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The Sekujam language of West Kalimantan (Indonesia)

JAMES T. COLLINS AND HERPANUS

ABSTRACT

Almost two hundred years ago, O. van Kessel identified a language group based on a characteristic sound change that yielded *-ai* in the final position of some words (Van Kessel 1850: 166); Hudson (1970) named this group “Ibanic” after the Iban language widely spoken in Sarawak. Of the numerous members of the Ibanic branch of Malayic, perhaps the Sekujam language is the least known. Although Sujarni et al. (2008: 282-285) provided information about the location and traditions of the Sekujam ethnic group, there is very little information about the language. Based on available colonial and contemporary sources, this essay provides a sketch of this ethnic group, numbering perhaps only 3,000 people, split between two administrative units (residencies). Then, a brief overview of the phonology of Sekujam suggests some of its distinctive characteristics. There follows an overview of the sociolinguistic setting of the Sekujam-speaking communities in the Sekadau residency reflecting the status and functions of Sekujam in the language ecology of this multilingual area. Of interest perhaps is the praxis of split dialogic bilingualism documented in some of the area’s villages and the role of Sekujam in traditional rituals of at least one other ethnic group. Much work remains in the face of rapid social, demographic and economic change.

KEYWORDS

Ibanic; language ecology; multilingualism; nasal fortition; West Kalimantan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Iban is spoken as the first language in rural and urban communities of three Southeast Asian countries: Malaysia (in particular, Sarawak, and to some extent in Sabah, as well as rather recently in peninsular Malaysia), Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia. This far-flung Iban-speaking network must be counted as one of the largest indigenous language groups in the whole island of Borneo. In Sarawak alone, more than 600,000 persons speak Iban

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as their first language (Sather 2004); tens of thousands of other inhabitants of Sarawak use Iban as a second or third language (Collins 2002a, 2004b). Even in some interior areas of Brunei, Iban is widely used, not only among the Iban themselves (Nothofer 1991) but also for interethnic communication among the Penan, Dusun, and Iban groups (Sercombe 2002). However, in Indonesia, specifically in West Kalimantan, a different picture emerges. There, the number of Iban speakers is not large and most of them live in areas near the Sarawak-West Kalimantan border (Collins 2004a; Wadley 1999). In West Kalimantan, the use of Iban as a second language, even in areas where Iban is spoken by long-settled communities, appears to be limited as well.

In any case, because the total number of Iban speakers in all of Borneo is certainly large and also because Iban has been studied and documented for a long time and therefore is well-known (Collins 2004b), all the languages that are similar to Iban have long been counted as close relatives of Iban. Indeed, almost 170 years ago Van Kessel (1850) had already recognized this language group in West Kalimantan. Today those languages similar to Iban are considered members of the “Ibanic” subgroup of Austronesian languages. As noted, although Hudson (1970) was not the first to discuss these languages as a distinctive group, nonetheless it was he who named the group “Ibanic”. The term “Ibanic” was used by Hudson (1970) to refer to all the Austronesian languages that display the same specific sound changes (innovations). Briefly, Hudson (1970: 306) wrote:

[M]embers of an Ibanic sub-group, comprising such isolects as Sebuyau, Mualang, Kantu', Seberuang, and the various related Iban dialects of Sarawak and Brunei, may be easily identified on the basis of the presence in word-final position in certain lexical forms of /-ai/ where cognates in other Malayic languages exhibit /-an/, /-ang/, or, less frequently, /-ar/.

Hudson’s list of “certain lexical forms”, though distinctive, is not a large one.¹ See Collins (2004a) for a summary. Note that Hudson and most language scholars consider Iban and the other Ibanic languages to be closely related to Malay in a larger subgroup named “Malayic”; see Hudson (1970) and Collins (2004a).

Certainly, in the Dutch colonial era, missionaries and government officials, for example Enthoven (1903), recognized that in the Kapuas River basin of West Kalimantan, there were many ethnic groups whose languages were similar to Iban (then widely known as “Batang Lupar”). Based on that cadastral knowledge as well as input from modern anthropologists, Wurm and Hattori (1983) produced a map that included a sketch of the distribution of Ibanic languages in the late twentieth century. However, even that carefully researched map with its extensive notes is not comprehensive. One of the languages similar to Iban and, thus, presumably classified with Iban in the so-called Ibanic branch, is the Sekujam language – seldom mentioned or studied

¹ In fact, Van Kessel (1850: 166) had already made similar observations about word-final *-ai*, which characterized the group of Iban-like languages that he labelled “*Maleisch*”.

