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Traditions of Oral Formulaic Composition across the Island of Rote

As a study of oral formulaic compositions, the first half of this book has focused on 10 versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from the domain of Termanu, examining in some detail the semantics of oral composition in a single speech community. The second half has focused on another 10 versions of this chant, from seven different domains of the island: Landu, Ringgou, Bilba, Ba'a, Thie, Dengka and Oenale. It has considered both the specific ritual semantics of these various speech communities and the general patterning of parallelism that allows communication across these speech communities. Since the second half of this study has had to proceed step by step to examine each speech community, the full extent of the semantics of oral composition can only begin to be grasped in relation to the traditions of the whole of the island.

It is apparent from the various versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, however distinctive, that these compositions share a common tradition. Similarities among versions of this chant are greater throughout eastern and central Rote but even in western Rote, where the shells change sex to become female, similarities in form of composition, in elements of the narrative and in the recurrence of many set formulae point to a shared tradition.

As at the end of the first half of this study, it is useful to review the narrative structures of these various versions.

Narrative Structures of the Dialect Versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

Version XI, Landu: Alex Mada's *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

In Alex Mada's version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, the woman Noa Bafo and the girl Lole Ora watch over their ripening fields. The fields are ready for harvest but the *fua poi* and *peda bafo* ceremony has yet to be held, so they prepare a scoop-net to go in search of the ritual fish. Before the friarbird sings and the east turns red, they make their way to the sea where they encounter Suti Solo and Bina Bane. At first they fish them up, then throw them away, but the shells beg them to take them home. The women begin a dialogue with the shells, telling them to go with the flotsam and sea refuse. When the shells decline this offer, the women tell them to go with the harbour crabs and shore molluscs. When they decline this possibility, the women propose that they go with the *boa* and *piko* trees that grow along the water's edge. The shells again refuse to accept this suggestion because these trees are vulnerable in the monsoon. The women then propose that they go with the house post and old beam. (The shells' formulaic answer confounds house post and old beam with syrup vat and millet basket.) This proposal is also declined. The women's next proposal is to go with the syrup vat and millet basket, but this is also declined. The women then urge the shells to go with border stone and boundary tree and when this is again declined, they propose they go to the sacred grove and forbidden forest. The shells reply that these forests could be cut down and they, the shells, would be abandoned. Finally, as the ninth dialogue directive of this recitation, the women propose that the shells join with the *gewang* (Corypha) palm and the lontar (Borassus) palm to serve as clappers to drive away birds. At this suggestion, the recitation ends.

Version XII, Ringgou: Ande Ruy's *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

The woman Oli Masi and the girl Bisa Oli go to search for the fish Tio Holo and Dusu Lake, but they are only able to catch Suti Solo and Bina Bane in their nets. The shells explain that they are orphan and widow: without a companion, they seek a homeland. So the women take up the shells and bring them home, telling them that 'their land is the rice basket and their

lineage the syrup vat'. Since these vessels can be depleted, the shells reject this proposal. So the women propose that they take shelter with the rice field's wide embankment and the dry field's long boundary. The shells reply that flooding rains could wash away the embankment and boundary and then they would not have 'contentment and satisfaction'. The women then propose that the shells take shelter with 'the raised horns and waving tails'. The shells answer that if disease strikes the buffalo and goats, there will be no 'order or integrity'. The women then direct the shells to the tapped lontar palms and to the harvested rice fields. In response, the shells say that when the lontar baskets are lowered at the end of the season and the rice is harvested from the fields, they will have no 'land and shelter', no 'contentment and satisfaction'. Next the women direct them to 'boundary stone and border tree', but these are liable to be trampled by 'the moon's buffalo and the sun's goats', leaving them no 'land or lineage'. Finally, as they continue on in the late afternoon, the women come upon a *ko-nau* (or *bidara*) tree and *nilu-foi* (or tamarind) tree under whose shade the shells are pleased to shelter. The shells are left to 'pick and eat, pluck and consume' the fruit of these trees.

Version XIII, Bilba: Kornalius Medah's *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

The narrative begins in Dulu Oli ma Lange Le ('East Estuary'/'Headland River'). Suti Solo and Bina Bane leave the security and certainty of their homeland to embark on a sea journey. On their way, they try to find contentment in the 'rolling sea and meandering waves'. A storm arises in the east and a cyclone at the head; they lose their pods, and are carried bobbing like *boa* wood and drifting like *piko* wood. They utter the refrain 'nothing is certain and nothing lasting'. In the sea, they have various personified encounters, first with 'sea refuse and river dregs', then with 'seaweed *lima* and waterweed *koko*' and finally with 'long river and wide pool'. None of these encounters offers 'certainty and security'. At this point, the girl 'Tomorrow's Tide' (Meti Balaha) and the woman 'Dawning Sea' (Tasi Dulupila), who are fishing in long river and wide pool for the ritual fish Moka Holu and Kuku Lake, scoop the shells from the sea and take them to their home. The shells beg the women to be their father and mother to shelter and protect them. The women first assign the shells to the *timi* post and lontar beam within the house but if the rain spears the *timi* post and the sun heats the lontar beam, there can be no satisfaction there. The women next propose that the shells go with the lontar vat and the rice

basket but these can be emptied so there is no certainty or permanence there. The women then direct the shells to the tapping of the lontar palms and the harvesting of fields of rice. Although there is celebration in these activities, they must come to an end when the lontar baskets are lowered and the great mortar for pounding rice is put aside. The shells move on to large flowering trees: the *nitas* (*kelumpang*) tree and the *delas* (*dedap*) tree. But when the monsoon rains end the flowering season of these trees, the shells are left to sob that there is no certainty with the mountain *nitas* tree and no permanence with the field *delas* tree. The shells move on to snuggle up in a pigeon pea garden and squat in a cotton field, but there, too, wind and rain blow away the cotton bolls and pigeon pea flowers. Unable to find certainty and permanence in the world, the shells resolve to return to East Estuary and Headland River by following the Pandanus River and the Jasmine Forest path. They recognise their condition as orphan and widow and join with the orphan Le Lai and the widow Oe Bolo on the path to East Estuary and Headland River. When they arrive there, they take the Nilu Neo (or tamarind) tree as their 'birth mother' and the Ko Nau (or *bidara*) tree as their 'birth father'. They are able to pick and pluck the fruits of these trees and there they are able to find inner satisfaction and heartfelt contentment.

