

**Local autonomy, identity, and indigenous of poetic language of *Pangunraun* of Maanyan Dayak Central Kalimantan.**

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Abstract

Among the revolutionary policies that have been implemented after Soeharto's era is Bill number (UU) 22/1999 on local autonomy. Conceptually the article is targeting to ease the social unrests, (including armed movements) that were so common in various Indonesian islands. These phenomena are believed rooted deeply in economic unfairness, acknowledgment of ethnic identity, and representation in government institutions and parliament. These phenomena had been long known as weaknesses of the form of the state: *negara kesatuan* (united state), which is obviously unsuitable for very multi-ethnic of Indonesia. The bill gave autonomy to local communities to form and to run their local government in a level of regency (*Kabupaten/Kota*). And among the most important thing, the local parliament and the heads of the local government *Bupati* and the Deputy of *Bupati* are elected through a direct voting election. In February 2001, before the bill effectively implemented in the massive island of Kalimantan, an ethnic riot between indigenous inhabitants of the island Dayak and Madurese migrations exploded in Central Kalimantan following similar riot in the neighbouring province of the West Kalimantan two years earlier. The main issues behind the riot were similar to most of Indonesian social unrests, the rights to manage their own natural resources, problem of representation in the body of decision maker, but the most dominant issue was acknowledgement of the Dayak ethnic identity.

I would focus on very restricted area, a new founded regency East Barito (Kabupaten Barito Timur, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia). It is established based on Bill number 5/2002 on April 10, 2002 in Indonesian government official announcement *Lembaran Negara RI* number 18/2002. In this occasion I would like to draw the general connection between the local identity, indigenous arts especially ethnopoetic, and the implementation of the Bill 22/1999 in Central Kalimantan province, especially in the Regency of East Barito, *Kabupaten Barito Timur*.

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## **Introduction**

The Regency of East Barito, Central Kalimantan is a new established regency, it was after Soeharto era (April 2002). Maanyan, the ideogenous inhabitants of this region is believed to have linguistic cognate and has a strong genetic connection to Madagascar of Africa (Dahl 1951, Hudson 1967, Adelaar 1995, Hurlles *at al* 2005). According to Leo Suryadinata *at al* (2003[2004]) Maanyan population is 50,505. Surprisingly the figure is only about 5 % of total population of Central Kalimantan province. How does the establishment of the Regency influence the re-struction of local identity? To be specific, how does the role of local language: Maanyan Language in establishing the local identity? This paper is based on my fieldtrip between October 2003 and April 2004, and it is on local language, identity and local autonomy it will focus on.

## **Situation in Soeharto era.**

Even since Indonesia declared her independence in 1945, the ideal form of the state had been through great debates. The motto “*bhineka tunggal ika*” unity in diversity is obviously an adoption from western value, especially USA, and aimed to establish *negara federasi* ‘federal state’. But since the beginning, the founding fathers realised the dilemma. On one hand they knew that the best state for a very multi-ethnic Indonesia with 13 thousand separated islands was federation, but on the other hand 60 % of Indonesian population was in Java living with very limited natural resources. Therefore although they knew that it would not be idealistic, and may facing a risk of disintegration in the later days, but at least for buying time, thanks to the severe weakness of the regions outside Java, *negara kesatuan* (united state) was adopted. With the help of a strong military the condition was maintained well in New Order era. All governmental and economical affairs were controlled by central government, all revenue from regencies and provinces flowed to Jakarta, and very little was sent back to the producer regions in their Annual Local Budget (APBD). No wonder many critics say that this is in fact has no different than colonialism, Acehneses (GAM) made this for central issue in their armed movement (*Penjajah Jawa*). Social and cultural affairs including various indigenous arts were neglected even suppressed in a certain way by labelling them as primordial, for they did not promote the unity of Indonesia, hence did not worth of maintaining. In fact in the name of *persatuan* indigenous cultures were mean to be destroyed and replaced with new culture *kebudayaan Pancasila*, which is interpreted as the tips of local cultures that were selected on the basis of promoting the unity value. Such cultural re-engineering project was called *politik ragi usang* ‘total replacement of the old yeast’, an adoption of a concept of ‘development’ popularly applied by Western colonials on various indigenous peoples of the world. Local Languages are never been maintained seriously, they are just there in desperate situation, best illustrated as “*bagai kerakap tumbuh di batu hidup segan mati tak mau*”. Basically, they are not obviously being suppressed or formally forbidden to use, but they gain sort of ambivalent support from central government. No educational institution that fucus to study and develop a certain local language, or newspapers, or any media that adopted or allowed to use any local language, as their mean of communication. Although there is *Lembaga Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa-bahasa Daerah* (The Institution for Development for Local Languages) but it is mainly just for documentation purpose.