but the focus of this essay.²

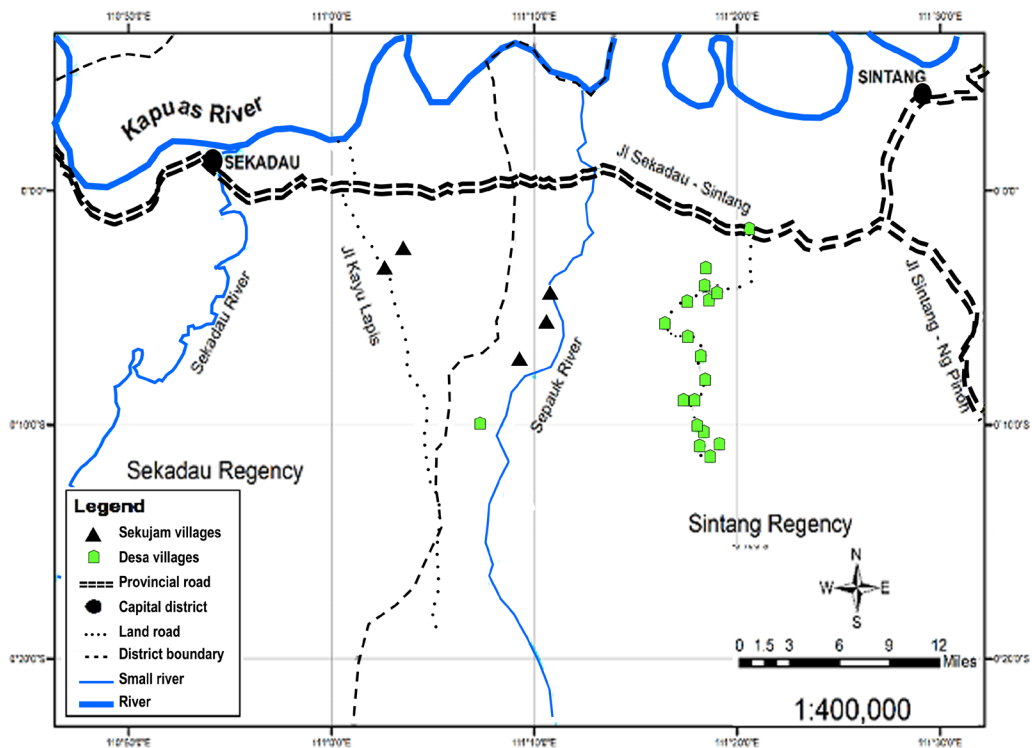
Speakers of Sekujam, a language clearly related to Iban, are found in two neighbouring regencies (*kabupaten*) of West Kalimantan, namely the Sintang Kabupaten and the Sekadau Kabupaten. However, almost all Sekujam speakers live in villages located in the Sepauk River valley or its vicinity (see Map 1). Perhaps, because the total number of Sekujam speakers is not large (see below) and because the Sekujam villages are located on the southwestern periphery of the main Ibanic area (Wurm and Hattori 1983), the Sekujam language has never been the topic of comprehensive analysis. Moreover, Sekujam speakers are split between two political and administrative units: the Sintang and Sekadau Kabupatens; so, the relative number of speakers in either one of those units is small and, thus, less likely to attract the attention of administrators or scholars. Whatever the reasons, the Sekujam language has never been studied – except for two preliminary descriptions (Collins 2007a, 2007b). Even in *The encyclopaedia of Iban studies* (V. Sutlive and J. Sutlive 2001), an impressive and comprehensive compendium of Ibanic knowledge, there is no coverage about Sekujam. The compendium of Dayak ethnicities and languages, produced by indigenous scholars of West Kalimantan (Alloy et al. 2008), allocates only a short entry for Sekujam that focuses on oral traditions, providing only one word of the Sekujam language.³

In Map 1, the location of some Sekujam villages on both the Sepauk River in the Sintang Regency and to the west in the Sekadau Regency are mapped as well as the location of several communities of Desa speakers, the Ibanic language geographically closest to Sekujam villages. Alloy et al. (2008:117) estimated that in 1998 there were 41,376 speakers of Desa, the largest group of Ibanic speakers in Indonesia. The Desa villages indicated in Map 1 are located on the Sepauk River and the Tempunak River to the east. Some Desa speakers have moved to the west and live side by side with Desa speakers in a few villages in the Sekadau Regency.

² As will be explained in this report, not only has Sekujam never been described, it is hardly even mentioned. In an earlier overview (Collins 2004a) of Ibanic languages, the Sekujam language was not discussed, although at that time some of the basic data about Sekujam had already been recorded; see Collins (2005b). The data and analyses presented here can be considered an introduction to Sekujam. We express to the editors of two books about Ibanic languages who invited us to contribute chapters to the collections they edited (Chong, Yusriadi, and Dedy 2007; Chong and Collins 2007) about the Ibanic peoples of West Kalimantan. Some parts of the essay presented here include revised portions of those earlier publications (Collins 2007a, 2007b).

Most of the data referred to in this report were obtained in the research project “A survey of the language and literature of the Sekujam, an Ibanic group of Kalimantan Barat”, that was suggested by the Tun Jugah Foundation (Sarawak, Malaysia) in 2006 and carried out in the context of the Foundation’s cooperation with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia with the support of Pusat Studi Masyarakat dan Bahasa Pulau Borneo and Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri Pontianak (now Institut Agama Islam Negeri Pontianak).

³ In the same year, Mahsun et al. (2008), published by Pusat Bahasa, Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, makes no mention of Sekujam at all.



Map 1. The location of some Sekujam and Desa communities in the Sekadau and Sintang regencies.