Version XIV, Ba'a: Laazar Manoeain's *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

A storm arises and carries away Bane Aka and Solo Bane, the father of Suti Solo do Bina Bane, leaving the shells abandoned, bobbing like *boa* wood and drifting like *piko* wood. Two women fishing along the shore scoop up the shells and direct them to go with the 'creaking wood' and with the 'scraping forest' to hide themselves in the wood and conceal themselves in the forest. But if a storm comes, the leaves and liana of the forest will fall from the trees. There is no order or integrity there. Next the women direct them to go with the 'wild pig' and the 'forest monkey' to conceal themselves in caves and hide themselves in holes. But the wild pig is hunted and the forest monkey is flushed out, leaving no order or integrity. So the women direct them to go with the 'grassland cuckoo' and the 'river shrimp' to hide themselves deep in the grass and conceal themselves deep in a waterhole. But the grass dries out and the river ceases its ebb, leaving the grassland cuckoo and the river shrimp in a pitiful state. Thus, once again there is no order or integrity. Finally, the women direct the shells to shear through the surf and plunge through the waves to make their way

to Timor (Helok and Sonobai). They make their way to Timor and there meet the girl of Helok and the woman of Sonobai. Sobbing, they recount their plight, having become like a lone buffalo and an orphan chicken. The women tell them to follow them to their house, where they cut them badly into hair combs and file them poorly into earrings. And so the two shells perish.

Version XV, Thie: Samuel Ndun and N. D. Pah's *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

This version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, which recounts the origin of rice and millet, begins in the Heavens. The Sun and Moon, Bula Kai and Ledo Horo, inform their family that they intend to make war on the ocean and sea. They sharpen their swords and set their flintlocks and descend into the ocean to meet the Lord of the Sea's warriors and the Hunter of the Ocean's defenders. In the ensuing battle, blood drips down on Solo Bana Sain's child, Suti Solo, and on Bane Aka Liun's child, Bina Bane. They extend their pods and put forth their insides and drift away like seagrass, arriving at Loko Laka Fa and Tebu Tipa Re.

The woman Bui Len, the child of (Leu) Le Dale and wife of Nggongo Ingu Lai, and the girl Eno Lolo, the child of Lolo Dala Ina and wife of Rima Le Dale, take up their scoop-nets and go to fish in the receding tide at Loko Laka Fa and Tebu Tipa Re. There they encounter Suti Solo and Bina Bane, who beg to be scooped up. The women wonder where they might hang or attach these shells. The shells ask to be hung on the *ufa* (or Malay apple: *Syzygium jambos*) tree and *bau* (or Hibiscus: *Hibiscus tiliaceus*) tree. But this is soon considered not 'right and proper'. The shells then ask that they be hung on two sacrificial poles in the house, the Sema Kona and Lunggu Lai. But this, too, is considered not 'right and proper'. So the shells ask to be carried eastward and placed at the boundary stone and field's border. There they announce that at the rice field dike and the dry field boundary, they are to be cared for as orphans and to be treated as widows, giving birth to planting at To Batu and giving birth to sowing at Lane Ai. As the seeds of rice and millet, Suti Solo and Bina Bane are taken from field to field, where they are planted. One hundred plants rise to where the orphan goes to rest and a thousand stalks mount to where the widow goes to cling. So Suti's descendants and Bina's successors cover all the world and sun-lit earth.

Version XVI, Thie: Jonas Mooy's Version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

This next narrative, like the preceding one, recounts the origin of rice and millet. It also makes explicit the 'western' Rotenese view that Suti Solo and Bina Bane are female. Presumably the shells, who become the rice and millet seeds in the previous narrative, are also to be regarded as female.

A storm strikes the ocean's depths and the woman Suti Solo and the girl Bina Bane exude their insides and cut loose their pods. They are left crying at the reef's base and the sea's edge. The woman Rema Ko and the girl Lutu Koe take up their scoop-nets and descend to the tidal reef. There they hear the voices of the shells begging them to scoop them up and place them at the shore's edge and the estuary's mouth. The women agree and carry the shells and hang them in two shoreline trees, the *ai sauk* and *lenggu-ha'ik* trees. The shells invite the women to come back and visit them because they offer the prospect of 'fine attire and delicious nourishment'. The shells are lively and happy to be in the trees along the shore.

The venerated ancestors of Thie, Tola Mesa and Lee Lunu, put on their sword and take up their flintlock to go to see what has happened after the storm. There they encounter the shells, who beg them not to harm them, again promising the prospect of 'fine attire and delicious nourishment'. The shells ask to be wrapped in a sarong and tied in a pouch and taken to be hung on the doorpost of the house and at the fence's base. The two ancestors wrap the shells up and then, following their instructions, cut a tree near the shore and cradle a flat harbour stone to plant as a resting stone and standing post for the shells to rest on. The stone and tree are to become the resting stone and 'coconut-holding' post for the performance of Thie's *limba* harvest ceremony. They then pluck the ancestral coconut, beat the drums and celebrate the first *limba*, bringing rain and dampening dew down upon the earth. The shells bear the 'nine seeds and the basic grains' and give instructions that they be planted in different fields in Thie. When the planting is done, the shells form leaves and stalks—seeds with sprouts and leaves with spikes. Orphans are able to eat rice and widows millet. The narrative then gives emphasis to its main revelation: the creation of the *limba* ceremony and the origins of rice, millet and other crops. This is repeated as follows: they create sitting stones and make a standing tree, drumming with a begging sound and dancing with a requesting voice, calling on the Creator of the Heavens to let fall gentle dampening dew and cooling rain to pour upon the fields that they may

plant the nine seeds and basic grains. The narrative ends with a statement as spoken through the voice of the shells: ‘We have delicious food and fine clothing fallen and descended upon the earth, particularly on Rote Ndao.’

Version XVII, Dengka: Simon Lesik’s First Version of *Suti Saik ma Bina Liuk*

This narrative, which also identifies Suti and Bina as female, begins with a brief peroration remembering specific widows and orphans: Ola Oe and Laba Dae, Ndule Dae and Ndule Oe. It then introduces the woman Tau Tenggu Bulan and the girl Kudu Henu Ledo, a woman who fishes in the sea and a girl who scoops in the tide. They go to fish on the rocky reef and sandy edge and there encounter Suti Saik and Bina Liuk. The shells who once danced in the sea are struck by a storm. They exude their insides and turn out their pods. They suffer and are in pain, passing through the tides. The women take up the shells and place them on three paths and two roads but this proves unsatisfactory because human beings tread along these paths. The shells continue to suffer and are in pain. The shells ask to be carried to a specific hill and specific field: to hide at Mbila Fume Lete and to take cover at Nau Langga Loe Lesu. But they still suffer and are in pain so the women shift the shells to the hill of the black buffalo and the field of the white goats, but the buffalo trample there and the goats tread there. The shells still suffer and are in pain. So the women shift them to Dela Muli and Anda Kona at the western end of Rote. Here the narrative ends.

