When I set out to bring poets from different parts of Rote to Bali for recording in 2006, I was entirely uncertain of whom I would be able to attract and, more importantly, what the abilities of these various poets would be. Initially I had to rely on two master poets who were critical to the project from the beginning: Esau Pono from Termanu and Ande Ruy from Ringgou. In turn, they relied on what they could learn about the reputations of other poets in different domains. I insisted that we endeavour to invite poets from all the domains—or at least all the larger domains—thus prompting them to seek out a range of able poets. In the second recording session that I held, we invited some notable poets from Landu and one distinguished elder poet from Bilba, who unfortunately came down with malaria and was able to provide only a limited number of recitations. It was not until the fifth recording session, in October 2009, that I was able to invite another three able poets from Bilba. Among these poets was Kornalius Medah, who turned out to be a poet of exceptional ability: able, versatile and fluent, with a considerable and distinctive repertoire. His recitation of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is the longest I recorded and is certainly one of the most elaborate. Although it resembles, in many recognisable features, recitations of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from Termanu, it is distinctive and remarkable.
The Narrative Structure of Kornalius Medah’s Suti Solo do Bina Bane

Like other versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, Kornalius Medah’s narrative recounts a journey. This journey follows a cycle that eventually returns to where it began. The narrative begins and ends in Dulu Oli//Langa Le (‘East Estuary’//‘Headland River’). Suti Solo and Bina Bane leave Dulu Oli/Langa Le, enter the sea and begin their journey in search of a place of ‘certainty and security’ where they hope to be able to find a ‘true mother’ (literally, ‘a birth mother’: *ina bongi*) and a ‘true father’ (literally, ‘a birth father’: *ama bongi*). At one point, this sought-after kin attachment is also referred to as a ‘lineage aunt’ (*te’o leo*) and ‘land mother’ (*ina ingu*).

On their journey, Suti Solo and Bina Bane experience various ‘encounters’, each of which in the end proves unfulfilling. These encounters are personalised and designated by distinct person/place names. Each name reveals the nature and condition of the encounter. Initially, Suti Solo and Bina Bane find contentment in the sea: the rolling waves and meandering sea (*pela oe leleu*//*tasi oe lalama*).

In the sea, the shells experience three encounters:

1. *te’le tasi*//*hamu le* ‘sea refuse’//‘river dregs’
2. *engga lima*//*latu koko* ‘Seaweed Lima’//‘Waterweed Koko’
3. *le naluk*//*lifu loak* ‘long river’//‘wide pool’

Only after this sea journey does the girl ‘Tomorrow’s Tide’ and the woman ‘Dawning Sea’ (Meti Balaha//Tasi Dulupila) scoop the two shells from the sea. They, in turn, place the shells within the house, but the shells shift from one place within the house to another:

4. *timi dil*//*nata tuak* ‘house post’//‘lontar beam’
5. *bou tua*//*neka hade* ‘lontar vat’//‘rice basket’

When neither of these places proves satisfactory, they shift progressively further from the house to:

6. *tua timu*//*hade safu* ‘east lontar (season)’//‘savu rice (harvest)’
7. *nita lete*//*dela mo* ‘mountain nitas (tree)’//‘field delas (tree)’
8. *tuli tini*//*kaba osi* ‘pigeon pea garden’//‘cotton field’
Figure 18: Kornalius Medah
They then make a decision to return to Dulu Oli//Langa Le and there set forth on a specifically named path (enol//longe) that is identified as that of:

9. *Hena Le//I Lasi* ‘Pandan...'

This path leads them to:

10. *Nilu Neol//Ko Nau* ‘The Nilu Neo Tree’/‘The Ko Nau Tree’

Nilu Neo//Ko Nau become their ‘true mother’ and ‘true father’ (*ina bongi//ama bongi*), where they rest ‘content’ and ‘satisfied’ (*tesa teik//tama dalek*).

As such, Kornalius Medah’s *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is more of a ritual lament about the nature of life than an origin chant. After the departure of the shells from Dulu Oli//Langa Le and until their return, each episodic encounter follows a similar formulaic development that begins with initial contentment but quickly turns to disappointment and leads to a departure in search of yet another encounter.

For presentation’s sake, I have arranged this recitation into separate sections beginning in Dulu Oli//Langa Le, followed in turn by a succession of encounters, concluding with the return to Dulu Oli//Langa Le and the Pandanus//Jasmine path leading to Nilu Neo//Ko Nau.

Kornalias Medah’s recitation begins with the shells in East Estuary and Headland River with both their mother and their father. They wake their parents to seek for peace and well-being (*soda-molek*), recognising that there are inner satisfaction and heartfelt contentment with both mother and father in East Estuary and Headland River. Yet this condition is neither certain nor lasting.

**Suti Solo and Bina Bane in East Estuary (Dulu Oli) and Headland River (Langa Le)**

1. *Tene-tu ana mak Le Naluk* Hasten the orphan Le Naluk
2. *Ma hae-lai falu ina Oli Loak.* And hurry the widow Oli Loak.
3. *Faik lia nasa-kendu Le Lain* On this day, Le Lain sobs
4. *Ma ledok na nama-tani Oli Dale* And at this time, Oli Dale cries
5. *Sama leo Suti Solo* Just like Suti Solo
6. Ma deta leo Bina Bane. And similar to Bina Bane.

