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

### Introduction

In 2006, I began a renewed effort to study ritual language by setting out to record the finest chanters—the master poets—from all the dialect areas of Rote. For more than 40 years, I had recorded chanters, mainly from the domains of Termanu and Thie. Most of these recordings were made when the occasion arose. Although I sought out particular chanters and often made requests of them, most chanters preferred to choose the occasion and the setting for their recitation and most recitations were those of their own choosing. On numerous occasions, I would ask about a specific chant only to be told that its recitation was too dangerous to be spoken of without the proper offerings and would be told of someone who had recited without proper heed and had suffered the consequences.

Often these recitations would occur during a ritual gathering, where there were large numbers gathered and various animals slaughtered, thus creating a favourable setting for a recitation as public revelation. On a number of occasions, a particular chanter would simply appear—once near midnight—and announce that he had come to recite a specific chant. This would be an entirely private recording and, having heard the replay of his recitation, the chanter would leave.



Figure 8: Joel Pellondou

As a result, I gathered what I could when I could—occasionally and opportunistically. In retrospect, it now seems to me that only Old Meno had the idea in mind to provide me with a broad comprehension of the most important ritual knowledge that he possessed, but unfortunately I was only at the beginning of my study of Rotenese life and did not have the proper basis to understand everything he was trying to communicate.

The other limitation of my study was its restricted basis. I did most of my fieldwork in Termanu and concentrated on learning the dialect of Termanu. I had a place in Termanu, was comfortable there and, on return

visits, was eager to catch up with what had happened in a community I knew well. I had briefly gathered material from one of the great poets of Ba'a and had recorded excellent ritual language materials from two of the finest chanters in Thie, but this was the limit of my recording of other dialects.

So in 2006, with a research grant from the Australian Research Council, I set out to bring Rotenese chanters for a week at a time to Bali where I rented the top floor of a small family hotel at Sanur. Here in a setting entirely removed from restrictions that would apply on Rote, I was able to record more freely and could carry on, without interruptions, the discussions and close exegesis needed to understand particular recitations.

The project took on a momentum of its own. After the first recording session I was helped by each group of chanters, who spread the word of their time on Bali. Two elderly chanters who came to Bali at different times described Bali as like being in paradise. Neither had ever left Rote, so that having flown above the clouds to reach Bali, they felt themselves in a wondrous place.

For the first session, which was organised as a trial effort, I invited three notable chanters from Termanu and a master poet and performer from the domain of Ringgou, whom I had met just the year before on a visit to Rote and from whom I had failed to record a single chant.

Among the three chanters from Termanu was Mikael Pellondou's cousin Joel Pellondou. By this time, Mikael had died and it was Joel who was carrying on the Pellondou traditions. As Joel explained to me, he and his cousin Mikael (his father's brother's son) learned from the same source: their grandfather, Dou Ba'i Adu. When I told Joel that I had already recorded *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from Mikael and from Eli Pellondou (that is, Seu Ba'i) and that I needed to record his version, he had no reservations. His recitation was much shorter than Mikael's recitations and that of Seu Ba'i, but it nonetheless bears comparison with these compositions.

Joel Pellondou's version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is as follows:

- |    |                             |                            |
|----|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | <i>Meti la si'unu</i>       | The tide begins to ebb     |
| 2. | <i>Ma tasi la buka papa</i> | The sea shows its shallows |
| 3. | <i>Boe ma inak Ole Masi</i> | The woman Ole Masi         |
| 4. | <i>Ma fetok ka Bisa Oli</i> | And the girl Bisa Oli      |

