

## A MINI-ANTHOLOGY OF SOUTH PACIFIC ORAL POETRY

From a larger collection of poetry, mainly from New Guinea, gathered & edited by Ulli Beier, to be published by Unicorn Press (Santa Barbara). The translations—with the exception of those by Don Laycock—are by native speakers, many of them students at the University of Papua & New Guinea in Port Moresby. They represent a direct link with tribal life & poetry, as well as the emergence through translation of a new poetry in English. While the poems in Beier's collection follow only the translation side of the process, many of the participants are also engaged in original composition that takes the aboriginal traditions as a primary model. Some of the poetry in this gathering appeared originally in Kovave ("New Guinea's first literary magazine") & in the Papuan Pocket Poets series.

### THREE FOR THE GOD AIA

#### Mekeo

#### 1. The Cycle of A'alsa

Water all over  
all all over  
darkness all over  
all all over

Aia sitting seated  
Aia living alive

Aia sitting seated  
sitting forever  
Aia living alive  
living forever  
Aia without beginning  
Aia without end

Aia above the water  
Aia has lived  
Aia has watched  
above the darkness  
Aia has lived  
Aia has watched

Aia creator of our earth  
Aia creator of our home

Creator of earth  
creator creating  
creator of home  
creator creating

2.  
By mouth wind of Aia  
we were made  
by lip wind of Aia  
we were made

Eater eating  
things all things  
things above  
things below

Aia lighting alight  
lighting our earth  
lighting our home

Aia lighting all over  
lighting all our earth  
Aia lighting all over  
lighting all our home

3.  
Aia walks on the road  
Aia all naked.  
He walks on the road.

Aia my hand is faultless  
Aia all naked  
My hand is faultless!

Aia you shake your spear!  
Aia all naked  
you shake your spear!

Aia in war decoration  
Aia all naked  
Aia in war decoration.

—Translated by Allan Natachee