

Frightened by the eagle

Recording songs and music from the Island of Siberut, Mentawai Islands

GERARD A. PERSON AND REIMAR SCHEFOLD

ABSTRACT

Singing is the most important element of the traditional music culture on Siberut, the largest of the Mentawai Islands (West Sumatra, Indonesia). There are various types of songs on the island. Some of them are related to the world of spirits and ancestors. These are mainly sung by shamans during healing ceremonies and rituals. Other songs are made up by men and women during their daily activities, when they are fishing out at sea or when they take a rest from collecting forest products. Various animals (birds, primates, reptiles) or natural forces (wind, thunder) provide inspiration for lyrics and melodies, as do special events, like the arrival of a logging company on the island). In this article, we discuss the process of recording the songs and other types of music of the island and the production of two CDs and the reactions of the singers and the community to the presentation of the CDs. In a context of decades of suppression of various aspects of the traditional culture (religion, tattoo, loincloth) documentation of a form of intangible culture and its positive appreciation can generate a sense of pride among a local community. In addition, we have added an extensive appendix to this article containing the lyrics of a number of songs in both the local language as well as in translation. It allows readers to get an idea of the poetic nature of the song literature of the Mentawaians.

KEYWORDS

Recording process; traditional music; Siberut; Mentawai Islands.

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INTRODUCTION¹

The study of music is usually defined not only in terms of sound but also in terms of perceptions and behaviour. Therefore, in addition to what is usually called “music”, its study should also include the way people think about music, how and under what kind of conditions it is used, and how it is created, transmitted, preserved (for instance, by recording) or renewed. This, of course, demands the study of song texts. The role of the musicians as well as of the audience and other relevant actors also deserves ample attention in this context (Merriam 1974; Nettl 2005).

This article describes the music culture from the island of Siberut, the largest of the Mentawai Islands, off the west coast of Sumatra. In particular, it will pay attention to the process of recording the music as part of the island’s intangible cultural heritage and the production of two CDs, which were made on the basis of a selection of songs and music collected and recorded over a long period of time (1967–2002). The production and the presentation of the CDs gave rise to some interesting discussions about what is actually perceived as music and what the positive appreciation of this particular cultural element can mean in a context of decades of suppression of various other cultural aspects like the traditional religion and the tradition of tattooing. In 2009, the CDs were presented on the island to the original singers and musicians and their family members, and since that time they have become part of the music culture of the island.

THE ISLAND OF SIBERUT

The Mentawai Archipelago is a chain of islands about 100 km off the west coast of Sumatra. Four of them are inhabited: Siberut, Sipora, and North and South Pagai. Siberut is the southernmost and largest of these islands. Its land mass is more than 4,000 km². Its present population is estimated at about 35,000 people. Most of them are native Mentawaians, but there are also people from other ethnic groups like the Minangkabau, Javanese, Batak and some people from Nias. There is quite a rich ethnography about the traditional culture and about modern developments on the island by both foreign and Indonesian authors. In the following sections, we focus on some features which can provide a general image of the context of the music culture and, more specifically, of the themes of the song texts in the Appendix.

Large families, organized along patrilineal lines, traditionally live in communal houses, called *Uma*. These communal houses are located on the banks of the rivers, which flow through the dense tropical rainforests. The livelihood of the people consists of subsistence agriculture with sago starch, taro and bananas as the most important crops. In addition, the people also domesticate chickens and semi-wild pigs. Extra meat is also supplied from

¹ A short version of this article was presented by the first author at the conference ISISA Islands of the World XIII, “Small is beautiful; Island connections and innovations”. Penghu Archipelago, Taiwan, 22-27 September 2014. The authors would like to thank Philip Yampolsky for his helpful comments.

the hunting by the men. Fishing and the collection of smaller edible food items is undertaken by the women. There is relatively little division of labour between the people on the island. Almost every man and woman is capable of performing the most relevant economic tasks.

According to the traditional religion, all elements in the natural world have spirits and souls. Plants and animals, but also natural elements like the sea and the wind, have souls. In their daily activities, men and women disturb the environment when they cut down a tree or when they go out hunting or fishing. As souls and spirits are invisible, rituals have to be performed in order to restore the harmony, which might have been disturbed as a result of their activities. The local shamans, called *kerei*, are the central figures in the performance of the necessary rituals whose purpose is to restore the balance between the people and their living environment.

A communal house can be considered a small community under a single roof. The architecture of the house and the way people use their communal dwelling indicate a strong sense of a coherent social group. The elevated veranda of the communal house is reached via a tree trunk into which steps are cut. Once inside, the number of skulls of hunted animals like primates, deer and wild pigs and occasionally also from a big sea turtle, a crocodile, or a sea cow is striking. These skulls, some which are decorated, hang from the big beams which form the skeleton of the house. A large part of the daily life takes place on the veranda of the house. Rituals and ceremonies are usually performed inside the house where the central hearth is also located. Another room contains a bunch of flowers and leaves which are believed to have magical powers. This can be considered the religious centre of the house and therefore also of the community. Every family (husband, wife, and children) has its private part in the communal house. Once the boys have grown up, they might sleep together in the first room or, if necessary, on the veranda (Scheffold 1988).

In addition to the communal house, the individual families also own their private field huts. These are located upstream at some distance from the major settlement. They keep their pigs and chickens, which need to be fed daily, in the immediate vicinity of the field huts. Forest fields are also usually nearby. Various types of crops are cultivated including bananas, cassava, taro, fruit trees and plants essential to ceremonies. Sago stands are to be found in the swampy areas. Because of many years of repression and development policies by the government, only a small number of communities still has a traditional communal house. The purpose of these policies was to bring the Mentawaians into the mainstream of Indonesian socio-economic and cultural life. Even though some people still live a somewhat traditional life, most Mentawaians have experienced a wide range of changes during the last few decades. Their native religion, called *sabulungan*, was banned shortly after Indonesia became independent. The people had to give up their traditional religion and convert to become Christians or Muslims. Objects which were used in the traditional rituals were publicly destroyed. The local government, backed up by the

police force, urged people to leave their communal houses and move to larger settlements. In these settlements, the children could also attend school. Men were no longer allowed to have long hair or wear a loincloth. Traditional cultural practices like tooth filing and the tattooing of the bodies of both men and women were also forbidden.

Most of the people on the island converted to Protestantism or Catholicism which were brought to the island by German and Italian missionaries. In these new settlements people no longer lived in the large communal house but in single-family dwellings.

In the 1970s, the government granted concessions to logging companies which were allowed to cut a substantial part of the rainforest. Alarmed, however, by various nature conservation agencies, the government in Jakarta decided to put an end to the large-scale destruction of the rainforest and declared that about half of the island should be turned into a national park in order to conserve the island's rich biodiversity, including its four endemic primate species (Whitten 1980; WWF 1980).

In 1999, shortly after the fall of President Soeharto, the Mentawai Archipelago, which had always only been part of the district (*kabupaten*) Padang Pariaman, became an independent district. From that moment onwards the islanders were no longer administered by layers of governments dominated by the Minangkabau. Democratic elections allowed them to choose leaders from their own ethnic background. Since that time general policies in the field of development, culture and religion have become more positive and are more congruent with the native Mentawaiian culture. One important aspect of this positive attitude has certainly been the rise of cultural tourism to the islands. Many, in particular western, tourists are attracted by the colourful islanders and their traditions. To a certain extent, this external interest has had a stimulating impact on the traditional religion and many traditional practices which are very much appreciated by the tourists. As a result of the less repressive attitude of the government, the induction of new shamans has taken place. This external interest in the traditional culture of Mentawai is reflected in a relatively large number of coffee-table books and films, often presenting a somewhat romantic image of an isolated and traditional community living in harmony with nature (Persoon and Heuveling van Beek 1998).

