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## *Suti Solo do Bina Bane:* A Version from the Domain of Bilba

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

## The Narrative Structure of Kornalius Medah's *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

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

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

In the sea, the shells experience three encounters:

1. *tele tasil//hamu le* 'sea refuse'/'river dregs'
2. *engga limal//latu koko* 'Seaweed *Lima*'/'Waterweed *Koko*'
3. *le naluk//lifu loak* 'long river'/'wide pool'

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

4. *timi dil//nata tuak* 'house post'/'lontar beam'
5. *bou tual//neka hade* 'lontar vat'/'rice basket'

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

6. *tua timu//hade safu* 'east lontar (season)'/'*savu* rice (harvest)'
7. *nita letel//dela mo* 'mountain *nitas* (tree)'/'field *delas* (tree)'
8. *tuli tinil//kaba osi* 'pigeon pea garden'/'cotton field'



Figure 18: Kornalius Medah

They then make a decision to return to Dulu Oli//Langa Le and there set forth on a specifically named path (*eno//longe*) that is identified as that of:

9. *Hena Le//I Lasi* 'Pandanus River'/'Jasmine Forest'

This path leads them to:

10. *Nilu Neo//Ko Nau* 'The Nilu Neo Tree'/'The Ko Nau Tree'

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

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

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

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

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

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

- |     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
| 6.  | <i>Ma deta leo Bina Bane.</i>               | And similar to Bina Bane.                      |
| 7.  | <i>Te hu faik lia Suti ma-no ina bongik</i> | But on this day Suti has a birth mother        |
| 8.  | <i>Ma ledok na Bina ma-no ama bongik,</i>   | And at this time Bina has a birth father,      |
| 9.  | <i>Suti no ina na ma Bina no ama na.</i>    | Suti with his mother and Bina with his father. |
| 10. | <i>Hu no tepok lia Suti natane sodak ka</i> | At that time Suti seeks well-being             |
| 11. | <i>Ma lelek na Bina teteni molek ka.</i>    | And at the moment Bina asks for peace.         |
| 12. | <i>Lia na foa kela ina bongi na</i>         | He wakes his true mother                       |
| 13. | <i>Ma lako kela ama bongi na,</i>           | And to greet his true father,                  |
| 14. | <i>Mai de tena neuk Dulu Olin</i>           | To descend to Dulu Oli                         |
| 15. | <i>Ma monu neuk Langa Len, lae:</i>         | And go down onto Langa Le, saying:             |
| 16. | <i>'Tesa teik Dulu Oli</i>                  | 'There is inner satisfaction in Dulu Oli       |
| 17. | <i>Ma tama dalek Langa Le.'</i>             | And heartfelt contentment in Langa Le.'        |
| 18. | <i>Te hu tean tak Dulu Olin</i>             | Yet nothing is certain at Dulu Oli             |
| 19. | <i>Ma mepen tak Langa Len</i>               | And nothing is permanent at Langa Le.          |

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

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

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|-----|-------------------------------------|--|
| 20. | <i>Faik lia dilu liu na neu</i>     | On this day, he goes down into the ocean |
| 21. | <i>Ma ledok na loe sain na neu</i>  | At this time, he descends into the sea   |
| 22. | <i>Neu no pela oe leleu ka</i>      | To go with the rolling waves             |
| 23. | <i>Ma neu no tasi oe lalama ka.</i> | And to go with the meandering seas.      |
| 24. | <i>Neu [no] pela oe leleu ka,</i>   | To go with the rolling waves,            |
| 25. | <i>Hika boe setele</i>              | Laughing loudly                          |

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

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

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

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|-----|---|--|
| 38. | <i>Faik lia luli dulu fafae na</i>        | On day a storm arises in the waking east               |
| 39. | <i>Ma ledok na sangu langa titipa na.</i> | And at one time a cyclone blows at the thrusting head. |
| 40. | <i>Boe ma li sio lasa-ngengeli</i>        | Nine waves rage  |
| 41. | <i>Ma nafa falu laka-tutulek</i>          | And eight crests heave                                 |
| 42. | <i>Pode ketu Suti ate na</i>              | Cutting loose Suti's liver                             |
| 43. | <i>Ma lui ketu Bina ngi na.</i>           | Pulling out Bina's pods.                               |
| 44. | <i>Suti bonu-bonu,</i>                    | Suti bobs and bobs,                                    |
| 45. | <i>Bonu boa no ao na</i>                  | Bobs like <i>boa</i> wood on his own                   |
| 46. | <i>Ho nama-tani no ao na.</i>             | Crying on his own.                                     |
| 47. | <i>Bina ele-ele,</i>                      | Bina drifts and drifts,                                |
| 48. | <i>Ele piko no ao na</i>                  | Drifts like <i>piko</i> wood on his own                |
| 49. | <i>Ho nama-tani no ao na.</i>             | Crying on his own.                                     |
| 50. | <i>Boe ma Suti de'a-de'a no Bina</i>      | Then Suti speaks with Bina                             |