7. Te hu faik lia Suti ma-no ina bongik But on this day Suti has a birth mother

8. Ma ledok na Bina ma-no ama bongik, And at this time Bina has a birth father,

9. Suti no ina na ma Bina no ama na. Suti with his mother and Bina with his father.

10. Hu no tepok lia Suti natane sodak ka At that time Suti seeks well-being

11. Ma lelek na Bina teteni molek ka. And at the moment Bina asks for peace.

12. Lia na foa kela ina bongi na He wakes his true mother

13. Ma laxo kela ama bongi na, And to greet his true father,

14. Mai de tena neuk Dulu Olin To descend to Dulu Oli

15. Ma monu neuk Langa Len, lae: And go down onto Langa Le, saying:

16. ‘Tesa teik Dulu Oli ‘There is inner satisfaction in Dulu Oli

17. Ma tama dalek Langa Le.’ And heartfelt contentment in Langa Le.’

18. Te hu tean tak Dulu Olin Yet nothing is certain at Dulu Oli

19. Ma mepen tak Langa Len And nothing is permanent at Langa Le.

The shells descend into the sea where they continue to find contentment and satisfaction in the rolling waves but they are no longer with their parents. These lines, as is so often the case in ritual language recitations, shift between singular and plural in reference to the shells.

Suti Solo and Bina Bane Descend into the Rolling Waves and Meandering Seas

20. Faik lia dilu liu na neu On this day, he goes down into the ocean

21. Ma ledok na loe sain na neu At this time, he descends into the sea

22. Neu no pela oe leleu ka To go with the rolling waves

23. Ma neu no tasi oe lalama ka. And to go with the meandering seas.

24. Neu [no] pela oe leleu ka, To go with the rolling waves,

25. Hika boe setele Laughing loudly
26. Ma neu tasi oe lalama
In the meandering seas
27. Eki boe lata-dale.
Shouting gaily.
28. Lia na lae:
So they say:
29. Tesa teik pela oe leleu na
Satisfaction in the rolling waves
30. Ma tama dalek tasi oe lalama
na.
Contentment in meandering seas.
31. Tēhu noi-tao leo lia
Yet however one strives
32. Ho tunu-hai leo lia
There is trouble there
33. Ma sanga-tao leo na
And however one seeks
34. Ho kelō-kea leo na.
There is difficulty there.
35. Lia na dadi neuk Suti Solo
This happens to Suti Solo
36. Ma na moli neuk Bina Bane
And this arises for Bina Bane
37. Ho ina o tak ma ama o tak.
With no mother and with no father.

A storm arises and the shells lose their inner pods. They bob like boa wood and drift like piko wood, speaking and crying to themselves.

Suti Solo and Bina Bane are Carried Away by Storm and Cyclone

38. Faik lia luli dulu fafae na
On day a storm arises in the waking east
And at one time a cyclone blows at the thrusting head.
40. Boe ma li sio lasa-ngengeli
Nine waves rage
41. Ma nafa falu laka-tutulek
And eight crests heave
42. Pode ketu Suti ate na
Cutting loose Suti’s liver
43. Ma lui ketu Bina ngi na.
Pulling out Bina’s pods.
44. Suti bonu-bonu,
Suti bobs and bobs,
45. Bonu boa no ao na
Bobs like boa wood on his own
46. Ho nama-tani no ao na.
Crying on his own.
47. Bina ele-ele,
Bina drifts and drifts,
48. Ele piko no ao na
Drifts like piko wood on his own
49. Ho nama-tani no ao na.
Crying on his own.
50. Boe ma Suti deā-deā no Bina
Then Suti speaks with Bina
Suti Solo and Bina Bane Encounter Sea Refuse and River Dregs

61. Faik lia tele tasi bobonu na  This day the sea’s refuse comes bobbing
62. Ma hamu le e’ele na  And the river’s dregs drift by.
63. Suti tepa noi tele tasi  Suti meets the sea’s refuse
64. Ma Bina kala noi hamu le  And Bina strikes the river’s dregs.
65. Luku no hamu le  Squats on the river’s dregs
66. Ma sake no tele tasi,  And snuggles with the sea’s refuse,
67. Hika no setele  Laughing loudly
68. Ma eki bo lata dale.  And shouting with joy.
69. Boe ma dua dea-dea  Then the two speak
70. Ma dua kola-kola  And the two talk
71. ‘Tean nai hamu le so  ‘Certainty lies in the river’s dregs
72. Mepen nai tele tasi so.  And security rests in the sea’s refuse.
73. De bika boe-boe setele  To laugh out loud
74. Ma eki boe-boe lata-dale. And shout out with joy.
75. Tehu noi-tao leo lia Yet however one strives
76. Tean tak hamu le There is no certainty in the river’s dregs
77. Ma sanga-tao leo na And however one seeks
78. Mepen tak tele tasi. ‘There is nothing lasting in the sea’s refuse.’
79. Faik lia luli dulu fafae seluk One day a storm arises again in the waking east
80. Ma ledok na sangu langa titipa seluk. And at one time a cyclone blows again at the head.
81. Boe ma li lasa-ngengeli The waves rage
82. Ma nafa laka-tutulek. And the crests heave
83. Li tipa hini Suti The waves push Suti away
84. Ma nafa sonu hini Bina. And the crests thrust Bina away.
85. De bonu-bonu no ao na He bobs and bobs on his own
86. Ho nasa-kedu no ao na While sobbing on his own
87. Ma ele-ele no ao na And he drifts and drifts on his own
88. Ho nama-tani no ao na. While crying on his own.
89. Li tipa nini mai The waves push forward
90. Ho tipa nini Suti mai Pushing Suti forward
91. Ma nafa toko nini mai And the crest thrusts forward
92. Ho toko nini Bina mai. Thrusting Bina forward.
93. Ma-uk neu Suti Solo Luck is with Suti Solo
94. Ma-nalek neu Bina Bani. And good fortune is with Bina Bane.

The next encounter is with seaweed and waterweed. The shells join with this seaweed but its vulnerability to heat and rain makes it particularly fragile. So, crying to themselves, the shells move onward.