THE MUSIC CULTURE OF SIBERUT

Siberut has a variety of musical instruments, including drums, flutes, shells, bells, gongs and Jew's harps. They also use the wooden dance floor of the communal house to produce rhythm. Stringed instruments are unknown on the island. Most of the instruments are local products made of wood, bamboo (Figure 1), animal skins, and triton shells. The Mentawaians import bells and gongs made of gong-metal from Minangkabau because they have never developed the art of metallurgy. The mouth harp was originally made of bamboo, but the Dutch brought metal versions to the islands during the

colonial era. The metal mouth harps have now completely replaced the original ones.²



Figure 1. A member of the Maileppet group, Bottui, plays the *lologui*, the bamboo xylophone (photograph by G. Persoon, 2009).

Nature in its widest sense is a very important theme in many songs. In all categories of songs, nature is often used in a metaphorical sense or elements of the landscape (mountains, islands, rivers, sun, moon, stars, rain or rainbow) are referred to. They are used as markers for time and place. Physical characteristics of animals or animal behaviour are often mentioned. In a song praising her mother, a girl describes her loved one: “gently moving

² There is a substantial ethnography about the culture of Siberut. However, little attention has been paid to the music of the island. Schefold (1973) provides an analysis of the slit drum language. In two Indonesian articles, attention has been paid to the lyrics of a number of songs (Chaniago 1978; Schneemann 1992; Hanefi 1993). See also Persoon and Schefold (1999) about the relation between songs and “nature”. In the booklet which is included in the double-CD album *Songs from the “uma”* (Persoon and Schefold 2009), a general overview of the music culture of Siberut is given. In the Mentawaiian version of the booklet, the full texts of the recorded songs are included. An article has been written about the history of the Dutch national anthem in Indonesia, including the context of the Mentawaiian version of this song (Persoon 2014). Some small parts of the latter publications have been used in the present article. In addition to the above-mentioned CDs, tracks of traditional Mentawaiian music can also be found on Lucena and Duran (1989), Yampolsky (1995), and Spoorman (2003).

and with a waist like a *joja* (Mentawaiian langur), while look at me, I am just like a *bulukbuk* (big basket), my waist is as big as my chest". The interaction between different categories of animals, and between animals and humans is also interesting. All these texts make it abundantly clear that people are impressed and fascinated by the natural world in general and the animal world in particular. The texts reveal a great deal of knowledge about this natural world. Singing is not limited to human beings. Animals can sing too and the Mentawaians believe that there is a special meaning in this animal singing, just as with the singing of humans. The singing of the gibbon (*bilou*) in the early morning, for instance, is said to be calling for the sun to rise. However, the natural world is also the domain of ancestors and spirits. In this context, the calling of the gibbon can be given an uncanny association, as the *bilou* are seen to be the companions of dangerous supernatural beings which can harm people. "Don't go to the *bilou*" parents admonish the souls of their sleeping children when a gibbon calls during the night.

Songs are the most important element in the music culture of Siberut. There are various genres of song texts. First, there are the *urai silange* or *urai siokko*, literally boys' songs or girls' songs. They are individually created songs recounting daily matters. Frequently, they are about special events which have inspired young people to compose a song. The lyrics can be about anything: social relations, love affairs, the arrival of a new trader or teacher in the village, the sight of a beautiful animal, the activities of the logging company or the misbehaviour of one of the *uma*-members or neighbours, who are usually referred to by their real names. In principle, anybody can compose such a song, but once a song is there, it can be sung by everybody, irrespective of age, gender, or status. Songs are learned through careful listening and repetition, and are spread only through oral transmission. If the theme, words and melody of a song are appealing, it can spread rapidly across the island. Hence, songs tell a story or reflect on a particular event. The lyrics and the melody are freely composed by individuals: there are no general, formal or metrical patterns. The songs are usually sung during the evening while smoking, chatting or "just sitting in the wind" on the veranda of the communal house. But they can also be sung while canoeing on the river, while working in the forest fields or while looking after the pigs. Other people attracted by the songs might pick them up and add them to their own repertoire. Consequently, the texts are highly improvised and the wording often changes slightly between one singer and the next (Persoon and Schefold 2009).

A second category of songs, the *urai turu* (dance songs) are sung while dancing. One of the dancers sings while the drums are played, and he and the other dancers move in a circle around the dance floor, rhythmically stamping on the floor-boards, which adds another rhythmic element to the beat of the drums. The songs, which are often difficult to hear and understand with all the other noise going on, are about animals and animal behaviour in which birds and primates take a prominent place. The dancing is done by both men and women. Combined with the beating of the drums, the stamping of the

feet makes the dancing an exciting, feverish event which sometimes leads to one of the dancers going into a trance. The dancing can also include hilarious interludes when the “animals” react to each other in a funny manner. One person takes the lead in the dancing movements and the others follow, making the same movements or improvising reactions in response to the situation or their own liking and dancing skills.

A third genre of songs consists of the *urai kerei*, the songs of the shamans or *kerei*. These are challenging songs because they are phrased in a special language, the words of which are sometimes not known to the general audience. They are basically a medium through which the shamans communicate with the spirits, and not, as with the other songs, to tell a story or to communicate a feeling of joy, love or fear (Persoon and Schefold 2009).

Some of the *kerei* songs are sung while the shamans collect plants with magical powers in the forest or while they prepare medicine for rituals. These plants form a special case in the Mentawaians’ involvement with their natural surroundings. Their applicability to a specific curative or ritual goal is always derived from certain morphological characteristics. One of hundreds of examples is a shrub with very hard wood. Its name, correspondingly, is “hard interior” (*kela бага*). Parts from this shrub can be used in ceremonies to “harden” participants against illness and evil influences. In the accompanying songs, the spirits of the plants are requested to perform their particular healing or protective task. When the shamans go out to collect these plants, they document a comprehensive knowledge of the natural world which draws meaning from apparently the most trifling herbs – they move through the forest as if moving through an agglomeration of helpful spirits.

Many *kerei* songs are part of the communal rituals of the group. Their purpose is to expel evil spirits from the house, to attract good forces or to heighten the offering of sacrificial animals. During healing ceremonies and in ritual, the singing is often accompanied by the ringing of little bells. When performing their tasks, the shamans adorn themselves with glass beads, flowers and other adornment to please and impress the spirits.

Learning these songs is done by imitation. Younger and older shamans and novices get together in order to practise their singing and to learn new songs. They usually do so in the evening. Many songs do not have clear rhythmical patterns; it is up to the singer to decide how long he will hold the different tones of a melody. When singing in groups, someone, with the best voice, or who knows the lyrics of the song best, takes the lead while the others join in, taking up the melodic lines (cueing). Frequently, passages in falsetto are inserted into a melody, designed to create a magical mood. Understanding the texts is complicated by the fact that many words are differentiated from their everyday use by adorning them with flourishing modifications (epenthesis). Younger sibling, *bagi*, for instance, is transformed into *baigi*; *kabei* ‘hand’ becomes *kambei*; *saaleita* ‘our companions’ becomes *sanaileita*, etcetera. Moreover, the poetic mood is often enhanced by making use of archaic idioms or of loanwords from dialects of neighbouring groups. Among the Sakuddei,

for instance (Figure 2), instead of the usual word for afraid, *magila*, the term *maloto* is used. This word is current in the southern districts of Mentawai; or instead of *gougou* for chicken, the word *manu* appears incidentally, which is a term for bird used in a range of Austronesian languages.



Figure 2. Three *kerei* of the Sakuddei group, while singing together (photograph by R. Schefold, 2009).

A fourth category of songs is the chants that are sung after the death of a close relative (*urai sou*). They are interrupted by sobbing and express the feelings of sorrow and the desire to be reunited in death, sentiments which the souls of the departed expect to the bereaved to express.

A fifth category is the melodic texts which are beaten on the three-part slit drum ensembles (*tuddukat*) and sometimes sung concomitantly. The drums vary in pitch according to size (between about 130 and 275 cm) and serve not only to make music on festive occasions, but to communicate words of standardized messages according to the vowels of the syllables. The vowel “a” is associated with the highest drum the “e” and “o” for the middle one and the “u” and “i” for the lowest (see for more details Schefold 1973: 46f).

A sixth category of songs basically consists of nursery rhymes (*urai tatoga*). They are based on simple rhythmic and melodic patterns and are sung to infants by their parents or adult relatives and friends. Like western nursery rhymes, they include fanciful sound compositions, many of which are imitations of animal sounds that make little narrative sense and are therefore difficult to translate and are essentially meaningless. The rhyme and the rhythm are of overriding importance. These songs are spread all over the island.