51. *Ma Bina kola-kola no Suti:* And Bina talks with Suti:  
 52. *'Tia Suti nga ko* 'Suti, my friend  
 53. *Ma sena Bina nga ko,* And Bina, my companion,  
 54. *Tean o tak ma mepen o tak.* Nothing is certain and nothing permanent.  
 55. *Pode hini ita ate na* Our liver is cut away  
 56. *Lui hini ita ngi na* And our pod is pulled out  
 57. *De bonu boa to ao tala* We bob like *boa* wood on our own  
 58. *Ma ele-ele to ao tala,* And we drift and drift on our own,  
 59. *Tehu ma-uak ka dei* But with fortune still  
 60. *Ma-nalek ka bali.'* And with luck yet.'

Suti Solo and Bina Bane begin their encounters, the first of which is with sea refuse and river dregs. Rather than being directed to these encounters, each encounter marks the movement of the shells. An encounter begins in optimism and ends with recognition of that encounter's impermanence and of the need to continue the journey.

## Suti Solo and Bina Bane Encounter Sea Refuse and River Dregs

61. *Faik lia tele tasi bobonu na* This day the sea's refuse comes bobbing  
 62. *Ma hamu le e'ele na.* And the river's dregs drift by.  
 63. *Suti tepa noi tele tasi* Suti meets the sea's refuse  
 64. *Ma Bina kala noi hamu le.* And Bina strikes the river's dregs.  
 65. *Luku no hamu le* Squats on the river's dregs  
 66. *Ma sake no tele tasi,* And snuggles with the sea's refuse,  
 67. *Hika no setele* Laughing loudly  
 68. *Ma eki ho lata dale.* And shouting with joy.  
 69. *Boe ma dua dea-dea* Then the two speak  
 70. *Ma dua kola-kola* And the two talk  
 71. *'Tean nai hamu le so* 'Certainty lies in the river's dregs  
 72. *Mepen nai tele tasi so.* And security rests in the sea's refuse.  
 73. *De hika boe-boe setele* To laugh out loud

74. *Ma eki boe-boe lata-dale.* And shout out with joy.  
 75. *Tehu noi-tao leo lia* Yet however one strives  
 76. *Tean tak hamu le* There is no certainty in the river's dregs  
 77. *Ma sanga-tao leo na* And however one seeks  
 78. *Mepen tak tele tasi.'* There is nothing lasting in the sea's  
 refuse.'  
 79. *Faik lia luli dulu fafae seluk* One day a storm arises again in the  
 waking east  
 80. *Ma ledok na sangu langa* And at one time a cyclone blows again  
*titipa seluk.* at the head.  
 81. *Boe ma li lasa-ngengeli* The waves rage  
 82. *Ma nafa laka-tutulek.* And the crests heave  
 83. *Li tipa hini Suti* The waves push Suti away  
 84. *Ma nafa sonu hini Bina.* And the crests thrust Bina away.  
 85. *De bonu-bonu no ao na* He bobs and bobs on his own  
 86. *Ho nasa-kedu no ao na* While sobbing on his own  
 87. *Ma ele-ele no ao na* And he drifts and drifts on his own  
 88. *Ho nama-tani no ao na.* While crying on his own.  
 89. *Li tipa nini mai* The waves push forward  
 90. *Ho tipa nini Suti mai* Pushing Suti forward  
 91. *Ma nafa toko nini mai* And the crest thrusts forward  
 92. *Ho toko nini Bina mai.* Thrusting Bina forward.  
 93. *Ma-uak neu Suti Solo* Luck is with Suti Solo  
 94. *Ma-nalek neu Bina Bani.* And good fortune is with Bina Bane.

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

## Suti Solo and Bina Bane Encounter Seaweed *Lima* and Waterweed *Koko*

95. *Faik lia tepa noi Engga Lima* One day they meet Seaweed *Lima*  
 96. *Ledo na kala noi Latu Koko.* At one time they encountered  
 Waterweed *Koko*.

