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Suti Sai ma Bina Liu from the Domain of Oenale

Thanks to the poet Ande Ruy, who joined the first recording session, invitations for subsequent sessions were initially extended to poets from eastern Rote, particularly Landu and Bilba. It proved relatively easy to find poets from these domains. Termanu was also represented from the beginning by Esau Pono and by other poets he brought to join the group. The goal from the outset, however, was to attract master poets from as many different dialect areas as possible. The third recording session was able to attract poets from Dengka and the fourth session had poets from Thie. It was harder, however, to find poets from other domains, particularly from the far west of Rote.

Fortunately for the seventh recording session, in 2011, we were able to attract a poet from the domain of Oenale. This poet, Hendrik Foeh, was remarkably capable. Unlike most other poets, however, he was quiet, almost self-effacing and hardly put himself forward as a notable Rotenese 'man of knowledge'. Yet his recitations were clear, coherent and linguistically beautiful. None of them was particularly long, nor were they reiterative. Instead they were focused and succinct. Moreover, he was able to provide reasonable exegesis on his recitations. His recitation of *Suti Sai(k) ma Bina Liu(k)*, recorded on 5 October 2011, is an excellent example of his style of composition.

Figure 26: Hendrik Foeh

Hendrik Foeh's recitation places Suti Sai and Bina Liu in an origin chant that recounts the creation of Rotenese cloths. Although it is not made explicit, Suti Sai and Bina Liu are female creatures. The recitation is an origin chant, but the poet emphasises from the beginning that this is also a 'widow and orphan' chant.

The first half of the recitation describes the shells' journey from the sea to the land and their quest for shelter and protection. Eventually they are taken to Delha. The arrival in Delha begins the second half of the recitation. The recitation does not name the chant characters who gather the shells and carry them to Delha nor does it identify the chant character who is responsible for the first weaving and patterning of the Rotenese cloth. It is a narrative of occurrence, not of named actors or agents.

In this first section, Suti Sai ma Bina Liu are carried by a storm from sea to land and, at 'the river's edge and the sea's boundary', they speak out with a plaintive cry, asking for shelter and protection.

Ina Falu Bina Liu Do Ana ma Suti Sai: Widow Bina Liu or Orphan Suti Sai

1.	*Ata ola-ola*	We speak of
2.	*Ina falu fo Bina Liu*	The widow Bina Liu
3.	*Ma ana ma fo Suti Sai.*	And the orphan Suti Sai.
4.	*Ana suru sia Mbia Liun na*	She takes cover in Mbia Liun
5.	*Do ana bambi sia Unu Sain*	Or she shelters in Unu Sain
6.	*Dadi neme-hena ma ne'e-bani.*	Offering hope and expectation.
7.	*Te hu sanggu sai na edo*	But a storm erupts in the sea
8.	*Ma ruli liun na eno*	And a typhoon makes its way in the ocean
9.	*De Bina ana edo nggi*	Bina, she puts forth her pod
10.	*Boe ma Suti ana roko isin.*	Then Suti lets loose her insides.
11.	*Ana lali hela sain*	She shifts from the sea
12.	*Ma ana keko hela liun*	And she moves from the ocean
13.	*Ana lalo no tere-tasi*	She is carried with the ocean refuse
14.	*Boe ma ana nggongga no hanu-lé*	And is moved with river debris