Version XVIII, Dengka: Simon Lesik’s Second Version of *Suti Saik ma Bina Liuk*

This second narrative begins with a genealogical introduction to the woman Sina Kona and the girl Koli Mola, whose mother is Seu Dela (and Fale Anda). One day they go to fish at the home of the Lord of the Sea, Langga Lena Liu//Manatua Sain. There they scoop up Suti Saik and Bina Liuk and take them to Dela Muli and Anda Kona. At this point and at several other junctures, the shells proclaim their special status: ‘I am Bina the restricted. I am Suti the prohibited.’ The shells first ask to be taken to knock against wood and bump against rock to mark the field’s boundary and the land’s border and thus drive away monkeys and pigs. The shells are, however, carried on to Dela Muli and Anda Kona, and passed on to Seu Dela and Fale Anda, a woman who dyes threads

and a girl who prepares indigo. They create patterns that are lovely and attractive. So it is that Suti is used for indigo and Bina for dyeing threads. The narrative ends with the observation that the pattern (for Rotenese cloth) comes out from the sea and goodness comes out from the ocean.

Version XIX, Dengka: Frans Lau's Invocation of *Suti Saik ma Bina Liuk*

This version of *Suti Sai ma Bina Liuk* is a poetic reflection on the inevitability of death. It is not a narrative but it has many of the aspects of other *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* narratives. As with most other narratives, this invocation begins with a storm—a storm caused ominously by ‘seven grasping spirits and eight snatching ghosts’. The poem then invokes the pearl fish as a symbol of vulnerability because they hide themselves in the anuses of sea cucumbers. The poem invokes the pain of Suti Saik and Bina Liuk: ‘Suti Saik moans’//‘Bina Liuk is in pain.’ The poem then returns to the theme that the initial lines pose. A cyclone strikes the ancestral land (of the Rotenese) and is the origin of death. Comparison is made with the snake that loses its skin but continues to live and the grasshopper that loses its wings but also continues to live. But this comparison is challenged because when a rock pile is overturned, the snake hiding beneath is exposed, suffers and dies. Similarly, when the grass is burnt, the grasshopper is exposed, suffers and dies. Humans are like pearl fish, seeking shelter from death in precarious places. Suti Saik and Bina Liuk also cry out, asking where they might hide and shelter. If they try to hide with the border stone, buffalo trample there and if they try to shelter with the boundary tree, goats tread there. If they try to hide in the tree's shadow, that shadow will move and if they try to shelter in the lontar's shade, that shade will move. Order is not of the earth, integrity is not of the world: everyone dies. The fertile banana eventually dies with its fruit; the *gewang* palm dies with its final great inflorescence. One can try to hide in a great harbour or shelter in a hole in the earth, but remember and keep in mind that the grave awaits with ‘stones piled at its head’ and ‘earth raised at its foot’, where ‘chickens scratch’ and ‘pigs root’, with only stone to rest on and wood to lean on.

Version XX, Oenale: Hendrik Foeh's Version of *Suti Saik ma Bina Liuk*

This narrative begins with the widow Bina Liuk and the orphan Suti Saik taking cover in Mbia Liun and sheltering in Unu Sain. A storm arises. Suti loses her insides and Bina puts forth her pod. They are carried with the ocean refuse and the river debris to the sea's boundary and the river's edge. They cry out for someone to take pity and open their heart to them. A friarbird and parrot hear their plea, take heart, embrace the shells and carry them to Dela Muri and Ndana Ikon. There is a woman who spins and winds cotton. She seeks what she needs for her work: *sina* cotton and *koli* thread, indigo blue and *morinda* red for dyeing. She creates a woman's cloth with a motif of the sea and a man's cloth with a pattern of the ocean. These designs originate from Suti Saik and Bina Liuk, the orphan and the widow. As a result, whether they know it or not, the population of Rote carries Suti Saik's voice and Bina Liuk's words.

Dialogue Directives and Other Encounters on the Journey of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

As in all of the versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from Termanu, the versions of this chant from among the dialect areas of Rote have as their most prominent and distinctive feature a succession of formulaic dialogue directives. In many instances, these directives involve a dialogue over the appropriate 'placement' of the shells between the women who scoop up the shells and the shells themselves. In other instances, as for example in the version of the chant from Bilba, these formulaic features occur as 'encounters' even before the shells are scooped from the sea. In yet other instances, as in the versions of the chants from Thie, the shells themselves direct their particular placement.

In the dialect versions of the chant, there is a far greater array of placements—both satisfactory and unsatisfactory—than in the versions from Termanu. There is also a significant overlap of formulae with the chants of Termanu, particularly in the case of the chants from eastern Rote. For example, the formula *syrup vat//rice* (or millet) basket occurs in the chants from Landu, Ringgou and Bilba. Variations on the formula *Border Stone* and *Boundary Tree* are used across dialect versions in Ringgou, Bilba, Thie and Dengka. Similarly, a formulaic expression for

the house—in each case, citing different ritual poles or beams—is used in dialect versions in both eastern and western Rote: Landu, Bilba and Thie. Lontar Shade//Tree Shadow and Three Paths//Two Roads are both formulae shared between Termanu and Dengka.

In contrast with these formulae is a host of new formulae that are particular to one or another dialect tradition. While Sea Refuse//Flotsam (or River Dregs) occurs in the Landu and Bilba versions and the invocation of *ko-nau* tree//*nilu-foi* trees in Ringgou and Bilba versions, the rest of the formulae, with the exception of the place name for Delha, used in the dialogue directives appear in only a single dialect version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*. The domain of Delha, as in the case of several versions from Termanu, becomes a final resting place for the shells.

Whereas all versions of the chant in Termanu follow a progression from the sea back to the sea (and then a possible return to the domain of Delha), the journey of the shells in the dialect versions is far more varied. In Landu, the shells are joined with the *gewang* and lontar palms; in Ringgou and Bilba, they are joined with *ko-nau* and *nilu-foi* trees; in Ba'a, the shells make their way to Timor; in the two versions from Thie, the shells become the seeds of rice and millet and are planted in specific fields; in the Dengka and Oenale versions, the shells are moved to Delha where they are used for dyeing and weaving.