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 5.  | <i>Ana nggao na ndai tasi na</i>              | She takes up her sea fishnet                               |
| 6.  | <i>[Fo] ndai ma hamu lilok</i>                | The fishnet with a gold-weighted belly                     |
| 7.  | <i>Ma tenga na seko meti</i>                  | And picks up her tidal scoop-net                           |
| 8.  | <i>Fo seko ma tei besik.</i>                  | The scoop-net with iron-weighted insides.                  |
| 9.  | <i>Neu seko sisi'u enggak</i>                 | Goes to scoop and gather <i>engga</i> seaweed              |
| 10. | <i>Ma ndai hubuka batu</i>                    | And to fish and turn the rocks                             |
| 11. | <i>Fo neu seko sanga Dusu La'e</i>            | Goes scooping in search of Dusu La'e                       |
| 12. | <i>Ma neu ndai sanga Tio Holu.</i>            | And goes fishing in search of Tio Holu.                    |
| 13. | <i>Boe te ana seko nala lifu esa</i>          | But she scoops in one pool of water                        |
| 14. | <i>Na, Bina nala lifu esa</i>                 | Nah, Bina is in that pool of water                         |
| 15. | <i>Ma ana ndai nala lek esa,</i>              | And she fishes in one waterhole,                           |
| 16. | <i>Na Suti nala lek esa.</i>                  | Nah, Suti is in that waterhole.                            |
| 17. | <i>Seko toko heni Bina</i>                    | She scoops but throws Bina away                            |
| 18. | <i>Ma ndai ndano heni Suti.</i>               | And fishes but casts Suti away.                            |
| 19. | <i>Boe ma Bina ana a'e dasi</i>               | So Bina, he raises his voice                               |
| 20. | <i>Ma Suti ana lole halana, nae:</i>          | And Suti, he lifts his words, saying:                      |
| 21. | <i>'Seko toko muni au</i>                     | 'Scoop and take me up                                      |
| 22. | <i>Te Bina ta, te dae hena</i>                | For I am not Bina, but a human being                       |
| 23. | <i>Ma ndai ndano muni au,</i>                 | And fish and take me up,                                   |
| 24. | <i>Te Suti ta, te hataholi.'</i>              | For I am not Suti, but a human person.'                    |
| 25. | <i>Boe ma inaka nahala ma nae:</i>            | So the woman speaks and says:                              |
| 26. | <i>'Au o o fo o mo se?'</i>                   | 'If I take you, with whom will you go?'                    |
| 27. | <i>Boe ma nae:</i>                            | Then she says:   |
| 28. | <i>'Mu mo fetu Titi Letek</i>                 | 'Go with the girl Titi of the Hill                         |
| 29. | <i>Ma inak Ai Huule Mok.'</i>                 | And with the woman Huule of the Field.'                    |
| 30. | <i>Boe ma nae:</i>                            | Then he says:  |
| 31. | <i>'Malole la so</i>                          | 'That is good  |
| 32. | <i>Te mesa ma letek esa</i>                   | But alone with a hill                                      |
| 33. | <i>Ma mesa ma mok esa</i>                     | And alone with a field                                     |
| 34. | <i>Na, se kokolak no se?'</i>                 | Nah, with whom will I speak?'                              |
| 35. | <i>Boe ma nae:</i>                            | Then she says:   |
| 36. | <i>'Mu mo pila kumea letek</i>                | 'Go with the red <i>kumea</i> grass on the hill            |
| 37. | <i>Ma mu mo nggeo koko<br/>[kuku] telas.'</i> | And go with the black <i>kuku</i> shrub in<br>the forest.' |

38. *Boe ma nae:* Then he says:  
 39. *'Malole so* 'That is good  
 40. *Tehu timu lama tua dulu* But when the east monsoon builds  
 in the east  
 41. *Na pila kumea letekala* Nah, the red *kumea* grass on the hill  
 42. *Lama dilu neu kalen* Bends at the heads of its stalks  
 43. *Ma fak nama nalu langa na* And when the west monsoon grows  
 at the head  
 44. *Nggeo koko [kuku] telasala* The black *kuku* shrub in the underbrush  
 45. *Lama sesu neu bu'un,* Breaks at the weight of its joints,  
 46. *Fo au kokolak o se* With whom will I talk  
 47. *Ma au dedea'k o se?'* And with whom will I speak?'  
 48. *Boe ma nae:* Then she says:  
 49. *'Mu mo fetok Po'o Pau Ai la* 'Go with the girl Mouldy Pau Tree  
 50. *Ma mu mo inak Latu Kai* And go with the woman Withered  
*Do la* Kai Leaves  
 51. *Nai le bibifa-na* At the mouth of the river  
 52. *Ma nai oli tatain* And at the edge of the estuary  
 53. *Fo kolo ba'o le anakala* There the river watercock birds  
 54. *Beba'o tunga le* Cry *ba'o-ba'o* along the river  
 55. *Na fa tunga-tunga le* As the monsoon follows the river  
 56. *Ma do[a] lasi anakala* And the forest cuckoo birds  
 57. *Bedo'o tunga lasi,* Cry *do-do* through the forest,  
 58. *Na udan tunga-tunga lasi* As rain follows through the forest  
 59. *Fo daenga fa tunga-tunga le* So as the monsoon follows the river  
 60. *Fo o bonu boa fo liun* Go bobbing like *boa* wood to the ocean  
 61. *Fo o ele piko fo sain.'* Go drifting like *piko* wood to the sea.'  
 62. *Boe ma be'uk Suti Solo bai* So the new-one Suti Solo  
 63. *Ma fe'ek Bina Bane bai* And the stranger-one Bina Bane  
 64. *De [Bina] lama edo nggi* So Bina exudes its pods  
 65. *Ma Suti lama toko isi.* And Suti issues forth its insides.  
 66. *De ala bonu boa fo liun* They bob like *boa* wood to the ocean  
 67. *Ma ele piko fo sain.* And they drift like *piko* wood to the sea.

