Suti Solo do Bina Bane: Version I from the Domain of Thie

The Canon of Origins: Relations between the Sun and Moon and the Lords of the Sea

This recitation, which I recorded in 1973, is remarkable not just as another version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* but also as a composition that locates the initial cause of the shells’ distress in the context of one of the most important episodes in the origin narratives of the Rotenese. This episode, which serves to introduce the recitation, recounts the attack of the Sun and Moon, Ledo Horo and Bula Kai, and their children on the Lords of the Ocean and Sea, Manetua Sain and Danga Lena Liun. In the course of this attack, Suti Solo and Bina Bane are tainted with the spilled blood of battle and this sets the shells adrift in the sea. Thereafter the recitation is concerned with the fate of the shells.

The introduction to this recitation gives a glimpse of the drama of the origin narratives, all of which recount the successive involvement and intimate engagement of the Sun and Moon with the Lords of the Ocean and Sea, who are identified as Shark and Crocodile. Their field of interaction is on earth as much as in the heavens or sea.
On a trip to the village of Oe Handi in Thie in 1973, I recorded this version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* together with a wealth of other chants from the two master poets at that time: N. D. Pah, who was invariably referred to as Guru Pah (‘Teacher Pah’), and his close friend and companion, Samuel Ndun. These chants included a long and detailed version of the foundation chant that recounts the discovery of fire and cooked food in the sea and another chant about the origin of the house built with tools obtained from the sea. In addition, the two poets provided other chants, including two extended mortuary chants. My week’s stay in Oe Handi was the most intensive and productive period of my second fieldwork on Rote.

In retrospect, I realise that the version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* that I was offered was intended as an integral component of the other origin chants I recorded. It is critical therefore to introduce this recitation by reference to the other origin chants that provide the ‘cosmological’ context for this version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*. In Thie, *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is itself a vital origin chant—one that was previously recited at one of the major origin ceremonies of the domain.

The origin narratives of Thie begin with the heavenly marriage of Pua Kende and No Rini to Ledo Horo and Bula Kai, the Lords of the Sun and Moon. The first sons of this marriage are Adu Ledo and Ndu Bulan. As young men, they set out to hunt ‘pig and civet cat’. During their hunt, they meet the sons of the Lords of the Ocean and Sea, Tio Dangak and Rusu Mane, and agree to join each other in the hunt.

When eventually they catch a ‘woodland civet and a forest pig’, the sons of the Sun and Moon propose that they divide their catch. Instead, Tio Dangak and Rusu Mane invite Adu Ledo and Ndu Bulan to their realm beneath the sea. There in the ocean’s depths, the sons of Sun and Moon discover the immense wealth of the Shark and Crocodile. More importantly still, they discover fire for the first time and the delicious taste of cooked food. The taste is so extraordinary that Adu Ledo and Ndu Bulan hide a portion of their meal and take it back to their father, Ledo Horo and Bula Kai.
Figure 20: Samuel Ndun
Figure 21: N. D. Pah — ‘Guru Pah’

What follows is a debate about how the Sun and Moon can acquire the full bounty of the sea. The first inclination is to make war on the sea but this proves futile. Eventually Ledo Horo and Bula Kai decide to divorce their daughters Sà'o Ledo and Mani Bulan from their husbands and offer these women in marriage to Tio Dangak and Rusu Mane. In return, they demand an immense bridewealth, which consists of a litany of objects
that they desire. Besides gold and livestock, particularly water buffalo, they demand the means for making fire—a flint set and fire drill—but also an array of tools for building a house, as well as axe and adze for clearing fields for planting.

Among their specific demands is the ‘mortar whose thudding shakes its base and a pestle whose thrust blisters the hand’. When they have concluded their marriage alliance and obtained a bridewealth of useful objects, the Lords of the Sun and Moon have gained for themselves the implements for planting, for pounding grains and for cooking but they lack the ‘seeds’ to plant. These seeds originate in the sea. This version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* recounts the origin of these seeds.

**Recording and Interpreting this Version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane***

In 1966, many years before my 1973 visit, I journeyed to the settlement of Oe Handi in Thie to meet ‘Guru Pah’. As a young man, he had assisted the Swiss researcher Alfred Buehler in his study of textiles and gained a wide reputation throughout Rote as one of the most knowledgeable authorities on Rotenese traditions. He was noted as a brilliant Christian preacher, a fine singer and versatile player of the Rotenese *sesandu*—a tradition that continued in subsequent generations of his family.