In the modest description presented here, only a limited amount of information about Sekujam can be set forth. The essay is divided into three sections, followed by a conclusion. First, the social and economic background of the Sekujam area is explored. Then, in the second section, the phonology of Sekujam is described briefly. In the third section, the status and function of Sekujam in the language ecology of the area are surveyed. In the conclusion, a few generalizations are presented for the reader's consideration.

2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH AREA

The Sepauk and Sekadau Rivers flow from the south to the north until they each join the Kapuas River, roughly 300-350 km east of the broad Kapuas delta on the coast of West Kalimantan. Between these two tributaries of the Kapuas the villages and hamlets of almost all the Sekujam speakers can be found,⁴ including both the first and second language speakers. Institut Dayakologi (2004) estimated that in the Sekadau Kabupaten there were 4,178 speakers of

⁴ Nonetheless, there are a few Sekujam villages that are located just east of the Sepauk River, for example Timai. Indeed, the Sekujam River joins the Sepauk River near Timai (P. Derani, personal communication, 29-4-2006). This suggests that this area may be the origin of this group's ethnonym, bearing in mind that in West Kalimantan (and elsewhere in island Southeast Asia) very often an ethnic group is named after a nearby river.

Sekujam. Probably that number represents the total number of inhabitants in villages (*desa*) labelled as Sekujam villages.⁵ Indonesian census takers do not collect data about specific ethnic groups, even less so about the number of speakers of most ethnic languages.⁶ Because not all the people who live in a village labelled Sekujam actually speak the Sekujam language, it can be reckoned that the total number of Sekujam speakers in the Sekadau Kabupaten is probably between 3,000-4,000 persons. In addition, based on the information collected in 2006 by the fieldworkers of the project reported on here (Collins 2005b), it is estimated that the total number of Sekujam speakers in the Sintang Kabupaten probably does not exceed 1,000 persons. So, at this point we assume that the combined total of Sekujam speakers is between 4,000-5,000. As noted above, because of this small number of speakers who, moreover, live in an area divided between two governmental jurisdictions, very little information about the Sekujam ethnic group has ever been published.

In the many colonial reports and academic publications that have been examined, the Sekujam group is usually overlooked. Other small Ibanic groups, such as the Seberuang, are noted and described, not only in colonial sources, for example Enthoven (1903), but also in post-colonial sources, for example King (2001). But Sekujam is an ethnonym seldom mentioned. When the Sekujam group is mentioned, we note the problems of the colonial system of nomenclature. For example, in Enthoven's excellent cadastral overview of the history, geography and politics of the Kapuas Valley, his register *Namen der Dajaksche Stammen* ('Names of the Dayak Tribes') in Sintang (Enthoven 1903: 569), lists fifteen Dayak groups, including a group labelled "Sepauk", although even then, more than 100 years ago, there were many groups in the Sepauk area. However, in Enthoven's list all of them fell under the simplified label "Sepauk", referring to their river of residence. In fact, Enthoven had more detailed information on hand about the Sepauk Valley ethnic groups but did not include it in his list. Note that in the section of his book in which he discussed claims and rights with regard to salt water springs in Kesia (Enthoven 1903: 523), he stated that rights to the springs were shared out by three Sepauk groups (*stammen*), as he wrote "Sepaukstammen (Sekoebang-, Sekoejan- en Seberoeang-Dajaks) [...]". Presumably, the *Sekoejan* is the group known today as Sekujam. Apparently, colonial administrators at the turn of

⁵ But another publication of the Institute (Alloy et al. 2008: 283) estimates more than 8,000 ethnic Sekujam. Again, these numbers probably reflect non-Sekujam speakers who reside within the boundaries of Sekujam villages, including Javanese migrants.

⁶ In Indonesian government statistics (Mantri Statistik 1996), it was reported that the Engkersik *desa* had a population of 3,944. (*Desa* is an Indonesian administrative unit usually comprised of several nearby villages and hamlets.) In fact, almost all of the Sekujam people of the Sekadau Kabupaten live in this *desa*; however, the Engkersik *desa* includes several originally distinct villages or longhouses, some of which may not have been Sekujam-speaking villages. Moreover, since the opening of the palm oil estates a few decades ago, many outsiders have taken up residence in this *desa* of Engkersik. In the same government source (Mantri Statistik 1996), Engkersik had 2,823 Roman Catholics. Because most Sekujam speakers in this area are Catholics, this figure may come close to the actual number of ethnic Sekujam, although there are other Catholics in Engkersik who are not ethnic Sekujam.

the twentieth century most often used the simplified cover term “Sepauk”; this exonym was more convenient than Sekujam, unless details needed to be spelled out.

Twenty years after the publication of Enthoven’s two-volume book, another colonial administrator, M.A. Bouman, who wrote about a Dayak creation myth, did spell out all the ethnic groups of the Sepauk River Valley (at that time). In addition to the Malays of Nanga Sepauk⁷, Bouman (1923-1924: 285) wrote:

[A]jan de Sepaukrivier is de bevolking nog Dajaksch en wel samengesteld uit de stammen Dèsa, Sebroeang, Sekoedjam en Sekoebang.

On the Sepauk River the population is still Dayak and is made up of the Desa, Seberuang, Sekujam, and Sekubang tribes.

