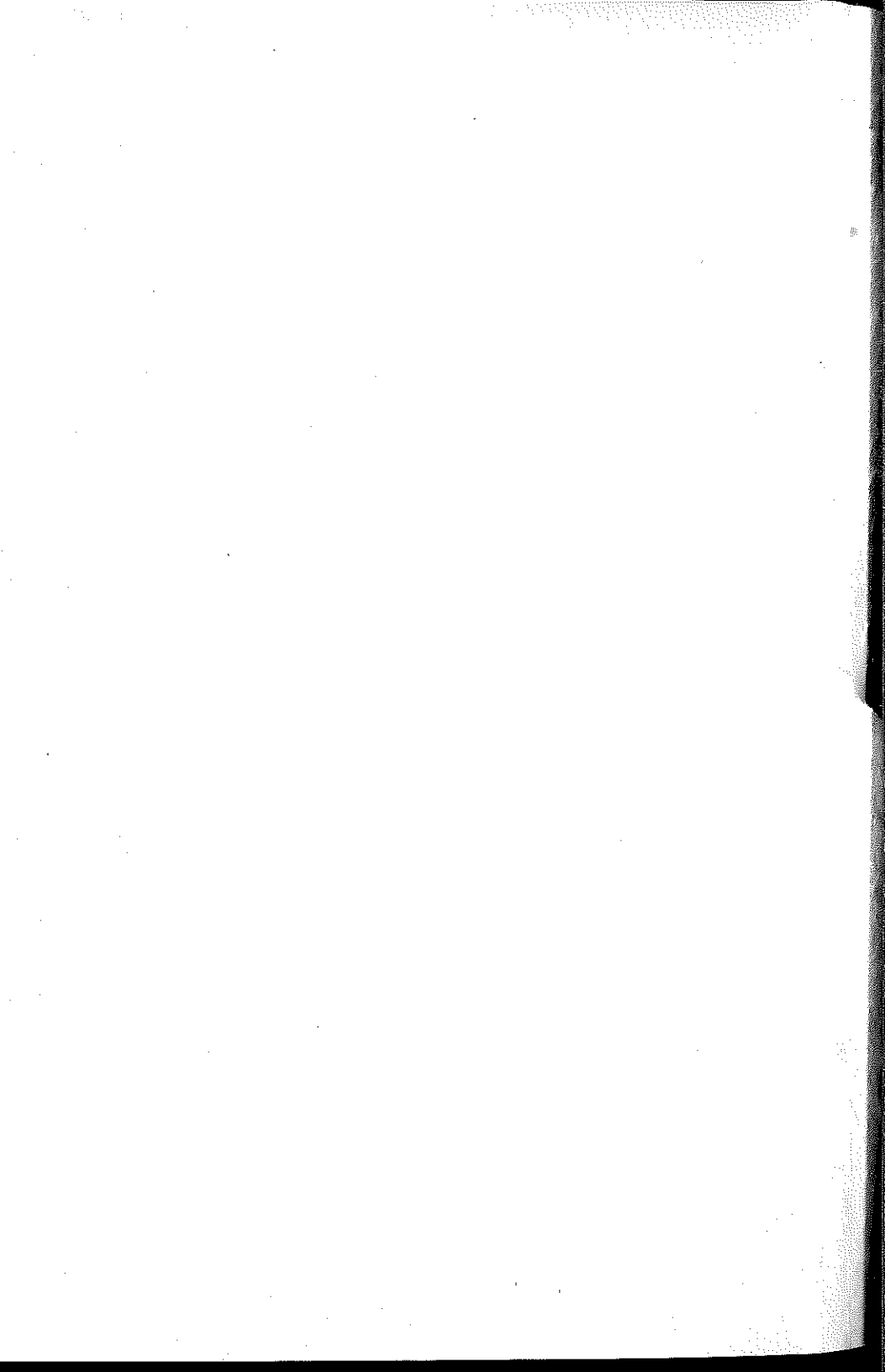
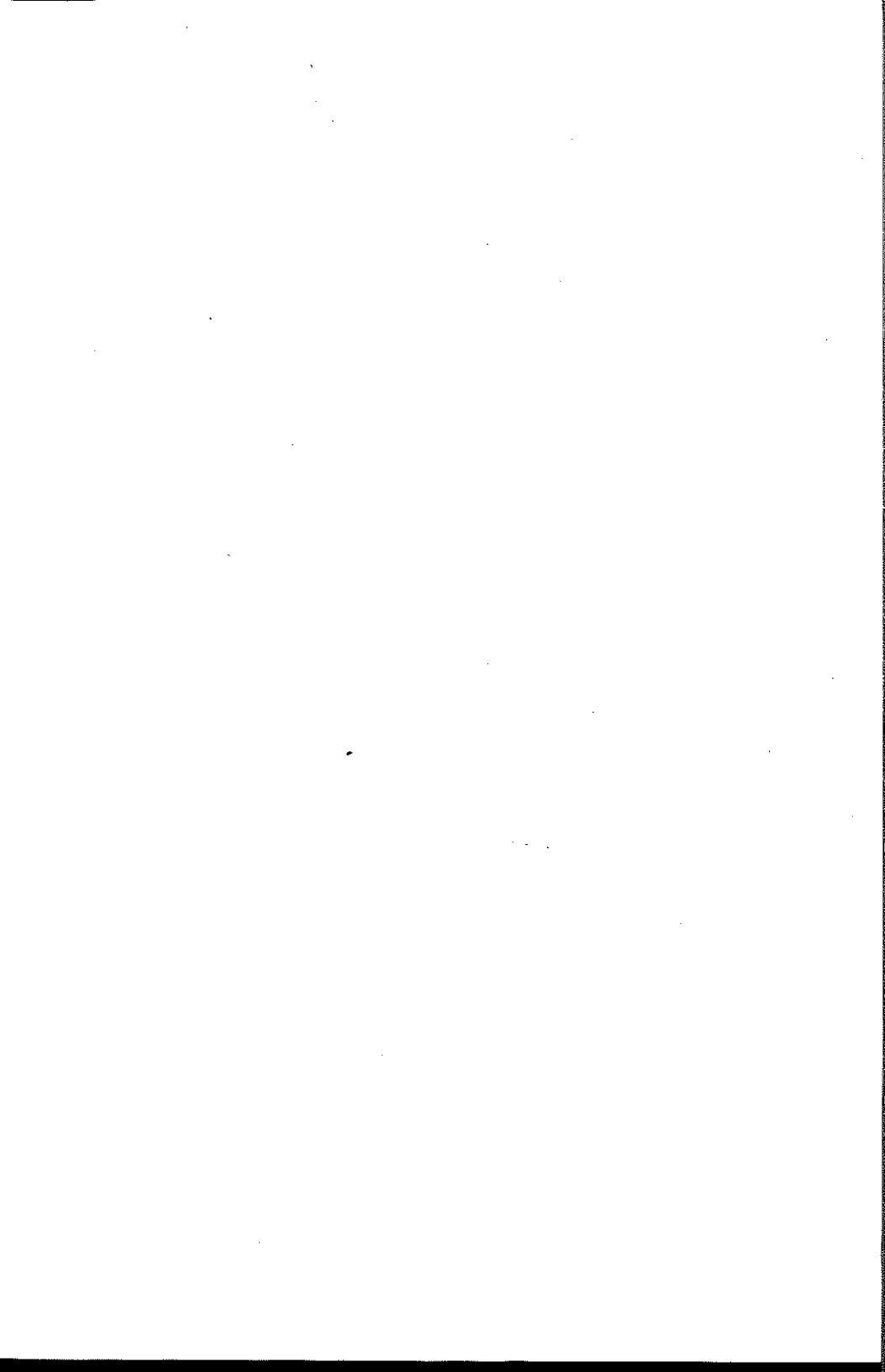