97. *Suti de'a-de'a no ao na* Suti speaks to himself
98. *Ma Bina kola-kola no ao na,* And Bina talks to himself,
99. *'Dua topa teuk Engga Lima leo* 'Let us two befriend Seaweed *Lima*
100. *Ma dua tai teuk Latu Koko leo.'* And let us two be close to Waterweed *Koko.*'
101. *Boe ma luku lo Engga Lima* So they squat with Seaweed *Lima*
102. *De tesa teik Engga Lima* And are satisfied with Seaweed *Lima*
103. *Ma sake lo Latu Koko* And they snuggle with Waterweed *Koko*
104. *De tama dale Latu Koko.* And are content with Waterweed *Koko.*
105. *Lae: 'Tean na nai lia so.'* They say: 'Certainty is here.'
106. *Ma lae: 'Mepen na nai na so.'* And they say: 'Permanence is here.'
107. *Tehu noi-tao leo lia* Yet however one strives
108. *Ho tunu-hai leo lia* There is trouble there
109. *Ma sanga-tao leo na* And however one seeks
110. *Ho kelo-kea leo na.* There is difficulty there.
111. *Faik na uda te Engga Lima* One day the rain spears Seaweed *Lima*
112. *Ma lelek lia ledo ha Latu Koko.* And one time the sun heats Waterweed *Koko.*
113. *De tean ta Engga Lima* So no certainty with Seaweed *Lima*
114. *Ma mepen tak Latu Koko.* And no security with Waterweed *Koko.*
115. *Uda te Engga Lima* The rain spears Seaweed *Lima*
116. *De kou heni Engga Lima* Causing Seaweed *Lima* to disappear
117. *Ma ledo ha Latu Koko* And the sun heats Waterweed *Koko*
118. *De noe heni Latu Koko* Causing Waterweed *Koko* to dissolve
119. *Dadi neu t'eo leo* To [cease] to become a lineage aunt
120. *Ma moli neuk ina ingu.* And [cease] to be a domain mother.
121. *Lasakedu lo ao nala* They sob to themselves
122. *Ma lamatani lo ao nala.* And cry to themselves.

The shells drift to Long River and Wide Pool where again they recognise the precariousness of their situation.

## Suti Solo and Bina Bane Encounter Long River and Wide Pool

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|------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 123. | <i>Boema bonu-bonu lo ao nala</i>     | So they bob and bob on their own          |
| 124. | <i>Bonu boa lo ao nala</i>            | Bob like <i>boa</i> wood on their own     |
| 125. | <i>Ma ele-ele lo ao nala</i>          | And drift and drift on their own          |
| 126. | <i>Ele piko lo ao nala.</i>           | Drift like <i>piko</i> wood on their own. |
| 127. | <i>Faik lia noi-tao leo lia</i>       | On this day, however one strives          |
| 128. | <i>Ho tunu-hai leo lia</i>            | There is trouble there                    |
| 129. | <i>Ma ledok na sanga-tao leo na</i>   | At this time, however one seeks           |
| 130. | <i>Ho kelo-kea leo na.</i>            | There is difficulty there.                |
| 131. | <i>Faik lia bonu-bonu no ao</i>       | One day bobbing on his own                |
| 132. | <i>Na tepa noi le naluk</i>           | He meets with long river                  |
| 133. | <i>Ma ledok na ele-ele no ao</i>      | One time drifting on his own              |
| 134. | <i>Na te kala noi lifu loak.</i>      | He encounters wide pool.                  |
| 135. | <i>Bina luku no lifu loak</i>         | Bina squats in wide pool                  |
| 136. | <i>Ma Suti tai no le naluk.</i>       | And Suti meets with long river.           |
| 137. | <i>Boema dua de'a-de'a lo ao nala</i> | The two speak with each other             |
| 138. | <i>Ma dua kola-kola lo ao nala.</i>   | And the two talk with each other.         |
| 139. | <i>Ita tean tak le naluk</i>          | Our certainty is not in long river        |
| 140. | <i>Ma ita mepen tak lifu loak.</i>    | And our security is not in wide pool.     |
| 141. | <i>Boe ma noi-tao leo lia</i>         | But however one strives                   |
| 142. | <i>Ho tunu-hai leo lia</i>            | There is trouble there                    |
| 143. | <i>Ma sanga-tao leo na</i>            | And however one seeks                     |
| 144. | <i>Ho kelo-kea leo na.</i>            | There is difficulty there.                |