Finally, there is a category of songs that were introduced by outsiders (*urai sasareu*). In the colonial past, teachers working in the missionary schools

introduced Dutch songs. Minangkabau traders and teachers have brought general Indonesian and Minangkabau folk songs to the island and, via radio and television, a great variety of modern songs has reached the local communities in more recent times. Radio/cassette players have become popular since logging companies became active on the island in the late 1970s. Young male Mentawaiian workers were often paid in kind: radio/cassette players and Seiko 5 watches were among the most popular luxury items, in addition to cigarettes and foodstuffs. More recently, video and karaoke-players have become very popular (Persoon 2014: 66-67).

The songs which form the focus of this article are all from Siberut and in that sense they are *island songs*, but that does not necessarily imply that they are all explicitly *about* the island or some particular aspect of it. For most people on the island, Siberut is the world in which they were born and in which they have grown up. It is their natural and social environment, while the people who are not from the island are classified as “those from far away” (*sasareu*). Consequently, there is little explicit reference to Siberut as an island as a whole. All the songs and texts are based on the perceptions of local people, or on the experiences and emotions they have lived through. It is only in recent times, and since a certain level of migration has taken place to those “faraway places”, that the island itself has become an object of the “island songs” (Baldacchino 2011). We shall come back to this topic at the end of the article.

In the Appendix, some examples are given of the texts of each type of song in Mentawaiian and with their English translation with a few introductory remarks.³

RECORDING THE MUSIC CULTURE OF SIBERUT

In the course of doing ethnographic fieldwork or working in various projects on the island over a long period of time, we have become fascinated by the music of the Mentawaians, in particular by the song culture about which surprisingly little was written in the extensive old ethnographic sources.

Reimar Schefold began to record songs and music in 1967-1969. He had a rather primitive tape recorder at his disposition (Telefunken magnetophone 300 with Reporter Microphone TD 300), with which, for example, “Sou” (Persoon and Schefold 2009: CD II, 18, 19) or “Teteu” (Persoon and Schefold 2009: CD II, 23), have been recorded. On later visits, notably 1974, 1983, 1988, he used an Uher 4000 Report IC with Sennheiser microphone, all mono. Most of his recordings were made among the Sakuddei in Central Siberut, where he did most of his fieldwork. During Schefold’s first stay, people were unfamiliar with the possibility of recording. Fortunately, it never occurred to them that the unknown medium could pose them a magical threat; on the contrary, the presence of a tape recorder made them eager to sing since they were thrilled by the possibility of listening to their own performances. Some recordings

³ Some of the English texts in the Appendix have been published elsewhere but we consider it relevant to present the original Mentawaiian songs texts here in combination with the English translation (Persoon and Schefold 1999).

were made on the spot, mostly during rituals, others, often on the singer's own initiative, in the daytime on the veranda of the house the Sakuddei had built for Schefold during his stay. Nothing of this singing was felt to be secret, on the contrary, visitors would regularly come to listen and to comment on the quality of the performance. There were no singing specialists, but some people were unanimously praised for the quality of their voices. Afterwards, the texts of the songs were transcribed with the help of the singers and the words, often in a shamanic idiom, were translated and commented if necessary.

Gerard Persoon initially spent an extensive period on the island in the context of a development project from late 1979 until early 1982. Later fieldwork was done in 1985 within the framework of his PhD research. A number of shorter visits to Siberut were made in 1988, 1992, 1994, 1995 and 2002. Most of his recordings were made in the village of Maileppet on the east coast of the island, a relatively short distance from the main harbour and the centre of the government of the island, Muara Siberut. Additional recordings were made all over the island. For all recordings, a Sony stereo tape recorder and two Sony microphones were used. The majority of the songs were recorded when they were sung on the veranda of the house of the singer in the late afternoon or the early evening. In the village of Maileppet there were some famous singers, renowned for their good voices and their extensive repertoire. Hearing somebody singing on a veranda usually prompted people to take a look and often people passing by would take a rest and look for something to smoke while listening. Once a recording was made, the singer always wanted to listen to his or her voice. Playing the recorded voice usually elicited a lot of comments, both serious and funny, from the people present. This setting often encouraged other people sing a song too, either alone or together with one of the relatives or friends present. However, most of the recordings were made of three men in particular, known for their good voices and vast repertoires. The presence of the recording equipment certainly had a stimulating influence on the enthusiasm of people to sing.

In addition to recording songs in a more or less relaxed setting in private houses or in the *uma*, other recordings were made during curing rituals, during the inauguration of a new communal house (or *uma*), after a successful hunting expedition or during the mourning for a deceased person. Some recordings were made in the village, while others were made in field huts at some distance from the main settlement.

After the recording of the songs, the texts were transcribed word for word with the help of our local assistants. Because of the complexity of the texts, it was sometimes necessary to go back to the singers, many of whom were illiterate, to ask for the exact wording or the meaning of the words. This was particularly the case with the songs of some of the medicine men because of their use of unfamiliar ritual words or metaphors. Another complicating factor with the texts was that there are various dialects on Siberut and, as song texts easily "travel" over the island by imitation, not all words are always completely clear to the audience or even to the singers themselves. The next

step in the process was to discover the deeper meaning of the song texts or to understand the context in which they were created. This was again done with the help of our assistants, the original singers or other informants known to be knowledgeable about specific issues. In some cases this was done by translating the songs from Mentawaiian into the Indonesian language to make sure we had got the meaning right.



Figure 3. A member of the Sakuddei group plays the slit drums, the *tuddukat* (photograph by R. Schefold 2009).

While going through the many hours of recordings, we made decisions about which songs to include. We wanted to include examples of all the musical instruments and a variety of types of songs. Some decisions were easy to make; we wanted to include pieces of music with the drums, the flutes and the mouth harp. An initial selection of the songs was also not difficult to make. But when we listened again to the mourning songs and the announcement of the passing away of a relative on the slit drums (*tuddukat*) (Figure 3), we hesitated. Should we include those pieces or not? Was this actually “music” as understood by the local people? These are songs which are sung when a relative is confronted with the body of a deceased person. These are very tragic songs because they are sung while the singer is sobbing and weeping. Other people might join the weeping person in expressing their grief. Sometimes, these songs might also be sung if a person suddenly remembers a deceased relative. Finally, because these songs are never sung outside these contexts, and because they represent a special type of genre, it was decided that these songs would be included. The same holds for the beating of a *tuddukat* announcing the death of relative. These announcements are based on a kind of drum

language, and as they are played on slit drums, they are also considered as music here, even though the messages can also be interpreted and analysed in linguistic terms.⁴

PRESENTATION OF THE CDs

On the 9 August 2009 a large meeting was organized in the Catholic church of the village of Maileppet, on the east coast of the island (Figure 4). Many of the recordings had been made in this village. This building was chosen because it was the largest available in the neighbourhood. In the weeks before the meeting, efforts were made to contact as many of the original singers as possible or at least one of their children.



Figure 4. The Catholic Church in Maileppet was completely filled for the presentation of the CDs *Songs from the "uma"*, on 9 August 2009 (photograph by G. Persoon).