### **After Soeharto**

After experiencing under a long suppressive regime, the disappointment of various regions seems to be popping up to the surface. Social unrest became a common trend in various provinces. Aceh, Maluku and West Papua launched armed movements demanded separation from Indonesia. Dayak of Kalimantan thought that the island was theirs and claimed that it was their authority to decide who might and who might not to stay in the island, which was leading to the horrific mass killing and flew of thousands Madurese migrations in February 2001. Until now most of them do not yet to come back to the island. Only after all these terrible things happened, with great victims had been sacrificed, Jakarta realised that the time is finished. The Bill 22/1999 was issued where Jakarta gave autonomy to regencies, a federal function in a different cloth. Irrespective that this may be only a lip service, as many critics say (very obvious Central Government's cunning design is reducing the area of autonomy from Province to Regency), but it is interesting to see the change does occur in the area where I did my fieldwork, East Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan Province.

It was not difficult to understand that the inter-ethnic war in the West and Central Kalimantan between Dayak and Madurese, the central theme was actually Dayak struggling over their identities (PC Budi Santoso 2001). Madurese was only a victim. The main target was obviously government policies over their right to manage their natural resources, representation in government agencies and parliaments. And the most fundamental issue was their rights to express themselves as a group, which in Soeharto era in the name of *persatuan* was not acknowledged. The term of identity in Dayak community in universal is understood as their source of pride as a human being, including their rights to manage their own living, which is endowed from the God, no one may take it from them, and to depend it an extreme collective action may be executed. The *fatwa* that the action is justified is *mangkuk merah* (originally from Dayak Kanayant), a small ceramic bowl with blood circulated among the *kepala suku* the heads of the sub-ethnic groups, which means war. In operational level, identity mostly takes form of an index feature or a core value with which they are identified. The core value labels themselves as a member of Dayak group and also to exclude those who are not the members. In a peaceful condition in Maanyan community language (Bahasa Maanyan) is primarily function as the index feature. As soon as the bill was implemented most of collective issues that Dayak demanded were accommodated. East Barito used to a District was up graded to a Regency. It is established based on Bill [UU] number 5/2002 on April 10, 2002 published in Indonesian government official announcement *Lembaran Negara RI* number 18/2002. Numerous of young dayaks were recruited to fulfil the position of new government employees and new local parliament was established. First direct election was organised in 2004 and successfully brought some Maanyan Dayak elders to the seats of the local parliaments (DPRD II). As also happen in every where of the world, religions bring separations. A long hostility among Maanyan Christian, Islam and indigenous religion Kaharingan adherents seemed to melt. Together they identified and challenged their real threat: poverty and marginality, and agreed to put their long differences: religions to private domain. And as "index feature" to identify as well as to bound them in to one group is the language: Maanyan Language, irrespective to what religious group they are affiliated (in the past all Dayak dialects means Christian or

Kaharingan, and Banjar Malay means Islam). This means that the other traditional identity features like the use of beads (*lumiang*) as bracelet or necklace and bandana (*lawung*), armed with traditional machete (*mandau*), and carrying a weaved rattan backpack (*lanynyung*) are not considered that important anymore.

In a community of ‘hard shelled’ (Saville-Troike 2003:16) an index feature is also functioning as a border system for the group. This border system should be maintained well otherwise it would be easy for an intruder to sneak in. It should be able to identify clearly who is a member and who is not. It is in this context that a poetic language of *Pangunraun* becomes very important, as it functions as a component of a border system to support the Maanyan language as an index feature. However, at modern time hardly any ethnic group in Indonesia adopting such a close community. A community adopts such a strong index feature, (which is usually anchored in or supported by deep religious principles; e.g. Banjar and Islam), may be perceived as a threat by other ethnic groups, which in their turn may launch a counter position towards the group. This is obviously irrelevant in the modern global life, since no group can live without other groups. Most of them, like Maanyan does, feel happy just to be a “soft-shelled” community. Although it does give an ethnic inclusiveness among the speakers, a regency’s identity marker (*pemarka Kabupaten*), but for the inhabitants of East Barito Regency, Maanyan language is maintained just for making this world has more varieties, like various flowers to a garden, to make the world is more interesting.

