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

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

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

The introduction to this recitation gives a glimpse of the drama of the origin narratives, all of which recount the successive involvement and intimate engagement of the Sun and Moon with the Lords of the Ocean and Sea, who are identified as Shark and Crocodile. Their field of interaction is on earth as much as in the heavens or sea.

On a trip to the village of Oe Handi in Thie in 1973, I recorded this version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* together with a wealth of other chants from the two master poets at that time: N. D. Pah, who was invariably referred to as Guru Pah ('Teacher Pah'), and his close friend and companion, Samuel Ndun. These chants included a long and detailed version of the foundation chant that recounts the discovery of fire and cooked food in the sea and another chant about the origin of the house built with tools obtained from the sea. In addition, the two poets provided other chants, including two extended mortuary chants. My week's stay in Oe Handi was the most intensive and productive period of my second fieldwork on Rote.

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

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

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



Figure 20: Samuel Ndun



Figure 21: N. D. Pah — ‘Guru Pah’

What follows is a debate about how the Sun and Moon can acquire the full bounty of the sea. The first inclination is to make war on the sea but this proves futile. Eventually Ledo Horo and Bula Kai decide to divorce their daughters Sa’o Ledo and Mani Bulan from their husbands and offer these women in marriage to Tio Dangak and Rusu Mane. In return, they demand an immense bridewealth, which consists of a litany of objects

that they desire. Besides gold and livestock, particularly water buffalo, they demand the means for making fire—a flint set and fire drill—but also an array of tools for building a house, as well as axe and adze for clearing fields for planting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

commenting on and correcting their recitations. Because of their mutual efforts, I have designated the set of recordings that I did at this time as joint compositions.

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

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

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

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

This recitation begins with a peroration of some seven lines that acknowledge the rule borne by the Heavens and the Earth. These lines foreshadow the concluding five lines of the recitation, which extol the rule and bounty of the Heavens. After this peroration, 49 lines launch immediately into a crucial episode from the canon of the origin chants. They give an account of the lead-up to the war waged by the Sun and Moon on the Lords of the Ocean and Sea. These lines also provide the genealogical background to the key members of the Heavenly Realm. Ledo Horo//Bula Kai is Lord

of the Sun and Moon; his wife is Pua Kende//No Rini, the daughter of Kende Bei Sama//Rini Bala Sama. Some of Ledo Holo//Bula Kai's children, who bear the first half of the name of their father—Bulan and Ledo—are mentioned in this recitation: 1) Patola Bulan//Mandeti Ledo, 2) Tuti Leo Bulan//Si Lete Ledo, 3) Ninga Heu Bulan//Lafa Lai Ledo, and 4) Hundi Hu Bulan//Tefu Oe Ledo. The names of other children of the Sun and Moon, however, are missing from the initial lines of this version. Neither the son who first descends into the sea to taste cooked food, Adu Ledo//Ndu Bulan, nor the daughter who marries Tio Dangak//Rusu Mane, Sa'o Ledo//Mani Bulan, is cited in this recitation.