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

## Tomorrow's Tide and Dawning Sea Scoop-net Suti Solo and Bina Bane

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|------|------------------------------------|---|
| 145. | <i>Feto Meti Balaha na</i>         | The girl Tomorrow's Tide                |
| 146. | <i>Ma ina Tasi Dulupila na</i>     | And the woman Dawning Sea               |
| 147. | <i>Ane bubui ho seko</i>           | She braids and twines a scoop-net       |
| 148. | <i>Seko bui na fepa deak</i>       | A scoop-net of heavy lontar leaf        |
| 149. | <i>Teli kokono ho lai</i>          | She strings and twists a fishnet        |
| 150. | <i>Lai ke na kabak dok.</i>        | A fishnet with cotton thread.           |
| 151. | <i>Dua leu lama-seko totoko</i>    | The two go to cast their scoop-net      |
| 152. | <i>Ma dua leu lama-lai lalano.</i> | And the two go to throw their fishnet.  |
| 153. | <i>Leo seko sangka Moka Holu</i>   | Scoop-netting for Moka Holu             |
| 154. | <i>Ho kelak seko la Moka</i>       | To scoop forth Moka fish                |
| 155. | <i>Na Moka la-holu ao.</i>         | For the Moka protects itself.           |
| 156. | <i>Leu lai tunga Kuku Lake</i>     | Fishing for Kuku Lake                   |
| 157. | <i>Ho kelak lai la Kuku</i>        | To fish forth Kuku fish                 |
| 158. | <i>Na Kuku lasa-lake ao.</i>       | For the Kuku guards itself.             |
| 159. | <i>Faik lia loe neuk metik</i>     | One day they go down to the tidal shore |
| 160. | <i>Ledok na dilu neuk namo</i>     | One time they descend to the estuary    |
| 161. | <i>Tehu tepa lo noi Suti Solo</i>  | But they meet with Suti Solo            |
| 162. | <i>Ma kala lo noi Bina Bane</i>    | And they encounter Bina Bane            |
| 163. | <i>Bonu-bonu no ao na</i>          | Bobbing on his own                      |
| 164. | <i>Ho nai lifu loak ka dale so</i> | In the middle of wide pool              |
| 165. | <i>Ele-ele no ao na</i>            | Drifting on his own                     |
| 166. | <i>Ho nai le naluk ka dale.</i>    | In the middle of long river.            |
| 167. | <i>Tek lai na neu</i>              | To be scooped into the fishnet          |
| 168. | <i>Ma suma seko na neu.</i>        | And lifted into the scoop-net.          |
| 169. | <i>Feto Meti Balaha</i>            | The girl Tomorrow's Tide                |
| 170. | <i>Mo ina Tasi Dulupila</i>        | And the woman Dawning Sea               |
| 171. | <i>Lai neni Suti Solo mai</i>      | Fish and take Suti Solo                 |
| 172. | <i>Ma seko neni Bina Bane mai.</i> | And scoop and take Bina Bane.           |
| 173. | <i>Suti de'a-de'a no na</i>        | Suti speaks with her                    |
| 174. | <i>Ma Bina kola-kola no na:</i>    | And Bina talks with her:                |



Figure 19: Woman with scoop-net

‘The girl, Tomorrow’s Tide  
And the woman, Dawning Sea  
Fish and take Suti Solo  
And scoop and take Bina Bane.’

175. *'O, fetu mama-seko nga ko* 'Oh, girl, scoop me up  
 176. *Ma o ina mama-lai nga ko* And oh, woman, fish me up  
 177. *Muni au ia Suti Solo* Take me here, Suti Solo  
 178. *Ma mini au ia Bina Bane.* And take me here, Bina Bane.  
 179. *Tebu ma-sulu au* But shelter me  
 180. *Sama leo au ama bongi* Like my birth father  
 181. *Ma ma-hapa au* And protect me  
 182. *Deta leo au ina bongi.'* Like my birth mother.'

Meti Balaha and Tasi Dulupila carry the shells to their house, placing them at the *timi* post and lontar beam. At first, they feel satisfied and content but then realise the impermanence of their new location and seek again for another mother and father.

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

183. *Dua leni nana mai* The two carry them forth  
 184. *Fua neu timi di* Place them on the *timi* post  
 185. *Fe Suti no timi di* Allocate Suti to the *timi* post  
 186. *Ma bati Bina no nata tuak.* And assign Bina to the lontar beam.  
 187. *Tesa teik timi di* Satisfied at the *timi* post  
 188. *Ma tama dale nata tuak.* And content at the lontar beam.  
 189. *Hika ho boe setele* Laughing out loud  
 190. *Ma eki ho boe latadale.* And shouting with joy.  
 191. *Dua de'a-de'a lo ao nala* The two talk to themselves  
 192. *Ma dua kola-kola lo ao nala:* And the two speak to themselves:  
 193. *'Ita nai na-sulu uda te ka* 'We are sheltered from the piercing rain  
 194. *Ma ita nai nahapa ledo ha ka.'* And we are protected from the scorching sun.'  
 195. *Dua boe de'a-de'a lo ao nala* The two again talk to themselves  
 196. *Ma dua boe kola-kola lo ao nala.* And the two again speak to themselves.  
 197. *Lae: 'Tesa teik.'* They say: '[We are] satisfied.'

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

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

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

- |      |                              |                             |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 217. | <i>Dua dilu leu</i>          | The two go down             |
| 218. | <i>Ho dilu leu bou tuak</i>  | Go down to the lontar vat   |
| 219. | <i>Ma dua loe leu</i>        | And the two descend         |
| 220. | <i>Ho loe leu neka hade.</i> | Descend to the rice basket. |