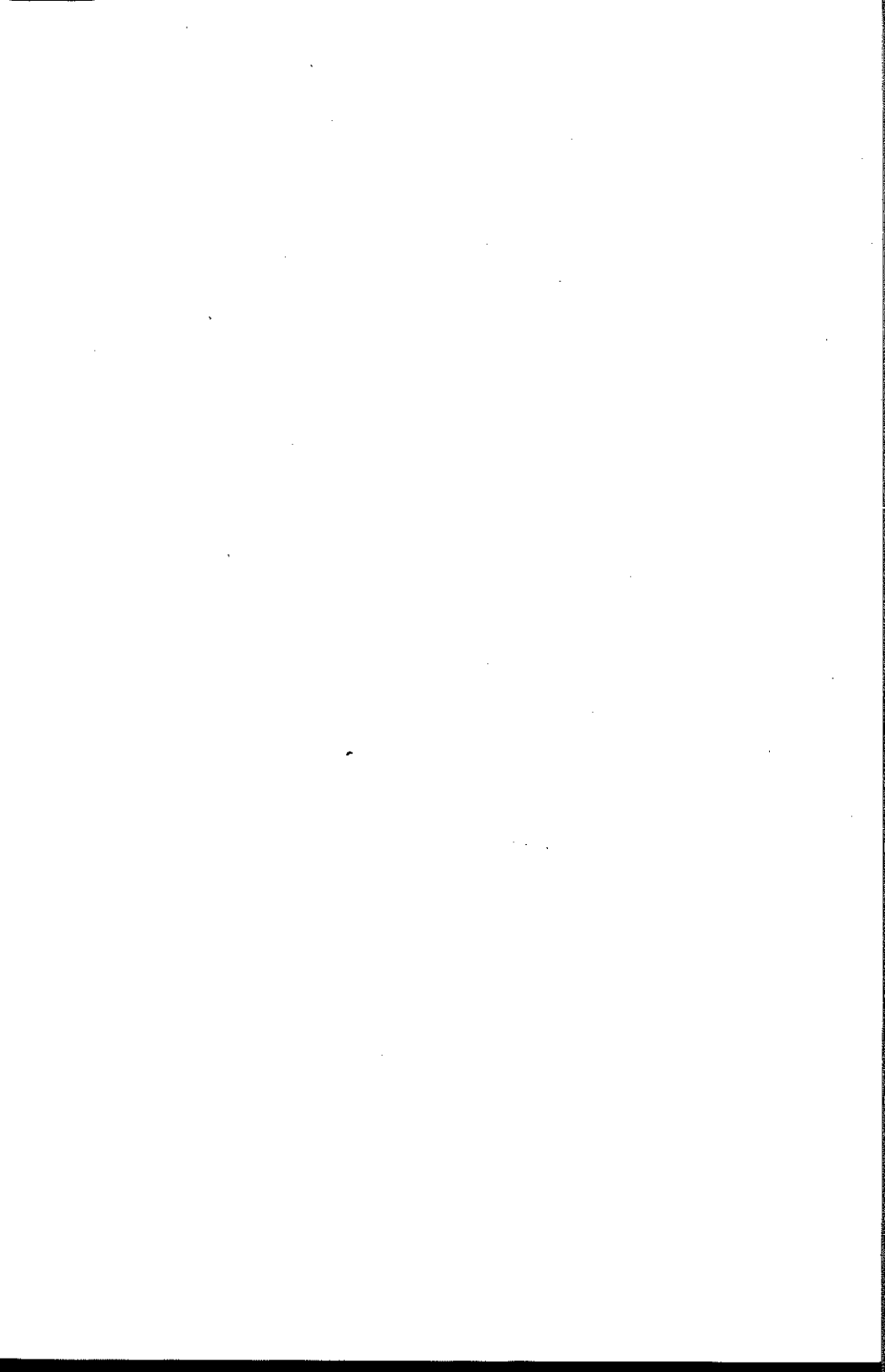