On my arrival, Guru Pah’s first question to me was why had it taken so long for me to pay him a visit. He felt that I was wasting my time doing research in Termanu, whereas, in his opinion, research in Thie would have been far more productive.

I was able to stay only a few days in Oe Handi but during that time I recorded two long chants of remarkable beauty associated with the celebration of origins in Thie.

Like my first visit to Oe Handi, my second visit in 1973 was brief. It lasted for only a week. At the time, Guru Pah was involved in a variety of ritual activities including both a funeral and a large-scale wedding. He was prepared to continue his recitations but he invited another poet, Samuel Ndun, to join him. The two were almost inseparable and made themselves available for my recording. They would confer with each other about each particular recitation and then take turns at reciting,
commenting on and correcting their recitations. Because of their mutual efforts, I have designated the set of recordings that I did at this time as joint compositions.

Although I never learned a great deal about Pak Sam, he gave his recitations with authority and enthusiasm. While I was in Oe Handi, he was also involved in officiating at a wedding. I remember that when he arrived to conduct the ritual, he asked whether the family wanted a Christian or traditional ceremony. He was willing and capable of performing either.

While I was in Oe Handi, I tried to work through each recitation, identifying new dyadic sets and annotating difficult lines. Despite these efforts at understanding, Thie’s dialect has always presented difficulties for me. Hence, over the years, I have turned to other knowledgeable speakers from Thie to check my transcriptions and assist me with my understanding and my translations.

Years later, I sought help on understanding this recitation from Guru Pah’s daughter, Ibu Guru Ena Pah, who was by that time a respected teacher in Kupang, and also from Paul Haning, who had a deep knowledge of the ritual language of Thie. Even after having properly transcribed and worked out an initial literal translation, I was still uncertain of the meaning of certain key passages in this recitation. Like many of the most important Rotenese chants, this recitation is challengingly elusive, with references to places whose significance is not immediately apparent. Years later, for further elucidation, I sought the help of the master poet Jonas Mooy, who carefully and patiently assisted me to understand more of the metaphoric expressions in this version.

The Narrative Structure of the Pah–Ndun Version of Suti Solo do Bina Bane

This recitation begins with a peroration of some seven lines that acknowledge the rule borne by the Heavens and the Earth. These lines foreshadow the concluding five lines of the recitation, which extol the rule and bounty of the Heavens. After this peroration, 49 lines launch immediately into a crucial episode from the canon of the origin chants. They give an account of the lead-up to the war waged by the Sun and Moon on the Lords of the Ocean and Sea. These lines also provide the genealogical background to the key members of the Heavenly Realm. Ledo Horo//Bula Kai is Lord
of the Sun and Moon; his wife is Pua Kende//No Rini, the daughter of Kende Bei Sama//Rini Bala Sama. Some of Ledo Holo//Bula Kai’s children, who bear the first half of the name of their father—Bulan and Ledo—are mentioned in this recitation: 1) Patola Bulan//Mandeti Ledo, 2) Tuti Leo Bulan//Si Lete Ledo, 3) Ninga Heu Bulan//Lafa Lai Ledo, and 4) Hundi Hu Bulan//Tefu Oe Ledo. The names of other children of the Sun and Moon, however, are missing from the initial lines of this version. Neither the son who first descends into the sea to taste cooked food, Adu Ledo//Ndu Bulan, nor the daughter who marries Tio Dangak//Rusu Mane, S’a’o Ledo//Mani Bulan, is cited in this recitation.

The Lords of the Sea, Manetua Sain//Danga Lena Liun, are mentioned along with various sea creature warriors. These sea creatures, Ain Bo’o Bai//Etu Asa Siru and Bara Kota Nau//Pila Mengge Mea, are specifically named, but with the exception of Pila Mengge Mea (‘Red Snake of the Sea’), these names do not clearly indicate what creatures they represent. The fighting occurs at Lau Mara//Leme Niru. All of this is provided as the prelude to the introduction of the shells.