Perhaps following Bouman,⁸ another colonial official, H.J. Heynen, wrote about the customs of Sintang’s ethnic groups and included a brief list in which the names *Sekoedjam* and also *Sekoebang* appear, although they seem to be considered subsets of the Seberuang group (Heynen 1937).

There are, then, only a few mentions of the Sekujam group on the Sepauk River, but apparently no descriptions of either the group or its language were produced in the colonial era. Even in the publications of the postcolonial period (1946-2004), only three or four scholarly sources that discuss the Sekujam have been found.⁹

First, in a project that produced a book about the history of the Catholic church in Indonesia, *Sejarah gereja Katolik Indonesia*, published 45 years ago, there was an essay specifically about church history in the Sintang diocese (Dijker 1974) – an ecclesial administrative unit whose boundaries include the Sintang Kabupaten. Attached to this essay is a map of a large parish on the southwestern edge of the diocese *Paroki Sintang bagian Baratdaya* (Dijker 1974: 360); this encompasses the area near the border with the present-day Sekadau Kabupaten, including the Sepauk River and its tributaries. About 20 km to the south of the provincial highway, a small unnamed river joins the Sepauk River. The area near this branch of the Sepauk is labelled “III”, and the legend explains that “III: daerah suku Daya Sekujam dengan bahasa dan adat sendiri” (Dijker 1974: 361), that is “III: the area of the Sekujam Dayak group with its own language and customs”. This information from a church historian is quite limited, but at least it suggests that there is a Sekujam ethnic group in a specific geographic area, a Sekujam language and a Sekujam customary law.

Second, in the reference book, *West Kalimantan; A bibliography*, compiled by three Western scholars, Avé, King, and De Wit (1983), a single sentence mentions ethnic groups and rivers, although the relationship between these two categories is not specified. In passing, the Sekujam group is mentioned,

⁷ See Chong (2004) for information about the language of Nanga Sepauk.

⁸ Bouman (1924) also mentioned the Sekujam; but see King (1976: 88).

⁹ Of course, there may exist published sources, both colonial and postcolonial, that have not yet been seen. Also, the Sekujam probably are discussed in unpublished governmental reports.

wedged in between the Selimbau and Sekubang groups (Avé, King, and De Wit 1983: 25). In view of the fact that neither the Selimbau¹⁰ nor the Sekubang¹¹ group uses an Ibanic language as their first language, this mere mention of the Sekujam group with no explanation of their geographic location is not helpful, indeed it is rather confusing because by juxtaposing Sekujam with two non-Ibanic languages it perhaps suggests that Sekujam is not Ibanic. The bibliography's index is not too informative, but scouring the book itself revealed an entry reporting Heynen's (1937) article, noted above. Perhaps this is the source that led Avé, King, and De Wit (1983) to mention the Sekujam?

Third, as noted above, Institut Dayakologi (2004) succeeded in publishing a draft map of Dayak ethnic groups in what was then the Sanggau Kabupaten. This large, multicoloured map, *Penyebaran suku berdasarkan terminologi lokal di Kabupaten Sanggau*, covers the eastern area of today's Sekadau Kabupaten and allocates a grey corner on its easternmost edge to *sub-suku* No. 48.¹² This area, apparently about 35-40 square km in size, is identified in the legend as *sub-suku Sekujam*. Besides reporting that the total number of Sekujam is 4,178 persons, there is no information about the language or customs of this group Number 48.¹³ Certainly, it represents an improvement over previous information about the Sekujam group because it provides both a geographic location for the group and offers an estimate of their population numbers. We note too that in another Institut Dayakologi publication (Alloy et al. 2008) – a sort of textual follow-up to the 2004 map – a few pages (Alloy et al. 2008: 282-285) discuss the Sekujam, mostly through Indonesian language abstracts of some of their oral literature; there is very little information about the language.¹⁴

Apparently, in contrast to the ethnic groups who live in the Sekadau Valley proper, research about the Sekujam group who reside outside of the Sekadau River system – though still within the Sekadau Kabupaten borders – has been

¹⁰ See Collins (2005a) concerning the nomenclature of non-Malay groups, including "Selimbau", in the vicinity of the Suhaid River valley and the languages that these "Selimbau" actually use. Enthoven (1903) also wrote about groups in that area.

¹¹ In July 2005 Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia approved a preliminary survey about the Sekujam and Sekubang languages as well as other languages spoken on the periphery of the Sekadau Valley. Those data proved that the Sekubang language could indeed be classified as Malayic but not as Ibanic – despite the fact that every day Sekubang speakers interact with their Desa and Seberuang neighbours (whose languages are Ibanic).

¹² The Institut Dayakologi considers all indigenous non-Malay peoples members of a single ethnic group, *suku Dayak* (the Dayak ethnic group); so, following from this ideology, any named non-Malay indigenous ethnic group, like the Sekujam, is a *sub-suku* (sub-ethnic group) under the all-encompassing *suku Dayak*.

¹³ The map discussed here was drawn up based on empirical fieldwork conducted by the late Sujarni Alloy, then a staff member of Pontianak's Institut Dayakologi. Almost certainly, in the archives of Institut Dayakologi there were stored wordlists and other data collected through that project but not published. The building and its contents were destroyed by fire in 2008. After the publication of Alloy et al. (2008), "Sekujam" appears in lists of Indonesian ethnic groups, especially in blogs and Facebook pages.