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

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

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

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|-----|--|-------------------------------------|
| 15. | <i>Inak kia Pua Kende</i>                    | The woman Pua Kende                 |
| 16. | <i>Ma Rini Bala Sama anan</i>                | And Rini Bala Sama's child          |
| 17. | <i>Fetok kia No Rini.</i>                    | The girl No Rini.                   |
| 18. | <i>Ana dea-dea no anan nara</i>              | He speaks with his children         |
| 19. | <i>Mandeti Ledo bali</i>                     | Mandeti Ledo                        |
| 20. | <i>Ma Patola Bulan bali</i>                  | And Patola Bulan                    |
| 21. | <i>Kola-kola no anan nara</i>                | Addresses his children              |
| 22. | <i>Si Lete Ledo bali</i>                     | Si Lete Ledo                        |
| 23. | <i>Tuti Leo Bulan bali</i>                   | Tuti Leo Bulan                      |
| 24. | <i>Ana kola-kola no anan nara</i>            | He addresses his children           |
| 25. | <i>Ningga Heu Bulan</i>                      | Ninga Heu Bulan                     |
| 26. | <i>Lafa Lai Ledo</i>                         | Lafa Lai Ledo                       |
| 27. | <i>Hundi Hu Bulan bali</i>                   | Hundi Hu Bulan                      |
| 28. | <i>Tefu Oe Ledo bali ma nae:</i>             | Tefu Oe Ledo and says:              |
| 29. | <i>'Tetenda tafa langga</i>                  | 'Sharpen the sword blade            |
| 30. | <i>Ma seseru siro nggoe</i>                  | And set the flintlock trigger       |
| 31. | <i>Sain dale miu dei</i>                     | We are going into the sea           |
| 32. | <i>Ma liun dale miu dei.'</i>                | And we are going into the ocean.'   |
| 33. | <i>Ela leo be na,</i>                        | So let it be,                       |
| 34. | <i>Rani falu rai liun</i>                    | Eight warriors in the ocean         |
| 35. | <i>Ma meru sio rai sain.</i>                 | And nine defenders in the sea.      |
| 36. | <i>Ma na te tetenda tafa<br/>langga dei</i>  | Strike their sword heads            |
| 37. | <i>Ma seseru siro nggoe dei.</i>             | Set their flintlocks' triggers.     |
| 38. | <i>Hu na te ara konda sain dale<br/>mai</i>  | So they descend into the sea        |
| 39. | <i>Ma ana konda liun dale mai</i>            | And descend into the ocean          |
| 40. | <i>Ratonggo ro liun meru nara</i>            | To meet the ocean's defenders       |
| 41. | <i>Ma na te randa ro sain<br/>rani nara,</i> | And to meet the sea's warriors,     |
| 42. | <i>Manetua Sain rani nara</i>                | The Lord of the Sea's warriors      |
| 43. | <i>Ma Danga Lena Liun<br/>meru nara</i>      | And Hunter of the Ocean's defenders |
| 44. | <i>Ain Bo'o Bai ma Etu Asa Siru</i>          | Ain Bo'o Bai and Etu Asa Siru       |

45. *Bara Kota Nau sain* Bara Kota Nau of the sea  
 46. *Ma Pila Mengge Mea sain* And Pila Mengge [red snake] of the sea  
 47. *Ara tonggo ro* They meet them  
 48. *Ma ara nda ro* And they encounter them  
 49. *Rain falu ma meruk sio* The eight warriors and nine defenders  
 50. *Ruma sain bei Lau Mara* In the sea at Lau Mara  
 51. *[Ruma liun] bei Lema Niru bali* And in the ocean at Lema Niru too  
 52. *Tonggo langga reu tonggo* They meet head to head  
 53. *Tetenda tafa langga* Strike their sword blades  
 54. *Ma seseru siro nggoen.* Fire their cocked flintlocks.  
 55. *Hu na de ara siro la'e Lau Mara* Thus they fire at Lau Mara  
 56. *Ma ara tati la'e Leme Niru.* And they slash at Leme Niru.

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

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

57. *Dan, ana nonosi* Blood, it pours out  
 58. *Ma oen, ana tititi.* And water, it drips out.  
 59. *Ana tititi la'e* It drips on

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|-----|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 60. | <i>Bane Aka Liun anan ia</i>        | Bane Aka Liun's child         |
| 61. | <i>Bina Bane</i>                    | Bina Bane                     |
| 62. | <i>Ma ana nosi la'e</i>             | And it pours out on           |
| 63. | <i>Solo Bana Sain anan</i>          | Solo Bana Sain's child        |
| 64. | <i>Suti Solo.</i>                   | Suti Solo.                    |
| 65. | <i>Faik esa no dalen</i>            | In the course of one day      |
| 66. | <i>Boe ma Suti rama-roko isi</i>    | Suti puts forth his insides   |
| 67. | <i>Ma Bina reu-edo nggi</i>         | And Bina extends his pods     |
| 68. | <i>Hu na ara la latu, de mai</i>    | So they drift like seaweed    |
| 69. | <i>Ma ara bonu engga, de mai.</i>   | And they bob like seagrass.   |
| 70. | <i>De ara mai Loko Laka Fa lain</i> | They come to Loko Laka Fa     |
| 71. | <i>Ma ara mai Tebu Tipa Re lain</i> | And they come to Tebu Tipa Re |
| 72. | <i>Isi nara haradoi</i>             | Their insides cry out         |
| 73. | <i>Ma na te nggi nara kurudo.</i>   | And their pods are in pain.   |