**Ledo Horo and Bula Kai Declare War on the Lords of Ocean and Sea**

1. **Hida bei fan na**
   At a time long ago
2. **Dalu bei don na**
   At a period long past
3. **Lalai ma na te dae bafok**
   The Heavens and the Earth
4. **Neni parinda ma neni koasak**
   Carry rule and carry power
5. **Neni ko’o ifak**
   Carry it lifting and cradling it
6. **Neni nekeboik**
   Carry it with care
7. **Ma neni nesemaok.**
   And carry it with concern.
8. **Faik esa no dalen**
   Then on a certain day
9. **Ledo esa no tein**
   At a particular time
10. **Touk kia Bula Kai**
    The man Bula Kai
11. **Tæek esa Ledo Horo**
    The boy Ledo Horo
12. **Ana dea-dea no tun**
    He speaks with his wife
13. **Ma na te ana kola-kola no saon**
    And he addresses his spouse
14. **Kende Bei Sama anan**
    Kende Bei Sama’s child
15. Inak kia Pua Kende
The woman Pua Kende

16. Ma Rini Bala Sama anan
And Rini Bala Sama’s child

17. Fetok kia No Rini.
The girl No Rini.

18. Ana dea-dea no anan nara
He speaks with his children

19. Mandeti Ledo bali
Mandeti Ledo

20. Ma Patola Bulan bali
And Patola Bulan

21. Kola-kola no anan nara
Addresses his children

22. Si Lete Ledo bali
Si Lete Ledo

23. Tuti Leo Bulan bali
Tuti Leo Bulan

24. Ana kola-kola no anan nara
He addresses his children

25. Ningga Heu Bulan
Ninga Heu Bulan

26. Lafa Lai Ledo
Lafa Lai Ledo

27. Hundi Hu Bulan bali
Hundi Hu Bulan

28. Tefu Oe Ledo bali ma nae:
Tefu Oe Ledo and says:

29. ‘Tetenda tafa langga
‘Sharpen the sword blade

30. Ma seseru siro nggoe
And set the flintlock trigger

31. Sain dale miu dei
We are going into the sea

32. Ma liun dale miu dei.’
And we are going into the ocean.’

33. Ela leo be na,
So let it be,

34. Rani falu rai liun
Eight warriors in the ocean

35. Ma meru sio rai sain.
And nine defenders in the sea.

36. Ma na te tetenda tafa langga dei
Strike their sword heads

37. Ma seseru siro nggoe dei.
Set their flintlocks’ triggers.

38. Hu na te ara konda sain dale mai
So they descend into the sea

39. Ma ana konda liun dale mai
And descend into the ocean

40. Ratonggo ro liun meru nara
To meet the ocean’s defenders

41. Ma na te randa ro sain rani nara,
And to meet the sea’s warriors,

42. Manetua Sain rani nara
The Lord of the Sea’s warriors

43. Ma Danga Lena Liun meru nara
And Hunter of the Ocean’s defenders

44. Ain Bo’o Bai ma Etu Asa Siru
Ain Bo’o Bai and Etu Asa Siru
45. Bara Kota Nau sain
Bara Kota Nau of the sea

46. Ma Pila Mengge Mea sain
And Pila Mengge [red snake] of the sea

47. Ara tonggo ro
They meet them

48. Ma ara nda ro
And they encounter them

49. Rain falu ma meruk sio
The eight warriors and nine defenders

50. Ruma sain bei Lau Mara
In the sea at Lau Mara

51. [Ruma liun] bei Lema Niru bali
And in the ocean at Lema Niru too

52. Tonggo langga reu tonggo
They meet head to head

53. Tetenda tafa langga
Strike their sword blades

54. Ma seseru siro nggoen.
Fire their cocked flintlocks.

55. Hu na de ara siro la'e Lau Mara
Thus they fire at Lau Mara

56. Ma ara tati la'e Leme Niru.
And they slash at Leme Niru.

It is during the fighting at Lau Mara//Leme Niru that Suti Solo and Bina Bane are touched by the blood of battle, put forth their pods and are carried to Loko Laka Fa//Tebu Tipa Re. The lines that explain this also introduce the shells by way of their paternal genealogy. They are the children of Bane Aka Liun and Solo Bane Sain. This genealogical identification is the same as that recognised in Termanu (in both Meno’s and Eli Pellondou’s recitations). Rotenese genealogies that cite such a succession of generations—Bina Bane from Bane Aka Liun and Suti Solo from Solo Bane Sain—provide no indication of the gender of the succeeding generation. Other commentary is required to provide this information. In Termanu, the tradition is strong and clear: Suti Solo and Bina Bane are male. However, outside Termanu, in Thie and elsewhere in western Rote, tradition asserts that the shells are female. This recitation, however, offers no indication of the gender of the shells.