Table 19 provides a list of all the variant formulae (some 38 in total) used to chart the journey of the shells

Table 19: Encounters on the Journey of Suti and Bina in the Dialect Compositions of Rote

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Sea and shore										
Sea Refuse//Flotsam (<i>Tere-Tasi//Hambau</i>)	x									
Sea Refuse//River Dregs (<i>Tele Tasi//Hamu Le</i>)			x							
Seaweed <i>Lima</i> //Waterweed <i>Koko</i> (<i>Engga Lima//Latu Koko</i>)			x							
Harbour Crabs//Shore Shells (<i>Ni Namu//Kuma Dae</i>)	x									
<i>Boa</i> in Harbour// <i>Pi'ko</i> in Estuary (<i>Boa Namu//Pi'o Oli</i>)	x									

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	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Shore's Edge//Estuary's Mouth (<i>Nembe Hun//Oli Su'un</i>)						x				
Long River//Wide Pool (<i>Le Naluk//Lifu Loak</i>)			x							
Pathway										
Three Paths//Two Roads (<i>Enok Telu//Dalak Dua</i>)							x			
House										
House Post//Old Beam (<i>Timi Di//Balo Tua</i>)	x									
House Post//Lontar Beam (<i>Timi Di//Nata Tuak</i>)			x							
(<i>Sema Kona//Lunggu Lai</i>)				x						
Door Post//Fence's Base (<i>Fara Tanar//Lulutu Nasun</i>)						x				
Vat and basket										
Syrup Vat//Millet Basket (<i>Bou Tua//Fati Bete</i>)	x									
Syrup Vat//Rice Basket (<i>Bou Tua//Ne'a Hade</i>) (<i>Bou Tua//Neke Hade</i>)		x	x							
Border and field										
Border Stone//Boundary Tree (<i>To Batu//Peu Ai</i>)		x	x							
Border Stone//Field's Boundary (<i>To Batu//Lane Tiner</i>)					x					
Wide Embankment//Long Boundary (<i>Opa Loa//E Naru</i>)		x								
Field Boundary//Land Border (<i>Tine To//Lane Dae</i>)							x			
Border Stone//Boundary Tree (<i>To Batu//Lane Ai</i>)									x	
Forest and trees										
Sacred Grove//Forbidden Forest (<i>Nura Huta//Lasi Luli</i>)	x									
Creaking Wood//Scraping Forest (<i>Nula Kekek//Lasi Nggi-Nggiok</i>)			x							
Ko-Nau Tree//Nilu-Foi Tree		x	x							
Ufa Tree//Bau Tree					x					
Ai-Sauk Tree//Lunggu-Ha'ik Tree						x				

MASTER POETS, RITUAL MASTERS

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Mountain Nitas//Field Delas (<i>Nita Lete//Dela Mo</i>)			x							
Lontar Shadow//Tree Shade (<i>Sao Ai//Mafo Tua</i>)									x	
Gewang Trunk//Lontar Stalks (<i>Isi Tua//Londa Fepa</i>)	x									
Animals										
Raised Horns//Waving Tails (<i>Sura Manamamasua//Iko Manafefelo</i>)		x								
Wild Pig//Forest Monkey (<i>Bafi Fui//Kode Lasi</i>)				x						
River Shrimp//Grassland Cuckoo (<i>Mpoe Le//Koko Na'u</i>)				x						
Hills and fields										
Rice Fields//Tapped Lontar (<i>Lele Hade//Peu Tua</i>)		x								
Field//Hill (<i>Mok//Lete</i>)									x	
Black Buffalo Hill//White Goat Field (<i>Lete Ngge-Nggeo Kapa//Mo Mumuti Bi'in</i>)									x	
East Lontar Season//Savu Rice (<i>Tua Timu//Hade Safu</i>)				x						
Pigeon Pea Garden//Cotton Field (<i>Tuli Timi//Kaba Osi</i>)			x							
Pandanus River//Jasmine Forest (<i>Henu Le//I Lasi</i>)			x							
Other people/places										
Land People//Mountain Clansmen (<i>Nusa Iku//Lete Leo</i>)	x									
Semau//Timor (<i>Helok//Sonbai</i>)				x						
<i>Dela Muli//Anda Kona</i>							x	x		x

Notes: Identification of the 10 compositions covered in this table by poet: I: Alex Mada; II: Ande Ruy; III: Kornalius Medah; IV: Laazar Manoeain; V: Samuel Ndun and N. D. Pah; VI: Jonas Mooy; VII: Simon Lesik, version one; VIII: Simon Lesik, version two; IX: Frans Lau; X: Hendrik Foeh.

Comparisons across Different Dialect Traditions

This is principally a study of variations in the telling of a single ritual chant—one out of a large repertoire of other specifically named and distinctive ritual chants. The value of this study is its concentration on this single chant. However, because of this concentration of focus, the formulaic sets to be found in this chant represent a fraction of the total number of such sets used by poets within this tradition of composition. These sets are directed to the telling of a particular sort of narrative and do not cover the entire range of other forms of ritual composition—as for example, in the proliferation of mortuary chants—that make up this tradition.

Nonetheless, these various recitations of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* can be said to provide a reasonable representation of this tradition of composition. Although by no means comprehensive, these recitations include a substantial number of the most common dyadic sets in ritual language. The 10 versions from Termanu definitely offer a wider glimpse of these forms of composition than do the one or two versions from the other dialects. On the basis of one or another dialect composition, there is little indication of the diversity of the ritual repertoire from which they derive. While it is possible to identify particular dialect variation, it is difficult to assert that the longer formulaic variations that occur in these dialect compositions are unique to just one particular dialect. Generally, there is subtle and considerable sharing across local traditions.

This is particularly the case in discussing the most basic of formulaic expressions that are in fact shared among the dialects of the island. In discussing these particular expressions, one must expand the purview of consideration and take into account a wider range of formulaic compositions available in different dialects.

The task is twofold: to identify what formulaic expressions form part of a common island-wide tradition and to identify what formulaic expressions are specific to particular ritual communities.

I begin with a long discussion of what are some of the most important formulaic expressions that are shared across the entire island.

Shared Dialect Expressions that Define the Quest for the ‘Good Life’

At the heart of all the compositions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is a quest for an imagined quality of life. In the different ritual compositions, the quality of life that the shells seek in their quest is given various expressions—frequently when the shells suffer disappointment in not achieving their goal. These expressions are generally repeated, both negatively and positively, to form a refrain. I call these formulae ‘key expressions’, and the dyadic sets that compose these expressions can be considered as ‘signature sets’. They form a special class of frequently repeated formulae that punctuate an entire composition.

The semantics of these expressions provides a starting point for considering the dialect variation across the island because these particular signature sets tend to be widely recognised throughout the island and many of the elements in them are used in multiple formulae.

The list of these signature sets that I propose to consider here is the following. Although each has been chosen from separate domains, my intention is to trace these signature sets among compositions in different dialects. While each of these signature sets needs to be considered in turn, they must also be considered in relation to each other. As a result, this discussion weaves its way among many related formulaic expressions.