¹⁴ Note that publications of Indonesia's national language centre (Pusat Bahasa, now Badan Bahasa) do not mention the Sekujam language, not in Kurniawati's (2002) monograph specifically focused on the two residencies where Sekujam is spoken, nor, as noted above, in Mahsun's (2008) overview of the languages of entire country.

overlooked. Indeed, although since 1996 there have been language research projects in the Sekadau Valley and since 2000 that effort has been intensified,¹⁵ only in 2002 did a research team of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia hear about the existence of the Sekujam group on the eastern periphery of the Sekadau district.¹⁶ Between early 2003 and 2008 research was conducted in Sekujam-speaking villages with computerization of word lists and oral narrative texts.¹⁷ Some of these data form the basis of this report.

Through these academic efforts, the language situation and social setting on the edges of Sekadau have become clearer. Based on information collected in the field, the social history of the area can be investigated, although these oral histories still must be compared with government reports and company documents. Nonetheless, according to the recollections of the local villagers, up until the 1970's, the Sekujam group as well as other groups who lived between the Sekadau and Sepauk Rivers were quite isolated. Transportation and communication depended on rivers and streams, as well as hours of walking. This recollection of the Sekujam villagers matches Dijker's (1974: 361) report that in 1974 a missionary who had reached the downriver areas of the Sepauk River¹⁸ still needed to travel by small boats (*naik perahu kecil*) and travel on foot by narrow paths in the forest (*jalan kaki dan menggunakan jalan-jalan sempit di hutan*) to reach neophyte Catholic Sekujam communities. As a result of this isolation, agricultural products, such as rubber, were difficult to trade and even communities within the area itself had limited interaction,

¹⁵ Collins (2002b) offered a sketch of the history of language research in the Sekadau Valley.

¹⁶ I am grateful to Petrus Derani, the chief fieldworker in many language research projects in West Kalimantan, who provided preliminary information about the Sekujam group (Derani 2002) and who for a long time was actively involved in the Sekujam language project. In fact, Derani belongs to the Benawas ethnic group, a group whose language is not Ibanic but, instead, more closely related to Malay. However, Derani is familiar with the Sekujam language because of the intensive asymmetric bilingualism that characterizes the relationships between Sekujam and Benawas speakers; see Section 3 below. The role of the Sekujam language in the social interface between Sekujam and Benawas speakers can be studied in Derani's (2006) essay and Collins (2014). Several ethnic Sekujam friends have also assisted us as field assistants, especially Tanton, Panco, Apo, and Budi; other Sekujam speakers, including Mincang, Rama, and Baen, have also generously offered advice and information. To them and, in particular, all the Sekujam speakers who have cooperated in this research as language informants and story-tellers we express our thanks and highest appreciation.

¹⁷ In January 2003, two Sekujam wordlists were collected with the cooperation of speakers from Engkersik, Sekadau Kabupaten. Then in 2004-2005 Sekujam stories were recorded (mostly in Engkersik) and transcribed; some Sekujam hamlets were visited to observe the overall setting. In early 2006 fieldwork about Sekujam variants in both the Sekadau and Sintang Kabupatens was intensified with computerization of these data (wordlists and recorded narratives) undertaken in Pontianak (Indonesia) and Kajang (Malaysia). We are indebted to Datuk Amar Dr Leonard Linggi Jugah, then Director of the Tun Jugah Foundation (Sarawak, Malaysia), who supported this project, "A survey of the language and literature of the Sekujam, an Ibanic group of Kalimantan Barat".

¹⁸ Usually the Catholic missionaries left Sintang by motorbike and travelled along a road roughly parallel to the Kapuas River until they were near the Sepauk River before turning inland until the dirt road ended at the Sepauk settlement a few kilometres upriver; churches and mission stations were located much further upriver and inland from there (Dijker 1974: 361).

and even less with communities and organizations outside the area. In the late 1970's this situation began to change.

First, in order to facilitate the transportation of logs from the interior of the Sepauk River and even further inland, in the 1970's a timber company surveyed and built a graded road, later improved with gravel topping. In general, this earthen road was built along a route in the hills that separated the watershed of the Sekadau River from that of the Sepauk River (see Map 1), thus becoming a sort of alternative route for the transport of goods and peoples, a third "river", as it were, less influenced by flood seasons and dry seasons. This new transportation route, like the ancient but unpredictable Sekadau and Sepauk riverway routes, also "debouched" at the southern side of the Kapuas River, at the point where a boat harbour had been constructed. From this transfer point, the timber could be more easily and cheaply floated and towed to a plywood factory built in Sanggau, a town about 50 km downriver from this transfer harbour. This timber extraction road was known as "Jalan Kayu Lapis", the Plywood Road.