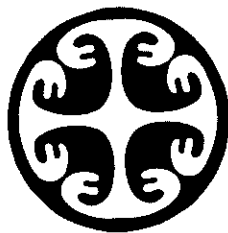
**MELPA  
AMB  
KENAN**







**MELPA AMB KENAN**  
**Courting Songs of the Melpa people**  
**Collected and translated**  
**by Andrew Strathern**



**INSTITUTE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA STUDIES**

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have put these songs into English, but I could not have done so without help. At every stage I have been guided successively by the singers, by friends and by interpreters. I particularly want to thank here Nikint Ndamba who has worked with me for many years on Melpa texts and tape recordings; and also my main sponsor in Melpa society, Ongka Kaepa, and earlier interpreters and mentors, Ru Kuntil and Oke Korpa. Finally, in Port Moresby, Moka Mbona and Mrs. Kupi Kuntil have helped me further with both texts and translation work. Despite all this help, of course, I remain fully responsible for the errors and infelicities which remain.

Andrew Strathern

May 1974





## INTRODUCTION

The songs included in this volume are a tiny fraction of a large corpus of songs which circulate within the Mount Hagen area of the Western Highlands District, Papua New Guinea, continually being added to, modified, and reinterpreted. The singer, in shaping the song to fit his present need, becomes its creator, or re-creator, but the song motifs are mostly traditional. For a new dance, courting occasion, or other ceremony the names of relevant places and people are slotted in and new phrases are inserted into a song used for a similar occasion before. The singers draw on particular terms of expression in new combinations. Songs of this kind, unlike ritual spells, which must be transmitted strictly through inheritance or payment, are taken up freely and repeated by listeners. Nowadays knowledge of new songs spreads even more rapidly as a result of motor travel and radio broadcasts.

Most of the songs here translated are either amb kenan, courting songs (hence the title), or else songs, known as mǝlyɑ\* or mǝrli, invented by girls or men to convey messages and comments about their personal preferences for courting partners. The amb kenan, known in Pidgin as tanim het songs, are sung when young people gather at night

\* See note on orthography

for courting in one of the women's houses of a settlement. (In the Hagen area men traditionally sleep in houses of their own, separate from the women, girls, and small boys.) When a girl reaches the age of fifteen or so she begins to take part in courting, and men visit her mother's house, decorated in bright feathers<sup>1</sup>, leaves, and perhaps face-paint in order to sing and 'turn-head'. The mother is usually there looking after the fire, for it is cold at night, and watching<sup>2</sup>. Two girls or even more may collect in one house to receive the men, who sing as they arrive and also set up a chorus as soon as they are settled in the house. They often stress how far they have come, or how wet the path was, or how steep the hill<sup>3</sup>, in order to impress the girls with the idea that they are really keen to court them. Girls who are moved by all this may reply in mōlya to their favourite that they are indeed ready to go with him<sup>4</sup>. At first, though, the girls hide in a side compartment of the house, while the men urge them to come out<sup>5</sup>. When they do so, a male partner sits himself crosslegged beside each girl and begins swaying

1. See songs nos. 1, 3a, 24.

2. See song no. 1.

3. See songs nos. 2, 3a, 3b.

4. See song no. 28.

5. See song no. 36.

his head gently towards her in a stylised fashion, while his friends strike up a particular song again in vigorous nasal tones. The girl turns her face towards the man, their noses and brows meet, they pivot twice on the nose, then turning their heads to make contact on the cheeks they duck their heads down together to the floor<sup>6</sup> at least twice before moving upwards again. In time to the song they repeat these movements many times. In between songs they can joke with and whisper to the girls or share cigarettes with them, and both sexes are supposed to introduce love-magic substances into the face-paint they wear or into their cigarettes in order to make their partner want them<sup>7</sup>. Men change places as partners of the girls throughout the night. Turning head in fact requires enthusiasm, skill and endurance, for it is supposed to continue until dawn, when the men should leave for home and go to sleep. Everyone is liable to become drowsy during the early hours of the morning and a song may be sung to wake people up<sup>8</sup>. Intercourse should not take place with girls at the actual courting occasions, but a couple may make friends or a girl's fancy be taken at them, and it is accepted that a girl may afterwards go to the place of a man she has sung with and announce that she

6. See song no. 8.

7. Love magic is referred to often, see songs nos. 6, 10, 15, 23, 24, 27, 28.

8. See song no. 7.

wishes to marry him. Then the serious business of raising a bridewealth payment in pigs, shells and cash will begin<sup>9</sup>, if the man too likes her and his parents agree. Or he may warn the girls while he is actually singing to them that this is just play and they should not think of trying to marry him<sup>10</sup>.

Many songs make use of natural imagery to convey a sense of emotion and atmosphere and to give structure to the song. Mountains, rain, rivers and mist, which predominate in Hagen and must be negotiated when one is going on courting trips at night, appear in the songs as symbols of the difficulty of achieving one's desires, or the discomfort and sorrow that accompanies separation between the singer and his or her loved one<sup>11</sup>. However, the feeling of romantic loss and doubt is replaced in some of the songs by incitement or challenge or a downright statement of sexual intent<sup>12</sup>. Such statements appear sometimes in mōlya songs performed as sideshows at formal exchange occasions when wealth items are given away by one group to another. For these, men and girls form into rival circles and whirl around lustily shouting or shrieking verses against the other sex, to their own and the spectators'

9. See song No. 16.

10. See song No. 18.

11. See songs Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 12, 13, 16, 23, 29.

12. See songs Nos. 30, 31, 32, 34.

great enjoyment. Older leaders may angrily criticise the young people and tell them not to interpose their frivolity into the serious political business of exchange. Sometimes the girls' own songs reflect or comment on the exchange occasion itself. Night courting sessions often follow a day's dancing of this kind.

In counterpoint to the songs of love and gaiety, I have included at the end a few examples of serious songs performed along with formal dances at exchange occasions and also of mourning songs sung at funerals. Accounts of behaviour at exchanges and funerals, as well as at courting times, can be found in the book Self-decoration in Mount Hagen 13.

13. Self-decoration in Mount Hagen, by Andrew and Marilyn Strathern, Duckworth 1971.



## ORTHOGRAPHY

My transcription of Melpa is not quite the same as those used by the Catholic and Lutheran missions in Mount Hagen, although it is based on the analysis of Melpa carried out by the Revd. Hermann Strauss of Ogelberg Lutheran Mission<sup>1</sup>. In order to make the transcription easier to read here, I have retained in it only one special symbol,  $\phi$ , which is pronounced as is 'u' in the word 'hurt' (English but not Scottish pronunciation). In Melpa words 'ng' often appears, and is to be pronounced as it is in 'sing'.