The Blood of Battle Falls on Suti Solo and Bina Bane and They Flee

57. Dan, ana nonosi
Blood, it pours out

58. Ma oen, ana tiititi.
And water, it drips out.

59. Ana tiititi la'e
It drips on
The Woman Bui Len and Girl Eno Lolo Encounter Suti Solo and Bina Bane

On that day,

Ngonggo Ingu Lai’s spouse

[Leu] Le Dale’s child

Bui Len.

Rima Le Dale’s wife

Lolo Dala Ina’s child

Eno Lolo

Eno Lolo and Bu Len

Ngonggo Ingu Lai’s wife

And Leu [Rima] Le Dale’s spouse

She takes her sea scoop-net

Lifts up her tidal fishnet

Goes to the receding tide

And to the drying sea.
Suti Solo and Bina Bane Ask to be Carried to *Ufa* and *Bau* Trees

101. *Boe ma raе: ‘Fua ai miu*  
    So they say: ‘Place us on

102. *Ufa mabuna henu [kara]*  
    The *ufa* tree full of gold-bead flowers

103. *Ma Bau malusu lilok kara.’*  
    And on the *bau* tree with golden blossoms.’

104. *Fai esa no dalen*  
    On one day

105. *Ara bei ta ratetu*  
    They still do not feel right

106. *Ma bei ta randa.*  
    And still do not yet feel proper.
Suti Solo and Bina Bane’s next request is to be carried into the house and placed on two of the major beams of the house. These are the places where sacrifices are carried out in the traditional house in Thie.¹

Suti Solo and Bina Bane Ask to be Carried to the Sema Kona and Lunggu Lai

107. Ara dea-dea ro Nggonggo Inggu Lai tun
They address Nggonggo Inggu Lai’s spouse

108. Inak ia Eno Lolo
The woman Eno Lolo

109. Ana kola-kola ro Rima Le Dale saon
They speak to Rima Le Dale’s wife

110. Fetok ia Bui Len:
The girl Bui Len:

111. ‘Ma ha’i falik ai dei
‘Carry us back

112. Ma tengga falik ai dei
And take us back

113. Ndae ai miu Sema Kona
Hang us on the Sema Kona

114. Fua ai miu Lunggu Lai
Place us on the Lunggu Lai

115. Fo ama bara manu Sema Kona
To sacrifice chickens at the Sema Kona

116. Na te ama langge lilo Lunggu Lai.’
And to place gold at the Lunggu Lai.’

117. Hu na de ara fati bete sara
They offer millet there

118. Ma ara hao hade sara,
And they consume the rice there,

119. Faru kapa ma na te mina bafi.
Water buffalo horns and pig’s fat.

120. Faik esa no dalen
Then on one day

121. Ledok esa no tein
And at one time

122. Bei ta ratetu
They still do not feel right

123. Ma bei ta randa.
And still do not feel proper.

Suti Solo and Bina Bane then ask to be carried eastward so that at dawn they may be placed at the boundary stone and field’s border. It is at this point that the lines occur: ‘So let it be: a hundred rise and a thousand mount at the rice field dike and the dry field boundary.’ These metaphoric lines signal the planting of the shells as the first seeds of rice and millet and foretell the harvests (‘a hundred rise//a thousand mount’ refers to

¹ See Fox (1993) for drawings of the internal architecture of a traditional house.
the myriad stalks in the fields) that will come from them. This is stated again in the lines in which the shells are described as giving rise to the ‘Planting at the Boundary Stone’ (Tanek To Batu) and ‘Sowing at the Field Boundary’ (Selek Lane Ai).