This is the shortest version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* that I recorded from Termanu. It assumes some considerable background knowledge and some acquaintance with other versions of this chant. In itself, it is a mere outline of other longer chants.

Composed of 67 lines, this version comprises just 37 different dyadic sets. Comparing it with Meno's version, which is composed of 299 lines and comprises 103 dyadic sets, this version is particularly succinct. It has a higher percentage of different dyadic sets per line of composition. As a poetic composition, it has the bare minimum of necessary elements to qualify as an 'orphan and widow' mortuary chant. It recounts the gathering of the shells and their return to the sea. It mentions the search for the Tio Holu//Dusu La'e fish but makes no attempt to explain the reason for this search; nor does it explain the cause of the appearance of Suti Solo and Bina Bane in the waterhole where they are gathered up. It does, however, contain three dialogue directives: 1) to go with the girl Titik Letek and the woman Huule Mok ('Titik of the Hill' and 'Huule of the Field'); 2) to go with the red *kumea* grass and the black *kuku* shrub; and then finally 3) to go with the girl Mouldy Pau Tree and the woman Withered Kai Leaves. The invocation of these names in this third directive alludes to the origin incident that drove Suti Solo and Bina Bane from the depths of the sea and is linked with the directive to follow the *koloba'o* river birds and the *doa* forest birds back to the sea.

This directive (in lines 49 to 61) is similar to other directives that refer to the *koloba'o* and *doa* birds. The directive to go with the *koloba'o* and *doa* birds is a key admonition in virtually all versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* because it leads to the return of the shells to the sea. Joel Pellondou's version thus calls for closer comparison with these other directives and for closer examination of just how these passages are constructed in terms of a variety and combination of formulae.

## Comparison of Formulae in the *Koloba'o* and *Doa* Bird Directives

With the exception of Mikael Pellondou's first version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, all of the versions so far considered have included the directive to go with the *koloba'o* and *doa* birds. Some involve a single long statement; others involve an exchange of dialogue. Each is made of several formulae in different variations.

The *koloba'o* and *doa* bird directive can be analysed in terms of its constituent formulae and these formulae can, in turn, be analysed in terms of their variations.

## Formula I

To begin with, *doa lasi* and *koloba'o le* ('forest cuckoo' and 'river watercock') is itself a formula. *Doa||koloba'o* form a dyadic set, as do *lasi||le* ('forest'/'river'), but the combination of *doa* with *lasi* and *koloba'o* with *le* constitutes an invariant relation and this invariance is evidence of a formulaic (synthetic or syntagmatic) relationship. (It is, for example, unacceptable to combine *doa* with *le* or *koloba'o* with *lasi*: *doa le||koloba'o lasi\** does not occur.)

Seu Ba'i and Malesi rely on exactly the same formula.