Throughout the texts I employ the particular version of the Hagen language which I know, that is the Northern Melpa dialect of the language that has come to be known as the Melpa language. It is distinct from, but very closely related to, the dialect or language spoken south of Mount Hagen town as far as Tambul on the borders of the Southern Highlands. Melpa is spoken by at least 60,000 people<sup>2</sup>.

Throughout the songs there are refrains of a standardised kind and 'fill-in' syllables, for example the refrain 'yerol nderol' and the fill-in

1. See H. Strauss, *Melpa grammar*, roneo, Lutheran Mission, Hagen.
2. See Andrew Strathern, The rope of Moka, chapter 1, Cambridge University Press 1971.

syllable appearing at the end of lines as 'e' or 'a'. I have tried to include indications of these parts of the song, but do not always include them fully, and they have not been translated or repeated in the English translation.

Finally, in most cases I have removed the actual names of girls or men from the texts of the songs. This means a loss of accuracy, but it seems most appropriate to do so. Place names are retained. Notes on the meaning of the songs are included at the bottom of each page.



**AMB KENAN**

1.

Kopon kuri ekik a makik elna

Ambokla manem e a ndip kaklŋga

Na kond enem a kaemb enem a

Kona rŋgin kona pŋt rŋgan a

Nanga kopa kong ila mbi ond a

Na ikŋmb kong ila mbi ond a

1.

The white bird's plumes sway forwards and back,

My girl, your mother stirs up the fire.

It makes me sorry, makes me sad.

Dawn rise quickly and I'll be off

To my land of mists,

To my land of rain.

The singer has come to the girl's house wearing plumes of the white bird of paradise, which sway as he turns head with her. He is 'sorry' for the mother who is watching over them. Secretly he wishes she would go away, but she won't, so he'll go off home at dawn, leaving the girl behind him.

2.

Mbite kep kit ti tetem tile

Na kɔu mana mbi nda

Yerol nderol ndan o win a ya

Ambokla ya manem ik e kum telna

Rɔtn pana kɔi monom e.

2.

Up the steep hill of Mbite I've come,

Must I go down it alone?

Girl, while you listen to your mother's talk,

Birds play in the garden you planted.

The meaning is: I've had a hard time getting here, and I want to take you off with me. But you don't think of a husband, you listen to your mother, and meanwhile in the gardens you planted long ago as a young girl tall fallow trees are growing and birds play in the branches.

3a.

Kwoinimb kep oklmba .

Køi mek ngoin a ngan o e

Kila wak elmba

Ranggopa korla wi a ronom o e

Erol nderol pa ya wayo e

Pa ya pa wayo e.

Kwoinimb amb wentep e

Kwoinimb peta manga ile pelna

Pilip kelep oklmba

Nanga pømb e ndoma ronom o e

Erol nderol pa ua wayo e

Pa ya pa wayo e.

As I come by the edge of the Kwoinimb stream,  
Black mek feathers wave and nod.  
At Kila I take a little look,  
But it's dawn and the cock is crowing.  
Young Kwoinimb girl, you're there,  
There in your big women's house.  
It's a long way, but still I've come, and see,  
I've stubbed my toe on a stone.

The singer has come from a distant place to court the girl, but gets there too late, it is already dawn as he arrives. He is wearing plumes of Princess Stephanie's bird of paradise. He sadly notes that the girl is there, but he can't sing to her, and he's hurt his foot as well.

3b.

Ui kin und ye

Romnga kin e mbi nda

Kongand amb e pɔt pɔt pena a wan e

Ama pɔt pɔt pena wan e.



3b

I came in the mud,

Must I go home in the dew?

Kongand girl, hurry, hurry, come out,

Please hurry, hurry, come out!

'Come out': i.e. come out of the back part of the house where she is sitting and begin turning head with the men, for they will stay until they have to go home in the morning dew.

4.

Konda tit e

Tit o e

Tit woit mana onom

Erol nderol ndan waya

Kongand noi amb wentep o e

Rut mbil mona mon

Eroi nderol ndan waya.

4.

At Konda the rain drops

Rain drops

Rain drops down.

Kongard girl over there,

Shall we go to Mbuki or not?

If the rain would stop, he could think about persuading the girl to go with him to his place, Mbuki (called Rut in the song).

5.

Kopa kong ile

Pep nimb ond a

Lkømb kong ile

Mokip nimb ond a

Paiya pange waiya.

Møka kep ile

Pøya wakl e rokimba

Kongand amb ya

Kont mong enem a

Paiya pange waiya.

5.

From my place of mists  
I have come to you,  
From my place of rains  
I have come to you.

By the banks of the Møka  
I dallied and killed  
A little pøya snake.  
Meanwhile, Kongand girl,  
You make eyes at someone new.

The singer admits he did not get to the courting house quickly enough and the girl has already befriended another boy. The 'little pøya snake' is probably in fact another girl whom he 'talked to' on the way and so was delayed. The Møka is a prominent river in the Northern Meipa area.

6.

Mibarat o a rokl ile o e

Na nanom a kòu mbi o e

Ambokla wentep a konta mbuki

Erol erol paiye paya

Na mep a Rut pamb o e

Rut ken a ou tan q e

Ou tan a palka tan

Erol erol paiye paya

6.

Along the road

I'm going alone,

Girl, let us go together.

I'll take you to Mibuki,

And there you'll see

My love-magic plants,

And you alone

Can look after them for me.

You alone can look after them: i.e. I won't use them to attract anyone else, I will give my love only to you.

7.

Kumbil ur e pek mondana

Møkil ur e pena

Pømbil o e

Amb wentep e kap kot e

Weng weng ndokon e

Nan o e pa



7.

Don't sleep too heavily,

Open your eyes a bit, and then

Let the two of us go.

My fine big girl,

Take it slowly and we shall

Turn head the night through.

The singer tells the girl not to get sleepy. A good, polite girl will carry on turning head with her partner all night long, and won't rush through it and abandon him for sleep instead. A girl who finishes it too quickly gets a bad reputation.

8.