Suti Solo and Bina Bane Encounter
Seaweed Lima and Waterweed Koko

95. Faik lia tepa noi Engga Lima One day they meet Seaweed Lima
96. Ledo na kala noi Latu Koko. At one time they encountered Waterweed Koko.
97. Suti de’a-de’a no ao na  
Suti speaks to himself

98. Ma Bina kola-kola no ao na,  
And Bina talks to himself,

99. ‘Dua topa teuk Engga Lima leo’  
‘Let us two befriend Seaweed Lima

100. Ma dua tai teuk Latu Koko leo.’  
And let us two be close to Waterweed Koko.’

101. Boe ma luku lo Engga Lima  
So they squat with Seaweed Lima

102. De tesa teik Engga Lima  
And are satisfied with Seaweed Lima

103. Ma sake lo Latu Koko  
And they snuggle with Waterweed Koko

104. De tama dale Latu Koko.  
And are content with Waterweed Koko.

105. Lae: ‘Tean na nai lia so.’  
They say: ‘Certainty is here.’

106. Ma lae: ‘Mepen na nai na so.’  
And they say: ‘Permanence is here.’

107. Tēhu noi-tao leo lia  
Yet however one strives

108. Ho tunu-hai leo lia  
There is trouble there

109. Ma sanga-tao leo na  
And however one seeks

110. Ho kelo-kea leo na.  
There is difficulty there.

111. Faik na uda te Engga Lima  
One day the rain spears Seaweed Lima

112. Ma lelek lia ledo ha Latu Koko.  
And one time the sun heats Waterweed Koko.

113. De tean ta Engga Lima  
So no certainty with Seaweed Lima

114. Ma mepen tak Latu Koko.  
And no security with Waterweed Koko.

115. Uda te Engga Lima  
The rain spears Seaweed Lima

116. De kou heni Engga Lima  
Causing Seaweed Lima to disappear

117. Ma ledo ha Latu Koko  
And the sun heats Waterweed Koko

118. De noe heni Latu Koko  
Causing Waterweed Koko to dissolve

119. Dadi neu te’o leo  
To [cease] to become a lineage aunt

120. Ma moli neuk ina ingu.  
And [cease] to be a domain mother.

121. Lasakedu lo ao nala  
They sob to themselves

122. Ma lamatani lo ao nala.  
And cry to themselves.

The shells drift to Long River and Wide Pool where again they recognise the precariousness of their situation.
Suti Solo and Bina Bane Encounter Long River and Wide Pool

123. Boema bonu-bonu lo ao nala
So they bob and bob on their own

124. Bonu boa lo ao nala
Bob like boa wood on their own

125. Ma ele-ele lo ao nala
And drift and drift on their own

126. Ele piko lo ao nala.
Drift like piko wood on their own.

127. Faik lia noi-tao leo lia
On this day, however one strives

128. Ho tunu-hai leo lia
There is trouble there

129. Ma ledok na sanga-tao leo na
At this time, however one seeks

130. Ho kelo-kea leo na.
There is difficulty there.

131. Faik lia bonu-bonu no ao
One day bobbing on his own

132. Na tepa noi le naluk
He meets with long river

133. Ma ledok na ele-ele no ao
One time drifting on his own

134. Na te kala noi lifu loak.
He encounters wide pool.

135. Bina luku no lifu loak
Bina squats in wide pool

136. Ma Suti tai no le naluk.
And Suti meets with long river.

137. Boema dua dé’a-dé’a lo ao nala
The two speak with each other

138. Ma dua kola-kola lo ao nala.
And the two talk with each other.

139. Ita tean tak le naluk
Our certainty is not in long river

140. Ma ita mepen tak lifu loak.
And our security is not in wide pool.

141. Boe ma noi-tao leo lia
But however one strives

142. Ho tunu-hai leo lia
There is trouble there

143. Ma sanga-tao leo na
And however one seeks

144. Ho kelo-kea leo na.
There is difficulty there.

At this point, Tomorrow’s Tide (Meti Balaha) and Dawning Sea (Tasi Dulupila) are introduced by their ritual names. They prepare their scoop-nets and then set out to fish for two required ritual fish—in this case, Moka Holu and Kuku Lake. Meti Balaha and Tasi Dulupila scoop up Suti Solo and Bina Bane from the middle of Long River and Wide Pool. The shells beg Meti Balaha and Tasi Dulupila to be their mother and father to protect and shelter them.
Tomorrow’s Tide and Dawning Sea
Scoop-net Suti Solo and Bina Bane

145. *Feto Meti Balaha na* The girl Tomorrow’s Tide
146. *Ma ina Tasi Dulupila na* And the woman Dawning Sea
147. *Ane bubui ho seko* She braids and twines a scoop-net
148. *Seko bui na fepa deak* A scoop-net of heavy lontar leaf
149. *Telî kokono ho lai* She strings and twists a fishnet
151. *Dua leu lama-seko totoko* The two go to cast their scoop-net
152. *Ma dua leu lama-lai lalano.* And the two go to throw their fishnet.
153. *Leo seko sanga Moka Holu* Scoop-netting for Moka Holu
154. *Ho kelak seko la Moka* To scoop forth Moka fish
155. *Na Moka la-holu ao.* For the Moka protects itself.
156. *Leu lai tunga Kuku Lake* Fishing for Kuku Lake
157. *Ho kelak lai la Kuku* To fish forth Kuku fish
158. *Na Kuku lasa-lake ao.* For the Kuku guards itself.
159. *Faik lia loe neuk metik* One day they go down to the tidal shore
160. *Ledok na dilu neuk namo* One time they descend to the estuary
161. *Têhu tepa lo noi Suti Solo* But they meet with Suti Solo
162. *Ma kala lo noi Bina Bane* And they encounter Bina Bane
163. *Bonu-bonu no ao na* Bobbing on his own
164. *Ho nai lifu loak ka dale so* In the middle of wide pool
165. *Ele-ele no ao na* Drifting on his own
166. *Ho nai le naluk ka dale.* In the middle of long river.
167. *Têk lai na neu* To be scooped into the fishnet
168. *Ma suma seko na neu.* And lifted into the scoop-net.
169. *Feto Meti Balaha* The girl Tomorrow’s Tide
170. *Mo ina Tasi Dulupila* And the woman Dawning Sea
171. *Lai neni Suti Solo mai* Fish and take Suti Solo
172. *Ma seko neni Bina Bane mai.* And scoop and take Bina Bane.
173. *Suti de’a-de’a no na* Suti speaks with her
174. *Ma Bina kola-kola no na:* And Bina talks with her:
Figure 19: Woman with scoop-net