15.	*Ana losa ré pepisin*	She comes to the river's edge
16.	*Fo ndia ré retan*	There where the river ceases
17.	*Ana ndu'u tasi tatain*	She comes to the sea's boundary
18.	*Fo ndia tasi sun.*	There where the sea ends.
19.	*Ana na-lo*	She calls out
20.	*Do ana na-meli:*	Or she speaks:
21.	*'Au keko hela au daeng*	'I have moved from my land
22.	*Ma au lali hela au nggorongga.*	And I have shifted from my village.
23.	*Te touk sé tei telu*	What man will take pity
24.	*Ma ta'ek sé rala rua.*	And what boy will open his heart.
25.	*Au tuda u ana ma*	I have become an orphan
26.	*Ma au dadi u falu ina.*	And I have become a widow.
27.	*Sé ma tei telu*	Who will take pity
28.	*Ma sé ma dale dua*	And who will open his heart
29.	*Fo ana lai nala au*	Someone to love me
30.	*Ma ana sue nala au.*	And someone to care for me.
31.	*Ana dadi neu lane aon solo langga*	Someone to surround me like a wide hat
32.	*Ma ana foi aon nggeli tua*	And someone to cover me like a thatched roof
33.	*Fo ana na'a bambi nala au*	Someone to shelter me
34.	*Ma ana na'a suru nala au.'*	And someone to protect me.'

In this version, a young friarbird and a parrot are the ones to hear the shells' cry and carry them to Delha in the west.

35.	*Koa mana mete nggoro-a*	A friarbird who sees its village
36.	*Ma koa ma tei telu*	That friarbird has pity
37.	*Nggia mana suri inggu-a*	A parrot who spies its clan
38.	*Nggia ma dale dua,*	That parrot opens its heart,
39.	*Sama ona koa-ore ta'e tena*	Just like a still young friarbird
40.	*Ma deta leo nggia-mese tou landus.*	And just like an immature parrot.
41.	*Ana ninia nala Suti halan*	She hears Suti's voice

42.	*Ma ana nenene nala Bina dasin*	And she listens to Bina's words
43.	*Ana eko feo nala Bina*	She embraces Bina
44.	*De ana la'o losa Dela Muri*	Then she goes to Dela Muri
45.	*Ana lutu eko nala Suti*	She surrounds Suti
46.	*De nendin losa Ndana Ikon.*	Then bears her to Ndana Ikon.

The 'woman who spins and winds cotton' lives in Delha at the western end of Rote. She is engaged in producing cloths. Traditional cloths rely on two basic dyes: a blue-black dye derived from indigo and a red dye that comes from the roots of the *morinda* (*Morinda citrifolia*) plant. The Rotenese pair these dyes as a dyadic set: *tau*//*manukudu*. The passage describes the creation of such cloths. It implies that the very patterning of these cloths is based on these shells: 'the motif of the sea//the pattern of the ocean.' And, as a consequence, whoever wears these cloths carries 'Suti Sai's voice and Bina Liu's words'.

47.	*Te hu ina ia ina mana bindo inde,*	This woman is a woman who spins,
48.	*Te'o ia te'o mana lola kaba*	This aunt is an aunt who winds cotton
49.	*Ara losa Dela Murin*	They arrive at Dela Muri
50.	*Do ara ndu'u Ndana Ikon.*	Or they come to Ndana Iko.
51.	*Ana lolo kaba*	She winds cotton
52.	*Ma ana bindo inde*	And she spins
53.	*Ana sangga kaba sina*	She seeks *sina* cotton
54.	*Ana ta hambu*	She does not have any
55.	*Ana sangga fina koli*	She seeks *koli* thread
56.	*Ana ta nita.*	She does not see any.
57.	*Ana tao sa neu kaba sina*	She makes *sina* cotton
58.	*Fo ana lolo*	She lays out the loom
59.	*Ana tao sa neu fina koli*	She makes *koli* thread
60.	*Fo ana tenu.*	She weaves.
61.	*Ana seu kaba dae mbena*	She picks cotton bolls from the land
62.	*Fo ana hai fina koli Rote boan.*	She takes thread from the fruit of the *koli* tree.
63.	*Ana bindo inde*	She spins