### Seu Ba'i

- |      |                              |                                  |
|------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 134. | <i>Mu mo doa lasi</i>        | 'Go with the forest cuckoo       |
| 135. | <i>Ma mu mo koloba'o le'</i> | And go with the river watercock' |

### Malesi I

- |      |                               |                                  |
|------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 124. | <i>Mu mo doa lasi</i>         | 'Go with the forest cuckoo       |
| 125. | <i>Ma mu mo koloba'o le.'</i> | And go with the river woodcock.' |

### Malesi II

- |     |                            |                               |
|-----|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 63. | <i>Mu mo doa-lasi</i>      | 'Go with the forest cuckoo    |
| 64. | <i>Ma mo koloba'o le.'</i> | And with the river woodcock.' |

*Mu* is the second-person singular of the verb 'to go', while *mo* is the second-person singular verbal term meaning 'with'. Old Meno uses the same formula, but without the verb *mu*.

### Old Meno

- |      |                           |                                  |
|------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 204. | <i>Mo doa lasi</i>        | 'Go with the forest cuckoo       |
| 205. | <i>Ma mo koloba'o le'</i> | And go with the river watercock' |

Mikael Pellondou uses this same formula but adds a diminutive plural form to indicate many small birds.

## Mikael Pellondou II

138. *'Na, mu mo doa lasi anakala* 'Nah, go with the tiny forest cuckoos  
 139. *Ma mu mo koloba'o le anakala.'* And go with the little river watercocks.'

He reiterates this formula again a few lines further in his directive.

143. *'Doa lasi ana-kala* '[When] the tiny forest cuckoos  
 146. *Ma kolo ba'o le ana-kala'* And the little river watercocks'

He then follows this with the directive to go with the woman Po'o Pau Ai and the girl Latu Kai Do.

152. *'Mu mo ina Po'o Pau Ai la* 'Go with the woman Po'o Pau Ai  
 153. *Ma fetu Latu Kai Do la'* And with the girl Latu Kai Do'

Thus, the '*Mu mo*' command can itself be considered a formula whose framework can take various sets.

Joel Pellondou's use of this formula is similar to Mikael's. In his version, the command to go with the woman Po'o Pau Ai and the girl Latu Kai Do precedes his invocation of cuckoo and river watercock.

49. *'Mu mo fetok Po'o Pau Ai la* 'Go with the girl Mouldy Pau Tree  
 50. *Ma mu mo inak Latu Kai Do la'* And go with the woman Withered Kai Leaves'

## Formula II

Another formula associated with *doa lasi//koloba'o le* is a 'formulaic frame' that has various possibilities and is used in two variant forms in the same directive. It consists of the frame *x ... tunga-tunga le//y ... tunga-tunga lasi*. This formulaic frame is made up of the reduplicated verbal/preposition *tunga-tunga* ('follow through/down/along') and the dyadic set *lasi//le* ('forest'/'river'). Various dyadic sets can be inserted in the x/y slot. The most frequent is the set *fa//uda(n)* ('current/monsoon flood'/'rain').

Old Meno uses this formula with the simple connectives *fo* or *fo ela*, whose meaning can be translated as 'so' or 'so that'.

## Old Meno

206. *[Fo] fa tunga-tunga le* So that as current passes down the river  
 207. *Ma fo ela udan tunga-tunga lasi* And rain passes through the forest

Seu Ba'i uses the same formula as Meno but he also uses it to describe the sound of the birds as they pass through the forest and down the river.

## Seu Ba'i

### Variant I

138. *Fo udan tunga-tunga lasi* So when the rain passes through the forest  
 139. *Ma fa tunga-tunga le* And the current passes down the river

### Variant II

136. *Fo ba'o-ba'o tunga le* To [cry] *ba'o-ba'o* along the river  
 137. *Ma do-do tunga tunga lasi* And *do-do* through the forest

Malesi uses only variant II of this formula.

## Malesi I

134. *Ba'o-ba'o tunga le* [Cries] *ba'o-ba'o* along the river  
 136. *Do'o-do'o tunga lasi* [Cries] *do'o-do'o* through the forest

## Malesi II

69. *Hu koloba'o le la ba'o-ba'o tunga le* But if the woodcocks *ba'o-ba'o* down the river  
 70. *Ma betu doa lasi la do'o-do'o tunga lasi,* And the cuckoos *do'o-do'o* through the forest,

Mikael Pellondou interweaves the two variants.