Landu:	<i>Malole//Mara</i>
Ringgou:	<i>Tesa Teil//Tama Dale</i>
Bilba:	<i>Tean//Mepen</i>
Termanu, Ba’a:	<i>Tetul//Tema</i>
Thie:	<i>-Tetul//Nda</i>
Dengka:	<i>Lole//Lada</i>
Oenale:	<i>Lole//Tetu</i>

Malole//Mara (Malole//Mandak)

Although the poet Alex Mada tends to express the loneliness of the shells (‘with whom will I be once more’) after each of the shells’ successive disappointments, there is a passage near the beginning of his composition in which the shells voice the hope of the ‘good life’:

<i>'Tere tasi o</i>	'Oh the sea refuse
<i>Malole la boe</i>	May be fine
<i>Ma hambau o</i>	And the flotsam
<i>Mara a boe'</i>	May be proper'

This signature set uses the paired terms *malole/mada* and is one of the most common signature sets to occur on Rote. In Termanu, this semantic pair is *malole/mandak*; it occurs frequently in various *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* compositions from Termanu—from Old Meno's recitation to that of the 2009 recitation by Esau Pono. In Meno's recitation (lines 144–45) are the lines:

<i>'De malole-la so</i>	'These things are good
<i>Ma mandak-kala so.'</i>	And these things are proper.'

While in Esau Pono's recitation, this expression is given even greater emphasis:

<i>'Tete'ek ndia nde malole</i>	'Truly, that would be good
<i>Ma na nde mandaka'</i>	And that would be proper'

Malole/mandak is equally common in other domains. In two of the most important origin chants of Thie, the two poets N. D. Pah and S. Ndun use this expression regularly. At the end of their recitation (lines 171–72), they have these lines:

<i>Lain bati malole</i>	The Heights distribute the good
<i>Ma ata ba'e mandak</i>	The Heavens allocate the proper

Similarly, in their chant on the origin of the house, they expound how at the beginning everything was arranged from on high:

<i>Lain atur malole</i>	The Heavens arrange things well
<i>Ata atur mandak ia.</i>	The Heights Above arrange things properly.

And in the course of a long chant on the origin of fire and of cooking, in the midst of difficulties, they state:

<i>Mandan bei ta</i>	Things are not yet proper
<i>Ma malole bei ta dei.</i>	And things are not yet good.

The formula *ma-lolel/ma-nda(k)* is composed of two elements: *lole* ('good, lovely') and *nda(k)* ('proper, appropriate: that which meets, fits'). Both of these elements combine with other elements to form further significant sets.

Tesa Tei//Tama Dale

Ande Ruy from Ringgou uses the formulaic (double signature) set *tesa tei ma tama dale* no less than seven times in his recitation. Thus, for example, in lines 145–48, when the shells are disappointed by the possibilities offered by 'boundary stone and border tree', they utter these lines:

<i>'Na ami iku mo be a</i>	'Then with whom is our land
<i>Ma ami leo mo be a?</i>	And with whom is our lineage?
<i>De tesa tei bei ta'a</i>	There is yet no contentment
<i>Ma tama dale bei ta'a.'</i>	And yet no satisfaction.'

Tesa tei ma tama dale is no easy formula to translate. It combines *tesa//tama*, which carry connotations of being 'full, thick, tight, complete', with the paired terms *tei//dale* for 'stomach and inside'. In this context, I have ventured to translate this formulaic expression as 'contentment and satisfaction', although a fuller translation might be 'inner satisfaction and heartfelt contentment'.

Kornalius Medah of Bilba also makes frequent use of the formula *tesa tei ma tama dale* in his composition:

<i>'Tesa teik Dulu Oli</i>	'There is inner satisfaction in Dulu Oli
<i>Ma tama dalek Langa Le.'</i>	And heartfelt contentment in Langa Le.'

The shells, for example, find brief contentment within the house. They are described as:

<i>Tesa teik timi di</i>	Satisfied at the <i>timi</i> post
<i>Ma tama dale nata tuak.</i>	And content at the lontar beam.

Kornalius Medah also relies on the formula *tesa teik//tama dale* to conclude his recitation. When the shells come to rest with the Ko Nau and Nilu Neo trees, they utter these final lines:

<i>'Teu ho ketu kolu</i>	'Let us go to pick and pluck
<i>Ho tesa teik nai na</i>	Inner satisfaction is there

Ma teu ho hele hao And let us go to choose and eat
Ho tama dale nai na Heartfelt contentment is there
Ho kelak losa do na neu That goes on forever
Ma kelak sekunete na neu.' And that does not end.'

The set *tesal/tama* regularly occurs in Termanu compositions, as for example, in one of Pe'u Malesi's recitations (from 1977, lines 107–8) when he refers to the shells before the cyclone carries them away. They are:

Tama ota neu liun Crowded together in the sea
Ma tesa bela [isi] neu sain. And packed tightly in the ocean.

Although no Termanu compositions use the full formula *tesa tei ma tama dale*, Esau Pono, in one of his compositions (from 2009, line 123), offers a variation on this formula, *tesa teil/nda dalek*, which carries much the same meaning:

Ia sona nda dalek ma tesa teik. This is pleasing and satisfying.

The replacement of *tama* with *nda* is of particular interest for the semantics of ritual language in that in Thie, *nda* replaces *tema* in the widely recognised set *tetul/tema*. *Tama* may itself be a variant of *tema* (see Jonker 1908: 592). Both share similar meanings.

Both Kornalius Medah from Bilba and the two poets S. Ndun and N. D. Pah from Thie use the element *tema* in another set, *tema//bate*, which generally forms the complex two-set formula *tema siol//bate falu*—a pairing that could qualify as a signature set. Generally, this set occurs towards the end of compositions to describe a kind of heavenly state of complete well-being; the numbers *falu/sio* ('eight'/'nine') are indicative of this state of completion. Thus, at the end of Kornalius Medah's recitation, when the shells finally arrive at the Nilu Neo and Ko Nau trees, these trees are personalised and described as the 'mother' and 'father' of the shells:

Ina bongi lia Nilu Neo To the birth mother, Nilu Neo tree
Ma ama bongi lia Ko Nau. And to the birth father, Ko Nau tree.
Nai tema sio dei In the fullness of nine
Ma nai bate falu dei And in the abundance of eight

Similarly, the Ndun–Pah recitation ends with the lines:

<i>Lain bati malole</i>	The Heights distribute the good
<i>Ma ata ba'e mandak</i>	The Heavens allocate the proper
<i>Ruma mana parinda kisek mai a</i>	From them is a single rule
<i>Numa tema sion mai</i>	From the fullness of nine
<i>Numa bate falu mai ooo ...</i>	From the completeness of eight ...