A long black campaign by outside media about being a Dayak made a tremendous impact on the attitude of the young generation towards the ethnic group as well as the language, which unfortunately remains rather negative. Since colonial era being a Dayak is identic of being savage, human eater, uncivilised, head hunter, uneducated, etc. When a Maanyan family moves to urban area they do not encourage their children to speak bahasa Maanyan, but shifted to Banjar Malay or Indonesian language. A part from showing obedience to the central government as to promote unity, this is also intended to hide the children real identity, so nobody knows that the children are Dayaks. By doing so, they avoid for being objects of teasing or bullying by their schoolmates as “*dia ada ekornya*” having a tail (this horrible physical description of Dayak may be read on one chapter of writings from 19<sup>th</sup> century compiled by King (1978, 1993). Until recently Javanese especially (even educated ones) still imagine Dayak as “being black, barely have any cloth, eating raw meat, and having a tail”, stereotypes dated back to colonial era. To break such a powerful negative connotations and to build up a positive attitude towards the language, again a poetic language of *Pangunraun* a formal refined form of classical Maanyan language, the arts of speaking in public plays important role, in addition to improvements in other aspects of life, especially in socio-economic affairs. This is because in *Pangunraun* poetic language the beauty of high metaphoric expressions, glory of the past nostalgia, is the poetic language primarily credited, yet demands a high level of competence in daily Bahasa Maanyan, otherwise he/she will not be able to fully appreciate the poetry.

Language as the most apparent form of culture is the most common mean to express the identity of a group. As it has been said previously, in Maanyan there are two different

modes of language: ordinary Maanyan language for daily language use, and *Pangunraun* classical poetic language. Classical *Pangunraun* ethnopoetry is the arts of public speaking applies to any formal situations (rituals) including marriage negotiations (the focus of my dissertation). The main structure of the versification is parallel in music, phonology, syntax, and semantics (Ruth Finnegan 1992:175), ordained with highly humble polite expressions. Musical parallelism is characterised in three music styles of deliverance: chanting style (*Enraq Janyawaiq*), song style (*Tumet leut*), and rhetoric style (*Tarung*). Phonological parallelism is characterised with parallel in assonances, alliterations, and rhymes, while syntactical parallelism is “a couplet or dyadic set” with two parallel clauses of complete or not (ellipsis) or inversion (anastrophe) in variations. To gain semantic parallelism, the strategies the bards used are figurative symbols especially metaphors, circumlocutions, multi-language pairings, and synoptics of epic stories of *Pangunraun 22* (twenty-two noble men). For a clear description following Onvlee (1973), Adams (1973), and Mitchell (1981), I set a model applied to *Pangunraun* poetic ritual language:

- (1) the ritual language is composed of a series of couplets;
- (2) within each couplet each word in the first line is matched to the corresponding word in the second line by paralinguistic and grammatical aspect; and
- (3) each line contains a concrete statement such that the two statements of the couplet metaphorically represent a single intended meaning for the couplet as the whole (also see Mitchell 1981[1988:75]).

Certain implications follow from this model; Mitchell (1988:75-76) makes it clear. First, parallelism also includes combining a twin of two metaphors. Second, any statement that is parallel with another statement is to be interpreted metaphorically. And the third, as assigned by the nature of the metaphor, the meaning of the couplet is hidden or at least not immediately apparent. However there is a widely shared consensus as to the meaning of each couplet, where the semantic predictability is strictly framed in a standard plot. Maanyan bards call the rules to hide the intended meaning, yet to show politeness, are including: *nammangk gunung* (hide your intense as if it hides behind a mountain) or *mangkalungan* (hit your target indirectly), *ipujah* (humble yourself), and *ngammungk* (send tribute to others). Both *Nammangk gunung* and *mangkalungan* are carried out through metaphors and impersonalised expressions (no addressee), *ipujah* is mainly done by telling bad things about self, while *ngammungk* is carried out through giving noble title(s) to second person(s), and send tribute to them.