“The girl, Tomorrow’s Tide
And the woman, Dawning Sea
Fish and take Suti Solo
And scoop and take Bina Bane.’
Meti Balaha and Tasi Dulupila carry the shells to their house, placing them at the *timi* post and lontar beam. At first, they feel satisfied and content but then realise the impermanence of their new location and seek again for another mother and father.

### Suti Solo and Bina Bane are Placed on the *Timi* Post and Lontar Beam

183. *Dua leni nana mai*  
The two carry them forth

184. *Fua neu timi di*  
Place them on the *timi* post

185. *Fe Suti no timi di*  
Allocate Suti to the *timi* post

186. *Ma bati Bina no nata tuak.*  
And assign Bina to the lontar beam.

187. *Tesa teik timi di*  
Satisfied at the *timi* post

188. *Ma tama dale nata tuak.*  
And content at the lontar beam.

189. *Hika ho boe setele*  
Laughing out loud

190. *Ma eki ho boe latadale.*  
And shouting with joy.

191. *Dua de’a-de’a lo ao nala*  
The two talk to themselves

192. *Ma dua kola-kola lo ao nala:*  
And the two speak to themselves:

193. ‘*Ita nai na-sulu uda te ka*’  
‘We are sheltered from the piercing rain

194. *Ma ita nai nahapa ledo ha ka.*’  
And we are protected from the scorching sun.’

195. *Dua boe de’a-de’a lo ao nala*  
The two again talk to themselves

196. *Ma dua boe kola-kola lo ao nala.*  
And the two again speak to themselves.

197. *Lae: ‘Tesa teik.’*  
They say: ‘[We are] satisfied.’
198. *Ma lae: 'Tama dale.'* And they say: ‘[We are] content.’
199. *Tebu noi-tao leo lia* Yet however one strives
200. *Ho tunu hai leo lia* There is difficulty there
201. *Ma sanga-tao leo na* And however one seeks
202. *Ho kelo kea leo na.* There is trouble there.
203. *Faik lia uda te timi di* One day the rain spears the *timi* post
204. *De sengi heni timi di* It snaps the *timi* post
205. *Ma tepok na ledo ha nata-tua* One time the sun heats the lontar beam
206. *De pulu heni nata tuak.* It splits the lontar beam.
207. *Suti de’a-de’a no ao na* Suti talks to himself
208. *Ho nasakedu no ao na* While sobbing to himself
209. *Ma Bina kola-kola no ao na* And Bina speaks to himself
210. *Ho namatani no ao na:* While crying to himself:
211. ‘*Tean tak timi di* ‘No certainty in the *timi* post
212. *Ma mepen tak nata tuak.* And nothing lasting in the lontar beam.
213. *Ta ina teu bea bali* No mother for us to go to
214. *Ma ta ama teu bea dei* No father for us to go to
215. *Mai teu teteni seluk ina bongi ka* Let us again request a birth mother
216. *Ma teu tatane seluk ama bongi ka.* And let us again ask for a birth father.’

The shells go next to the lontar vat and rice basket but again realise the impermanence of their situation. (Lines 244 and 245 are translated as they were spoken. These lines, however, would make more sense if they were not in the negative. Without the negative ‘*tak*’, they might read: ‘Let us go where there is certainty and let us go where there is permanence.’)

**Suti Solo and Bina Bane Shift to the Lontar Vat and the Rice Basket**

217. *Dua dilu leu* The two go down
218. *Ho dilu leu bou tuak* Go down to the lontar vat
219. *Ma dua loe leu* And the two descend
220. *Ho loe leu neka hade.* Descend to the rice basket.
221. Dua déa-dea lo ao nala  The two talk to themselves
222. Ma dua kola-kola lo ao nala:  And the two speak to themselves:
223. ‘Tean nai bou tuak so  ‘There is certainty in the lontar vat
224. Ma mepen nai neka hade so.  And there is permanence in the rice basket.
225. Lole tama-bena  Let us well hope for
226. Neu ina bongi ka leo  A birth mother
227. Ma lena taka-bani  And let us fondly expect
229. Tēhu noi-tao leo lia  Yet however one strives
230. Ho dadi neuk tė'o leo  For someone to become a lineage aunt
231. Ma sanga-tao leo na  And however one seeks
232. Ho moli neuk ina ingu  For someone to be a clan mother
233. Ho bengu bafa ka dadi  Word of mouth reports
234. Ma lali ma ka moli  And wagging of tongues reveal that
235. Soke sasau neka  Scooping and ladling the basket
236. Soke sau basa neka hade  Scoops and ladles all the rice from the basket
237. Ma kola lului tua  Drawing and draining the lontar syrup
238. Lui henī basa bou tua.’  Drains all the lontar vat.’
239. Suti nasakedu seluk  Suti sobs again
240. Ma Bina namatani seluk.  And Bina cries again.
241. ‘Tean tak ma mepen tak.  ‘No certainty and no permanence.
242. He, tia Suti nga ko  He, my dear friend Suti
243. Ma he, sena Bina nga ko,  And he, my dear companion Bina,
244. Ita teu bea tean tak  Let us go where there is (no) certainty
245. Ma ita teu bea mepen tak.  And let us go where there is (no) permanence.
246. Teu teteni bea balik  Let us go ask for someone again
247. Ho lia dadi neuk ina bongi  Who may become a birth mother
248. Ma teu tatane bea dei  And let us go request someone once more
249. Ho na moli neuk ama bongi.’  And who may be a birth father.’
In the next lines, the shells move out of the house and into the fields where the lontar palm is tapped and rice is harvested. The time for tapping and harvesting with its accompanying celebrations is brief and thus also impermanent so the shells are left to themselves to cry and sob.