A large traditional communal meal was prepared for all the guests serving pork and for the *sasareu*-guests also beef, sago, and various kinds of tubers. During the evening, the CDs were presented to those singers who were present or the relatives of singers who had passed away. Several songs were played on the sound system. In some cases, people became quite emotional when they recognized the voice of someone who had passed away, or when the text made them recall particular people or events. The Mentawai-born

⁴ Quite a lot has been written about drum languages and "talking drums" from African and Melanesian societies (see, for instance, Carrington 1949, Stern 1957; Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok 1976; Locke and Agbeli 1981). From Southeast Asia or Indonesia in particular, however, there are few examples the use of drums for signalling. This makes the Mentawaian case with its direct "transnotation" of the spoken language particularly interesting (see Schefold 1973).

deputy-district head (*wakil bupati*) took the opportunity to present himself as one of the newly elected leaders. He made a long speech about how important it was that the traditional culture of the island should not be lost, and how the younger generation should take a sincere interest in these elements. He explained that in the present era of *reformasi* and *otonomi daerah* (reformation and regional autonomy), Mentawaians could decide for themselves about their own future. It is also important that the traditional culture should be performed only when tourists are present. It should also be taught at school. The young people should speak Mentawaiian as their daily language and not try to imitate the Minangkabau. After his speech there was more singing and the Sakuddei, one of the best-known groups of the island on account of their long and successful resistance to restrictive government policies, performed a number of dances in their traditional outfits (loincloth, and decorated with flowers and glass beads, see Figure 5). Some of the younger people performed a kind of modern dance inspired by the Minangkabau, like the candle dance (*tari lilin*). Finally, one of the popular Mentawaiian singers took the stage. This man, Mateus, has recorded quite a number of songs in the Mentawaiian language, but the music is often borrowed from other ethnic groups, like the Batak or Minangkabau. However, he has also issued a number of traditional Mentawaiian songs in a kind of “soft pop” version, with a new rhythm and instruments (guitars, synthesizer, and drums). In particular, his version of the classic Mentawaiian nursery rhyme called *Teteu* (see above) has become quite popular (Mateus 2009).



Figure 5. Members of Sakuddei group perform their traditional dances in the church during the presentation of the CDs (photograph by G. Persoon, 2009).

In the days after the presentation, it was interesting to hear the music emanating from some of the houses in the village of Maileppet in which people had a CD player. We also made use of the opportunity to give photographs which had been taken a long time ago to the singers or their relatives. For many, it was the only image of a close relative they had. Even though looking at the image often aroused instant emotions in people, they were very grateful to receive the photographs. Some told us that they were happy to see an image of their father or grandfather.

We also had discussions with a number of people about the selection of the music on the CDs. In particular, the inclusion of the mourning songs and the announcement of the death of a community member was regretted by some. Quite understandably, people did not want to listen to those mourning songs: it made them very sad to listen to the crying and keening as it revived memories of people who had only recently passed away. Similarly, people could also become quite emotional on hearing a voice of someone who had passed away since the recording was made. In a society in which people are not used to having images of deceased people or to having recordings of their voices, the viewing of these images or the listening to the voices can elicit quite strong emotions. This is not what people usually associate with music and songs. Interestingly, the people on Siberut do not have an all-encompassing concept of music in the way we usually define it, that is as an integrative concept which includes ideas about music, its variety of sounds and the related behaviour. The local people will refer to separate concepts like singing, dancing or drumming but they do not integrate all these elements into a single concept like music. Similarly, the Indonesian language originally did not have the concept of "music". However, the word "*musik*" is now widely used in present-day Indonesian.

Some of the younger people asked us why we had not produced a video CD with karaoke versions of the songs and they also suggested that we should have included some modern songs. There is already a market for this kind of video CD, which can be produced quite cheaply in Padang, the provincial capital. We explained the context and the history of the entire project and that the recordings were quite old. We also hoped that the recordings of the old songs would contribute to the people's awareness of the traditional culture, as is the case with the documentation of other elements of tangible or intangible culture, like the traditional architecture, the ecological knowledge and myths and folktales (see, for examples, Spina 1981; Schefold et al. 2003; and Tulus 2016). The traditional culture on the island had for many years been seriously repressed by the Indonesian government and by missionary activities, in particular those of the Protestant church. But now there was a renewed interest in some of these cultural elements. In Mentawai there is also an interesting debate going on about what it means to be Mentawaiian in terms of cultural identity, very much in line with the global discourse on "being indigenous". In relation to the outside world, this identity is often expressed in terms of iconic aspects of the traditional local culture like the

tattooing, the traditional religion, the *kerei*, the *uma* community and the oral tradition, of which music is an important element.

It is not easy to determine what the impact of the publishing of the traditional songs and music has been. We have not been able to do fieldwork on the island since 2009. From friends and students living or working on the island, however, we have been given to understand that the CDs were initially widely played. The music is still used in tourist hostels and some offices on Siberut. A local radio station, owned by one of the major Mentawaian NGOs, Yayasan Citra Mandiri - Mentawai (YCM), has regularly broadcast songs from the CDs. Mentawaian government officials have also expressed a sincere interest in the music and additional copies of the CDs were distributed to some of the resorts for surf tourism to be sold to visitors. One of our friends informed us that various songs were used to create new versions which were played during Christmas and New Year celebrations. Nevertheless, it is obvious that if they want music to be entertained or to relax, many people prefer to listen to either modern or modernized Mentawai music with instrumental arrangements instead of an unaccompanied human voice. In addition to the above-mentioned *Teteu*, other examples of popular re-arranged and modernized Mentawaian songs are *Siokko Simasou* and *Mananam Ibat Koat*.

A complicating factor to the further distribution was no doubt because the production had been done in the Netherlands, meaning that it was neither easy nor cheap to order copies of the CDs. In Indonesia, however, as in many other places, copying of CDs, or converting them into MP3 format for use on mobile devices, is common practice and widely accepted. To some extent, this is likely to have happened to these CDs as well.

Interestingly, numerous references are to be found to the CDs on the Internet, to sites from where they can be ordered, to reviews of the CDs in scientific journals, to YouTube clips, and to various publications in which reference is made to the CDs. The music of *Songs from the "uma"* is now also available on Spotify, the international online music provider with millions of subscribers around the world. It is difficult to say what the impact of the availability of this kind of information and the access to the music has at this stage.

CONCLUSION

The traditional songs of Siberut are expressions of the emotions and experiences which people have experienced or how they feel about them. They are also specific expressions of the knowledge which people have about their environment, the forces of nature and of the plants and animals in their world. Their lives depend on an intimate relationship with their environment, which is why these natural elements play a crucial role in their religious beliefs. The songs express the feelings and emotions which well up in people in their dealings with their relatives, their fellow-villagers and with outsiders in all kinds of circumstances. For this reason, the study of songs and their lyrics offers an interesting opportunity to observe aspects of social and religious

life on the island. Folk stories and myths can also be studied and analysed in a similar fashion.

Singing on Siberut is predominantly an individual activity. In particular, the singing of the *urai silaiinge* and *urai siokko* song types is always done by one person or a group of friends of a similar age. When somebody else wants to learn such a song, he or she can join in with the singers. In the case of the songs of the shamans (*urai kerei*), the singing is done by the *kerei* present at a ceremony. This might be a single person or a larger number (a maximum of five or six). Collective singing by a larger group of people or an entire family was and still is unknown on Siberut in the “traditional” setting. This collective singing was introduced by the Protestant missionaries who taught the people to sing psalms translated into the Mentawaiian language from German. Choral music is also part of Catholics services but it has never been adopted outside the Christian religious context.

Modern technology and social media have had a profound impact on the life of the people on the island. The influence of various types of western and mainstream Indonesian music is becoming stronger. This includes both Islamic pop music and the various types of modern music from the major Indonesian ethnic groups, like the Minangkabau, the Batak, the Javanese, etcetera, all of which have been brought to the island by migrants and are also broadcast by national and regional television stations. The younger generation of Mentawaians has adopted these forms of music and, at the same time, they are trying to develop a local version of modern Mentawaiian music, but this endeavour is still in its infancy. This trend depends heavily on young people who have moved away from Siberut or the other islands of the Mentawai Archipelago to study or work and are exposed to other types of music. They have moved to cities like Padang, Medan, or Jakarta. In their efforts to create new lyrics and songs, they often use melodies and instruments from existing songs from outside Mentawai to which they add texts in their native language. In many of these songs, there is a strong element of nostalgia, describing the beauty of the islands and the social coherence of their community (Heri et al. 2009; Marco et al. n.d.). This is a well-known phenomenon among migrants originating from island communities. Once away from their home island, nostalgic feelings begin to dominate their musical expressions (Connell 2011: 270). Surprisingly, despite these feelings, little effort has been made to include any of the traditional Mentawaiian instruments. The “soft” or “mellow” type of westernized music in particular is preferred since it creates the desired melancholic atmosphere. Consequently, a new dimension is appearing in the music and song culture of Siberut, because, until recently, there were never songs about the island created on the mainland or at an even greater distance.⁵

⁵ On a karaoke VCD of a female Minangkabau singer called Eva Agustin, natural landscapes as well as shots of villages and boats and dugout canoes of the Mentawaiian Islands (Pagai in particular) serve as the background for a variety of songs. Some of them actually refer to the islands themselves. All the lyrics are sung in the Minangkabau language. As far as we know, this is the first time the islands have been used as a topic by somebody of this ethnic group to convey nostalgia (Agustin 2009).