At first, the road stretched from the harbour roughly southward for about 80 km, a route that brought it through or near the traditional forest resource areas and fruit orchards of the Sekujam group. Eventually the whole region served by this road came to be known as Kayu Lapis. Indeed, the impact of the road has changed in some ways the regional identity of the people who live near it. They are now from Kayu Lapis; only an insider's familiarity with the road will reveal where the border between the two *kabupatens* it transverses lays. Moreover, local villagers often do not know the names of the hamlets and villages that the road passes through. For example, Engkersik is better known as "Kilo Lima Belas" (The fifteenth kilometre), and its closest neighbouring village on the road, Sejaong, as "Kilo Dua Belas" (The twelfth kilometre). The numbers are based on the distance from the river harbour, although nowadays most traffic leaves the road to join the provincial highway, some 3-5 km closer than that harbour.

Besides causing, or at least accelerating, massive deforestation in the area, the road has also led to serious degradation of the hillsides and valley bottoms. This has occurred not only through erosion but also in many cases because of the exploitation of mineral resources.¹⁹ The road has provided not only enhanced transportation access for forest and agricultural products, but also for tons of gravel from numerous quarries and, more spectacularly, for significant quantities of gold extracted from wildcat hillside mines and extraction from rivers with high pressure water hoses.

Second, as the timber and mine industries developed, some of the Sekujam villagers who lived rather near the Kayu Lapis Road were persuaded to

¹⁹ In at least one location near present-day Sejaong, the road was built directly over the salt springs that had been worked by the local villagers to produce salt that served as a steady source of income through trade with other ethnic groups. See Westenenk (1897) for an early report of this indigenous industry and trade and Heynen (1937) for an idea of the complex sharing of rights to the springs among several ethnic groups.

hand over their hereditary lands to be developed as palm oil plantations. Any surviving long houses (*rumah batang*)²⁰ were torn down and the physical structure and layout of whole villages were reorganized. Nuclear families (that perhaps had previously lived with their closest relatives in long houses) began to erect their own, private homes often at some distance from each other along the small roads that were built to connect these inhabitants with the main Kayu Lapis Road. For example, Engkersik is an administrative *desa* that includes several other hamlets now rebuilt as parts of the new Engkersik; a grid of roads and lanes with a commercial centre.

Third, according to most informants, in the 1980's most Sekujam people converted to Roman Catholicism;²¹ chapels and churches appeared along each side of the road and deep in the interior (reorganized) hamlets. In addition to erecting chapels and bell towers, some communities took the initiative of building primary schools at their own expense (Derani 2006: 129). This enhanced access to education meant a dramatic increase in the number of students. Finally, a lower secondary school was built in the middle of Engkersik, the main communal centre of the Sekujam in the Sekadau Kabupaten. This secondary school became a powerful centrifugal force attracting students from other villages and hamlets where Sekujam was not the patrilineal language.

Fourth, the development of the area's infrastructure, such as schools and roads, as well as the spread of palm oil plantations and private holdings, has changed an area that was rather isolated into a region that is appealing to outsiders who then migrated from more distant areas. Today in some Sekujam villages and hamlets, such as Engkersik and Segori (a Sekujam hamlet that now falls within the borders of Tekam Gonis, the administrative *desa*), migrants whose languages and religions are different now live side by side as neighbours of the Sekujam villagers. For example, between 1993 and 1994 the number of people living in Engkersik grew by a remarkable 33% (Mantri Statistik 1996: 19).²² Apparently, an increase that large in only twelve months

²⁰ The term *rumah batang* or *rumah betang* is used in West Kalimantan to refer to a residential building in which several nuclear families live and, thus, form a single village. These traditional houses that are comprised of a number of compartments, usually one for each nuclear family, most often were built as long buildings of consecutive compartments/quarters located at a river bank. In Dutch colonial census terminology (see, for example, Enthoven (1903)), the inhabitants were not enumerated individually; rather, the number of inhabitants in each longhouse was estimated on the basis of the number of doors (*lawang*), that is the doors of each nuclear family's compartment (*bilik*).

²¹ Apparently, however, even before the 1980's there were already some Catholics among the Sekujam. Indeed, Dijker (1974: 361) reported that Catholic missionary activities in the Sepauk River Valley had begun as early as 1947. So, in 1974 there were already 800 Catholics in the Sepauk Valley, but most of these Catholics were from another Ibanic ethnic group, the Seberuang. In any case, there was already a Catholic mission station with a primary school (grades 1-3) in the Sekujam area of Sintang in 1947. In contrast, the Catholic mission station in the Sekadau area was only opened in 1950 (Leer 1974: 338) with no significant impact until Sekadau became an Apostolic Prefecture in 1968 (Van de Boom 1974: 389). Unfortunately, no detailed information about activities in the Sekujam area of Sekadau has been found yet.

²² By contrast, in the preceding year that is between 1992 and 1993, population increase was

was caused by accelerated migration to Engkersik, not by a change in fertility and a reduction in morbidity!²³