To give an illustration, the following are some verses of the poetry to tell the groom in humble expressions that the bride does not have criteria of a good wife, which leads to a suggestion (not in this example) for the groom to find another lady:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <i>Daya hiay rege yati batung erang kakaw</i></li> <li>(2) <i>radah telang eray manyaquan lawi. [1]</i></li> <li>(3) <i>Takut huqan iuh alap ma widay balay</i></li> <li>(4) <i>huqan turay epu aji dasar jaru. [2]</i></li> <li>(5) <i>Huqan turay alap uma widay bannung</i></li> <li>(6) <i>ang juat epu aji dasar piluq. [3]</i></li> <li>(7) <i>Huqan turay uneng panguhana</i><br/><i>dammung pangkah manyiqetu</i></li> <li>(8) <i>awe mayu panuntaka. [6]</i></li> </ol> | <p>it is true that there is a big giant-bamboo<br/>a leafy bamboo with a lavish top<br/>but it might not be enough for the lath of a hall<br/>it is not sufficient for the floor of a house<br/>it is not enough for a partition of a boat<br/>it is not sufficient for the floor of a canoe<br/>She is not yet competent for a high ranking<br/>prince to consult with<br/>is not a right place yet for a high ranking prince</p> |
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| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>raden tengah muwung langit</i></p> <p>(9) <i>Daya iah kajang jawa aku huqan kataris terung</i></p> <p>(10) <i>samer gurun aku awe ka-kajang kukup. [9]</i></p> <p>(11) <i>Huqan ka-taris terung tata hang kamudi</i></p> <p>(12) <i>ang kakajang kukup hi juman hang haluan. [10]</i></p> <p>(13) <i>Huqan kataris terung liung buntil wulu</i></p> <p>(14) <i>huqan kakajang kukup iwu baling gilay. [11]</i></p> <p>(15) <i>Huqan kataris terung baling gilay unru</i></p> <p>(16) <i>ang kakajang kukup la buntil bajak wulan. [12]</i></p> <p>(Note line 7 and 8, the speaker addresses the groom as a high ranking prince, a real tribute!)</p> | <p>to seek advice from</p> <p>because like a Javanese roof she cannot provide shade</p> <p>like a gurun cover she cannot give protection</p> <p>cannot give shade to the brother at the helm</p> <p>cannot give protection to the brother at the prow</p> <p>cannot give shade around the head</p> <p>cannot give protection around the rice-stock</p> <p>cannot cover a high rice container</p> <p>cannot protect a high food stock container</p> |
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Although that *Pangunraun* poetry is rooted deeply in indigenous religion of Kaharingan Animism rituals, it is in Christian wedding ceremonies that the use of the poetry is most popular. In the period of my fieldwork, I witnessed eight wedding parties, seven in Christian families and one in a Kaharingan family. While for Kaharingan this ritual was a compulsory, all of seven Christian wedding parties adopted what the local called as *piqaduqan adat* “(optional) traditional wedding ritual”, where the poetic performances are significant parts of the festivity, hence attracted many audiences. However, I find some basic differences between the forms that the two groups employ, which are resulting from different beliefs towards the ethnopoeury. Kaharingan animism adherents believe that the language is a ritual language, thus sacred and means to be exact, while Christian preserves the poetic language for pure verbal art. Local government now is trying hard to put the ethnopoeury into local content of Primary School Curriculum.

Recent development, regarding to Bahasa Maanyan, there are two benign variables for the language maintenance: institutional support and reasonable quantity of native speakers that use the language in regular basis. At least in two Regencies (*Kabupaten Barito Selatan* and *Kabupaten Barito Timur*) the language is adopted in Local Content (*mulok*) of Primary School Curriculum. While I was in Tamiang Layang the capital city of the Regency, I visited the *Bupati* (head of the Regency) in his office, I was shocked to find that the *Bupati* (who is a Moslem) kept on replying me in Maanyan instead of Bahasa Indonesia. I soon realised that majority of the government officers spoke Maanyan in the office, and in informal situation with friends of other ethnic background was in Banjar Malay, a situation that never happen in Soeharto era. Later I knew that there was a story behind this attitude. As the *Bupati* was appointed by temporary local parliament, which were not from direct election (product of Orde Baru), he had no support from majority of Maanyan elders. At least for the first three months he could not work at his office, as a group of Maanyan sealed the office. As a genius young man he did not want to quit. He approached some most influenced Maanyan elders to get their support. And as a result, he speaks the language to anyone he knows can speak the language. Only by politics of language, at last he got support, now perhaps from the majority of the Maanyan.

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