AN AFTERTHOUGHT

As stated above, the original recordings of the songs and music were made over a long period of time without any preconceived plan to publish them. The recordings were made because of our fascination with the local music culture. This fascination was greatly stimulated by the reaction of the local singers and musicians who loved to have their songs and music recorded and who also enjoyed listening to the recordings afterwards and commenting on their performance and that of others. The transcription of the song texts and their interpretation and translation elicited a similar degree of interest among the musicians and other community members.

However, since then, some important changes have taken place in relation to copyright issues which simply did not exist when the recordings were made. One of them is the requirement of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) when doing research among indigenous peoples, and recording and publishing of what is nowadays called “intangible cultural heritage”, which is officially protected under a UNESCO Convention (UNESCO 2003). Shortly before that, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) had launched fact-finding missions to document the status of respect for intellectual property and traditional knowledge in order to avoid the apparent misuse of such knowledge by other parties (WIPO 2001). Numerous recommendations emerged from this process to protect the intellectual property rights to such knowledge and practices (see also Antons 2009). Finally, mention must be made of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2007. On account of this important document, indigenous communities have a much stronger voice in what can and what cannot be done with their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In short: in terms of protection of indigenous rights, the situation has changed dramatically since the recordings were made.

When we began the CD project there was no doubt that the initial recordings were made with the full consent of the singers, who were often very proud to have their voices and music taped. When the plan was conceived to publish the music in the form of the CDs, we certainly considered contacting the original musicians about the plan. This would, of course, have been quite problematic for all kinds of practical reasons: some people had passed away, Internet communication with Siberut is still non-existent or very limited and so forth. In the end, we concluded that the initial consent would suffice and, moreover, we were also convinced that this would be a useful contribution to the documentation of their traditional heritage. It was also decided that the distribution of the CDs would be put in the hands of an NGO established in Indonesia and the Netherlands called Kirekat. This NGO which has a number of Mentawaians on its board aims to safeguard and protect the culture of Mentawai, that of Siberut in particular. It was also decided that any revenue originating from these CDs would be donated to Kirekat.

At the time of the production of the CDs, we were not aware of the most recent copyright legislation in Indonesia. For a long time, Indonesia has been

reluctant to ratify international regulations with respect to copyright issues. Nor has Indonesia been active in relation to conserving or protecting the cultural traditions of so-called “isolated communities”. On the contrary, many of these traditions were thought to be backward and primitive. Indonesia has also been very reluctant to support the international discourse on the rights of indigenous peoples, which it considers to be irrelevant to its domestic situation. The government considers all Indonesians to be “indigenous”, not just some of the cultural minority groups. These groups must be subsumed into modern and mainstream Indonesian cultural life. However, in recent years, and as a result of a number of conflicts about shared cultural heritage with Malaysia, Indonesia has now adopted a different position. Tangible and intangible heritage should be recorded and protected as much as possible.⁶ The Ministry of Justice was, according to the Copyright Law of 2002, the official caretaker of the intangible heritage of the so-called isolated communities. In particular, foreign researchers have to seek permission from this ministry before they can publish any item which is part of a local community’s cultural heritage. Therefore, it was not the original producer or performer, or a representative of the community of which he/she is a member, but rather a central governmental agency which serves as the caretaker of rights over these kinds of cultural expressions. At the time of the production, however, this was non-existent, so it did not play a role in our considerations; it was only brought to our attention at a later stage. Recently a new copyright law has been adopted with a number of amendments (UU no. 28 tentang Hak Cipta 2014). Among other points, the distinction between foreign and Indonesian researchers has been removed from this new law. It remains to be seen to what extent the protection of traditional cultural expressions will change under this new law.

⁶ Recently, a new series of CDs with “Indonesian Traditional Music”, “Indonesian Folksongs” and “Indonesian Heritage Music” has been released. It was motivated by “an effort to preserve and develop Indonesian traditional culture, especially music, in a context in which western music is considered as a threat to Indonesian music”. To this is added: “Let us together help to preserve and develop the Indonesian traditional arts”. (Gema Nada Pertiwi 2005-2013). So far, the emphasis has been on the music of the larger ethnic groups in the country. Previously, Philip Yampolsky published a series of 20 CDs called collectively *Music of Indonesia*, focusing in particular on the traditional music. One of them (no. 7) includes some music from Siberut.

APPENDIX

SONG TEXTS

Here, we want to give a few examples of lyrics, which illustrate the way in which various types of songs reflect themes derived from nature, from social interaction, from self-reflection or from good or bad experiences which people have actually lived through. Most of them are *urai silainge* or *urai siokko*, but we also present the extended text of an *urai kerei*. The lyrics provided here are just a few examples of the hundreds of songs which are sung on the island. Each song will be presented with a few introductory lines.

The melodies belonging to the texts are indicated by the numbers referring to their position in CDs I and II of the double album mentioned in the main article.

1 *Urai silainge* and *urai siokko***Sailing** (I, 9)

The trip from Siberut to the island of Sipora in the south, a distance of some 30 km on the open sea in a dugout canoe, is a big adventure for the people of the island, who usually do not stray far the shore. The trip is seldom made because of the heavy swells and strong currents between the islands. No wonder the trip inspired one of the men to compose a song with a dialogic ending which is sung with a great deal of tension in the voice.

*Moi ekeu, moi ekeu, ta nailei,
aite kai kumimitake kai lajomai,
laulau malumbayo ta nailei.
Konan konan peile goiso kinali,
kam baire anai bimbinennu.
Laulau malumbayo ta nailei
amugepgepman te matat sikalaut,
momoian lepa ai maloto oiba aku ta nailei,

sita muiri muiri, sita luite luite.
Anai kududulu ka teitei betuet,
kupaingginake kaijun mailakkopa ta nailei.

Konan peile goiso ta nailei,
magurui goirombin peile.
Bele bele sulu tanaile,
ta kuaile nusa ka keru.
Kutatailipoki
teitei Pananggalat talipo aku*

Come, come, my friend,
we raise our sail,
trembling because you blow, my friend.
Come, come a bit harder,
you North Wind, you have sail to blow.
Shake the sail, my friend.
It becomes darker from the sea wind,
if it gets closer, it makes me afraid, my
brothers,
me in the bow, me in the stern.
I push away from the breakers,
paddling with the paddle made from
Lakopa wood.
Get a little bit closer, my friend,
we are advancing at a snail's pace.
The sun is down, my friend,
I cannot reach the island in the open sea.
I am crossing
to the island of Pananggalat,

Simainu ta nailei.
Bibbinake peile goiso
ka pulaibangan mai saalei
teunu ta nailei.
Ele ale jago jago kam gurunganta,
tupaparau te sita kateitei betuet
maloto aku, magila aku.
“O’o tanaile bakakailoake,
ai leu aku sikaluite luite,
ai leu aku, sikamuiri muiri,
kuparogdak kuparoipo-roipo,
bui mareureu bagam.
Tujolou sita ka nusa simaeru,
ta mulaje sita”.
Itso pei kam baire sikalaut!
Amujaiat te bai mimi kam lajota!
Anai sita mulalajo
ka surou koat ka keru.
Tau ta agai eijananta tanaile.