## The Woman Bui Len and Girl Eno Lolo Encounter Suti Solo and Bina Bane

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|-----|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 74. | <i>Neu faik ka boe,</i>              | On that day,                    |
| 75. | <i>Na te Nggonggo Inggui Lai tun</i> | Nggonggo Ingu Lai's spouse      |
| 76. | <i>[Leu] Le Dale anan</i>            | [Leu] Le Dale's child           |
| 77. | <i>Ma na te Bui Len.</i>             | Bui Len.                        |
| 78. | <i>Neu faik ka boe,</i>              | On that day,                    |
| 79. | <i>Rima Le Dale saon</i>             | Rima Le Dale's wife             |
| 80. | <i>Ma na te Lolo Dala Ina anan</i>   | Lolo Dala Ina's child           |
| 81. | <i>Eno Lolo</i>                      | Eno Lolo                        |
| 82. | <i>Eno Lolo na te Bui Len</i>        | Eno Lolo and Bu Len             |
| 83. | <i>Nggonggo Inggui Lai saon</i>      | Nggonggo Ingu Lai's wife        |
| 84. | <i>Ma Leu [Rima] Le Dale tun</i>     | And Leu [Rima] Le Dale's spouse |
| 85. | <i>Ana ha'i nala ndai tasi</i>       | She takes her sea scoop-net     |
| 86. | <i>[Ana] tengga nala seko metin</i>  | Lifts up her tidal fishnet      |
| 87. | <i>Reu meti manggatitiri nara</i>    | Goes to the receding tide       |
| 88. | <i>Ma mada manggahebeta nara.</i>    | And to the drying sea.          |

89. *Ana nda no Bina nggin* She encounters Bina's pods  
 90. *Ma ana tonggo no Suti isin.* And she meets Suti's insides.  
 91. *Ara baradoi numa Loko Laka Fa* They cry out at Loko Laka Fa  
 92. *Ma ara kurudo numa Tebu Tipa Re.* They are in pain at Tebu Tipa Re.  
 93. *'Soro meni nggai dei* 'Lift us up  
 94. *Ma ndai meni nggai dei.'* And scoop us up.'  
 95. *'Ai belu Bina mia se* 'With whom will we attach Bina  
 96. *Ma ai toto Suti mia se?'* And with whom will we fit Suti?  
 97. *Boe ma ko'o reni sara mai* So they cradle them away  
 98. *[Ifa] reni sara [mai].* And [carry] them away.  
 99. *'Ai ndae ei miu be?'* 'Where should we hang you?  
 100. *Ma ai fua ei miu be?'* And where should we place you?'

Suti Solo and Bina Bane's first request to Bu Len and Eno Lolo is to be placed on *ufa* and *bau* trees when they are in blossom. Both of these trees produce beautiful flowers. The *ufa* tree is otherwise known as the Malabar plum tree, rose apple or Malay apple tree (*Syzygium jambos*), while the *bau* tree is the hibiscus tree (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*). But almost immediately this proves unsatisfactory.

## Suti Solo and Bina Bane Ask to be Carried to *Ufa* and *Bau* Trees

101. *Boe ma rae: 'Fua ai miu* So they say: 'Place us on  
 102. *Ufa mabuna henu [kara]* The *ufa* tree full of gold-bead flowers  
 103. *Ma Bau malusu lilok kara.'* And on the *bau* tree with golden blossoms.'  
 104. *Fai esa no dalen* On one day  
 105. *Ara bei ta ratetu* They still do not feel right  
 106. *Ma bei ta randa.* And still do not yet feel proper.

Suti Solo and Bina Bane's next request is to be carried into the house and placed on two of the major beams of the house. These are the places where sacrifices are carried out in the traditional house in Thie.<sup>1</sup>

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

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|------|--|---|
| 107. | <i>Ara dea-dea ro Nggonggo<br/>Inggu Lai tun</i> | They address Nggonggo Ingu Lai's spouse |
| 108. | <i>Inak ia Eno Lolo</i>                          | The woman Eno Lolo                      |
| 109. | <i>Ana kola-kola ro Rima Le<br/>Dale saon</i>    | They speak to Rima Le Dale's wife       |
| 110. | <i>Fetok ia Bui Len:</i>                         | The girl Bui Len:                       |
| 111. | <i>'Ma ha'i falik ai dei</i>                     | 'Carry us back                          |
| 112. | <i>Ma tengga falik ai dei</i>                    | And take us back                        |
| 113. | <i>Ndae ai miu Sema Kona</i>                     | Hang us on the Sema Kona                |
| 114. | <i>Fua ai miu Lunggu Lai</i>                     | Place us on the Lunggu Lai              |
| 115. | <i>Fo ama bara manu Sema Kona</i>                | To sacrifice chickens at the Sema Kona  |
| 116. | <i>Na te ama langge lilo<br/>Lunggu Lai.'</i>    | And to place gold at the Lunggu Lai.'   |
| 117. | <i>Hu na de ara fati bete sara</i>               | They offer millet there                 |
| 118. | <i>Ma ara hao hade sara,</i>                     | And they consume the rice there,        |
| 119. | <i>Faru kapa ma na te mina bafi.</i>             | Water buffalo horns and pig's fat.      |
| 120. | <i>Faik esa no dalen</i>                         | Then on one day                         |
| 121. | <i>Ledok esa no tein</i>                         | And at one time                         |
| 122. | <i>Bei ta ratetu</i>                             | They still do not feel right            |
| 123. | <i>Ma bei ta randa.</i>                          | And still do not feel proper.           |