Tean//Mepen

Kornalius Medah makes use of the signature set *tean//mepen* more often than *tesa teil//tama dale*. He uses this expression no less than 19 times in his recitation. Most frequently, he follows each fleeting appearance of satisfaction with a long four-line phrase that sets the stage for the reversal of any hope of contentment:

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

This refrain is then followed by his invocation of *tean//mepen*:

<i>Tean tak ma mepen tak</i>	No certainty and no permanence
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Perhaps most poignantly, just before the shells set out on the Pandanus River road and the Jasmine Forest path, they express their frustration with the world in general:

<i>'Teu teteni ina bongik ka leo</i>	'Let us go in search of a birth mother
<i>Te tean tak dae bafok</i>	For there is no certainty on earth
<i>Ma teu tatane ama bongik ka leo</i>	Let us go in quest of a birth father
<i>Te mepen tak batu poik ka'</i>	For there is no permanence in the world'

This use of *tean//mepen* to describe the world is not confined to Bilba. Ande Ruy uses the same signature set in one of his mortuary chants. The expression of this signature set is phrased to give particular emphasis to the negative:

<i>Tean ta'a dae bafok</i>	There is no certainty on earth
<i>Ma mepen ta'a batu poi</i>	And no permanence in the world

Although *tean//mepen* is not used in any of the other dialect compositions, the terms themselves are known widely. *Tepen* refers to what is ‘hard or firm’, as for example, the inner core of a tree, while *mepen* refers to what is held ‘fast or firm’. These meanings are widely understood throughout Rote.

Tetu//Tema

Just as Kornalius Medah combines *tean//mepen* with *tesa teil//tama dale*, Ande Ruy relies on formulae combining *tesa teil//tama dale* with another signature set, *tetu//tema*—probably the best-known and most widely used signature set of its kind on Rote.

In Ande Ruy’s composition, *tesa teil//tama dale* is explicitly used to allow the shells to voice their disappointment, whereas *tetu//tema* is offered as a comment on their situation:

<i>De bei ta tesa tei</i>	‘Yet no contentment
<i>Ma bei ta tama dale.’</i>	And yet no satisfaction.’
<i>De lope tarali oe</i>	So they walk forth through the waters
<i>Ma lao tarali dae.</i>	And they go forth through the land.
<i>Tetun bei ta’a</i>	There is yet no order
<i>Ma teman bei ta’a.</i>	And there is yet no integrity.

Along with *ma-lolel//ma-ndak*, *tetu//tema* is a signature set used as a refrain in numerous ritual compositions in Termanu. It can be used in the same contexts as *tean//mepen*. Thus, for example, Old Meno, in one of his funeral chants, has these lines:

<i>De teman ta dae-bafak</i>	Integrity is not of this earth
<i>Ma tetun ta batu-poi.</i>	And order is not of this world.
<i>Sadi madale hataholi</i>	Just have a heart for mankind
<i>Ma matei daehena</i>	And sympathy for human beings

The domain of Ba’a follows a tradition similar to that of Termanu. In his recitation of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, at the end of the first, second and third dialogue directives (lines 46–47, 58–59 and 70–71), Laazar Manoeain allows the shells to voice the same plaintive observation:

<i>De tetun ta ndia boe</i>	‘Order is not there then
<i>Ma teman ta ndia boe.</i>	‘And integrity is not there then.’

Frans Lau begins his short initial recitation of *Suti Saik ma Bina Liuk* by using the Dengka form of this same signature set, which is *tetu//teme*:

<i>Fai fè'a tetu-tetu</i>	The day is still ordered
<i>Ma ledo fè'a teme-teme</i>	The time still harmonious

However, in his longer composition (Stanza XII), he uses the more common (Termanu–Ba'a) form of this dyadic set:

<i>Tetun ta nai dae bafok</i>	Order is not of the earth
<i>Teman ta nia batu poik</i>	Integrity is not of the world
<i>Mana sapuk mesa-mesan</i>	Those who die are everyone
<i>Mana lalok mesa-mesan.</i>	Those who perish are everyone.

-Tetu//Nda

The two poets from Thie, Samuel Ndun and N. D. Pah, use the set *-tetu//nda* and give it a (plural) verbal form, *ra-tetu//ra-nda*, to describe the distress that the shells feel about their placement within the house.

<i>Ara bei ta ratetu</i>	They still do not feel right
<i>Ma bei ta randa.</i>	And still do not feel proper.

The element *-nda* is the same *-nda* as in *ma-ndak* (*ma-lole//ma-nda*) and in Pono's *nda dalek* (*tesa teik//nda dalek*). As such, it is intelligible throughout the island. In all these contexts, *nda* has the meaning of 'what fits, meets, has purpose' or is 'proper, fitting and appropriate'. It is a significant element in other formulaic sets. For example, Mikael Pellondou uses the set *nda//soa* to indicate 'purpose, meaning or gain'. Thus, in line 57 of his second recitation, the women Fua Bafa and Lole Holu ask the shells why they should scoop them instead of the ritual fish:

<i>'Fo soa be ma o nda be?'</i>	'For what purpose and what gain?'
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Another notable example of this common formula—in this case, in reduplicated mode—occurs in the origin chant when the Lords of the Sea argue with the sons of the Sun and Moon on where they should go to sacrifice their pig and civet cat:

<i>'Teu poin fina kue-na</i>	'If we go to the Heights to eat the sacrifice of civet cat
<i>Sosoan bei ta</i>	This still has no purpose

<i>Ma teu lain fati bafi-na</i>	And if we go to Heaven to eat the offering of pig
<i>Ndandan bei ta.</i>	This still has no sense.
<i>Dilu teu liun dalek</i>	Let us turn and go down into the ocean
<i>Ma loe teu sain dalek.'</i>	And let us descend and go down into the sea.'

Nda also occurs in the formula *nda//tongo* ('to meet, to encounter'), another formulaic expression that is widespread on Rote. In Termanu, this formulaic expression is:

<i>Boe ma lima leu la-nda</i>	Their arms meet
<i>Do langa leu la-tongo</i>	Or their heads encounter

The equivalent usage in This is:

<i>Reu ra-tonggo do ra-nda</i>	They go to meet or encounter
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Lole//Lada

Simon Lesik uses the signature set *lole//lada* in several different but related ways. For example, he uses this set to define the conditions of things in general, as for example, in lines 78–79 of his second recitation:

<i>Basana lole ia la</i>	All this is good
<i>Ma lada ia la.</i>	And [all] this is fine.