221. *Dua de'a-de'a lo ao nala* The two talk to themselves
222. *Ma dua kola-kola lo ao nala:* And the two speak to themselves:
223. *'Tean nai bou tuak so* 'There is certainty in the lontar vat
224. *Ma mepen nai neka hade so.* And there is permanence in the rice basket.
225. *Lole tama-bena* Let us well hope for
226. *Neu ina bongi ka leo* A birth mother
227. *Ma lena taka-bani* And let us fondly expect
228. *Neu ama bongi ka leo.* A birth father.
229. *Tehu noi-tao leo lia* Yet however one strives
230. *Ho dadi neuk te'o leo* For someone to become a lineage aunt
231. *Ma sanga-tao leo na* And however one seeks
232. *Ho moli neuk ina ingu* For someone to be a clan mother
233. *Ho bengu bafa ka dadi* Word of mouth reports
234. *Ma lali ma ka moli* And wagging of tongues reveal that
235. *Soke sasau neka* Scooping and ladling the basket
236. *Soke sau basa neka hade* Scoops and ladles all the rice from the basket
237. *Ma kola lului tua* Drawing and draining the lontar syrup
238. *Lui beni basa bou tua.'* Drains all the lontar vat.'
239. *Suti nasakedu seluk* Suti sobs again
240. *Ma Bina namatani seluk.* And Bina cries again.
241. *'Tean tak ma mepen tak.* 'No certainty and no permanence.
242. *He, tia Suti nga ko* He, my dear friend Suti
243. *Ma he, sena Bina nga ko,* And he, my dear companion Bina,
244. *Ita teu bea tean tak* Let us go where there is (no) certainty
245. *Ma ita teu bea mepen tak.* And let us go where there is (no) permanence.
246. *Teu teteni bea balik* Let us go ask for someone again
247. *Ho lia dadi neuk ina bongi* Who may become a birth mother
248. *Ma teu tatane bea dei* And let us go request someone once more
249. *Ho na moli neuk ama bongi.'* And who may be a birth father.'

In the next lines, the shells move out of the house and into the fields where the lontar palm is tapped and rice is harvested. The time for tapping and harvesting with its accompanying celebrations is brief and thus also impermanent so the shells are left to themselves to cry and sob.

## Suti Solo and Bina Bane Shift to the East Lontar Season and Savu Rice Harvest

- |      |   |  |
|------|---|--|
| 250. | <i>Teu tateni tua timu</i>                      | Let us go ask the lontar-tapping season            |
| 251. | <i>Ma teu leo tatane hade safu</i>              | And let us go request the <i>Savu</i> rice harvest |
| 252. | <i>Ho tua timu lesu ngi</i>                     | Lontar palms put out their inflorescences          |
| 253. | <i>Na dua ngata dadi tasafali ao</i>            | Let us two renew ourselves                         |
| 254. | <i>Ma hade safu tona kale</i>                   | And <i>Savu</i> rice bends at the head             |
| 255. | <i>Na dua ngata moli tasafali<br/>ao tala.'</i> | Then let us restore ourselves.'                    |
| 256. | <i>Faik lia leu</i>                             | One day they go to                                 |
| 257. | <i>Tua timu lesu ngi</i>                        | The budding lontar inflorescences                  |
| 258. | <i>Ho kiki tua la-dopo</i>                      | Where the tapping of the cleaning brush            |
| 259. | <i>Na dadi neuk koa tua</i>                     | Gives rise to great celebration                    |
| 260. | <i>Ma nesu ingu langu</i>                       | And mortar's heavy pounding                        |
| 261. | <i>Ho manu ingu na</i>                          | With its squabbling chicken                        |
| 262. | <i>Dadi neu ngia sina.</i>                      | Gives rise to great exuberance.                    |
| 263. | <i>Luku lo nesu ingu</i>                        | Squatting with the great mortar                    |
| 264. | <i>Ma sake lo tua timu</i>                      | And snuggling with the lontar tapping              |
| 265. | <i>Hika ho setele</i>                           | Laughing out loud                                  |
| 266. | <i>Ma eki ho latadale.</i>                      | And shouting with joy.                             |
| 267. | <i>Lae: 'Tean liak so.'</i>                     | They say: 'Something certain is here.'             |
| 268. | <i>Ma lae: 'Mepen liak na so.'</i>              | And they say: 'Something lasting is here.'         |
| 269. | <i>Tehu ledok esa nai lia</i>                   | But then at one time                               |
| 270. | <i>Na lengu heni nesu ingu</i>                  | The great mortar is cast aside                     |
| 271. | <i>Ma faik esa nai na</i>                       | And on one day                                     |
| 272. | <i>Na hulu heni tua timu</i>                    | The lontar season comes to an end                  |
| 273. | <i>Hu uda te tua timu</i>                       | Because the rain spears the lontar tapping         |
| 274. | <i>Na tua lama loe suma.</i>                    | The lontar baskets are lowered.                    |

275. *Te tean tak ma mepen tak.* Nothing certain and nothing permanent.  
 276. *Dua boe lasakedu* The two sob again  
 277. *Ma dua boe lamatani.* And the two cry again.