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

1 See Fox (1993) for drawings of the internal architecture of a traditional house.

the myriad stalks in the fields) that will come from them. This is stated again in the lines in which the shells are described as giving rise to the ‘Planting at the Boundary Stone’ (*Tanek To Batu*) and ‘Sowing at the Field Boundary’ (*Selek Lane Ai*).

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

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

The next three lines appear to be an interjection—a comment on an imagined Biblical homeland in the Dawning East and at the Reddening Headland (Timu Dulu//Sepe Langga). Thereafter, the women Bui Len//Eno Lolo carry the shells westward to a succession of named places: Deras//Le Lena, Mundek//Na'u Dalek, Rote//Kode Ana, Oe Batu//Bau

Foe, Kone Ama//Sai Fua and onward to Nggonggoer//Lasi Lai and Liti//Sera Dale. Each of these places is a recognised field in Thie or on the border with Thie and Dengka, which is planted with either rice or millet.

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

- |      |   |                                     |
|------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 144. | <i>Neu na au ba'ing Ibrahim</i>               | At the time my ancestor Ibrahim     |
| 145. | <i>Ana leo numa Timu Dulu<br/>Sepe Langga</i> | He lives in Timu Dulu Sepe Langga   |
| 146. | <i>Nusak Urkasdin</i>                         | The Land of Urkasdin                |
| 147. | <i>Faik na ana ko'o nala sara</i>             | That day she cradles them           |
| 148. | <i>Ma na te ana ifa nala sara</i>             | And she lifts them                  |
| 149. | <i>Natun kae o kae</i>                        | A hundred to rise and rise          |
| 150. | <i>Ma rifun hene o hene</i>                   | And a thousand to mount and mount   |
| 151. | <i>Kae, ara muri mai</i>                      | Rising, they go to the west         |
| 152. | <i>Hene, ara iko mai</i>                      | Mounting they go to the tail        |
| 153. | <i>Ara mai Deras no Lelena</i>                | They come to Deras and Le Lena      |
| 154. | <i>Ara mai Mundek no Na'u Dale</i>            | They come to Mundek and Na'u Dale   |
| 155. | <i>Leo na, ara mai Rote no<br/>Kode Ana</i>   | Then they come to Rote and Kode Ana |
| 156. | <i>Oe Batu no Bau Foe</i>                     | Oe Batu and Bau Foe                 |
| 157. | <i>Kone Ama ma Sai Fuan</i>                   | Kone Ama and Sai Fuan               |
| 158. | <i>Ara hene, ara kona reu</i>                 | They mount, they descend            |
| 159. | <i>Reu Nggonggoer ma reu<br/>Lasi Lai</i>     | To Nggonggoer and Lasi Lai          |
| 160. | <i>Liti ma Sera Dale.</i>                     | Liti and Sera Dale.                 |

In the concluding lines of this recitation, Suti Solo and Bina Bane are declared to be 'orphan and widow'. In virtually every other version of this chant, this designation is mentioned early and often. Here it appears once at the very end of the recitation. As 'orphan and widow', Suti Solo do Bina Bane take their rest in the fields of Thie from whence their descendants

(*tititin/nonosin*) continue to spread throughout the world. The final lines reiterate the initial lines of the recitation that assert the power that the Heavens and the Heights exert on the Earth.

