

Keledu', Ketuya' and Ledun: Endangered genres in Punan Tubu (East Kalimantan)

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Punan Tubu is the language of a community of former hunter gatherers spread in a number of villages in the District of Malinau in East Kalimantan.

Like many local languages in Indonesia it is gradually losing its domains of application for different reasons. Traditionally, the languages of hunter gatherers, probably more than other minority languages undergo an influence from the neighboring languages like Kayan and Kenyah and from the major languages like Indonesian. The cultural and linguistic influence of the neighboring agriculturalists like the Kayan, the Kenyah and the Abai-Berusu is remarkable.

This paper will focus on special genres found in the language spoken in the village of Respen Tubu, a resettlement village where a part of the Punan Tubu community has moved since the 70ies to live together with other ethnolinguistic groups and next to the capital town or Malinau.

Keledu', Ketuya' and ledun are three genres described in this paper from the perspective of use, meaning and structure.

Keledu' is the chanted language the shaman (andu') uses to communicate with the upperworld spirits. Due to change in religion and habits the role of the andu' has been restricted to that of collector of traditional plants for medical treatment and his role as a medium has practically disappeared. Due also to the old age of the only three andu' in the village, the language is now completely unintelligible to all but a handful of Punan Tubu speakers.

Ketuya' is a poetic version used to tell stories of ancestors and heroes of the Punan Tubu group. It is allegedly known only by people able to communicate with spirits and can take the form of long poems common people do not understand. In common tales like mbui bits and pieces of ketuya' are found here and there as metaphors to refer to the main characters like that of Unjung, a female hero found in many tales.

Ledun (sort of nursery rhymes) also uses a special rhythm and a language non employed in the everyday communication. A brief analysis of old nursery rhymes hardly known by children today, gives a taste of this special genre in the Punan Tubu language.

This paper will report ongoing work on the relationship between the ritual keledu' and ketuya' and spoken Punan Tubu and try to understand why most of it has been lost as the ritual language has disappeared.