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

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

278. *Dua leu lateteni seluk* The two go in search again  
 279. *Lateni neuk nita lete* In search of the mountain *nitas* tree  
 280. *Ma dua leu latane seluk* And the two go in quest again  
 281. *Latane neuk dela mo.* In quest of the open field *delas* tree.  
 282. *Leu dei,* They go,  
 283. *Laneta lo nita lete* They encounter the *nitas* of the mountain  
 284. *Nita lete nabuna* The mountain *nitas* is in bloom  
 285. *Ma latonggo lo dela mo,* And they meet the open field *delas*,  
 286. *Dela mo napena* The *delas* is flowering  
 287. *Dadi latafali ao na* Renewing itself  
 288. *Ma moli laleo ao na.* And restoring itself.  
 289. *Dadi leu koa tua* These things give rise to great celebration  
 290. *Ma moli leu ngia sina.* And give forth great exuberance.  
 291. *Sake lo nita lete* They snuggle up to the mountain *nitas*  
 292. *Ho lo nita lete buna na* And with the blossoms of the mountain *nitas*  
 293. *Ma luku lo dela mo* And they squat with the field *delas*  
 294. *Ho lo dela mo pena na* And with the field *delas*'s flowers  
 295. *Hika ho setele* Laughing loudly  
 296. *Ma eki ho latadale.* And shouting for joy.  
 297. *'Tia Suti nga ko* 'My friend, Suti

- |      |  |   |
|------|--|---|
| 298. | <i>Ma sena Bina nga ko</i>             | And my companion, Bina                            |
| 299. | <i>Tean tak nai ia</i>                 | There is nothing certain here                     |
| 300. | <i>Ma mepen tak nai ia.</i> '          | And there is nothing lasting here.'               |
| 301. | <i>Tehu noi-tao leo lia</i>            | Yet however one strives                           |
| 302. | <i>Ho tunu-bai leo lia</i>             | There is difficulty there                         |
| 303. | <i>Ma sanga-tao leo na</i>             | And however one seeks                             |
| 304. | <i>Ho kelo-kea leo na.</i>             | There is trouble there.                           |
| 305. | <i>Tean bei tak</i>                    | There is yet nothing certain                      |
| 306. | <i>Ma mepen bei tak.</i>               | And there is yet nothing permanent.               |
| 307. | <i>Faik lia timu lasa-lua dulu</i>     | One day the monsoon widens in the east            |
| 308. | <i>Ma ledok na fa lasa-fali langa.</i> | One time the west winds return to the head.       |
| 309. | <i>Ani dulu fifiu</i>                  | The east wind blows                               |
| 310. | <i>Lefa heni nita bunan</i>            | Letting drop the <i>nitas</i> blossoms            |
| 311. | <i>Ma uda te dela pena</i>             | And the rains strike the <i>delas</i> flowers     |
| 312. | <i>Kono heni dela pena.</i>            | Letting fall the <i>delas</i> flowers.            |
| 313. | <i>Tehu be ana ma</i>                  | But what of the orphan                            |
| 314. | <i>Ho ana ma lasakedu lo ao</i>        | The orphan sobs with himself                      |
| 315. | <i>Be ina falu</i>                     | What of the widow                                 |
| 316. | <i>Ho falu ina lamatani lo ao na.</i>  | The widow cries with herself.                     |
| 317. | <i>Dua de'a-de'a lo ao na</i>          | The two talk to each other                        |
| 318. | <i>Ma dua kola-kola lo ao na:</i>      | And the two speak to each other:                  |
| 319. | <i>'Tean tak nita lete</i>             | 'No certainty with the mountain <i>nitas</i> tree |
| 320. | <i>Ma mepen tak dela mo.'</i>          | No permanence with the field <i>delas</i> tree.'  |

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

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

- |      |                           |                    |
|------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 321. | <i>Faik lia lae:</i>      | One day they say:  |
| 322. | <i>Dua leu teteni leo</i> | The two go to seek |

323. *Ma ledok na lae:* And one time they say:  
 324. *Dua leu tatane leo* The two go to quest  
 325. *Leu de tepa loi tuli tini* They go to meet the pigeon pea garden  
 326. *Ma kala loi kaba osi* And to encounter the cotton field  
 327. *De luku lo kaba osi pena* Snuggling with the cotton field boll  
 328. *Ma sake lo tuli tini buna.* And squatting with pigeon pea garden flowers.  
 329. *Hika ho setele* They laugh out loud  
 330. *Ma eki ho latadale* And shout with joy  
 331. *Luku lo kaba osi* Snuggling in the cotton field  
 332. *Ma latadale neu tuli tini.* And happy in the pigeon pea garden.  
 333. *Tehu bei tean tak* But there is yet no certainty  
 334. *Ma bei mepen tak.* And yet no permanence.  
 335. *Faik lia uda te tuli tini* One day the rain strikes the pigeon pea garden  
 336. *Ma ledok na ani fu kaba osi* One time the wind blows the cotton field  
 337. *Kono beni tuli buna* Letting fall the pigeon pea flowers  
 338. *Ma lapu beni kaba pena.* And lifting away the cotton bolls.

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

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

339. *Dua de'a-de'a lo ao na* The two talk with each other  
 340. *Ma dua kola-kola lo ao na:* And the two speak with each other:  
 341. *'Teu teteni ina bongik ka leo* 'Let us go in search of a birth mother  
 342. *Te tean tak dae bafok* For there is no certainty on earth  
 343. *Ma teu tatane ama bongik ka leo* Let us go in quest of a birth father  
 344. *Te mepen tak batu poik ka.* For there is no permanence in the world.