## Mikael Pellondou II

143. *Doa lasi ana-kala* '[When] the tiny forest cuckoos  
 144. *Bedoa tunga lasi* Sing *doa-doa* through the forest  
 145. *Na udan tunga tunga lasi* As the rain follows through the forest  
 146. *Ma kolo ba'o le ana-kala* And the little river watercocks

147. *Beba'o tunga le* Sing *ba'o-ba'o* along the river  
 148. *Na fa tunga tunga le,* As the current follows along the river,

In this sequence of lines, Mikael skilfully uses *tunga* on its own in one formula variation and a reduplicated *tunga* in his second variant.

Joel Pellondou's version follows closely that of Mikael. His interweaving of the two formulae is less well constructed and, as a consequence, he repeats the formula *fa tunga-tunga le* (lines 55 and 59).

### Joel Pellondou

53. *Fo kolo ba'o le anakala* There river watercock birds  
 54. *Beba'o tunga le* Cry *ba'o-ba'o* along the river  
 55. *Na fa tunga-tunga le* As the monsoon follows the river  
 56. *Ma do[a] lasi anakala* And the forest cuckoo birds  
 57. *Bedo'o tunga lasi,* Cry *do-do* through the forest,  
 58. *Na udan tunga-tunga lasi* As rain follows through the forest  
 59. *Fo daenga fa tunga-tunga le* So as the monsoon follows the river

### Formula III

Another formula that recurs in these passages is the locative reference to the *oli tatain//le bibifan* ('edge of the estuary'/'lip of the river') to which the shells are directed. Here *tatain* is the semi-reduplicated form of the noun *tai(n)*, meaning 'edge, side', and *bibifan* is the semi-reduplicated form of the noun for 'lip'.

### Old Meno

208. *Fo mu oli tatain* You may go to the edge of the estuary  
 209. *Ma mu le bibifan,* And you may go to the lip of the river,

### Seu Ba'i

151. *'Mu le bibifan* 'Go to the lip of the river  
 152. *Ma mu oli tatain* And go to the edge of the estuary

The poet Malesi does not use this formula but both Mikael and Joel Pellondou use it in a similar way.

## Mikael Pellondou II

154. *Nai le [bi]bifan* At the river's lip  
 155. *Ma nai oli tatain.* And the estuary's edge.

## Joel Pellondou

51. *Nai le bibifa-na* At the mouth of the river  
 52. *Ma nai oli tatain* And at edge of the estuary

## Formula IV

Yet another formula often associated with this passage but one that recurs more generally in most versions of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* is *bonu boal/ele piko* ('to bob like *boa* wood'/'to drift like *piko* wood'). (It is a formulaic combination in that syntactic connection between verb and comparator cannot be altered. Thus, *bonu piko/ele boa\** is not acceptable.)

Among the various poets, only Meno, Seu Ba'i and Joel Pellondou use this formula in their *doa lasil/koloba'o le* directive. Meno and Joel Pellondou each use this formula once, while Seu Ba'i uses it three times in his passage. In all these instances, this formula is associated with a return to the sea, whereas earlier in *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*, it is associated with the arrival of the shells from the sea.

## Old Meno

212. *Na bonu boa fo mu* That bobbing like *boa* wood, you may go  
 213. *Ma ele piko fo mu,* And drifting like *piko* wood, you may go,

## Joel Pellondou

60. *Fo o bonu boa fo liun* Go bobbing like *boa* wood to the ocean  
 61. *Fo o ele piko fo sain.* Go drifting like *piko* wood to the sea.

## Seu Ba'i

140. *Bonu boa fo mu* Then bobbing like *boa* wood, you may go  
 141. *Ma ele piko fo mu.* And drifting like *piko* wood, you may go.  
 148. *Au bonu boa fo au u* I will bob like *boa* wood and go  
 149. *Ma au ele piko fo u.* And I will drift like *piko* wood and go.

157. *Fo bonu boa fo mu* Then bobbing like *boa* wood, you may go  
 158. *Ele piko fo mu.* And drifting like *piko* wood, you may go.

## Other Formulae

Three of the poets—Seu Ba'i, Malesi and Mikael Pellondou—make use of one of the most common of all formulae, one that occurs repeatedly as a refrain in most ritual compositions. Seu Ba'i uses the singular variant of this formula while both Malesi and Mikael use plural forms.