Atusabau aroaro,
ka keru ele tatututnia,
tau ta agai eijanannia.
Mulalajeat te sita saiguigo.
“O’o tanaile, bui mareureu bagam
ta mulaje sita,
ai leu tusogai togan likam baire
sipabuirut sita kamurin laibangta.
Ka luitet laibangta jago,
Jago le sita!”

the island of Simainu.
 Blow us a bit harder
 in the sailing of me and my brothers
 should you wish, friend.
 Brothers, be careful at the river mouth,
 where the waves break constantly
 I am afraid, I am fearful.
 “Oh yes, my brother, don’t worry,
 I am here standing in the bow,
 I am here standing in the stern,
 I straighten it, I steer it,
 don’t worry.
 We will arrive at a beautiful island,
 we will not be hungry”.
 Look, the North Wind is coming!
 It is getting stronger, let us raise our sail!
 We are sailing
 towards the dark blue of the deep sea.
 I don’t know where we are heading,
 brother.
 An Aroaro [sea gull] is passing,
 it might fly to the deep sea,
 we don’t know where it is heading.
 We shall be hungry, me and my children.
 “No, brother, don’t worry
 we shall not be hungry,
 let us call upon the North Wind
 to blow abaft the stern of our boat.
 You in the bow, watch out,
 Watch out for us!”

Don’t cry (*urai siokko*) (I, 24)

Usually, a man and his wife would work together in the fields. They would take their small children to the forest huts with them. Wage labour was largely unknown on the island until the Filipino logging companies started to operate in the early 1970s. The following is a little song which is sung by a mother to her little child who is crying because his father is going away for a number of days.

*Ba pusou, ta anai amam.
Ameia mukuli ka sai Filipina.
Saki pei payungmai,
payungmai sijiji,
payungmai sikolik
ena ta mamaniu!
Ba paleklek sentre, sentre amam
tanda mata letet, aigalaknia kaini.*

Silo pei buakku, kupasang tubuku.

Aisitotoili mumenggui mumenggui

Don't cry because your father isn't here.
He has gone to work with the Filipinos.
Please buy us an umbrella,
An umbrella for me and the little girl,
an umbrella for me and the little boy
Oh brother!
Don't play with your father's flash-light
which he has left behind for us as a
remembrance.
Please pick up my nephew, I am going to
put on my dress.
There is someone returning from the
church.

If I were the sun (*urai silaingé*) (II, 25)

Just like the girls, the adolescent boys create their own songs in which they express their longings for the girls (here called sisters) they would like to contact. This song was composed by a boy who said it had come to him in a dream. It was soon adopted by his companions in the neighbourhood.

*Tikai sulu geti aku,
langgo geti aku,
kuendang sai baigi,
kuendang sai lebbu.*

*Tikai keiat pulu reu,
ku moi le kuendang
ta si baigi enda, tasilembu enda.*

*Sianai toiteku, sianai toitetku
ka sitenga pendek, ka sitenga panjang,
ka sitaagojet, ka si taamien.
Sabau sabau aku ka buttet sinoisoi
masoiboat sulu,
enan tikai baigi, ena tasibaigi.
Sianai si uma
simakop ka kabei,
kipa le kugalai, kipa le kukut, ena tikai baleu.*

*Nai kulairepmake, nai kulairpemake
ngangan uraijatda*

Oh, if I were the sun,
if I were the moon,
I would shine upon you with my rays,
you the younger sister, you the elder
sister.
No matter how distant it was
I would shine upon you,
shine upon the younger one, shine upon
the older one.
To me you resemble coconut palms,
not too short and not too long,
but far in the dark where I can't reach.
When I stroll along the flowering shrubs
and the sun sets,
[I remember them], the younger ones,
Why are they not like the tame pigs
which eat from my hand,
what am I to do, how can I make it
happen, oh friends?
I strain to listen
to the voices of their songs,

<i>tasibaigi enda, tasilembu enda,</i>	of the younger one and of the older one,
<i>kipa le kugalai.</i>	what am I to do?
<i>Sarat beilem бага, sarat beilem бага,</i>	My heart is always sad,
<i>senen senen gogoi,</i>	every single day,
<i>ka sibaigi enda, ka silembu enda.</i>	[thinking of] the younger one and the older one.

Searching for fish (*urai siokko*) (I, 8)

Fishing is an almost daily activity for women and girls. They look for fish in the rivers and brooks as well as in the swamps. Various types of nets, hooks and traps are being used to catch the fish and other small animals like frogs and molluscs. Usually, they fish during the daytime, but sometimes they go out at night and look for fish using torches made of bamboo. In this song, a woman complains that she has hurt herself while catching fish and in the end she did not catch anything much, expect for a few small frogs.

<i>Amei kai, amei kai pangisou</i>	We went, we went fishing at night
<i>ka sitonanambu, ka sitonanambu.</i>	on the upper course.
<i>Asuilin asulin kambeiku</i>	I hurt, I hurt my hand,
<i>sinoilem pangisou, sinoilem pangisou.</i>	because I wanted to fish.
<i>Manake manake ka sitonanambu</i>	It was given to me in the upper course
<i>amparan kambeiku, amparan kambeiku.</i>	a bandage for my hand.
<i>Jirita jiritan koi nia,</i>	He came in a hurry,
<i>sitonaulu roro, sitonaulu roro.</i>	my dear brother-in-law.
<i>Siboboi le suilin kambeiku</i>	My hand was hurt for nothing
<i>sinoilem pangisou, sinoilem pangisou.</i>	because I wanted to fish.
<i>Aisindei sindeile aku</i>	I was hampered
<i>ka sitonanambu, ka sitonanambu.</i>	on the upper course.
<i>Sibara sibara ka sitonanaulu roro</i>	My dear brother-in-law,
<i>sitairatan joipang, sitairatan joipang,</i>	he got little frogs from the river,
<i>sibara sibara kaku,</i>	and what I got,
<i>sitairatat lembai, sitairatat lembai.</i>	were little frogs from the swamp.

White flowers (*urai siokko*) (I, 13)

Boys and girls can interact freely with each another in daily life. Falling in love and courting are important elements in the life of young people. Young men might use a mouth harp to attract the attention of a particular girl without her parents noticing. Physical appearance and adorning oneself with glass beads and flowers are important elements in this courting process. In this song, a young girl is expressing her uncertainty about her body and about her chances of attracting a particular young man.

*Bule kuei ka kaku ka silembu roro,
togat Lolitna,
ta moi kualina, ta moi kualana.
Poingat tengana matengan joja,
kipa kugagalai?
Keinangan nia si enem tureureu,
aiteukingan nia.
Ta moi kualii, ta moi kualaa ka silembu roro.*

*Ina siteteu Ambui aipaake nia
metsule ngambek,
tamoi kualina tamoi kualana
tapoi ka kaku matengan burungbu.
Napakeinangan nia mulugai,
sinaiming aiteukingan nia,
silembu roro ta moi kualina,
ta moi kualana*

I wish I could go to meet my lover,
the son of the Lolitnan clan,
but I can't meet him, I can't take him.
His waist is slim like a langur monkey,
what should I do?
When he wears six strings of glass beads,
it suits him.
But I can't meet him, I can't take him,
my lover.
The mother of Ambui has already given
me
white beads,
but I can't meet him, I can't take him
for my waist is as big as a basket.
He likes to paddle,
the paddle suits him,
my lover, but I cannot meet him,
I cannot take him.

2 Urai turu

Gibbon (II, 4; adapted)

After a hot day, the evenings in Mentawai bring refreshing coolness. This lasts until the early hours, when the calls of the gibbon (*bilou*), which accompany the grey dawn of day, slowly die away in the forest and the misty veils from the valley rise slowly up the hillsides, dissolving into the blue sky. There is a dance song reflecting this mood, it reports on a "song in nature".

*Bilou teitei leleu
sikut beile бага
ka belekat sulu,
sinaipueiraji buttet maeilagat.
Ka tinombut leleu ai kulairepmake
bilou teitei leleu
bilou sisararaen,
aianggou tubuna ka ottoinu leleu,
ko-a-ii.*

The *bilou* from the mountain ridge
which makes us sad,
as the sun goes down,
perches in the Eilagat tree.
In the mists of the forest I can hear him,
the *bilou* from the mountain ridge,
the *bilou* who is lonely,
he grew tired there on the summit,
ko-a-ii.

*Sinaipuleiraji ka buttet maeilagat,
iengge suluna,
bilou teitei leleu.*

He perches in the Eilagat crown,
and waits for the sun,
the *bilou* from the mountain ridge.