These four interconnected developments, that is enhanced transportation facilities, deforestation and subsequent plantation economization, religious conversion with concomitant education fervour, and in-migration of other ethnic groups, have had an enormous impact on the day-to-day lives, the aspirations, and the epistemologies of the Sekujam speakers, as they have on all the diverse ethnic groups living in the Kayu Lapis research area. Buses and trucks, increasingly motorcycles,²⁴ pass back and forth along the Kayu Lapis Road each day.²⁵ Places that were once faraway have become accessible. For example, forty years ago, a trip from Engkersik to Sekadau would have required more than a day's traveling, beginning with a long walk to a river to wait for a motorized boat that would eventually carry its passengers to the government centre in Sekadau town. Now Engkersik is only 33 km from Sekadau along the well-paved provincial road and the unpaved Kayu Lapis Road. If the conditions are dry, that distance can be covered by motorcycle in 30-45 minutes. It has been observed during numerous research trips to the field area (2004-2006) that, although many Sekujam villagers work as labourers on palm oil plantations, others still tap rubber or collect palm oil fruits in their own holdings. In fact, in some places traditional swidden rice cultivation is maintained. These agricultural products can be transported to nearby towns and other places much more easily than in the past. This commercial access has meant an increase in villagers' incomes. So, through these roads there are now financial resources to invest in the education of village children. The roads provide access to markets but also access to the many public and private secondary schools²⁶ that are also located in the main commercial centre, Sekadau town.

Although there had been many social changes, ten years ago data reflecting

recorded at only 1%. So an increase of 33% is a remarkable statistic. However, we should consider that redistricting and the incorporation of smaller hamlets may have played a role in this increase. Refer to the relevant figures in Mantri Statistik (1996: 19).

²³ For example, within the borders of the Engkersik *desa*, the village of Merunyau has both Sekujam and Desa (another Ibanic group) inhabitants; indeed, in the past several years a number of families from the Nusa Tenggara Timur province – far on the southeast border of Indonesia – has taken up residence in Merunyau as well (P. Derani, private communication, 30-4-2006). In the village of Derajau the population is made up of Sekujam, Desa, Kerabat and Malays as well (Yulius Malit, private communication, 2-5-2006).

²⁴ As in other parts of Indonesia, many of the motorcycles on the Kayu Lapis Road are unlicensed public transportation vehicles. Known as *motor ojek*, the driver of the vehicle and his passenger agree on a price for a trip to a specified place.

²⁵ But during the rainy season transportation is disrupted and often only seasoned motorbike drivers can make their way along the Kayu Lapis Road (Nu, private communication, 16-8-2006). In the case of *motor ojek* transportation, the price doubles or triples at those times. In recent years, road maintenance has all but stopped and an overall decline in the quality of the road has seriously effected communication and transportation. Increasingly, other routes, depending on motorcycle roads (paths?) that connect the Kayu Lapis area with a roughly parallel road several kilometres to the west (leading southward from Sekadau town) are being used.

²⁶ Chong (2005) contained a report about the number of schools in Sekadau town.

the structure and uses of the Sekujam language could still be collected, whether by interviewing secondary school students in Sekadau town or by recording stories told by elderly subsistence farmers working on their ancestral lands in or near the Sepauk River basin. Some of these data about language and language use will be discussed in the following sections.

3. A SKETCH OF SEKUJAM PHONOLOGY

In the course of the research project on the borderlands between Sekadau and Sintang, five Sekujam wordlists consisting of 465 lexical elicitation items were collected in a number of dialects. These lists were transcribed by trained fieldworkers, using the phonetic symbols of the IPA (*International Phonetic Alphabet*). In addition, 23 stories of varying length and a few mantras were tape recorded in five different villages. All these oral materials were transcribed in IPA script and then computerized. Most of these stories were transliterated (word-for-word glossing) into Indonesian; some of those were translated into English. Moreover, four speakers of Sekujam were trained to record and transcribe language data. One of these four was also trained to computerize the data using the programs described above. Thus, data collected and organized by members of the Sekujam community itself forms the basis of the brief phonological description presented here.

The Sekujam language displays some distinct features of pronunciation that are rather different from most of the nearby Ibanic languages, like the Desa, Seberuang, Mualang, and Ketungau Sesat languages.²⁷ For example, if we compare a few cognate pairs between the Sekujam and Desa languages we note some differences in pronunciation that explain why Desa speakers (whose villages are the closest Ibanic villages to the Sekujam as suggested on Map 1) find Sekujam difficult to follow, see below:

English	Sekujam	Desa
fang	<i>taxiədn</i>	<i>taxia</i>
worm	<i>caciɔn</i>	<i>caciā</i>
forehead	<i>kənin</i>	<i>kəniā</i>
wall	<i>diniɔn</i>	<i>dindaw</i>
ear	<i>pəni:dn</i>	<i>pəni:a</i>

Whatever the differences in the phonetic pronunciation of these languages, the underlying phonologies that anchor the pronunciation of the sounds

²⁷ Further but quite limited information about these four Ibanic languages can be found in Collins (2004a). Among these four languages, only Mualang has a rather long record of academic research. In addition to Dunselman's pioneering work on Mualang (1950, 1955), we note Tjia's (2007) dissertation on the same language. However, recently Herpanus (2009, 2014, 2015) has significantly added to our knowledge about the Desa language, chiefly spoken in the Sintang area. Elsewhere in this essay, Ketungau Sesat will be mentioned under the name Ketungau.

remains fundamentally similar, starting with the numbers of consonants and vowels in all these variants.²⁸ So it can be said that, although some aspects of Sekujam phonetics are different from the neighbouring Ibanic languages, the underlying phonology of Sekujam is similar to the phonologies of most Ibanic languages. In this section, the Sekujam consonant and vowel inventories are presented. An analysis of some of the allophonic variation observed thus far is also presented. For the sake of consistency, only one Sekujam variant, the Engkersik variant, has been chosen as the basis of this brief description. This means that the description is not complete because some other Sekujam variants show slight phonetic differences. These differences are only rarely noted in the following description of the Sekujam sound system.

