa uma sona,</i> | When we reach the house, |
| 48. | <i>Boso pila nuli ami</i> | Do not burn us |
| 49. | <i>Do boso masu ndalu ami,</i> | Or do not smoke us, |
| 50. | <i>Te ami ia dae-hena</i> | For we indeed are human beings |
| 51. | <i>Ma ami ia hataholi,</i> | And we indeed are people, |
| 52. | <i>Ami falu-ina Bina Bane la</i> | We are the widows, Bina Bane |
| 53. | <i>Ma ami ana-ma Suti Solo la.'</i> | And we are the orphans, Suti Solo.' |

Although with their various uses of singular and plural and the missing line in the 2009 version these two passages are indeed different, their composition is in fact based on the same eight dyadic sets: 1) *kokolak// dede'ak*; 2) *inal//te'o*; 3) *nedak//ndelek*; 4) *losal//nduku*; 5) *umal//lo*; 6) *pila nulil//masu ndalu*; 7) *daebenal//hataboli*; 8) *yalu-inal//ana-mak*.

In both versions, this passage asserts the dominant theme of the composition: that the shells *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* are orphans in search of a permanent place of refuge and genuine fellowship. In the 2008 version, immediately after this passage, Pak Pono begins the familiar refrain that marks most versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*:

<i>Na ami kokolak mo se</i>	Then with whom will we speak
<i>Ma ami dede'ak mo se?</i>	And with whom will we talk?

In the 2008 version, this refrain, which is first enunciated in lines 51/52, is repeated in lines 62/63, 73/74 and 85/86—each time in reply to one of the directives on where to seek refuge.

The 2009 version also uses this formulaic refrain but alternates with another formulaic refrain:

<i>Na ami maka bani neu se</i>	Then on whom will we rely
<i>Ma ami mama bena neu se?</i>	And on whom will we depend?

This refrain occurs first in lines 66/67 and is followed in lines 77/78 by the same refrain that is used throughout the 2008 version:

<i>Na ami kokolak mo se</i>	Then with whom will we speak
<i>Ma ami dede'ak mo se?</i>	And with whom will we talk?

This refrain is then followed by a return to the first refrain in lines 90/91 but with the order of the two lines reversed:

<i>Na ami mama bena neu se</i>	Then on whom will we depend
<i>Ma ami maka bani neu se?</i>	And on whom will we rely?

Finally, where one expects a return to the alternative refrain in lines 101/102, Pak Pono offers another, more emphatic variant of his initial refrain:

<i>Sona ami nama henak ta</i>	For us, there is nothing to depend on
<i>Ma ami naka banik ta.</i>	And for us, there is nothing to rely upon.

Coming as the last in a succession of these refrains, this is a powerful poetic assertion.

Like other versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, the concluding passages of both of Pak Pono's recitations recount the return of the shells to the sea.

The 2008 version presents this return to the sea with what is a commonplace observation that is frequently heard on Rote. Whereas a bailer shell (*bina*) is occasionally found with some remnant fleshy content, a nautilus shell is always found without its content. This observation is the basis for the concluding lines of the 2008 version:

- | | | |
|------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 120. | <i>Mita kada Bina loun</i> | We see only Bina's shell |
| 121. | <i>Ma hapu kada Suti loun.</i> | And find only Suti's shell. |
| 122. | <i>Te isin ta.</i> | But no contents. |
| 123. | <i>Bina bei ma-isik</i> | Bina still has contents |
| 124. | <i>Tehu Suti isin ta.</i> | But Suti has no contents. |
| 125. | <i>Losa faik ia</i> | To this day |
| 126. | <i>Ma nduku ledok ia.</i> | And until this time. |

Technically, the composition of lines 120–24 is not based on pairs and should probably be considered as a commentary on the recitation rather than as an integral part of it. Lines 125/126 simply repeat lines 118/119 as an appropriate conclusion.

The 2009 version has a more complex conclusion. It recounts the passage of the shells to the sea, but then recounts their return to the land and their transformation into specific cultural objects: the first spinning base and first indigo container. As, for example, in Old Meno's composition, this statement—just six lines out of a total of 150 lines—links this recitation to a special corpus of sacred origin chants, even though the precise connections to this corpus are not articulated. Were these connections not articulated in other versions, the concluding lines in this version would make little sense, especially when they are inserted with observations about the content or lack of content in the two types of shell.

- | | | |
|------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 135. | <i>De liun pode heni Bina isin</i> | The ocean throws away Bina's contents |
| 136. | <i>Ma sain edo heni Suti nggin.</i> | And the sea casts away Suti's pods. |
| 137. | <i>Nalak duas bonu boa selu</i> | Then the two bob back like <i>boa</i> wood |
| 138. | <i>De ala dae mai</i> | They come to land |

- | | | |
|------|--|--|
| 139. | <i>De ala madak mai.</i> | They come to dry land. |
| 140. | <i>Tehu Bina bei ma isik</i> | But Bina still has some contents |
| 141. | <i>Ma Suti isi ta.</i> | And Suti has no contents. |
| 142. | <i>De losa besaka.</i> | So it is to the present. |
| 143. | <i>Ala tao Bina neu dipo ina</i> | They make Bina into a spinning base |
| 144. | <i>Ma tao Suti neu tena tauk</i> | And make Suti into an indigo container |
| 145. | <i>Fo ina mana pa'a abasala</i> | So the woman who winds cotton |
| 146. | <i>Ma fetu ma feo futusala</i> | And the girl who dyes the threads |
| 147. | <i>Tao neu dipo inak</i> | They make a spinning base |
| 148. | <i>Ala tao neu tena tauk.</i> | And they make an indigo container. |
| 149. | <i>De losa besaka Bina bei ma isik</i> | Until now, Bina still has content |
| 150. | <i>Te Suti isin ta kada louna.</i> | But Suti has only its shell. |

In ritual terms, if a version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* recounts the passage of the nautilus and bailer shells from the sea through a series of impermanent stations and then finally back to the sea, it can be used as a mortuary chant symbolic of the passage of a human being, as an orphan and widow, through the course of a lifetime. If, however, a recitation alludes to the creation and use of the nautilus and bailer shells as key ritual objects in the processes of weaving and dyeing, it constitutes an origin chant and forms part of a larger corpus of sacred knowledge. Pak Pono's 2008 version can appropriately be considered a mortuary chant whereas his 2009 version—because of the brief ritual allusions at its conclusion—can more appropriately be considered as an origin chant.

These versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* were among the last recitations of Esau Pono. Although he continued to preside at our recording sessions in Bali, he grew ever weaker at each gathering and eventually he was too weak to join our ninth session in 2014. Sometime after midnight on the 16th of December 2014, he died. At his funeral his fellow poets gathered to chant his farewell and with the help of Dr Lintje Pellu, who travelled from Kupang to Rote, I was able to send a chant that I composed to give voice to our long friendship.

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.