<i>Aisindei teiteina togan mapiligi</i>	Far above him, the child of the eagle sails along,
<i>sisasa tubuna ka matanu sulu.</i>	which soars in the face of the sun.
<i>Aiengge suluna sulu sibebela ka ulau manua,</i>	He waits for the sun, which rises in the bright sky,
<i>bilou teitei leleu isogai suluna,</i>	the <i>bilou</i> from the mountain ridge is calling his sun,
<i>isogai sitendangat sulu</i>	he is calling for the rays of sunshine,
<i>ko-a-ii.</i>	<i>ko-a-ii.</i>

Frightened by the eagle (*urai turu*) (I, 2)

Along the coast, sea eagles hunt for fish. Once in a while they rest in the mangrove trees. People are impressed by these mighty birds even though while there are fishing in their little canoes they are also scared of them. The eagle might also swoop towards a fish just caught by somebody sitting in his or her dugout canoe. This song was composed after somebody was drowned at sea.

<i>Ekeu togan malimanyang ipatuituina</i>	You, child of the eagle, you go to a place to rest.
<i>Ka puraukana malimanyang koian,</i>	To the place where you bathe,
<i>purauki teitei lentung koian.</i>	your bath in the wave crests.
<i>Leu siungkuiku taikabaigat koian,</i>	My father the sea spirit,
<i>ipuleinungi teitei lentung koian.</i>	he too walks on the wave crests.
<i>Ipasaibui ekeu ka sipukokoian</i>	The bath strengthens you to avoid the fishermen
<i>leu nupurauki</i>	when you are bathing
<i>jojoirot manuia.</i>	during rain while the sun shines.
<i>Nupaembeinan nupagaibeknan nutainiti</i>	You fly down, you hover, you rivet your eyes.
<i>maitana.</i>	
<i>Ekeu togan malimanyang koian</i>	You, child of the eagle, come skimming.
<i>nupabuirunan.</i>	
<i>Talautau keiru</i>	Over the open sea
<i>nupulibaigi kokounu munggei</i>	and on the shore you are searching for food
<i>nupabeilena ka kokounu moine,</i>	and you bring it to the gardens,
<i>ekeu togat malimanyang koian.</i>	you, child of the sea eagle.

3 *Urai Kerei*

Sacrificial pig (II, 5 selection)

During the religious feasts of the *uma*, pigs are sacrificed to the ancestors. The most important of these occasions is the *paeru*, literally 'making good', which is designed to prepare the pig (*eruket*, 'the one who is to make good')

ritually for the offering.

The shamans (*kerei*) assemble in the house in a semi-circle in front of the pig (which is bound to a carrying pole) and address it in a rhythmical chant, ringing their bells in accompaniment. The song, beginning with the cry *pánorá*, (a filler word without meaning), and with an evocation of the adornment of a shaman, presents an associative stream of images which recall the living spaces of the people, from the seashore up to the longhouse far inland. Besides a few interjections, it has no direct relationship to the sacrificial pig. At the end of the chant, the *kerei* compare the bent vines they sing of with the arching leaves they themselves hold in their hands: the shamans too, are “arched” from old age, for instance, sage and experienced.

Kerei kerei panora ko sikerei!

saguilu simanda,

sabba sabba guiluna,

sabba sabba pusena

leletteu matoronu

simatoro sasaat

iluirep tubuna ka lebbainu leleu,

siekket susuilet

puilakku bulukna.

Kerei, kerei, pánorá, hey kerei!

A ripe-coloured glass bead,

One of the evenly formed, the equally formed beads

with the evenly formed navel openings on the necklace string

made from the stripes of the rattan liana which grows where the forest is swampy,

with its clinging thorn claws

with its round arching leaves.

Ka rara baikeat

sibuilagat baga.

Pulengedda ekeu simaisot luimaku.

Bebele builukna

ka pagilokgilok ka giloknu leleu.

Rapupuilekake rauraiake ka bebeinu laibo.

To the string belong the threads of the bark cloth tree

with its white inside

The women of my *uma* twine you.

If its leaf falls,

it turns fluttering on the mountain slope.

They twine and they sing close by on the veranda.

Kai rara kaira

sitaimalalaulau,

siepat paluga

ailuga sebbunan koiat ka sibalu sebbu.

To our adornment belongs the tortoise shell which

never shatters,

of the four-flipped tortoise

who paddles in the sea with the eightfold breakers.

Aisebbu soroso sikekela kuilit,

They break over the pebbles with the hard surface,

bebeila ngangana ujini taddana kakoukou laibuggei

the tones then ringing over the long beach

<i>kateiteina toilabbau sigoirita maita.</i>	on whose back the snails lie with their spiral appearance.
<i>Ka kaiپی logigi sibailu soiroggot ka toinong leu baikat aisabbe piniupiu.</i>	On the bank stand the Loigigi plants with eight sharp thorns and on the spit mangroves their foliage just as high.
<i>Seiabboi kai buttet? Akule siokko simatmat ka nusa spaduija maita, pajoujou ngangana ka jeiratnu koiat.</i>	Who is there in their tops? Only I the maiden, the sea gull of the island with round yellow eyes, with shrieking voice, over the waves trickling away.
<i>Kai rara karakkak sibailu kisimang, aisimang loibutnu saloibut mainuia, ka ni eirukatku.</i>	To them belong the stilt-root mangroves on the eight punting stakes, punting through the fog shreds, the fog shreds of the sky, to you, my <i>eruket</i> pig.
<i>Ka rara ogaga pupeigu buiana, tainiget baigitta simalaimusegnan, soibo le padingit ngangana kai mengmeng mainuia ka ni eirukatku.</i>	To them belongs the Ogaga tree with jackfruit-like fruits, the goal of our young brother, the creeping cat, at night its voice wails under the silent sky to you, my <i>eruket</i> pig.
<i>Guruake ita ka tubut oinan siberi sinoilak siberi pakeira. Maruei kuaili sibukkunugoirat sitairipa luite sibalu taiko. Seiabboi ka laibo? Akule silainge sibabuinuara sikoipiat sotna ipasabbit babarat babaratnu baituk. Siriuake ita ka kaijunu toitet,</i>	Let us enter into the stream with the many branches, with the many obstacles. Quickly I arrive at the notched log- stairway which is levelled off at the top, after the eight indented steps. Who is there on the veranda? Only I, the boy, the pointed-tooth boar bound to the carrying pole, the carrying pole of wood. Let us go farther to the coconut trunk.

ailuirep tuibuna ka salo gaireat,
pulaibit kaijuna.
Ta touwat manuia siekkes sisuile.

Kai rara leu kainau
gaireboi ainakna
mainene buana,
manene bilujai,
bilujai kabeiku

ka ni erukatku.
Pánorá!

Kerei kerei pánorá ko sikerei !
kai rara leu mairup
sipubekeu buiana.
Tainiget bagitta
simatongailup
siguilutat luite.
Teteket pueilau
siluluppai baiga
puleilei dorona
aisabbit lakoiba
sibaibajat dadna.

Pulailai potsenu, tapotse kai leleu

sipapailou kuilit pumanai tiptiman,

tiptiman kai leleu,
teiluboi leimuna, teiluboi laulana.
Seiabboi ka buttet ?
Akule silaingé simatoimaingangan
sipadduija maita.
Aitouat pulaibak,
pulaibak simogjag
siteilukat baiga,
pukabbei loloisit

It grows next to the wide landing
platform,
trunk with the thief-proofing thorns.
Sky high sits the owl with the clinging
claws.

To it belongs the Simakainau bush
with the widely-branched shoots
with the rainwater-cool blossoms,
cool and slippery,
slippery as my hand (which squeezes
them)
over you, my *eruket* pig.
Pánorá!

Kerei, kerei, pánorá, hey, kerei!
To that also belongs the Mairup tree
with its hibiscus-like blossoms.
They are the goal of our young brother
the hummingbird
who turns his head from side to side.
Like vines it has the yam
with the many husked tubers
whose leaf buds extend
and clamber up the Lakoba tree
with boughs like cross-beams.