### Seu Ba'i

146. *Malole ndia so* This is good  
 147. *Ma mandak ndia so.* And this is proper.

### Malesi I

129. *Na malole la so* Such would be good  
 130. *Ma mandak kala so.* And such would be proper.

### Malesi II

67. *Ah, malole la so* Ah, such would be good  
 68. *Ma mandakala so.* And such would be proper.

### Mikael Pellondou II

140. *'Malole lai na* 'Such things are good there  
 141. *Ma mandak lai ndia.'* And such things are proper there.'

Meno and Seu Ba'i both make use of another common formula: *nene fnoll dei dongo* ('stop and listen'/'stand and wait').

### Old Meno

217. *Fo nene fino tata* To stop and listen there  
 219. *Fo dei dongo meme ndia* To stand and wait there

### Seu Ba'i

153. *Nene-fino mu ndia* Go to stop and listen there  
 154. *Ma dei-dongo mu ndia.* And go to stand and wait there

Finally, Old Meno uses a formula that none of the other poets uses in this same passage: *posi maka-mu mekon//unu ma-li labun* ('the sea's edge resounding like a gong//the reef rumbling like a drum'). This is a complex formulaic construction since it is based on the combination of three dyadic sets: 1) *posi//unu* ('sea's edge//reef'); 2) *maka-mul//ma-li* ('resounding//rumbling'); and 3) *meko(n)//labu(n)* ('gong//drum').

216. *Te hu mu posi makamu mekon*                      Thus go to the sea's edge, resounding like a gong
218. *Ma mu unu mali labun*                      And go to the reef, rumbling like a drum

This formula is one that Meno used in other of his compositions, such as the chant *Dela Koli ma Seko Buna*, which tells of an eagle and hawk that steal a child in revenge for the theft of their eggs.<sup>1</sup>

The formula in two lines in that chant is identical to that in *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*.

172. *De neu posi maka-mu mekon*                      She goes toward the edge, resounding like a gong
173. *Ma unu ma-li labun-na*                      And the reef, rumbling like a drum

## Koloba'o and Doa Bird Reference Passages

To understand the processes of oral composition, it is essential to analyse specific passages in terms of their constituent formulae, but it is also necessary to consider how these various formulae are deftly combined to produce poetic compositions. The following poetic segments contain all of the reference passages that have been analysed in terms of specific formulae. It is useful to go further and consider these various segments in their wider compositional contexts.

### Old Meno

Lines 204–21: 18 lines in a single statement.

204. *'Mo doa lasi*                                      'Go with the forest cuckoo
205. *Ma mo koloba'o le*                              And go with the river watercock

1 I have published this chant, *Dela Koli do Seko Buna*, in Fox (1971). It is a magnificent specimen of Old Meno's art.

- |      |  |   |
|------|--|---|
| 206. | <i>[Fo] fa tunga-tunga le</i>          | So that as current passes down the river          |
| 207. | <i>Ma fo ela udan tunga-tunga lasi</i> | And rain passes through the forest                |
| 208. | <i>Fo mu oli tatain</i>                | You may go to the edge of the estuary             |
| 209. | <i>Ma mu le bibifan,</i>               | And you may go to the lip of the river,           |
| 210. | <i>Fo ela fa oek ana mai</i>           | So that when the current's water arrives          |
| 211. | <i>Ma ela epo oek ana mai</i>          | And when the eddy's water arrives                 |
| 212. | <i>Na bonu boa fo mu</i>               | That bobbing like <i>boa</i> wood, you may go     |
| 213. | <i>Ma ele piko fo mu,</i>              | And drifting like <i>piko</i> wood, you may go,   |
| 214. | <i>Leo sain dale mu</i>                | To the sea, you may go                            |
| 215. | <i>Ma leo liun dale mu.</i>            | And to the ocean, you may go.                     |
| 216. | <i>Te hu mu posi makamu mekon</i>      | Thus go to the sea's edge, resounding like a gong |
| 217. | <i>Fo nene fino tata</i>               | To stop and listen there                          |
| 218. | <i>Ma mu unu mali labun</i>            | And go to the reef, rumbling like a drum          |
| 219. | <i>Fo dei dongo meme ndia</i>          | To stand and wait there                           |
| 220. | <i>Fo dei loe sain dale mu</i>         | And then descend into the ocean                   |
| 221. | <i>Ma dilu liun dale mu.'</i>          | And turn downward into the sea.'                  |

## Seu Ba'i

Lines 134–58: 25 lines of a dialogue exchange.