Suti Solo and Bina Bane Ask to be Carried to the East and to the Headland

124. Ana de’a-de’a ro Bui Len  He talks to Bui Len
125. Ma kola-kola ro Eno Lolo  And speaks to Eno Lolo
126. Nggonggo Inggu Lai tun  Nggonggo Ingu Lai’s spouse
127. Ma Rima Le Dale saon ma ra'  And Rima Le Dale’s wife, and says:
128. ‘Keko ai dulu miu dei  ‘Shift us to the east
129. Ma lali ai langga miu dei  And transfer us to the headland
130. Fo ai Timu Dulu miu dei  So that we may be in the Dawning East
131. Ma ai Sepe Langga miu dei.  And at the Reddening Headland.
132. Mbeda ai miu to batu  Take us to the border stone
133. Ma na te ndae ai miu lane tiner.  And carry us to the field’s border.
134. Fo ela leo be na:  So let it be:
135. Natun kae ma rifun hene  A hundred rise and a thousand mount
136. Nai omba bade dei  At the rice field dike
137. Nai lane tiner dei.  And the dry field boundary.
138. Fo ela leo be na  So let it be that
139. Ai makaboi miu ana mar  We are cared for as orphans
140. Ma ai masamao miu falu inar  And are treated as widows
141. Bonggi tanek To Batu  Giving birth to planting at To Batu
142. Ma bonggi selek Lane Ai  And giving birth to sowing at Lane Ai
143. Ruma Timu Dulu Sepe Langga.’  At Timu Dulu Sepe Langga.’

The next three lines appear to be an interjection—a comment on an imagined Biblical homeland in the Dawning East and at the Reddening Headland (Timu Dulu//Sepe Langga). Thereafter, the women Bui Len//Eno Lolo carry the shells westward to a succession of named places: Deras//Le Lena, Mundek//Na’u Dalek, Rote//Kode Ana, Oe Batu//Bau
Foe, Kone Ama/Sai Fua and onward to Nggonggoer/Lasi Lai and Liti/Sera Dale. Each of these places is a recognised field in Thie or on the border with Thie and Dengka, which is planted with either rice or millet.

**Suti Solo and Bina Bane Are Carried to a Succession of Fields Where They Are Planted**

144. Neu na au ba'ing Ibrahim  
At the time my ancestor Ibrahim

145. Ana leo numa Timu Dulu  
He lives in Timu Dulu Sepe Langga

146. Nusak Urkasdin  
The Land of Urkasdin

147. Faik na ana ko'o nala sara  
That day she cradles them

148. Ma na te ana ifa nala sara  
And she lifts them

149. Natun kae o kae  
A hundred to rise and rise

150. Ma rifun hene o hene  
And a thousand to mount and mount

151. Kae, ara muri mai  
Rising, they go to the west

152. Hene, ara iko mai  
Mounting they go to the tail

153. Ara mai Deras no Lelena  
They come to Deras and Le Lena

154. Ara mai Mundek no Na’u Dale  
They come to Mundek and Na’u Dale

155. Leo na, ara mai Rote no Kode Ana  
Then they come to Rote and Kode Ana

156. Oe Batu no Bau Foe  
Oe Batu and Bau Foe

157. Kone Ama ma Sai Fuan  
Kone Ama and Sai Fuan

158. Ara hene, ara kona reu  
They mount, they descend

159. Reu Nggonggoer ma reu Lasi Lai  
To Nggonggoer and Lasi Lai

160. Liti ma Sera Dale.  
Liti and Sera Dale.

In the concluding lines of this recitation, Suti Solo and Bina Bane are declared to be ‘orphan and widow’. In virtually every other version of this chant, this designation is mentioned early and often. Here it appears once at the very end of the recitation. As ‘orphan and widow’, Suti Solo do Bina Bane take their rest in the fields of Thie from whence their descendants
(tititin//nonosin) continue to spread throughout the world. The final lines reiterate the initial lines of the recitation that assert the power that the Heavens and the Heights exert on the Earth.

Suti Solo and Bina Bane as Orphan and Widow Achieve Their Rest in the Fields of Thie

161. *Natun kae ma rifun hene* A hundred rise and a thousand mount
162. *Natun kae nai be* One hundred rise to where
163. *Ana mar reu suru* The orphan goes to rest
164. *Ma na te rifun hene nai be* And a thousand mount to where
165. *Ma falu inar reu tai.* The widow goes to cling.
166. *Boe te Suti oen tititin* So Suti’s descendants
167. *Ma nate Bina oen nonosin* And Bina’s successors
168. *Ndule basa dae bafok ledo sa’ak* Cover all the world and sunlit Earth
169. *Ki boe, kona boe* North also and south also
170. *Dulu boe, muri boe.* East also and west also.
171. *Lain bati malole* The Heights distribute the good
172. *Ma ata bae mandak* The Heavens allocate the proper
173. *Ruma mana parinda kisek mai a* From them is a single rule
174. *Numa tema sion mai* From the fullness of nine
175. *Numa bate falu mai ooo …* From the completeness of eight …