345. *Teu tatane* Let us go in search  
 346. *Teu bea o tean tak* Let us go where there is no certainty  
 347. *Ma teu teteni* And let us go in quest  
 348. *Teu bea o mepen tak.* Let us go where there is no permanence.  
 349. *Ita dua dadi ana ma* Let us two become orphaned  
 350. *Ho ana ma Le Lai* With the orphan Le Lai  
 351. *Tasakedu to ao tala* That we may sob with each other  
 352. *Ita dua dadi falu ina* Let us two become widowed  
 353. *Ho falu ina Oe Bolo* With the widow Oe Bolo  
 354. *Tamatani to ao tala* That we may cry with each other  
 355. *Tasakedu to ao tala* Let us sob with each other  
 356. *Ho nai Dulu Oli* In Dulu Oli  
 357. *Ma tamatani to ao tala* And let us cry with each other  
 358. *Ho nai Lange Le.* In Langa Le.  
 359. *Au ia, ana mak Suti Solo* Here I am, the orphan Suti Solo  
 360. *Ma au ia, falu ina Bina Bane.* And here I am, the widow Bina Bane.  
 361. *Falu ina ko fali* I am a widow going back  
 362. *Ma ana ma ko tulek.* And an orphan returning.  
 363. *De ana ma teteni* The orphan quests  
 364. *Ho Suti Solo mu teteni* Suti Solo, you go in quest  
 365. *Ma falu ina tatane* And the widow searches  
 366. *Ho Bina Bane mu matane* Bina Bane, you go in search  
 367. *Teteni Hena Le* In quest of Hena Le [Pandanus River]  
 368. *Ho tabu tunga Hena Le* Treading along Hena Le  
 369. *Ma tatane I Lasi* In search of I Lasi [Jasmine Forest]  
 370. *Ho nama tunga I Lasi enok.* Following the I Lasi path.  
 371. *Nama osok maketu na* Hold on without letting go  
 372. *Ma molo Hena Le eno* And step on the Pandanus River road  
 373. *Molo osok mabasan.* Step along without stopping.  
 374. *Teteni Hena Le eno* Seek the Pandanus River path  
 375. *Ma tatane I Lasi dala* And quest for Jasmine Forest road  
 376. *Ho kelak molo tunga Hena  
Le enon* To step along Hena Le's path  
 377. *Ma nama tunga I Lasi dala.* And follow along I Lasi's road.

The shells arrive at East Estuary and Headland River and then begin to follow the steps and ladder that lead up the Pandanus River road and Jasmine Forest path.

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

- |      |                                      |  |
|------|--------------------------------------|--|
| 378. | <i>Ita dua tena Dulu Oli</i>         | So that we two arrive at Dulu Oli        |
| 379. | <i>Ma ita dua monu Langa Le</i>      | And we two enter Langa Le                |
| 380. | <i>Fali seluk Dulu Oli</i>           | Come back again to Dulu Oli              |
| 381. | <i>Ma tulek seluk Langa Le.</i>      | And return again to Langa Le.            |
| 382. | <i>Teu dulu</i>                      | Let us go east                           |
| 383. | <i>Lada edak losa nateke na</i>      | The ladder leads upward                  |
| 384. | <i>Ma teu langa</i>                  | Let us go to the head                    |
| 385. | <i>Ho nasalai kakae losa nabasan</i> | The steps lead to the top                |
| 386. | <i>Molo tunga Hena Le eno</i>        | Step along the Pandanus River road       |
| 387. | <i>Ma nama tunga I Lasi longe</i>    | And follow along the Jasmine Forest path |
| 388. | <i>Molo na tak nabasa na</i>         | Step upward without stopping             |
| 389. | <i>Ma nama na tak naketu na.'</i>    | Hold on without ending.'                 |
| 390. | <i>De'a-de'a lo aon na</i>           | They talk to themselves                  |
| 391. | <i>Ma kola-kola lo ao na.</i>        | And they speak to themselves.            |

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

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

- |      |   |  |
|------|---|--|
| 392. | <i>'Fali seluk leo ina bongi ka teu</i>     | 'Going back to the birth mother, we go |
| 393. | <i>Ma tulek seluk leo ama bongi ka teu.</i> | Returning to the birth father, we go.  |