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

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

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

This version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from Thie recounts the origin of rice and millet. It is the only version of a *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* chant for which, we are told, there was a specific ritual setting—one of the two annual origin ceremonies known as *Limbe* (or as *Limba* in some dialects) previously celebrated in Thie. The key to understanding this chant occurs in the lines (134 ff.) that proclaim:

<i>Fo ela leo be na:</i>	So let it be:
<i>Natun kae ma rifun hene</i>	A hundred rise and a thousand mount
<i>Nai omba hade dei</i>	At the rice field dike
<i>Nai lane tiner dei.</i>	And the dry field boundary.

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

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

## An Analysis of the Ritual Language Usage of Ndun–Pah’s *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*

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

A similar range of basic dyadic sets is also recognisable despite the various sound changes that occur in Thie dialect. Thus the ‘p’ in Termanu becomes ‘mb’ in Thie; ‘ng’ becomes ‘ngg’; and some (but not all) ‘l’ in Termanu become ‘r’ in Thie. Thie dialect also appends a final ‘r’ to give emphasis to particular nouns. An illustrative list of these basic dyadic sets is: 1) *dulul/muri* (‘east’//‘west’); 2) *dulul/langga* (‘east’//‘head’); 3) *ikoll/muri* (‘tail’//‘west’); 4) *natunl/rifun* (‘hundred’//‘thousand’); 5) *tafal/siro* (‘sword’//‘flintlock’); 6) *tatil/siro* (‘cut, slash’//‘fire a flintlock’); 7) *langgal/nggoe* (‘head’//‘snout’); 8) *mbedal/ndae* (‘place’//‘let hang down’); 9) *ndal/-tonggo* (‘meet’//‘encounter’); 10) *ha’il/tengga* (‘take, seize’//‘lift, grasp’); 11) *ana marl/falu inar* (‘orphan’//‘widow’); 12) *ranil/melu* (‘warrior’//‘defender’).

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

There are, however, many grammatical features that distinguish this recitation as a composition in the dialect of Thie. The use of pronominals defines it as Thie dialect: thus where Termanu uses *ami* for the third-person plural inclusive, Thie uses *ai*; where Termanu uses *emi* for the second-person plural, Thie uses *ei*; and where Termanu uses *ala* for the

third-person plural, This uses *ara*. Equally distinctive are the verbal forms *numa* (singular) and *ruma* (plural), indicating ‘action from’. Termanu uses *neni* and *leni*.

## A Comparison of Distinctive Refrains from Different Dialects

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<i>‘Ndae ai miu sema kona</i>	‘Hang us on the <i>sema kona</i>
<i>Fua ai miu lunggu lai’</i>	Place us on the <i>lunggu lai’</i>

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

<i>Bei ta ratetu</i>	They still do not feel right
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*Ma bei ta randa.*

And still do not feel proper.

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

*De tetun ta ndia boe*

Order is not there then

*Ma teman ta ndia boe.*

And integrity is not there then.

Often this refrain is expressed in universal terms:

*Tetun ta nai batu poik*

Order is not of this world

*Teman ta nai dae bafok*

Integrity is not of this earth.

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

*Te tesa tei bei ta'a*

There is no contentment there

*Ma tama dale bei ta'a.*

And there is no satisfaction there.

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

*Tean o tak ma mepen o tak.*

Nothing is certain and nothing lasting.

## The 'Origin' Traditions of Thie and Their Significance

Although I gathered this version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* in 1973 and, with the help of Ena Pah and Paul Haning, was reasonably confident of its transcription and literal translation, I gained further understanding of its significance only after discussions with Jonas Mooy, who joined the Master Poets Project in 2011 and came again as a participant in 2013 and 2014. It was in discussing the chants in my earlier collection from Thie that I discovered that another of my long chants, *Masi Dande ma Solo Suti*, gathered in 1966 from Guru Pah—a chant of more than 550 lines—is the foundation for the other 'origin ceremony' of Thie. In addition, I have another chant from Guru Pah, *Bole Sou ma Asa Nou*, which also recounts the origin of rice and millet and, in its narrative, resembles this version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane*. It is clear in retrospect that Guru Pah

was concerned to impart to me in our brief encounters as much of the traditional knowledge of ‘origins’ as he could. The purpose here has been to situate Thie’s version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* in relation to a wide range of other versions of this ‘same’ chant from the different domains and different ritual communities of Rote. At the same time, this telling of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* needs to be considered in relation to the rich ritual traditions of Thie. It is appropriate that I was able to gather another version of *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* from Thie—this one by Jonas Mooy. In a ritual sense, though not in any strict compositional sense, these two recitations are the ‘same chant’.

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