Thie’s Version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* in Relation to Other Versions

This version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from Thie recounts the origin of rice and millet. It is the only version of a *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* chant for which, we are told, there was a specific ritual setting—one of the two annual origin ceremonies known as *Limbe* (or as *Limba* in some dialects) previously celebrated in Thie. The key to understanding this chant occurs in the lines (134 ff.) that proclaim:
Fo ela leo be na: So let it be:
Natun kae ma rifun hene A hundred rise and a thousand mount
Nai omba hade dei At the rice field dike
Nai lane tiner dei. And the dry field boundary.

There is no explanation that the phrase *natun kae ma rifun hene* (‘a hundred rise and a thousand mount’) is a ritual expression that alludes to waving grains in a field. The sense of these lines and their subsequent repetition (lines 149–52) and (161–65) would appear elusive. Significantly the chant acknowledges a ritual order of precedence in planting: the first planting of the seeds of rice and millet was not in Thie but at Dawning East//Reddening Headland (*Timu Dulu//Sepe Langga*), which, in this version, is given a Christian interpretation and identified as the land of the ancestor Ibrahim.

There are other elements of this chant that are elusive, particularly the invocation of specific places. The cause for the expulsion of the shells from beneath the sea is also different from other versions of the chant. However, in other respects, this version follows the standard pattern of most *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* chants: 1) an initial expulsion from the sea, 2) a tidal encounter with women who fish them from the sea and bring them onto land, and 3) a quest for an appropriate resting place phrased as a search by an ‘orphan and widow’. Although some versions end with a return to the sea, others conclude with a resting place on Rote. In a truncated fashion, for example, the conclusion of this version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* resembles the conclusion of Kornalius Medah’s version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from Bilba. Instead of the Pandanus River road and the Forest Jasmine path leading to the Nilu Neo and Ko Nau trees, complete with ‘the fullness of nine and the abundance of eight’ (*tema sioll bate falu*), the shells in this version come to rest as seeds in fields that continue to produce their harvests—an order that presides over the Heavens and Heights ‘in the fullness of nine and in the abundance of eight’ (*tema sioll bate falu*).
An Analysis of the Ritual Language Usage of Ndun–Pah’s *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

This composition of 175 lines is composed of just 60 dyadic sets. In addition, the composition cites 14 distinct dyadic personal names and 10 dyadic place names. As with other compositions, a majority of the sets that make up this composition are common to most of the speech communities of the island. Thus, for example, the following basic dyadic sets are immediately recognisable: 1) bete//hade (‘millet’/'rice’); 2) kil//kona (‘north, left’/'south, right’); 3) de’al//kola (‘speak’/'talk’); 4) falu//sio (‘eight’/'nine’); 5) dal//oe (‘blood’/'water’); 6) tæk//touk (‘boy’/'man’); 7) fiua//ndae (‘to place’/'to let hang down’); 8) henull//lilo (‘golden beads’/'gold’); 9) atall//lain (‘heights’/'heavens’); 10) malole//mendak (‘good’/'proper’).

A similar range of basic dyadic sets is also recognisable despite the various sound changes that occur in Thie dialect. Thus the ‘p’ in Termamu becomes ‘mb’ in Thie; ‘ng’ becomes ‘nng’; and some (but not all) ‘l’ in Termamu become ‘r’ in Thie. Thie dialect also appendes a final ‘r’ to give emphasis to particular nouns. An illustrative list of these basic dyadic sets is: 1) dul//muri (‘east’/'west’); 2) dul//langga (‘east’/'head’); 3) ikol//muri (‘tail’/'west’); 4) natun//rifun (‘hundred’/'thousand’); 5) tafu//sio (‘sword’/'flintlock’); 6) tat//siro (‘cut, slash’/'fire a flintlock’); 7) langga//nggoe (‘head’/'snout’); 8) mbeda//ndae (‘place’/'let hang down’); 9) ndal//tongo (‘meet’/'encounter’); 10) ha‘i//tengga (‘take, seize’/'lift, grasp’); 11) ana mar//falu inar (‘orphan’/'widow’); 12) ranu//melu (‘warrior’/'defender’).