**Suti Solo and Bina Bane Shift to the East**

**Lontar Season and Savu Rice Harvest**

250. *Teu tateni tua timu*  
Let us go ask the lontar-tapping season

251. *Ma teu leo tatane hade safu*  
And let us go request the *Savu* rice harvest

252. *Ho tua timu lesu ngi*  
Lontar palms put out their inflorescences

253. *Na dua ngata dadi tasafali ao*  
Let us two renew ourselves

254. *Ma hade safu tona kale*  
And *Savu* rice bends at the head

255. *Na dua ngata moli tasafali ao tala.*  
Then let us restore ourselves.’

256. *Faik lia leu*  
One day they go to

257. *Tua timu lesu ngi*  
The budding lontar inflorescences

258. *Ho kiki tua la-dopo*  
Where the tapping of the cleaning brush

259. *Na dadi neuk koa tua*  
Gives rise to great celebration

260. *Ma nesu ingu langue*  
And mortar’s heavy pounding

261. *Ho manu ingu na*  
With its squabbling chicken

262. *Dadi neugja sina.*  
Gives rise to great exuberance.

263. *Luku lo nesu ingu*  
Squatting with the great mortar

264. *Ma sake lo tua timu*  
And snuggling with the lontar tapping

265. *Hika bo setele*  
Laughing out loud

266. *Ma eki bo latadale.*  
And shouting with joy.

267. *Lae: ‘Tean liak so.’*  
‘They say: ‘Something certain is here.’

268. *Ma lae: ‘Mepen liak na so.’*  
And they say: ‘Something lasting is here.’

269. *Tehu ledok esa nai lia*  
But then at one time

270. *Na lengu heniu nesu ingu*  
The great mortar is cast aside

271. *Ma faik esa nai na*  
And on one day

272. *Na hulu heniu tua timu*  
The lontar season comes to an end

273. *Hu uda te tua timu*  
Because the rain spears the lontar tapping

274. *Na tua lama loe suma.*  
The lontar baskets are lowered.
Nothing certain and nothing permanent.
The two sob again.
And the two cry again.

The shells move further afield to find a place with mountain *nitas* tree and the field *delas* tree. Both are large trees that have a marked flowering season. They join with these trees but when the rain puts an end to their flowering period, the shells are left to themselves as orphan and widow.

**Suti Solo and Bina Bane Move to the Mountain *Nitas* Tree and the Field *Delas* Tree**

The two go in search again
In search of the mountain *nitas* tree
And the two go in quest again
In quest of the open field *delas* tree.
They go,
They encounter the *nitas* of the mountain
The mountain *nitas* is in bloom
And they meet the open field *delas*,
The *delas* is flowering
Renewing itself
And restoring itself.
These things give rise to great celebration
And give forth great exuberance.
They snuggle up to the mountain *nitas*
And with the blossoms of the mountain *nitas*
And they squat with the field *delas*
And with the field *delas*’s flowers
Laughing loudly
And shouting for joy.
‘My friend, Suti
298. Ma sena Bina nga ko
And my companion, Bina
299. Tean tak nai ia
There is nothing certain here
300. Ma mepen tak nai ia.
And there is nothing lasting here.’
301. Tehu noi-tao leo lia
Yet however one strives
302. Ho tunu-hai leo lia
There is difficulty there
303. Ma sanga-tao leo na
And however one seeks
304. Ho kelo-kea leo na.
There is trouble there.
305. Tean bei tak
There is yet nothing certain
306. Ma mepen bei tak.
And there is yet nothing permanent.
307. Faik lia timu lasa-lua dulu
One day the monsoon widens in the east
308. Ma ledok na fa lasa-fali langa.
One time the west winds return to the head.

309. Ani dulu fifiu
The east wind blows
310. Lefa heni nita bunan
Letting drop the nitas blossoms
311. Ma uda te dela pena
And the rains strike the delas flowers
312. Kono heni dela pena.
Letting fall the delas flowers.
313. Tehu be ana ma
But what of the orphan
314. Ho ana ma lasakedu lo ao
The orphan sobs with himself
315. Be ina falu
What of the widow
316. Ho falu ina lamatani lo ao na.
The widow cries with herself.
317. Dua de’a-de’a lo ao na
The two talk to each other
318. Ma dua kola-kola lo ao na:
And the two speak to each other:
319. ‘Tean tak nita lete
‘No certainty with the mountain nitas tree
320. Ma mepen tak dela mo.’
No permanence with the field delas tree.’

The shells move on again, this time to the pigeon pea garden and cotton field, whose harvest is late in season and affected by the wind and rain, leaving them alone.