Mina oa ile rona pɔn e  
Ndamb oa ile mana wɔn e  
Kona kit e we nimb e  
Kepa kinim mera ronon e  
Yerol ndan waya  
Rorlop amb wentep oki  
Ni ina kandep kae pint e  
Kiki rokon o ruk ongon e  
Mbe ndokon mboi ndan o e  
Yerol ndan waya.

8.

Walk up the slope of Mina,  
Walk down the slope of Ndamb.  
The place is bad, you'll say, and yet  
It's smell is sweet, like marsupial fur.  
Rorlop girl, I like the way  
That you turn head.  
Come closer, shift over here, and  
Turn the head up, turn the head down.

The singer's place is mountainous, with steep sloping pathways, and so it is 'bad'. Yet it's attractive, like the musk-laden smell of marsupial fur. He invites the girl to court with him.

9.

Erol e paya wayo e

Mina ronom e

Ndamb ronom e

Ndep ndep nu e ronom e

Erol e paya wayo e

Ambokla wentep e

Mba mondopa onom e

Mundi kong rokinga ninim e

9.

Mina stream flows,

Ndamb stream flows,

Water drops down, drops down.

That girl o

Marries but returns,

Her heart's still sound.

The singer begins by referring to his own place. He wants to court a girl who was married but has left her husband, and her heart is still 'intact', that is, she did not love her husband.

10.

Na Mina ken o e

Nu Poklkane mam kep ile

Pasim etep tep o e

Rorlop amb wentep

Tip ile wurlung pon ndä

Nin kandep a

Wør ile moklp pamb

10.

I, a boy from Mina,  
Down by the big stream's edge,  
Caught a firefly and brought it here.  
Rorlop girl, you shrink to the corner,  
Do you?  
I'll just look at you, then,  
Across the room and I'll go.

The singer has caught 'a firefly'. i.e. he has brought some love magic (which is supposed to glow like a firefly at night), but he can't get near enough to the girl to apply any of it to her, so he will go.

11.

Pikit oa ile rona p~~h~~n a p~~h~~n

Mokikon wi Pikit oa ile mana w~~h~~n o e

Ambokla wentep pren ye

Wua kot ningon pilin o e pa

Muki ile puka rokimba

Pikit ndu i a ~~h~~kit ndui ninim a.



Go up the hill of Pikit,

Come down the hill of Pikit.

Girl, my young friend,

You think I'm an old man.

I've been away travelling and you say

My beard is long like the moss that hangs on trees,

But I'm really still young.

The singer has been away from home and meanwhile he has grown up and his beard has become longer. Girls who see him think he is a mature man, but he protests he is really still the boy he was when he went away.

12.

Na kona rok! kang ye  
Nu Moka mam kep ile  
Eip tep o e  
Eip tep o e pa  
Reip tep o e  
Rorlop amb wentep ya  
Minembi wua num ile  
Mba ponom a

12.

I am a boy from far away

At the banks of the big river Møka.

I take a look

And another look,

And I look again, but that Rorlop girl

She's going off

Into the sea of Minembi men.

The singer explains that he has arrived to turn head near to the Møka river with a girl visiting from the place Rorlop. But he's too late; he takes a look and sees that she has already moved on to another place. The Minembi tribe is a large one and so is described as a 'sea of men'.

13.

Rut ya mokip a kant mel a

Kin kopa ropa wone ninim a

Kopa ya ropa peta nŕi o e

Le pa win a pa wa ye

Kiit amb nimb e kandep okimba

Minembi wua num ile mba ponom a

Nanom wak ri a na rop ond o e

Le pa win a pa wa ye

13.

Here at Mbuki I see how the mist  
Spreads over the hill of Kin.  
Mist, do not close in like that.  
I've been to Kilt and seen that girl,  
I've marked her as mine.  
She's going to the sea of Minembi men,  
But I've not let her go, she's mine.

The singer looks up from Mbuki to Kin Pup, towards Minembi territory. He thinks of the girl who has gone to turn head there, and does not want the mist to close in and separate him from her, because he still thinks of her as his.

14.

Rut ya moklp a kant e

Al Urunga mbaka manga ile

Sut lamp kiya nonom

Sut lamp nimb pint

Wua Urunga kang enga ndeng ndong kiya nonom

14.

I am here at Mbuki and I see

Down there at Urunga

A torch shining,

It is a torch, I think.

That boy of Urunga, his bright decorations glow

Like a torch.

This is sung by a girl. From her hillside place she looks eastwards down into the valley and imagines she can recognise the decorations shining on the body of a boy she likes.

15.

Na Rut Ken a mep okimba

Mep okimba

MØka mam kep ile

Mana ponom a

O rol lerol ndan waya

Amb wentep pren ya

Kiya kanda

Kiya kanda

Krai kiya palta

Kiya kanda

O rol lerol ndan waya



I came from Mbuki  
With my love magic  
To the Møka river's edge,  
But there it fell down.  
My girl, light a torch,  
Light a torch,  
Break the torch and  
Light it again,  
To help me find my magic.

The singer complains that he brought his love magic with him when he came to see a girl, but 'it fell down', i.e. she was not there where she said she'd be. He asks her to light a torch for him and for her to see by, that is, to find each other again.

16.

Konde mokip a kant mel a

Wande kopa ropa wone ninim a

Le pa win a pa wa ye

Kng e korond a

Mel e korond a

Pren nim kandepa kond enem a

Le pa win a pa wa ye

Here at Konde I see  
How the mist spreads out at Wande.  
I'm looking for pigs,  
I'm looking for shells,  
My girl, as I look at you,  
It makes me so sorry.

The singer looks over from his own place (Konde) to that of his sweetheart (Wande). The mist spreads over, blocking her place from view. He is sad, and thinks of how he is trying to raise a bridewealth to pay for her. Meanwhile, she has to wait, and he is sorry.

17.

Ant e rona onom e

Nggit puki ile tan e

Wul mana ponom e

Nggomb puki ile tan e

Wa pi wa ye

Pang e wa ye.

Komon akel ndimb e

Wua met eimb e

Wande amb wentep ye

Koepa rokopa ngonom e

Wa pi wa ye

Pang e wa ye.

17.

The sun rises up,

Stay by the nggit bush,

The sun goes down.