64.	*Ma ana lolo kaba.*	And she lays out the cotton.
65.	*Ana lolo neu rambi*	She lays out a woman's cloth
66.	*Boe ma ana tenu neu lafe*	Then she weaves a man's cloth
67.	*Ana sangga nae tutu deta*	She wants to pound dyes
68.	*Fo mbila nggeo*	To make the red and black
69.	*Te hu ara ta hambu.*	But there are none.
70.	*Ana ketu tau ana tete don*	She cuts leaves of the small indigo
71.	*Boe ma ana kali manukudu lasi okan.*	Then she strips old roots of the *morinda* bush.
72.	*De ana tutu deta neu mbila nggeo*	She pounds to make the red and black
73.	*Fo ana adu dudula*	She creates a pattern
74.	*Fo lafe dulan.*	A pattern for a man's cloth.
75.	*De ana tao neu buna*	Then she makes a motif
76.	*Fo rambi bunan,*	A motif of a woman's cloth,
77.	*Fo rambi ra-buna*	A woman's cloth with a motif
78.	*Fo ra-buna saik*	A motif of the sea
79.	*Te lafe na-dula*	A man's cloth with a pattern
80.	*Te na-dula liu.*	A pattern of the ocean.
81.	*Hu Suti Sai nendi ma liu*	Because Suti Sai has been carried from the ocean
82.	*Ma Bina Liu nendi ma sain.*	And Bina Liu has been carried from the sea.
83.	*Ana na loa ma na naru.*	It is wide and long.
84.	*Sia dae mbenan ia sia Rote Ndao*	On the dry land here on Rote Ndao
85.	*Losa fai ia ma ndu'u fai ia.*	To this day and until this day.
86.	*Rote Ndao ana nalusa*	The people of Rote Ndao wrap it
87.	*Ma ana natai*	And wear it
88.	*Lafe fo dula sai ia*	A man's cloth with this sea pattern
89.	*Rambi fo dula liu ia*	A woman's cloth with this ocean pattern
90.	*Hu la'o mia Suti Sai ia*	Because it originates from Suti Sai
91.	*Ma la'o mia Bina Liu*	And originates from Bina Liu
92.	*Ana ma ma ina falu.*	The orphan and the widow.

93.	*No ia ana fe'a ndoe ndolu*	Those who still do not understand
94.	*Ma ana fe'a la'a lela*	And those who still do not comprehend
95.	*Te ta'e mana ma Rote Ndao ra*	The young men on Rote
96.	*Rendi Suti Sai haran*	They carry Suti Sai's voice
97.	*Boe ma rendi Bina Liu dasin na.*	And they carry Bina Liu's words.

This would seem to be the appropriate ending to this version of *Suti Sai ma Bina Liu*. However, as a good oral poet, Hendrik Foeh continued his recitation to provide a postscript that gave the context of his recitation. He made clear that his recitation was for me and that it was made on Bali but he then explained that this recitation was intended to be heard to affect people's hearts and convince them to provide for widows and orphans, especially on Rote Ndao.

98.	*Ne'e lolosan neu Pak Fox sa ia*	To this point for Pak Fox here
99.	*Sia Nusa Bali ia*	Here on the island of Bali
100.	*Fo ela leo bena*	So let it be that
101.	*Ndi'i don nenene*	The ear continually hears
102.	*Fo tao dalen leo be*	To affect the heart
103.	*Fo na-tetu ina falu*	To give order to widows
104.	*Ana tao tein leo be*	It affects the inner person
105.	*Fo na-lole ana ma*	To do good to orphans
106.	*Fo mana mia Rote Ndao nema.*	To those from Rote Ndao.

Hendrik Foeh's Recitation as a Distinct Example of a *Suti Solo do Bina Bane* Chant

Hendrik Foeh's recitation locates his version of *Suti Sai ma Bina Liu* within the context of an origin chant—one that recounts the origin of weaving, dyeing and the production of Rotenese tie-dyed textiles. In this respect, it is similar to Old Meno's recitation from Termanu and to Simon Lesik's recitation from Dengka, both of whose recitations link the shells to the origins of weaving. However, *Suti Sai ma Bina Liu* is a narrative without genealogical grounding. One of the features of most other versions of this

chant is the insistence on particular named agents. Not only are these chant characters named, they also are often genealogically linked to one another. This version names no one except the shells (and no genealogy is given for these shells). It thus is a narrative without its embedding and as such lacks one of the critical features of an 'origin' chant.