Suti Solo and Bina Bane Shift to the Pigeon Pea Garden and the Cotton Field

321. Faik lia lae:
One day they say:
322. Dua leu teteni leo
The two go to seek
Ma ledok na lae: And one time they say:

Dua leu tatane leo The two go to quest

Leu de tepa loi tuli tini They go to meet the pigeon pea garden

Ma kala loi kaba osi And to encounter the cotton field

De luku lo kaba osi pena Snuggling with the cotton field boll

Ma sako lo tuli tini buna. And squatting with pigeon pea garden flowers.

Hika ho setele They laugh out loud

Ma eki ho latadale And shout with joy

Luku lo kaba osi Snuggling in the cotton field

Ma latadale neu tuli tini. And happy in the pigeon pea garden.

Tehu bei tean tak But there is yet no certainty

Ma bei mepen tak. And yet no permanence.

Faik lia uda te tuli tini One day the rain strikes the pigeon pea garden

Ma ledok na ani fiu kaba osi One time the wind blows the cotton field

Kono hen ti tuli buna Letting fall the pigeon pea flowers

Ma lapu hen kaba pena. And lifting away the cotton bolls.

Suti Solo do Bina Bane come to recognise the uncertainty and impermanence of the world. They recognise that the human condition is to be orphaned and widowed. They resolve therefore to return to where they began at East Estuary and Headland River and there follow the Pandanus River and the Jasmine Forest.

**Suti Solo and Bina Bane Follow Pandanus River Road and Jasmine Forest Path**

Dua de'a-de'a lo ao na The two talk with each other

Ma dua kola-kola lo ao na: And the two speak with each other:

'Teu teteni ina bongik ka leo 'Let us go in search of a birth mother

Te tean tak dae bafok For there is no certainty on earth

Ma teu tatane ama bongik ka leo Let us go in quest of a birth father

Te mepen tak batu poik ka. For there is no permanence in the world.
345.  *Teu tatane*  
Let us go in search

346.  *Teu bea o tean tak*  
Let us go where there is no certainty

347.  *Ma teu teteni*  
And let us go in quest

348.  *Teu bea o mepen tak.*  
Let us go where there is no permanence.

349.  *Ita dua dadi ana ma*  
Let us two become orphaned

350.  *Ho ana ma Le Lai*  
With the orphan Le Lai

351.  *Tasakedu to ao tala*  
That we may sob with each other

352.  *Ita dua dadi falu ina*  
Let us two become widowed

353.  *Ho falu ina Oe Bolo*  
With the widow Oe Bolo

354.  *Tamatani to ao tala*  
That we may cry with each other

355.  *Tasakedu to ao tala*  
Let us sob with each other

356.  *Ho nai Dulu Oli*  
In Dulu Oli

357.  *Ma tamatani to ao tala*  
And let us cry with each other

358.  *Ho nai Lange Le.*  
In Langa Le.

359.  *Au ia, ana mak Suti Solo*  
Here I am, the orphan Suti Solo

360.  *Ma au ia, falu ina Bina Bane.*  
And here I am, the widow Bina Bane.

361.  *Falu ina ko fali*  
I am a widow going back

362.  *Ma ana ma ko tulek.*  
And an orphan returning.

363.  *De ana ma teteni*  
The orphan quests

364.  *Ho Suti Solo mu teteni*  
Suti Solo, you go in quest

365.  *Ma falu ina tatane*  
And the widow searches

366.  *Ho Bina Bane mu matane*  
Bina Bane, you go in search

367.  *Teteni Hena Le*  
In quest of Hena Le [Pandanus River]

368.  *Ho tabu tunga Hena Le*  
Treading along Hena Le

369.  *Ma tatane I Lasi*  
In search of I Lasi [Jasmine Forest]

370.  *Ho nama tunga I Lasi enok.*  
Following the I Lasi path.

371.  *Nama osok maketu na*  
Hold on without letting go

372.  *Ma molo Hena Le eno*  
And step on the Pandanus River road

373.  *Molo osok mabasan.*  
Step along without stopping.

374.  *Teteni Hena Le eno*  
Seek the Pandanus River path

375.  *Ma tatane I Lasi dala*  
And quest for Jasmine Forest road

376.  *Ho kelak molo tunga Hena Le enon*  
To step along Hena Le’s path

377.  *Ma nama tunga I Lasi dala.*  
And follow along I Lasi’s road.
The shells arrive at East Estuary and Headland River and then begin to follow the steps and ladder that lead up the Pandanus River road and Jasmine Forest path.

**Suti Solo and Bina Bane Arrive at East Estuary and Headland River**

378. *Ita dua tena Dulu Oli*  
So that we two arrive at Dulu Oli

379. *Ma ita dua monu Langa Le*  
And we two enter Langa Le

380. *Fali seluk Dulu Oli*  
Come back again to Dulu Oli

381. *Ma tulek seluk Langa Le.*  
And return again to Langa Le.

382. *Teu dulu*  
Let us go east

383. *Lada edak losa nateke na*  
The ladder leads upward

384. *Ma teu langa*  
Let us go to the head

385. *Ho nasalai kakae losa nabasan*  
The steps lead to the top

386. *Molo tunga Hena Le eno*  
Step along the Pandanus River road

387. *Ma nama tunga I Lasi longe*  
And follow along the Jasmine Forest path

388. *Molo na tak nabasa na*  
Step upward without stopping

389. *Ma nama na tak naketu na.*  
Hold on without ending.’

390. *De’a-de’a lo aon na*  
They talk to themselves

391. *Ma kola-kola lo ao na.*  
And they speak to themselves.

This is a symbolic return: a return to mother and father, who are represented by the Nilu Neo tree and the Ko Nau tree, the same two trees—the tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*) and the *bidara* or Indian plum tree (*Ziziphus mauritana*)—that Suti Solo and Bina Bane find shelter with in Ande Ruy’s recitation from Ringgou.