Towards the end of his second recitation (lines 88–89), Simon Lesik uses this signature set to describe the 'goodness and attractiveness' of the cloths. This usage is similar to the way that Jonas Mooy describes the 'goodness and attractiveness' (*lada mbedal//lole heu*) promised by the shells when they are planted as seeds:

<i>Mita lole na heu</i>	Look at the goodness on offer
<i>Metelada na mbeda.</i>	Regard the attractiveness here.

Simon Lesik also uses this same set to describe the tie-dye patterns on Rotenese cloths that derive from the shells. He then goes on—possibly as a form of wordplay—to link this loveliness and attractiveness (*lole//lada*) explicitly with the patterns themselves (*dula*) by making a set of *lole//dula*:

<i>Lole ala sa na</i>	‘There is loveliness
<i>Boema na lada a sa na ...’</i>	So is there attractiveness ...’
<i>Dula ma sain nea</i>	The pattern comes out from the sea
<i>Ma lole ma liun nea.</i>	And goodness comes out from the ocean.

Simon Lesik also uses *lole* in another set, *ma-lole//ma-na’a* (‘surpassing’), to emphasise the height and breadth (*nalul//loa*) of a particular hill and field (*letel//mok*):

<i>Na letek ia, lete nalu mana’a</i>	This hill is indeed a high hill
<i>Ma mok ia, mo loa malole.</i>	And this field is truly a wide field.

Both *lole//lada* and *ma-lole//ma-na’a* are commonly used dyadic sets. One of the most frequent uses of *lole//lada* is in the complex formulae that link three sets: *lole//lada* (‘good’//‘fine’), *faik//ledok* (‘day’//‘sun’) and *dalen//tein* (‘inside’//‘stomach’). Most often this complex formulaic expression is used to begin a recitation:

<i>Lole faik ia dalen</i>	On this good day
<i>Ma lada ledok ia tein na</i>	And at this fine time

N. D. Pah provides a beautiful example of the use of this set in describing two young men:

<i>Tou malole</i>	Good-looking men
<i>Ma ta’e mana’a.</i>	And fine-looking boys.

One can trace the linkages among elements that form such sets. They do not, however, necessarily function as signature sets.

-Lole//Tetu

Finally, it is necessary to consider the dyadic set *-lole//tetu*, which the poet Hendrik Foeh uses at the conclusion of his recitation. He uses this set as a signature set to conclude his composition with an expression of hope:

<i>Fo ela leo bena</i>	So let it be that
<i>Ndi’i don nenene</i>	The ear continually hears
<i>Fo tao dalen leo be</i>	So that it affects the heart
<i>Fo na-tetu ina falu</i>	To give order to widows

<i>Ana tao tein leo be</i>	It affects the inner person
<i>Fo na-lole ana ma</i>	To do good to orphans
<i>Fo mana mia Rote Ndao nema.</i>	Especially to those from Rote Ndao.

This appears as an unusual pairing of *-lole//tetu*. I can find no other example of this combination either in Hendrik Foeh's other compositions or in any other of the compositions. It may be a simple lapse, though it is clearly a pairing that is intelligible within the context of ritual language. It may be rare, unusual and idiosyncratic, but it falls within the overall semantic parameters of oral composition on Rote.

The Semantic Network of Key Terms

Signature sets form part of the semantic core of Rotenese ritual language. They extend beyond the confines of a single speech community—a single ritual community. Although these sets may vary in usage across different dialects, they are sufficiently connected to one another (and to other dyadic sets) to be recognised and intelligible throughout Rote. Critically, the elements that make up these sets relate to one another and most of these elements can be shown to belong to a relatively compact semantic cluster—a semantic field of significance that links the dialects of the island. This network consists of the following connections:

<i>Lole</i>	>	<i>nda, lada, tetu, na'a</i>
<i>Nda</i>	>	<i>lole, tetu, soa, tongo</i>
<i>Lada</i>	>	<i>lole</i>
<i>Tesa</i>	>	<i>tama, nda</i>
<i>Tama</i>	>	<i>tesa</i>
<i>Tetu</i>	>	<i>tema, nda, lole</i>
<i>Tema</i>	>	<i>tetu, bate</i>

It is notable that while elements of most of these signature sets can be shown to form part of a compact semantic field, the set *tean//mepen* does not form part of this network. As far as I can determine, the elements in this set have no links to other elements.

Figure 27 provides a diagrammatic representation of semantic relations among the terms that make up these key signature sets.

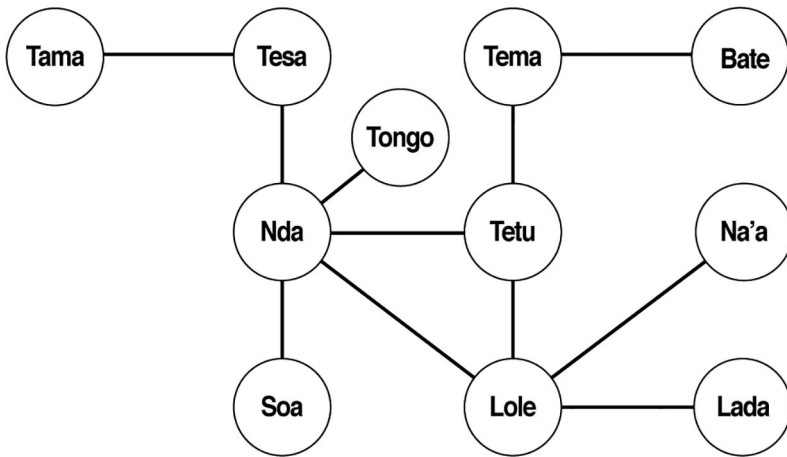


Figure 27: Diagram of Key Signature Terms

Ritual Language as Legacy

Ritual language is a legacy of the past. All the poets of Rote insist that they are speaking the language of their ancestors. Their duty as ritual masters is to preserve this language and the knowledge that it is used to convey. The issue here is the extent to which the various dialect versions of Rotenese language preserve a shared core of basic sets. At the end of each composition, I have pointed to: 1) dyadic sets that were recognisable (from the perspective of Termanu) as part of a shared core; 2) dyadic sets that were also part of this core, though their dialect sound shape made them less recognisable as such; and 3) dyadic sets that appeared to be distinctive to that dialect or closely related dialects but may not form part of a wider shared core. The difficulty in all of this is that the six dialects (or dialect areas) featured in this study are represented by either a single composition or by several short compositions, none of which can be considered to provide an adequate sample of those dialects' ritual language. We can at best only glimpse what might constitute a shared core of basic sets.

An appendix provides a complete list of all of the dyadic sets used in the compositions in the second half of this volume. The list is much longer than the comparable list drawn up for the compositions from Termanu. It

includes a large number of single-occurrence sets. These single-occurrence sets constitute the overwhelming majority of all such sets, as one might expect from such a small sample from each dialect.