Stay by the nggomb bush.

Brothers older and younger

They are a strong thing.

That girl of Wande

Cooks food but she gives it

Back to the oven.

The singer tells the girl to wait for him in the shade of a bright leaved bush. Then he reflects that only a man with plenty of brothers to help him can raise a bridewealth payment. He does not have these, and so his girl is cooking food but has no husband to feed - she 'gives it back to the oven'.

18.

Al ant e rona onom ndakara

Rut wak enem ndo e

Na Rut e malt waki ye

Wolt peling ninim e

Rol le pa win o e

Ambokla wentep pren nim

Ka kela

Ka kela kela o e

Ou nikint rup kang e nt a

Mel nambel nguimb nda

Rol le pa win o e.

18.

The sun comes up from the east  
And looks down at the place Mbuki.  
I am a young sapling of Mbuki,  
And the wind will blow me to the west.  
Girl, my girl,  
Do not cry,  
Do not cry, do not,  
I am a boy of the bush who shoots  
At parrots in the trees,  
What have I to give you ?

The singer is at the girl's place, but by evening time he will be heading homewards, like saplings blown in the wind and pointing towards home. So the girl should not cry for him, he cannot really marry her, he is just a youth who hunts in the forest, he lacks the real wealth for a marriage payment.

19.

Kona kwi waka ile

Muklin kona mon tile

Motn kant e

Mep pamb erol nderol

Mep Rut pamb a

Wi mit røit wal mbø

Kila tein a

Wal e mein a erol nderol.



19.

Girl, why are you here

On the empty grasslands?

This is no place for you.

Let me take you off,

Let me take you off to Mbuki.

Open your netbag.

I'll give you meat and rice

To fill up and carry away.

The singer invites the girl to leave her grassland valley home and go with him to his mountain place, He will give her plenty of good food, she has only to open her netbag to receive it.

20.

Keop ngond ningon pin a

Kaklp ngond ningon pin a

Na pøtø ile int moklp a

Mbiltik wi amb wentep

Mban pokl king kul

Mep Kendipi Rape pamb e

Le pa wa ye.

20.

You told me 'I'm cooking you food in my oven',

You told me 'I'm cooking you food on my fire',

But I haven't eaten it yet.

I'm in my men's house, far away ,

Girl, up in the place Mbilitik,

Your skin a ripe banana colour,

Let me take you off to Kendipi Rape.

The singer says the girl promised to cook food for him but she hasn't. (This is equivalent to saying she promised to sleep with him but she hasn't.) He is a long way away from her but thinks of getting her and bringing her back home.

21.

Rut ya mokip a kant mel a

Rapa Kint ongom ile kona monom a

Parawaya paya epaya pawaya.

Mil amb wentep mep a mbi nilmba

Amb mam kik a rønt ronom a

Parawaya paya epaya pawaya

21.

Here at Mbuki I look and see  
Raindrops on pandanus leaves  
Down there at Raporong.  
I've said that I will take the girl off,  
And now her mother gets ready  
A bundle of ashes.

The singer's reference to raindrops here is really a reference to the mother's tears falling at the thought of her daughter leaving her and going away to be married. The mother prepares a bundle of ashes to pour on her head as if in mourning for the loss of her daughter.

22.

Kontin wal ye

Nggaemá wal ye

Mbun enem e

Waye pawaye pa.

Nim mein mona

Na meimb e

Wa ndan a

Waye pawaye pa.

22.

My netbag of kontin

My netbag of nggaema,

They are so heavy.

Will you take it,

Or shall I take it?

Help me and lift it

Onto my back.

The singer is carrying bags of stone axe blades, of the types kontin and nggaema, and he asks a girl whom he likes if she will carry some for him, or if not will she at any rate lift the bag up so he can carry it on his back?





MØLYA

23.

Rona ndop a kant mel a

Plaua ongom lie kona monom a

Yelkau wia waipa yo e

Mana ndop a kant mel a

Reipø tit a mana onom a

Niminga møn ngutn

Niminga pol itn

Ambokla ye

Krai ropel ro mapel ro

Yelkau wia waipa yo e

23.

I look up and I see

Raindrops on the leaves of shrubs,

I look down and I see

Rain drips from the cedar tree.

The girl you turned head with,

The girl you talked with,

Her magic turns you,

And you won't look at me.

The girl is singing to a man who is not interested in her. From his place only rain falls down, he himself does not come down to visit her. The girl he turned head with has placed love magic on him and he thinks only of her.

Rona ndop e kant mel e

Ndakla ken a wi

Nggrit enem e

Mana ndop e kant mel e

Ndakla mek a wi

Ulkup ronom e

Roepa ronom e

Yelkau wi a

Ambokla Melpa

Arlang ambokla e nt a

Waya pet wua ye

Ok ponom e

Kint ponom e

24.

I look up and I see  
The fireflies of Ndakla  
Glow bright.  
I look down and I see  
Black plumes of Ndakla  
Rush along  
In a throng.  
Girl of the valley,  
Girl from the east,  
That fine man  
Like a long bamboo,  
She hooks him up  
And carries him away.

The girl sings of fireflies, that is of the love magic she and other girls keep on their bodies; then of the plumes which men who come to court them wear as they approach her house. She thinks of another girl from the east who, like a hawk, seizes one of the best men and takes him off.

25.

Mongaki okla mokip

Okla pon ndip e kakip

Mana an ndip e kakip

Kakip wurlung wurlung int

Køni wamb nam kanem nda

Mongaki kang e mokip kanem nda

Mongaki kang e ting e mbi ngokimba ka

Wete wøngi mbi ngokimba ka

Kondit mam mbuki ile monom e

Ka ent mona mon nda

Mana tek pilana

Mana mana tek pilana.

Up here at Mongaki

I cook on the big stones,

I cook on the small ones below

I cook and push the food away.

Who is it that sees?

Does the Mongaki boy see?

I was looking at him and talking,

We were together, but now

He has gone on the big plane's back.

Am I crying or not?

Ask me that gently,

Gently, gently ask me.

The girl sings that she is preparing food for everyone, cooking for other people on the 'big stones' and for her loved one 'on the small ones below', the secret ones. Her boy is not there, he has gone away in a plane, and she is sad and will not eat the food, pushes it away.