- |      |                                  |   |
|------|----------------------------------|---|
| 134. | <i>'Mu mo doa lasi</i>           | 'Go with the forest cuckoo                      |
| 135. | <i>Ma mu mo koloba'o le</i>      | And go with the river watercock                 |
| 136. | <i>Fo ba'o-ba'o tunga le</i>     | To [cry] <i>ba'o-ba'o</i> along the river       |
| 137. | <i>Ma do-do tunga tunga lasi</i> | And <i>do-do</i> through the forest             |
| 138. | <i>Fo udan tunga-tunga lasi</i>  | So when the rain passes through the forest      |
| 139. | <i>Ma fa tunga-tunga le</i>      | And the current passes down the river           |
| 140. | <i>Bonu boa fo mu</i>            | Then bobbing like <i>boa</i> wood, you may go   |
| 141. | <i>Ma ele piko fo mu.</i>        | And drifting like <i>piko</i> wood, you may go. |
| 142. | <i>Leo sain mu</i>               | To the sea you may go                           |
| 143. | <i>Ma leo liun mu.'</i>          | And to the ocean you may go.'                   |
| 144. | <i>Boe te Suti neu dedeak</i>    | But Suti begins to speak                        |
| 145. | <i>Ma Bina neu kokolak, nae:</i> | And Bina begins to talk, saying:                |
| 146. | <i>'Malole ndia so</i>           | 'This is good                                   |

147. *Ma mandak ndia so.* And this is proper.  
 148. *Au bonu boa fo au u* I will bob like *boa* wood and go  
 149. *Ma au ele piko fo u.* And I will drift like *piko* wood and go.  
 150. *Boe te nae:* But she says:  
 151. *Mu le bibifan* 'Go to the lip of the river  
 152. *Ma mu oli tatain* And go to the edge of the estuary  
 153. *Nene-fino mu ndia* Go to stop and listen there  
 154. *Ma dei-dongo mu ndia.* And go to stand and wait there.  
 155. *Udan tunga-tunga lasi* The rain passes through the forest  
 156. *Ma fa tunga-tunga le* And the current passes down the river  
 157. *Fo bonu boa fo mu* Then bobbing like *boa* wood, you may go  
 158. *Ele piko fo mu.* And drifting like *piko* wood, you may go.'

## Malesi I

Lines 124–40: 17 lines in a single dialogue exchange.

124. *Mu mo doa lasi* 'Go with the forest cuckoo  
 125. *Ma mu mo koloba'o le.* And go with the river woodcock.'  
 126. *Boe ma Bina Bane nahala* Then Bina Bane gives voice  
 127. *Ma Suti Solo nafada ma nae:* And Suti Solo speaks and says:  
 128. *Au o kolobao le* 'I will go with the river woodcock  
 129. *Na malole la so* Such would be good  
 130. *Ma mandak kala so.* And such would be proper.  
 131. *Te timu lamatua dulu* But if the wind increases in the east  
 132. *Ma hu'ak [fak] lamanalu* And the monsoon extends at the  
*langa* headlands  
 133. *Na kulu kolobao le* Then the river woodcock  
 134. *Ba'o-ba'o tunga le* [Cries] *ba'o-ba'o* along the river  
 135. *Ma betu doa lasi la* And the forest woodcock  
 136. *Do'o-do'o tunga lasi* [Cries] *do'o-do'o* through the forest  
 137. *Na Bina Bane no se* Then with whom will Bina Bane be  
 138. *[Fo] setele no se* With whom to laugh  
 139. *Ma Suti Solo no se* And with whom will Suti Solo be  
 140. *Fo nata-dale no se?'* With whom to take heart?'

## Malesi II

Lines 63–74: 12 lines in a single dialogue exchange.