**Suti Solo and Bina Bane Come to Rest at the Nilu Neo Tree and the Ko Nau Tree**

392. ‘*Fali seluk leo ina bongi ka teu*  
‘Going back to the birth mother, we go

393. *Ma tulek seluk leo ama bongi ka teu.*  
Returning to the birth father, we go.
Ina bongi lia Nilu Neo
Ma ama bongi lia Ko Nau.
Nai tema sio dei
Ma nai bate fali dei
Ko Nau naboa nai na
Ma Nilu Neo napetu nai na
Teu ho ketu kolu
Ho teu teik nai na
Ma teu ho hele hao
Ho tama dale nai na
Ho kelak losa do na neu
Ma kelak sekunete na neu.

To the birth mother, Nilu Neo
And to the birth father, Ko Nau.
In the fullness of nine
And in the abundance of eight
The Ko Nau fruits there
And the Nilu Neo sprouts there
Let us go to pick and pluck
Inner satisfaction is there
And let us go to choose and eat
Heartfelt contentment is there
That goes on forever
And that does not end.

Kornalius Medah’s Recurrent Use of Refrain

No less than Ande Ruy, Kornalius Medah relies on the use of a distinctive refrain and counter-refrain to move his recitation forward. His use of one particular refrain based on the dyadic set tean//mepen is emphatic. This set is used no less than 20 times in the course of the recitation: positively to express Suti Solo and Bina Bane’s vain hope and more frequently to announce the failure of all such hopes.

The dyadic set tean//mepen is difficult to translate. It has a concrete and specific sense while connoting a more general quality or condition of being. Tean(n) can mean ‘hard, strong, firm’ and most frequently applies to the hard, inner core of a tree; mepen (seemingly related to the verb nepen) means ‘to hold tight, to grip, to fix’. Together the set denotes what is ‘hard’ and ‘held tight’ and, by extension, what is ‘certain and lasting’. This set is, in some ways, the equivalent in Bilba’s ritual language to the recurrent dyadic set used in Termanu based on tetu//tema.

Thus, early in the recitation (lines 18–19), Kornalius Medah sets the scene for the departure of the shells from Dulu Oli//Langa Le:

Te hu tean tak Dulu Olin
Ma mepen tak Langa Len.
Yet nothing is certain at Dulu Oli
And nothing is lasting at Langa Len.
A more literal translation might be: ‘But nothing holds firm at Dulu Oli and nothing holds tight in Langa Len.’

Kornalius used this set in separate lines and, often as well, in single lines. Thus, in lines 54, 241 and 275, the set Tean//mepen is used in a single line:

Tean o tak ma mepen o tak. Nothing is certain and nothing permanent.

Combined with this steady refrain is a further equally distinct and idiomatically difficult set of lines. These lines in their full form recur six times (lines 31–34, 107–10, 141–44 and 301–04), each time following a phrasing of the major refrain:

Tēhu noi-tao leo lia Yet however one strives
Ho tunu-hai leo lia There is trouble there
Ma sanga-tao leo na And however one seeks
Ho kelo-kea leo na. There is difficulty there.

They also appear in truncated form as, for example, in lines 75/77 and 128/130:

Tēhu noi-tao leo lia … Yet however one strives …
Ma sanga-tao leo na. And however one seeks.

This refrain is composed of the double dyadic sets noi-tao//sanga-tao and kelo-kea//tunu-hai. Noi-tao//sanga-tao indicates a ‘striving, struggling or searching’. In Termanu, the near equivalent combines the terms sanga//tunga. Kelo-kea//tunu-hai, on the other hand, connotes ‘difficulties, problems, setbacks’. Its closest equivalent in Termanu is toa//pia.

The use of these particular dyadic sets serves as Kornalius Medah’s key signature, and the interweaving of complementary refrains is an expression of his mastery of Bilba dialect.

An Analysis of Kornalius Medah’s Ritual Language Usage

This recitation by Kornalius Medah, in Bilba dialect, has 405 lines and is composed of 107 dyadic sets. Bilba’s dialect belongs to Dialect Area II, which falls between Ringgou and Landu in the east and Korbaffo and
Termanu in the central-west of Rote. As a dialect, it is closer to the language of Termanu than to the language of Ringgou. For Termanu speakers, it presents less of a challenge than Ringgou’s dialect.

The majority of the dyadic sets in Bilba’s ritual language are sets shared through most of the island. Some examples of sets that are identical to those in Termanu are the following: 1) *baʃa*/*ma* (‘mouth’//’tongue’); 2) *deʃa*/*nita* (‘*de*las tree, *Erythina* spp.’//’*ni*tas tree, *Sterculia* *foetida’); 3) *deʃa*/*as* (‘like’//’as’); 4) *ekil/hika* (‘to scream, shout’//’to laugh’); 5) *hapa*/*sulu* (‘to protect’//’to shelter’); 6) *loak/naluk* (‘broad’//’long’); 7) *litu/sain* (‘*li*tum’//’sea’); 8) *luli/sangu* (‘*li*tum’//’cyclone’); 9) *li*/*naʃa* (‘wave’//’wave crest’); 10) *molol/tabu* (‘step’//’tread’).