26.

Met Mongaki oa mon ile

Kang e nga mam e unt mepa koem kant e

Koepa kang e ngum nda

Elim nom nda

Koem ranggekinga kae ile

Pora ramb e okle rop wurlung ndop

Kakip kang e ngop

Nanomb nomb o e

Nomb mokip kant mel

Kel aya

Nda nimba manga onom

I kang aya nam nda

King ile pipil o e



Down on the path to Mongaki  
His mother cooked and gave him food  
Or did she eat it herself?  
In the bright morning at Koem  
I take out my little  
Sweet potato,  
Cook it and offer it  
To that boy of mine.  
As we share it, then,  
Oh, what's this?  
My brother slips into the house  
And makes me embarrassed.

The girl sings about a man she likes who is already married to another woman ("mother"). Has she already fed him, that is, have they had intercourse together? She herself will take out her 'little sweet potato', that is her genitals, and offer these to him - but oh, as she does so, her brother comes into the house, and she is ashamed.

27.

Wolt ndop a kant e o e  
Wul mbarat oa mon ile  
Fon an ndip e nonom a  
KøI wamb nam kanem nda  
Amb wentep Mbakri-nga  
Mbit mbrat kiya nonom a.  
Mana ndop a kant e o e  
Nu Motpi mam a ropa ndil mbul ninim a  
Komon akele mundi a  
Nømndi kang e a  
Amb wentep Mbakri nt a  
Molna amb king a tinim e.

I look up towards home and I see

On the hill road there

Distant fires are burning

Who is it lights the fires? It is

That dark-skinned girl, with beads

Shining on her breasts .

I look down and I see

The big river Moresby runs and chatters over stones.

I have no elder brother and no younger,

I am alone.

Dark-skinned girl, you stay and

You grow old waiting.

The singer is in Moresby and he is thinking of how at home in Hagen one can look over the hillside at night and see fires burning in houses and also distant elusive fires which are really a kind of love magic. The girl he likes is compared to that love magic. He is sad because he is alone with no brothers in town, and he cannot raise a bridewealth for her, so she must 'grow old waiting'.

Mokip tep woint ndop kant mel

Nu Waema peng oronga kengena ppu na

Yara ppu ninim a

Mokip tep ment ndop kant mel

Met Waema por oronga

Krai nomba nggrit ninim

Mokip tep mana ndop kant mel

Rut aut kapa manga

Kona ndil na mbul na ninim

Pren gras kom peng ile kona poromba

Nanom lap kunung e

Mep akei temb

Konta pambokl.

I look up and I see

At the Waema stream's head

Fresh kengena and fresh yara blooming.

I look down and I see

At the Waema stream's mouth

Love magic is glowing.

I look down and I see

On the house at Mbuki

Rain falls and drops from the eaves.

My boyfriend, with your well-combed hair,

You will get wet.

Wait and I'll bring my rain-mat for you,

Let us go together.

The girl's boyfriend is a modern young man with well-combed hair. She is sorry that he will get wet in the rain and offers to hasten after him with her pandanus rain-cape and put it over his head as they take a walk together.

Okla ndop kant mel e  
 Kara Mongón wi tit mana onom a  
 I waipa e waipa e waipa o e  
 Mana ndop kant mel e  
 Kara Mara met tit mana onom nda  
 I waipa e waipa e waipa o e  
 Tit tep mbukl ile mondop a  
 Koepka mbraun omong ile mor ndolka  
 I waipa e waipa e waipa o e  
 Nanga laikim et kang toa  
 Lae kondit e nt pasim em nda  
 I waipa e waipa e waipa o e  
 Tapak kum e katim eimba Toyota  
 Mbukl ile andepa raun enem a  
 I waipa e waipa e waipa o e.  
 Kang e kng tem kang e mel e tem kang e  
 Kang etamb wulya kot  
 I waipa e waipa e waipa o e  
 Nanga laikim et kang e o  
 Pakla mel e nuk rui toa  
 I waipa e waipa e waipa o e.

I look up and I see

At Mongon the rain falls down,

I look down and I see

At Mara the rain falls down.

I put the rain at my back and I am

At my place Koepka picking coffee.

The boy that I like

Went off to Lae in a plane.

I shared out some smokes and he was cross,

He rides round in a Toyota now.

So the man who married me

He was short and a fool,

But he had the pigs and shells,

While the boy that I like

Is tall and handsome,

But he stands and stares around,

Yes, he's a fool too!

The girl is sad as she watches the rain falling. She thinks of her boy friend who has gone off in a huff because she divided her attentions ('shared out some smokes'). Meanwhile an unattractive but well-off man has married her. She doesn't like him - he's a fool; but so is the one she likes.

30.

Elkau

Rut Kama e

Ndoki ponom elkau

Ndoki ponom o

Mondøk kanem elkau

Ndakla ambokla tekon

Mera pinda elkau

Kit em ndam

Kokleimb ramon e

Elkau.



Oh!

At Mbukl the wild pandanus

Roots fall down

Fall down oh!

Bend down oh!

Ndakla girl, take it close,

Make it feel your scent.

If it's no good,

We'll pull it back oh!

The singer is a man making a rather bold challenge to a girl. He compares his penis to the aerial roots of a pandanus, saying it is slack and hanging down, but if she puts it close to her it will feel her scent and rise. If not, well they can always separate and forget about it.

31.

Møka kep ile

Mana oklmba o e

Møi weipø e

Mul ku e nde tinim

Erol le pa e

Amb wentep a

Wua raki kømb na ri o e

Møka kep ile na pøya

Pi poklp o

Erol le pa e.

By the banks of the Møka

I come down.

My marsupial tail

Is up, and I rush

Like a boulder down a hill.

Girl, you say

That you don't count

A man, two men,

Listen, I will plant

My two feet squarely.

The singer is coming down a pathway to turn head with a well-known local girl, who has let it be known that one man is not enough for her. He tells her that his penis is erect, and he will wedge himself firmly when he makes love to her.

32.