The Potse liana embraces it, the forest
Potse,
with the reddish skin and blossoms like
leaf veins,
forest leaf veins,
thrice wound, thrice bent.
Who is there on the top?
Only I, the boy, the eagle
with round yellow eyes.
He likes it, travelling there like a dugout,
to travel there like a small dugout
with hollowed out insides,
his arms like paddles,

sirua kabaiga sirua pasila.
Purauki jorotnu tajorot mainuia

ka ni eirukatku.
Pánorá!

Kerei kerei panora ko sikerei!
Kai rara leu toktuk
keppu kulitna, keppu bagana,
ka ni erukatku
Pánorá!

Kerei kerei pánorá ko sikerei!
Kai rara leu batti
bajou bajou buiana, tainiget bagitta

simaleituagnan. Moi ekeu,
makailei pubagunan tubuna
kakina notoat
pumanai pelekag,
sinambeu musaika.
Masaika bat luima sikoilojo baiga
ka ni erukatku.
Pánorá!

Kerei kerei pánorá ko silerei!
Kai rara toilat.
Seiabboi ki buttet?
Akule silabai simapiligiat sikeleke maita

pulugai sasainu tasasai mainuia
ka ni eirukatku.

Ka rara lemurat
teiteipa buiana,
aitepea loibutnu mainuia

ka ni erukatkuu.
Pánorá!
Kerei keirei pánorá ko sikerei.

with double bent oar blades,
 He bathes in the sky in the rain while the
 sun shines
 for you, my *eruket* pig.
Pánorá!

Kerei, kerei, pánorá, hey, kerei!
 To that belongs he Toktuk tree
 with a thick bark, with a thick core,
 for you, my *eruket* pig.
Pánorá!

Kerei, kerei, pánorá, hey, kerei!
 To that belongs the Bairabbi tree
 with the red shining fruit, goal of our
 young brother
 the flying fox. Come hither,
 he flutters to and fro like his image
 on top of the feast pole
 adorned with Pelekag flowers,
 the sweet-smelling ones.
 Sweet smells the deep hollow longhouse
 for you, my *eruket* pig.
Pánorá!

Kerei, kerei, pánorá, hey, kerei!
 To that belongs the Toilat tree.
 Who is on its top?
 Only I, the woman, the eagle with the
 concave face
 paddling near to the sky
 to you, my *eruket* pig.

To that belongs the Lemurat tree
 with the double-pointed fruit,
 they point through the early mist of the
 sky
 for you, my *eruket* pig.
Pánorá!
Kerei, kerei, pánorá, hey, kerei!

*Kaddutnake ita ka bakkat saileppet,
mainene bilujai, bilujai kabeiku.*

*Kai rara leu tobe
pagolou bakkatna*

*pusaiki aggana,
pubeikeu buiana.*

*Ka kabbei koibadja paneiki toimiang,
mukoikoi mulaibi,
laibimai sikerei!*

Lepaboi!

Let us climb up to the cool plant ground,
cool and slippery, slippery like my hand.
To that belong the Tobe plants
they grow criss-cross through one
another

with firm-hooking creepers,
with hibiscus-like blossoms.
Next to it is the Toimiang bamboo,
bent like the thorny Laibi vines,
climbers like the leaves we now hold,
we the *kerei!*
Ready-ho!"

4 Urai sou

Weeping song (II, 18, 19)

These laments are sung individually with more or less standardized texts, but other people might join in producing a communal chant.

Arep aku Amangilak kusogai ekeu.

Ala aku, egge aku,

aiangoan aku,

sarat tuegge ia sarat turepdep ia,

kueggeat katunanganang saibaku.

Listen to me Amangilak, I am calling you.

Come fetch me, wait for me,

I am tired,

I keep waiting for him, I keep thinking
of him,

I am waiting for the reunion with my
beloved one.

5 Urai tuddukat

Slit drum message (not on the CDs, compare Schefold 1973: 53)

Tuddukat texts are sung while beating their vowel-derived melodies on the slit drum ensemble. The text reproduced here stems from the period (until about the First World War) when headhunting was still practised on Siberut. It signalled the beginning of a headhunting raid. *Pa-to-pi-gug-gug* is a filler word without meaning but evoking the three pitches of the drums.

Memeian pai-tou-ku,

memeian pai-tou-ku

pai-tou-ku baigipgip.

Ipakambeila goiluku

ka leleu ka simatinobut leleu.

Ka teiteina koka

Soon there will be going *pai-tou-ku,*

soon there will be going *pai-tou-ku,*

pai-tou-ku our younger brother.

He carries my wrath out there to the
forest hill,

to the mist-veiled forest hill.

On the far side of which stands the Koka
tree

<p><i>sinandeu bakkat sinandeu buttet, ka buttetna piligi sikeilekeke maita</i></p> <p><i>siagai palajau, siagai pagalik, sigalik togara sa Matubeket.</i></p> <p><i>Pa-to-pi-gug-gug, pa-to-pi-gug-gug.</i></p>	<p>with its wide trunk and its broad crown, on top of which sits the eagle with its concave face</p> <p>who knows how to seize, who knows how to circle, circling he seizes the children of the Tubeket Valley,</p> <p><i>pa-to-pi-gug-gug, pa-to-pi-gug-gug.</i></p>
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6 Urai tatoga

Teteu (II, 23)

One of the numerous nursery rhymes in Mentawai is this apparent nonsense verse, which is very popular on Siberut. According to some, however, it reflects a mythical association with victims of an earlier tsunami.

<p><i>Teteu amusiat loga teteu ka tinambut leleu, teteu, girisit niau niau, girisit niau niau. Amugolu teteuta teuta Pelege, aratadde baikona. Uilak, paipai gougou, leilei gougou, bara si ta teteu, lalaklak, paguru, seilet.</i></p>	<p>Grandfather, the squirrel has whistled, grandfather, on the hill slope, grandfather, slide slide, <i>niau niau</i>. Our grandfather got angry, our grandfather Pelege, they have cut down his barkcloth tree. Divorce, chicken tail, chicken feathers, grandfatherless, rough-hewn, put inside, deposited.</p>
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7 Urai sasareu

Wilhelmus (I, 22)

The seventh category of songs which form part of the music culture of the island are songs which were brought to the island by people from outside. Over the years, a variety of outsiders have come to the island and they have influenced the local repertoire. These include teachers, German Protestant (see for instance Börger 1909) or Italian Catholic missionaries, traders, colonial officials (Dutch and Japanese), civil servants of the Indonesian government, employees of foreign (Filipino) logging companies or migrants from various parts of Indonesia. Even though, in some cases, they were more or less forced to learn these songs as part of official ceremonies or as part of religious conversion (Kunst 1994), some people have included these songs in their repertoire and they take pride in being able to perform them. One of the most remarkable examples of this category that we have encountered was undoubtedly the local version of the Dutch national anthem, the *Wilhelmus*. This song was sung repeatedly by a man from the village of Maileppet, who learned the song in the late 1930s. He was forced to learn this song at school and he kept on singing it in the years after Indonesia gained independence. Apparently, the

song had lost any political connotation. Interestingly, the song was originally translated from the Dutch into Mentawaiian by a teacher from the German Protestant mission in the first decades of the twentieth century.

<i>Bilemurai Nasau,</i>	Wilhelmus of Nassau,
<i>Jermani asangku.</i>	I am of German origin.
<i>Ku kasi blandari</i>	I surrender to the Dutch
<i>kau seinga asangku.</i>	and to them I belong.
<i>Ku tuani orang</i>	I respect the people
<i>demerdeka branila,</i>	of freedom and courage,
<i>selalu rajaku</i>	I shall always respect
<i>kasi blandari.</i>	the Queen of the Dutch.
<i>Rimata Bilelimi</i>	To <i>rimata</i> Wilhelmina
<i>kau seingga asangku</i>	I shall belong
<i>Ku tuani orang merdeka lai</i>	I respect the people of freedom
<i>Ku kasi blandari.</i> ⁷	I shall surrender to the Dutch. ⁸

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⁷ Track 22, CD1, Persoon and Schefold 2009.

⁸ Our translation. Some of the original words in the Mentawaiian translation must have been changed over time. The word *Bilemurari* in the first line is most likely a corruption of the word Wilhelmus. The Queen's name Wilhelmina was transformed over the years into *Bilelmi*.

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