- |     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| 63. | <i>'Mu mo doa lasi</i>                           | 'Go with the forest cuckoo                           |
| 64. | <i>Ma mo koloba'o le.'</i>                       | And with the river woodcock.'                        |
| 65. | <i>Boe ma Bina Bane kokolak</i>                  | So Bina Bane speaks                                  |
| 66. | <i>Ma Suti Solo dedeak ma nae:</i>               | And Suti Solo answers and says:                      |
| 67. | <i>Ah, malole la so</i>                          | 'Ah, such would be good                              |
| 68. | <i>Ma mandakala so.</i>                          | And such would be proper.                            |
| 69. | <i>Hu koloba'o le la ba'o-ba'o tunga le</i>      | But if the woodcocks <i>ba'o-ba'o</i> down the river |
| 70. | <i>Ma betu doa lasi la do'o-do'o tunga lasi,</i> | And the cuckoos <i>do'o-do'o</i> through the forest, |
| 71. | <i>Na Suti au o se</i>                           | Then for me, Suti, with whom will I be               |
| 72. | <i>Fo au asalai o se</i>                         | With whom will I recline                             |
| 73. | <i>Ma Bina au o se</i>                           | And with me, Bina, with whom will I be               |
| 74. | <i>Fo au angatu o se?'</i>                       | And with whom will I sit?'                           |

## Mikael Pellondou II

Lines 138–55: 18 lines in a single dialogue exchange.

- |      |                                       |   |
|------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 138. | <i>'Na, mu mo doa lasi anakala</i>    | 'Nah, go with the tiny forest cuckoos     |
| 139. | <i>Ma mu mo koloba'o le anakala.'</i> | And go with the little river watercocks.' |
| 140. | <i>'Malole lai na</i>                 | 'Such things are good there               |
| 141. | <i>Ma mandak lai ndia.'</i>           | And such things are proper there.'        |
| 142. | <i>Lafada ma ladasi, lae:</i>         | They speak and they talk, saying:         |
| 143. | <i>'Doa lasi ana-kala</i>             | '[When] the tiny forest cuckoos           |
| 144. | <i>Bedoa tunga lasi</i>               | Sing <i>doa-doa</i> through the forest    |
| 145. | <i>Na udan tunga tunga lasi</i>       | As the rain follows through the forest    |
| 146. | <i>Ma kolo ba'o le ana-kala</i>       | And the little river watercocks           |
| 147. | <i>Beba'o tunga le</i>                | Sing <i>ba'o-ba'o</i> along the river     |
| 148. | <i>Na fa tunga tunga le,</i>          | As the current follows along the river,   |
| 149. | <i>Au dede'ak o se</i>                | With whom will I speak                    |
| 150. | <i>Ma dede'ak o se?'</i>              | And with whom will I speak?'              |

151. *Boe ma nae:* So she says:  
 152. *'Mu mo ina Po'o Pau Ai la* 'Go with the woman Po'o Pau Ai  
 153. *Ma fetu Latu Kai Do la* And with the girl Latu Kai Do  
 154. *Nai le [bi]bifan* At the river's lip  
 155. *Ma nai oli tatain.'* And the estuary's edge.'

### Joel Pellondou:

Lines 49–61: 13 lines in a single statement.

49. *'Mu mo fetok Po'o Pau Ai la* 'Go with the girl Mouldy Pau Tree  
 50. *Ma mu mo inak Latu Kai* And go with the woman Withered Kai  
*Do la* Leaves  
 51. *Nai le bibifa-na* At the mouth of the river  
 52. *Ma nai oli tatain* And at the edge of the estuary  
 53. *Fo kolo ba'o le anakala* There the river watcock birds  
 54. *Beba'o tunga le* Cry *ba'o-ba'o* along the river  
 55. *Na fa tunga-tunga le* As the monsoon follows the river  
 56. *Ma do[a] lasi anakala* And the forest cuckoo birds  
 57. *Bedo'o tunga lasi,* Cry *do-do* through the forest,  
 58. *Na udan tunga-tunga lasi* As rain follows through the forest  
 59. *Fo daenga fa tunga-tunga le* So as the monsoon follows the river  
 60. *Fo o bonu boa fo liun* Go bobbing like *boa* wood to the ocean  
 61. *Fo o ele piko fo sain.'* Go drifting like *piko* wood to the sea.'

The shortest of these poetic segments weaves together just 12 lines; the longest segment some 25 lines. Each is, however, a distinctive compositional creation.

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.