Rut ya moklp a kant mel a

Kin Pup ile koi enem a

Wai enem a

Rui nin mona

Mui nin nda

Paip ndola wak ramba

Kandekin pan a.

32.

I am here at Mbukl and I see

Up at Kin Pup

Promises are made

And then they are broken.

Girl, you strut

Up and down and show yourself off.

Here's five dollars, take a look at it

Before you go.

The singer is talking to a flirtatious girl. Since she is behaving in a loose way, he offers her five dollars for her sexual favours.

33.

Waki kel nimb o e

Kintmant ndurumun o e

Wamb rondoki nimb o e

Kintmant ko ndonomen e

Nanga nggoimnga rakl e

Mana onom o e

Met kona nimb o e

Peng ndi ronom o e.

When I was a child  
They made me their servant.  
Now I'm grown up,  
But I'm still working for them.  
My two fruits  
Have fallen down.  
Below, in that place,  
My head hair is growing.

A girl sings, complaining that when she was small her parents gave her a lot of work to do, and they're still making her work for them. She protests that she is getting old now, her breasts have fallen down and she is fully mature sexually, why don't they send her to a man?

34.

Men sing on a public occasion to a rival set of girls:

Rut okapana kota nile o

Kunduma oka kuk nonom o

Waki kau pa

Kel kin poklkon mutn o

Nggo ndokon kae mondan o

Waki kau pa.

The girls reply:

Waki kau pa

Rut okapana kota nile o

Andekl kunung kaep kum nim o

Waki kau pa

Konimb ningon on kang yo

Kunung mel pakeken pan o.



34.

Men:

At Mbukl beside the garden's edge

Jack eats sweet potato flowers.

Since you were young you've had it in,

Pull it out and place it in well!

Girls:

At Mbukl beside the garden's edge

A rain mat lies unfolded there.

You, boy, who say you've come to see it,

Wear it as a cape and go.

The references here are all sexual.



WERL and MØR Songs

(These are sung, by women and men respectively, at formal dance occasions marking the transfer of wealth in moka exchanges between groups.)

35.

A song sung by women while performing the werl dance at a moka exchange ceremony:

Komone moklpa nimba wua e

Reipa kut-nt koepa-nt nonom e

Werl ro Werl ro ea

Werl ro a e.

Akele moklpa pint panda wua e

Timb e rut ninim o e

Werl ro Werl ro ea

Werl ro a e.

35.

The elder brother here before,  
Now lies beneath the cedar tree,  
Shrubs and the earth consume him.

The younger brother is not strong,  
They push him around, but now  
He's making his show here.

An important leader had died previously, and in the first verse the women sing about him. The men left in the group are his younger brothers, they lack his strength, and yet they are holding a moka ceremony here.

36.

Men dancing at the same occasion as in song 35 sing of their enmity with another group:

E pa

Rokl e pint o

Ngoina pilip o

Elkau

Kuki ndaop o ndoron okl o

Erol e pa

Tawe e e pa

Ipe yo aipe yo e epa

Madang Keap o pøp urum nda

E pa

Rakla wua ya kandep o

Kent a

Elkau .

Oh,

That tall man

You cut him down

His skin was fine.

Kiap from Madang,

It was good you came,

Was it?

Now you're here, I look at

That man,

But I don't kill him.

The singers express their anger against enemies for wounding one of their leaders, and say that but for the government officers they would take revenge by killing a man in return.





KA

(Laments and Funeral Songs)

37.

This is a lament for a girl who was taken on a journey into a forest area, and was there lost. Supposedly, she was seized and taken off by wild spirits:

Al ant e rona onom e na

Ropanda Yan a

Mbit kiya nom nda,

Wa e wa e wa e wa e;

Ropanda Yan e

Wa e wa e

Wul ant e mana pum e na

Ropanda Yan a

Mbit kiya nom nda

Wa e wa e wa e wa e

Ropanda Yan e

Wa e wa e

Na nt a pi nindit noklka

Epi Rumba nt a pi nilinga

Putn nokl ka

Wa e wa e wa e wa e

Ropanda Yan e

Wa e wa e.

The sun rises up in the east.

Girl of Ropanda, Yan,

Did it shine on your beads?

Girl of Ropanda, Yan.

The sun sets in the west.

Girl of Ropanda, Yan,

Did it shine on your beads?

Girl of Ropanda, Yan.

It was not I who told you to go,

It was your father, Rumba, who told you to go.

And so you went,

For ever,

Girl of Ropanda, Yan.

I have included names here, in this instance only, because the song is so widely known throughout the Hagen area. The singer is the girl's step-mother, who had brought her up after her true mother died. She stresses that it was the father who told his daughter to go on the journey, 'and so she went', never to return.

38.

A mourning song, sung at a public funeral occasion for a man killed in 1971 in a motor accident. He was of the Mokei tribe. It was sung by his clansmen:

Mbarat o rokl nile

Kokela ond o

e e e ye e

Wua kuki ndaep nile nga

Korop nint o

We e e e e.

38.

I have just begun

Walking on the road.

My fine-skinned man,

I'm searching for him.

Another men's mourning song:

Ang koemb al e

Ru wua ye e

Kuning mŕi e

Rawa ngop e

Wua ang e

Namba tamb e e

Wua ang e

Namba tamb e e.

My brother , he was  
At the head of the dance,  
Now he's presented  
To the clay.  
My brother man,  
What shall I do?  
My brother man,  
What shall I do?

The singer thinks of how his brother led in dancing at proud ceremonial occasions before. Now he is being given as a 'present' to the earth. In the last lines he wonders what he will do without his brother and also whether to take revenge for his death.

40.

Mourning song, sung by clansmen and many others at the funeral for an important man in the Tipuka tribe, Tipuka Kengeke Ruing, in late Decem  
1973:

Waema tit e

Mana onom e ne

Ang kuki e

Ndaep ninim e

Wua ang e

Namba tamb e e

Wua ang e

Namba tamb e e



At Waema the rain

Falls down.

My brother , he was

A fine-skinned man.

My brother man,

What shall I do?

My brother man,

What shall I do?

The leader's name is included here as a record. The reference to the rain conveys the sense of separation and loss: "I look up to see if my brother is coming, but instead it is only the rain falling down."