- |      |                                  |                                  |
|------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 394. | <i>Ina bongi lia Nilu Neo</i>    | To the birth mother, Nilu Neo    |
| 395. | <i>Ma ama bongi lia Ko Nau.</i>  | And to the birth father, Ko Nau. |
| 396. | <i>Nai tema sio dei</i>          | In the fullness of nine          |
| 397. | <i>Ma nai bate falu dei</i>      | And in the abundance of eight    |
| 398. | <i>Ko Nau naboa nai na</i>       | The Ko Nau fruits there          |
| 399. | <i>Ma Nilu Neo napetu nai na</i> | And the Nilu Neo sprouts there   |
| 400. | <i>Teu ho ketu kolu</i>          | Let us go to pick and pluck      |
| 401. | <i>Ho tesa teik nai na</i>       | Inner satisfaction is there      |
| 402. | <i>Ma teu ho hele hao</i>        | And let us go to choose and eat  |
| 403. | <i>Ho tama dale nai na</i>       | Heartfelt contentment is there   |
| 404. | <i>Ho kelak losa do na neu</i>   | That goes on forever             |
| 405. | <i>Ma kelak sekunete na neu.</i> | And that does not end.           |

## Kornalius Medah's Recurrent Use of Refrain

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

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

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

- |                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Te hu tean tak Dulu Olin</i> | Yet nothing is certain at Dulu Oli   |
| <i>Ma mepen tak Langa Len.</i>  | And nothing is lasting at Langa Len. |

A more literal translation might be: ‘But nothing holds firm at Dulu Oli and nothing holds tight in Langa Len.’

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

<i>Tean o tak ma mepen o tak.</i>	Nothing is certain and nothing permanent.
-----------------------------------	---

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

<i>Tehu 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.

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

<i>Tehu noi-tao leo lia ...</i>	Yet however one strives ...
<i>Ma sanga-tao leo na.</i>	And however one seeks.

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

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

## An Analysis of Kornalius Medah’s Ritual Language Usage

This recitation by Kornalius Medah, in Bilba dialect, has 405 lines and is composed of 107 dyadic sets. Bilba’s dialect belongs to Dialect Area II, which falls between Ringgou and Landu in the east and Korbaffo and

Termanu in the central-west of Rote. As a dialect, it is closer to the language of Termanu than to the language of Ringgou. For Termanu speakers, it presents less of a challenge than Ringgou’s dialect.

The majority of the dyadic sets in Bilba’s ritual language are sets shared through most of the island. Some examples of sets that are identical to those in Termanu are the following: 1) *bafal//ma* (‘mouth’//‘tongue’); 2) *delal//nita* (‘*delas* tree, *Erythina spp.*’//‘*nitas* tree, *Sterculia foetida*’); 3) *detal//sama* (‘like’//‘as’); 4) *ekil//hika* (‘to scream, shout’//‘to laugh’); 5) *-hapal//sulu* (‘to protect’//‘to shelter’); 6) *loak//naluk* (‘broad’//‘long’); 7) *liun//sain* (‘ocean’//‘sea’); 8) *lulil//sangu* (‘storm’//‘cyclone’); 9) *lil//nafu* (‘wave’//‘wave crest’); 10) *molol//tabu* (‘step’//‘tread’).

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

Table 15: Termanu–Bilba–Ringgou Dialect Comparisons

Termanu	Bilba	Ringgou	Gloss
<i>na//ndia</i>	<i>na//lia</i>	<i>na//ria</i>	‘this’//‘that’
<i>ndui//sau</i>	<i>lui//sau</i>	<i>ruil//sau</i>	‘to ladle’//‘to scoop out’
<i>ndai//seko</i>	<i>lai//seko</i>	<i>rai//se’o</i>	‘to scoop’//‘to net-fish’
<i>ndano//toko</i>	<i>lano//toko</i>	<i>rano//to’o</i>	‘to throw’//‘to thrust’
<i>-nggeli//tulek</i>	<i>-ngeli//tulek</i>	–	‘to rage’//‘to heave’
<i>-kedu//tani</i>	<i>-kendu//tani</i>	<i>-edu//tani</i>	‘to sob’//‘to weep’

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

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

*Faik lia luli dulu fafae na*

One day a storm arises in the waking  
east

*Ma ledok na sangu langa titipa na.* And at one time a cyclone blows at the thrusting head.

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

*Faik lia luli dulu fafaeseluk* One day a storm arises again in the waking east

*Ma ledok na sangu langa titipa seluk.* And at one time a cyclone blows again at the thrusting head.

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

## (1)

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

## (2)

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

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

## Kornalius Medah's Recitation as a Christian Parable

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

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

<i>Tē tean tak dae bafok</i>	For there is no certainty on earth
<i>Tē mepen tak batu poik ka.</i>	For there is no permanence in the world.

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

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

<i>Au ia, ana mak Suti Solo</i>	'Here I am, the orphan Suti Solo
<i>Ma au ia, falu ina Bina Bane.</i>	And here I am, the widow Bina Bane.
<i>Falu ina ko fali</i>	I am a widow going back
<i>Ma ana ma ko tulek.'</i>	And an orphan returning.'

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

<i>Hu no tepok lia Suti natane sodak ka</i>	At that time Suti seeks well-being
<i>Ma lelek na Bina teteni molek ka.</i>	And at the moment Bina asks for peace.

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

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

This text is taken from *Master Poets, Ritual Masters: The Art of Oral Composition Among the Rotenese of Eastern Indonesia*, by James J. Fox, published 2016 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.