The list groups sets that can be considered semantically the same set, even though the lexical representation of its elements may vary. Thus, for example, *dede'allkokola* (Termanu: 'to speak'/'to talk') occurs in different compositions as: 1) *dede'all'oola*, 2) *de'a-de'allkoka-kola*, and 3) *de'allkoka*; *dululllanga* (Termanu: 'east'/'head') occurs as *dululllaka* and *dululllangga*; *hambaul'tere-tasi* (Landu: 'flotsam'/'sea's debris') occurs as *hamulell'tele-tasi* and *hanu-lell'tere-tasi*.

As a first approximation, it is possible to identify from this list those dyadic sets used in five or more dialect compositions. These sets are: 1) *ail'batu* ('tree'/'rock'); 2) *ana-mall'falu-ina* ('orphan'/'widow'); 3) *dalel'tei* ('heart'/'stomach'); 4) *dual'telu* ('two'/'three'); 5) *fail'ledo* ('day'/'sun'); 6) *fetollina* ('girl'/'woman'); 7) *liunllsain* ('ocean'/'sea'); 8) *loallnalu* ('wide'/'long'); 9) *lulill'angu* ('storm'/'cyclone'); 10) *metill'tasi* ('tide'/'sea'); 11) *ndail'seko* ('to fish'/'to scoop'). All of these sets may be considered as part of a shared core but they also clearly reflect the narrative content of the ritual composition.

It is possible to go further and identify those sets that occur in four compositions. This yields another recognisable group of eight dyadic sets: 12) *dasil'hala* ('to sing, speak'/'to give voice'); 13) *dede'allkokola* ('to speak'/'to talk'); 14) *dululllanga* ('east'/'head'); 15) *isill'nggi* ('insides'/'pods'); 16) *-kedull-tani* ('to sob'/'to cry'); 17) *kekoll'ali* ('to move'/'to shift'); 18) *lail'sue* ('to love'/'to have affection'); and 19) *loll'uma* ('house'/'home').

Going even further, one can identify those sets that occur three times in different dialects. There are 11 such sets: 20) *amall'ina* ('father'/'mother'); 21) *batul'dae* ('rock'/'earth') and 22) *bafoll'poi* ('mouth'/'top, point'), which are both part of the formula *batu poil'dae bafu* ('the pointed rocks'/'the mouth, surface of the earth'—that is, 'the earth'); 23) *betell'hade* ('millet'/'rice'); 24) *edoll'loko* ('to put forth'/'let loose, exude'); 25) *hambaul'tere-tasi* ('flotsam'/'sea's debris'); 26) *ingull'leo* ('land, people'/'clan'); 27) *kill'kona* ('left, north'/'right, south'); 28) *letell'mo* ('hill'/'field'); 29) *ta'ell'tou* ('boy'/'man'); and 30) *temall'tetu* ('integrity'/'order').

Going still further, it is evident from the Dyadic Dictionary that I have so far compiled for Termanu that at least three-quarters of the single-occurrence sets in this list of dialect dyadic sets has a recognisable equivalent in Termanu dialect and forms part of a shared core of dyadic sets used in oral composition. This issue has a further dimension since the legacy of ritual language is not confined to the island of Rote alone. As I have discussed elsewhere (2014: 378–79), many of the dyadic sets shared among the dialects of Rote have equivalent pairs in other ritual languages of the Timor region. Although they may have different lexical constituents, the canonical pairing of specific terms is the same. Rote’s tradition of canonical parallelism is thus part of a larger regional tradition.

As evidence of this wider regional tradition, I provide here a short, select list of shared canonical pairs in Rotenese (Termanu dialect), Tetun (Lia Tetun) and Atoni (Uab Meto). These canonical pairs contain various shared lexical cognates since both Lia Tetun and Uab Meto are languages related to Rotenese.

Table 20: Rotenese, Tetun and Atoni Canonical Pairs

		Dede’a Lote	Lia Tetun	Uab Meto
1.	sun//moon	<i>ledo//bulan</i>	<i>loro//fulan</i>	<i>manse//funan</i>
2.	rock//tree	<i>batu//ai</i>	<i>fatu//ai</i>	<i>fatu//hau</i>
3.	trunk//root	<i>hu//oka</i>	<i>hun//abut</i>	<i>uf//baaf</i>
4.	areca//betel	<i>pua//manus</i>	<i>buaf//fuik</i>	<i>puah//manus</i>
5.	seven//eight	<i>hitu//walu</i>	<i>hitu//walu</i>	<i>hitu//faon</i>
6.	eight//nine	<i>walu//sio</i>	<i>walu//sio</i>	<i>faon//siwi</i>
7.	pestle//mortar	<i>alu//nesu</i>	<i>alu//nesung</i>	<i>alu//esu</i>
8.	shame//fear	<i>mae//tau</i>	<i>moe//tauk</i>	<i>mae//mtaus</i>
9.	banana//sugar cane	<i>huni//tefu</i>	<i>hudil//tohu</i>	<i>ukil//tefu</i>
10.	tuber//tales	<i>ufil//talas</i>	<i>fehuk//talas</i>	<i>laku//nali</i>
11.	lung//liver	<i>ba//ate</i>	<i>afak//aten</i>	<i>ansao//ate</i>
12.	thigh//navel	<i>pu//puse</i>	<i>kelen//husar</i>	<i>pusun//usan</i>
13.	turtle//dugong	<i>kea//lui</i>	<i>kea//lenuk</i>	<i>ke//kunfui</i>
14.	friarbird//parrot	<i>koa//nggia</i>	<i>kawa//birus</i>	<i>kol ao//kit neno</i>
15.	orphan//widow	<i>ana ma//falu</i>	<i>oa kiak//balu</i>	<i>an anat//banu ina</i>
16.	dedap//kelumpang	<i>delas//nitas</i>	<i>dik//nitas</i>	<i>ensa//nitas</i>
17.	waringin//banyan	<i>keka//nunu</i>	<i>hali//hedan</i>	<i>nunuh//lete</i>
18.	spear//sword	<i>te//tafa</i>	<i>diman//surit</i>	<i>auni//suni</i>

22. TRADITIONS OF ORAL FORMULAIC COMPOSITION ACROSS THE ISLAND OF ROTE

		Dede'a Lote	Lia Tetun	Uab Meto
19.	drum//gong	<i>labu//meko</i>	<i>bidu//tala</i>	<i>kee//sene</i>
20.	head//tail	<i>langa//iku</i>	<i>ulun//likun</i>	<i>nakan//ikon</i>

This kind of comparative evidence points to a shared tradition that goes beyond—but historically links—the speech communities of the Timor area and of eastern Indonesia in general.

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.