There are, however, a number of sound changes that distinguish Bilba’s dialect from Termanu’s. Most notably, initial ‘nd’ in Termanu becomes ‘l’ in Bilba (as opposed to ‘r’ in Ringgou). Similarly, initial ‘ngg’ in Termanu becomes ‘ng’ in Bilba (as opposed to ‘k’ in Ringgou). Medial ‘d’ in Termanu becomes ‘nd’ in Bilba. These sound changes yield the following transformations of shared dyadic sets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Termanu</th>
<th>Bilba</th>
<th>Ringgou</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>na</em>/<em>ndia</em></td>
<td><em>na</em>/<em>lia</em></td>
<td><em>na</em>/<em>ria</em></td>
<td>‘this’//’that’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>nduai</em>/<em>sau</em></td>
<td>*lui/<em>sau</em></td>
<td><em>ruil/sau</em></td>
<td>‘to ladle’//’to scoop out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ndai</em>/<em>seko</em></td>
<td>*lai/<em>seko</em></td>
<td><em>ral//se’o</em></td>
<td>‘to scoop’//’to net-fish’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ndano</em>/<em>toko</em></td>
<td>*lano/<em>toko</em></td>
<td><em>rano//to’o</em></td>
<td>‘to throw’//’to thrust’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-<em>nggelii</em>/<em>tulek</em></td>
<td>-<em>ngeli</em>/<em>tulek</em></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>‘to rage’//’to heave’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-<em>kedui</em>/<em>tani</em></td>
<td>-*keedi/<em>tani</em></td>
<td>-*edu/<em>tani</em></td>
<td>‘to sob’//’to weep’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bilba has a range of specific sets with terms that distinguish these sets from those of Termanu and Ringgou or Landu. For example, Bilba has a different set of terms for house post and beam (*nata-tuak//timi-di*) than Landu (or Ringgou) (*balo-tual//timi-di*) or Termanu (*lungu-tual//timi-di*). Similarly, Bilba has the set *hamu-lel//tele-tasi*, whereas Landu has *hambaul//tere-tasi*. The verbs *teteni*/*tatane* (‘to seek’//’to quest’) are distinctive in their use in Bilba dialect.

There are other distinctive usages. For example, in lines 38–39:

*Faik lia luli dulu fafae na*  
One day a storm arises in the waking east
Ma ledok na sangu langa titipa na. And at one time a cyclone blows at the thrusting head.

The density of these lines is notable. Whereas generally poetic lines may contain three or four dyadic sets, these lines contain five dyadic sets: faik//ledo, lia//na, luli//sangu, dulu//langa and fae//tipa, which occurs in reduplicated form as fafae//titipa. Although analysable in separable sets, the combination dulu fafae//langa titipa constitutes a formula. Fae as a verb means to ‘to shake, to wake’, while the verb tipa means ‘to push, to shove’. When these verbs with similar meanings are applied to east//head, they describe an early dawning, an opening to the east. This same formula is repeated in lines 79–80 when a storm again arises in the east:

Faik lia luli dulu fafae seluk One day a storm arises again in the waking east
Ma ledok na sangu langa titipa seluk. And at one time a cyclone blows again at the thrusting head.

Another idiomatic expression occurs (in singular format using neu) in lines 259/262 and again (in plural format using leu) in lines 289–90:

(1)
Na dadi neuk koa tua Gives rise to great celebration
Dadi neu ngia sina. Gives rise to great exuberance.

(2)
Dadi leu koa tua These things give rise to great celebration
Ma moli leu ngia sina. And give forth great exuberance.

The combination of koa tua//ngia sina in Bilba signifies a ‘celebration, rejoicing, a show of exuberance’. However, if translated literally, this combination of terms means ‘old, large friarbird’//‘Chinese parrot’. This particular idiomatic usage is not an expression used (or possibly even understood) in Termanu.

Kornalius Medah’s Recitation as a Christian Parable

With its recurrent refrains, the narrative progression of Kornalius Medah’s recitation is relatively clear and easy to follow. Its intent, however, may be more difficult to fathom. Unlike some versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, this version is not revelatory: it does not link the shells’ journey to specific events in any origin chants. Instead its insistent theme focuses on the uncertainty, impermanence and transitory nature of life.

As is emphatically stated in lines 342/344 towards the end of the recitation:

*Te tean tak dae bafok*  
For there is no certainty on earth

*Te mepen tak batu poik ka.*  
For there is no permanence in the world.

Like numerous other mortuary chants, this recitation reiterates a basic Rotenese conception of the human condition: that all human beings in the world are ultimately like orphans and widows. However they may live, they are born and die as widows and orphans.

As the shells prepare to embark on the Pandanus River road and Jasmine Forest path, they enunciate this fundamental view of themselves:

*‘Au ia, ana mak Suti Solo*  
‘Here I am, the orphan Suti Solo

*Ma au ia, falu ina Bina Bane.*  
And here I am, the widow Bina Bane.

*Falu ina ko fali*  
I am a widow going back

*Ma ana ma ko tulek.’*  
And an orphan returning.’

This view of the human condition is explicitly voiced in some of the oldest and most traditional mortuary chants from Rote (see Fox 1988: 161–201, particularly pp. 166–69), but it can also be tinged, in various chants, with clear Christian sentiments. Kornalius Medah’s recitation offers hints of these Christian sentiments in its use of certain key words. At the beginning of the recitation (lines 10–11), it is announced that:

*Hu no tepok lia Suti natane sodak ka*  
At that time Suti seeks well-being

*Ma lelek na Bina teteni molek ka.*  
And at the moment Bina asks for peace.
15. A VERSION FROM THE DOMAIN OF BILBA

The dyadic set *soda/mole*, drawn from the vocabulary of the Christian canon, implies a state of heavenly grace. These paired terms, *Soda-Molek*, are used as a Christian greeting and their use in this context, at the outset of the recitation, signals the potential direction for the recitation.

The return to East Estuary and Headland River and the ascent along the Pandanus River road and Jasmine Forest path to the two prolific fruiting trees, the Ko Nau and the Nilu Neo, can be interpreted as a Christian parable that traces a path from birth to death.
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.