This recitation conforms to the pattern of an 'orphan and widow' chant— one that recounts the expulsion of the shells from the depths of the sea, their arrival at the edge of the land, their identification as 'orphan and widow' and their plea for shelter and assistance.

Not a woman but a friarbird and parrot (*koal//nggia*) take pity on the shells and deliver them to a woman in Delha, who relies on them to create her cloths. Precisely what the shells are used for in this process is not explicit: in some versions, the shells become a vat for indigo and a base for spinning, but this is certainly not the case in this narrative. The final lines of the recitation are particularly evocative. They insist that though Rotenese men do not realise it, all the traditional textiles they wear 'carry Suti Sai's voice and Bina Liu's words'.

Language Use in Hendrik Foeh's *Suti Sai ma Bina Liu*

This recitation of just 106 lines is composed of some 52 dyadic sets. A relatively small number of these sets (less than one-fourth) are familiar, recognisable sets. The dozen or so of these sets are the following: 1) *liuk// saik* ('ocean'//'sea'); 2) *ana mak//ina falu* ('orphan'//'widow'; 3) *isi//nggi* ('insides'//'pod'); 4) *lali//keko* ('to move'//'to shift'); 5) *lai//sue* ('care for, to love'//'to have sympathy'); 6) *meti//tasi* ('tide'//'sea'; 7) *ta'e// tou* ('boy'//'man'); 8) *koal//nggia* ('friarbird'//'parrot'); 9) *deta//sama* ('like'//'similar'); 10) *ina//te'o* ('mother'//'father's sister'). The set *buna// dula* ('flower, pattern'//'design') is of interest because the lexical terms that make up this set are familiar but in this recitation, as a pair, they take on a metaphorical significance in reference to the patterning of Rotenese cloth.

Sound changes in Oenale are different from those in Thie and Termanu. One of the 'l' sounds in Termanu becomes 'r'. (This is not the same 'r' as in Thie—hence Oenale has *ruli* where Thie has *luri* and Termanu has *luli* for 'storm'.) Oenale also has 'r' where Termanu uses 'd'. Oenale uses 'ngg' where Termanu has 'ng' and 'mb' where Termanu has 'p'. Oenale also

drops medial 'k' in some words. On the basis of these changes, there are many dyadic sets in Oenale that can be seen to belong to the island-wide repertoire:

Table 18: Termanu–Oenale Dialect Comparisons

Termanu	Oenale	Gloss
luli//sangu	*ruli//sanggu*	'storm'//'cyclone'
boa//pena	*boa//mbena*	'fruit'//'boll' (of cotton)
pila//nggeo	*mbila//nggeo*	'red'//'black'
dua//telu	*rua//telu*	'two'//'three'
dasi//hala	*dasi//hara*	'song'//'voice'
losa//nduku	*losa//ndu'u*	'up to'//'toward, until'
babi//sulu	*bambi//suru*	'shelter, cover'//'protect'

There are also dyadic sets that occur in this composition that are similar to sets in other dialects of Rote. For example, Hendrik Foeh uses the set *hanu-le//tere-tasi* for 'ocean refuse'//'river debris'; Alex Mada uses the expression *hambau//tere-tasi*; while Kornaluis Medah in his recitation uses the set *hamu-le//tele-tasi*. Another dyadic set that stands out in this composition is *lafe//rambi* as the terms for 'a man's cloth' and 'a woman's cloth'. In his recitation, Hendrik Foeh refers to these cloths as follows:

Ana lolo neu rambi	She lays out a woman's cloth
Boe ma ana tenu neu lafe	Then she weaves a man's cloth

In all other dialects, this pair is *lafa//pou*. Thus, for example, in Jonas Mooy's recitation, there occur the lines:

Ara pa'a pou su'u reu sara	They wrap a woman's sarong around them
Ma ara mboti lafa una neu sara	And they fold a man's cloth around them

Pe'u Malesi, in his recitation from Termanu, has these lines:

De ana tenu nan dadi pou	She weaves it to become a woman's cloth
Fo lae pou dula selu-kolo	They call this woman's cloth: the *selu-kolo* pattern
Ma ana tenu nan dadi lafa	And she weaves it to become a man's cloth
Fo lae lafa dula tema-nggik	They call this man's cloth: the *tema-nggik* pattern

There are also some puzzling usages in this recitation. For example, Henrik Foeh uses the pair *tei telu*//*rala rua* (literally: 'three stomach'//'two hearts') in lines 23–24. *Rala rua* (literally: 'heart two') is in Oenale dialect. In this context, this formula is an expression for 'taking pity'//'opening one's heart'.

Te touk sé tei telu	What man will take pity
Ma ta'ek sé rala rua.	And what boy will open his heart.

However, just a few lines later (lines 27–28) in the recitation, he shifts to the use of this same expression in what can only be interpreted as Termanu dialect:

Sé ma tei telu	Who will take pity
Ma sé ma dale dua	And who will open his heart

He then repeats this expression in lines 36 and 38:

Ma koa ma tei telu	That friarbird has pity
Nggia ma dale dua	That parrot opens its heart

Although this could be conceived of as some sort of exceptional dialect parallelism (the use of an expression in two dialects), it is more likely a lapse into the use of a Termanu literary standard of which the poet is well aware. The presence of other Termanu-speaking poets and the knowledge that I relied on the Termanu dialect as my comparative reference point may have influenced him.

Verbs in Oenale's ritual language have a different structure to verbs in Termanu. Despite these differences, they continue to retain the same semantic pairings in different dialectic grammars. Thus Oenale uses the third-person singular form *neme-hena*//*ne'e-bani* where Termanu has *nama-hena*//*naka-bani* for this expression ('to have hope'//'to have expectations'). Similarly, for the paired verbs 'to listen'//'to hear', Oenale uses the third-person singular form *nenene*//*ninia*, where Termanu has *nama-nene*//*nama-nia*.

There are also interesting differences. One example is the use of the verbs that describe the way the shells lose or expel their pods or insides.

Old Meno in his recitation has the following:

Boe ma besak ka Suti lama-edo nggi	Now Suti exudes his pods
Ma Bina lamatoko-isi	And Bina puts out his insides

Esau Pono uses a similar verb pair in a slightly different format, *edo heni//toko heni*:

Boe ma liun na e'edo	The sea continually casts out
De ana edo heni Suti nggi	It casts forth Suti's pod
Ma ana toko heni Bina isin.	And it throws out Bina's contents.
Ana edo heni Suti nggi	It casts out Suti's pod
Ma ana toko heni Bina isin.	And throws out Bina's contents.

By contrast, Simon Lesik uses a lexically different verb, *-loko*, but one with a similar meaning to *-toko*, to pair with *-edo*:

Bina ma-edo nggi	Bina, who exudes her pods
Suti mana-loko isi.	Suti, who issues forth her insides.

Jonas Mooy offers a different pairing of verbs, combining *roko* (Dengka: *loko*) with *ketu* ('to cut'):

Ara rama roko isi	They exude their insides
Ma ara rama ketu nggi.	And they cut loose their pods.

Hendrik Foeh's verb pairing (*roko//edo*) is similar to that of Dengka:

De Bina ana edo nggi	Bina, she puts forth her pod
Boe ma Sui ana roko isin.	Then Suti lets loose her insides.

This chain of semantic relationships between *edo//toko* (T), *edo//loko* (D), *ketu//roko* (Th) and *edo//roko* (O) is yet another example of what I refer to as 'dialect concatenation'. Recognising the pervasiveness of dialect concatenation is a key to understanding how ritual language functions across the island of Rote.