In this composition, there are surprisingly few dyadic sets whose semantic elements are distinctive to Thie. One such set is haradoi//kurudo, which refers to ‘problems, difficulties and sufferings’. The nearest equivalent in Bilba is kelol//tunu-hai and in Termamu the dyadic set toall/pia.

There are, however, many grammatical features that distinguish this recitation as a composition in the dialect of Thie. The use of pronominals defines it as Thie dialect: thus where Termamu uses ami for the third-person plural inclusive, Thie uses ai; where Termamu uses emi for the second-person plural, Thie uses ei; and where Termamu uses ala for the
third-person plural, Thie uses *ara*. Equally distinctive are the verbal forms *numa* (singular) and *ruma* (plural), indicating ‘action from’. Termanu uses *neni* and *leni*.

**A Comparison of Distinctive Refrains from Different Dialects**

Although this recitation places less emphasis on dialogue directives, it highlights the initial plight of the shells and their search for a place of rest. Crucial to this version, as in other versions, is the decisive moment when they are scooped from the sea and brought onto dry land. The women Bui Len and Eno Lolo ask the shells:

‘Ai ndae ei miu be? ’Where should we hang you? Ma ai fua ei miu be?’ And where should we place you?’

The dyadic set used to indicate this placement is *ndae*/fua (‘to hang’/‘to place’).

In reply, the shells ask to be placed in two trees:

‘... Fua ai miu ‘... Place us on
*Ufa mabuna henu [kara]* The *ufa* tree full of gold-bead flowers
*Ma Bau malusu lilok kara.* And in the *bau* tree with golden blossoms.’

This location in the *ufa* and *bau* trees does not satisfy the shells, and their discomfort is indicated by a set refrain:

*Ara bei ta ratetu* They still do not feel right
*Ma bei ta randa.* And still do not yet feel good.

The shells then ask to be placed on two specific beams within the house:

‘Ndae ai miu sema kona ‘Hang us on the *sema kona*
*Fua ai miu lunggu lai’ Place us on the *lunggu lai’*

This location also proves unsatisfactory and their discomfort is again indicated by the same refrain:

*Bei ta ratetu* They still do not feel right
Ma bei ta randa. And still do not feel proper.

Such refrains are indicative of each domain’s (or each poet’s) formulaic discourse. Here this refrain is based on the dyadic set tetul/nda. The two terms have a range of meanings but in this context, they indicate what is ‘right’ and ‘proper’ or ‘fitting’. A similar refrain in Termanu relies on tetul/tema:

De tetun ta ndia boe Order is not there then
Ma teman ta ndia boe. And integrity is not there then.

Often this refrain is expressed in universal terms:

Tetun ta nai batu poik Order is not of this world
Teman ta nai dae bafok Integrity is not of this earth.

In Ringgou, the most common refrain based on the dyadic set tesal/tama (or tesa tei/tama dale) is:

Tè tesa tei bei ta’a There is no contentment there
Ma tama dale bei ta’a. And there is no satisfaction there.

The equivalent refrain in Bilba is based on the dyadic set tean/mepen:

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

The ‘Origin’ Traditions of Thie and Their Significance

Although I gathered this version of Suti Solo do Bina Bane in 1973 and, with the help of Ena Pah and Paul Haning, was reasonably confident of its transcription and literal translation, I gained further understanding of its significance only after discussions with Jonas Mooy, who joined the Master Poets Project in 2011 and came again as a participant in 2013 and 2014. It was in discussing the chants in my earlier collection from Thie that I discovered that another of my long chants, Masi Dande ma Solo Suti, gathered in 1966 from Guru Pah—a chant of more than 550 lines—is the foundation for the other ‘origin ceremony’ of Thie. In addition, I have another chant from Guru Pah, Bole Sou ma Asa Nou, which also recounts the origin of rice and millet and, in its narrative, resembles this version of Suti Solo do Bina Bane. It is clear in retrospect that Guru Pah
was concerned to impart to me in our brief encounters as much of the traditional knowledge of ‘origins’ as he could. The purpose here has been to situate Thie’s version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* in relation to a wide range of other versions of this ‘same’ chant from the different domains and different ritual communities of Rote. At the same time, this telling of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* needs to be considered in relation to the rich ritual traditions of Thie. It is appropriate that I was able to gather another version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from Thie—this one by Jonas Mooy. In a ritual sense, though not in any strict compositional sense, these two recitations are the ‘same chant’.