CONSONANTS

Data, collected and recorded in the field, demonstrates that the Sekujam language has 19 consonant phonemes.²⁹ Six points of articulation can be considered relevant: Bilabial, Alveolar, Palatal, Velar, Uvular, and Glottal. With respect to the manner of articulation, we list five characteristic sounds of Sekujam: Occlusive, Fricative, Nasal, Lateral, and Semivowel. The results of this analysis can be reviewed in Table 1.

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Voiceless plosive	p	t		k		ʔ
Voiced plosive	b	d		g		
Voiceless fricative		s	c			h
Voiced fricative			j		ɣ	
Nasal	m	n	ɲ	ŋ		
Lateral		l				
Semivowel	w		y			

Table 1. The consonant inventory of Sekujam.³⁰

Details about the distribution of the consonants as well as allophonic variation in their pronunciation are only considered briefly in this essay. Similarly, only a limited number of examples are presented; moreover, in general, minimal pairs are not included here.

There are seven plosives. The voiceless bilabial plosive, /p/, can be found in all positions; however, its voiced counterpart, /b/, does not appear in

²⁸ However, Anderbeck (2018: 187-189) points out that Sekujam has not undergone the shift of *ɣ > ʔ in the final position of certain words and, thus, he implies that the retention of a rhotic reflex of *ɣ indicates the conservative nature of the Sekujam language.

²⁹ This list of Sekujam consonants can be compared with the list of Iban consonants provided by Steinmayer (1999: 12-14).

³⁰ In this essay, the IPA symbols for voiced and voiceless palatal fricatives have been replaced with simple /c/ and /j/ following Malay and Indonesian orthography.

word-final position. Note:

/p/		/b/	
<i>puak</i>	'search for honey'	<i>bau</i>	'shoulder'
<i>ŋapũ:</i>	'afloat'	<i>kiba?</i>	'left'
<i>c^hlap</i>	'cold'	---	

Likewise, the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ can be found in all positions, but /d/ is not found in final position. Examples include:

/t/		/d/	
<i>tau?</i>	'be able, can'	<i>dasa?</i>	'tasteless, not delicious'
<i>kəti</i>	'how'	<i>padah</i>	'inform'
<i>ukat</i>	'root'	---	

The voiceless velar occlusive /k/ is found in all positions. However, in the word-final position /k/ appears as the allophone [ʔ], voiceless glottal plosive. The voiced velar plosive is found only in initial and medial positions. See below: The phoneme /g/ does not occur in final position,

/k/		/g/	
<i>kənin</i>	'forehead'	<i>gisah</i>	'story'
<i>laŋkaw</i>	'forest shelter'	<i>nəga?</i>	'look for'
<i>tuŋo?</i>	'finger'	---	

In addition to [ʔ], an allophone of /k/, there is also the glottal plosive phoneme, /ʔ/, that contrasts with zero and is only found in the word-final position, for example:

<i>mani?</i>	'bathe'
<i>siku?</i>	'one (counter for animals et al.)'
<i>ia?</i>	'that'
<i>lama?</i>	'lengthy (of time)'

As noted, this glottal plosive has phonemic status because in Sekujam there are many words that end in vowels (not followed by a glottal plosive). Thus, /ʔ/ in the words above is not merely an optional phonetic "closure". Among the words that always end with a final vowel are:

<i>ati</i>	‘liver; seat of emotion’
<i>laki</i>	‘husband’
<i>ŋkayu</i>	‘suckle (a child)’
<i>mata</i>	‘eye’
<i>bila</i>	‘when’

So, in word-final position, the phoneme /ʔ/ contrasts with zero, or Ø. In fact, in the corpus there are clear minimal pairs, that demonstrate this contrast of Ø and /ʔ/, for example:

- Ø		/-ʔ/	
<i>muka</i>	‘face’	<i>mukaʔ</i>	‘open’
<i>naŋa</i>	‘estuary, river mouth’	<i>naŋkaʔ</i>	‘jackfruit’

Taking these differing forms into account, we can conclude that in word-final position /ʔ/ and Ø are different. Furthermore, the phoneme /ʔ/ is different from /k/, although in word-final position /k/ appears in its allophonic form [ʔ], as we saw above. Indeed in the Sekujam language we find pairs such as these:

/-ʔ/		/-k/	
<i>nimaʔ</i>	‘draw (water)’	<i>nimaʔ</i>	‘shoot’
<i>lamaʔ</i>	‘lengthy (of time)’	<i>lamaʔ</i>	‘fatty tissue’

Clearly, it is the low back unrounded vowel [ɑ] that appears before the phoneme /ʔ/, whereas the low front unrounded vowel [a] appears before /k/, although the allophone of /k/ in that position is [ʔ]. The difference in the phonetic shape of the phoneme /a/ demonstrates the phonemic difference between /ʔ/ and /k/. So we conclude that the number of plosives in Sekujam is seven: /p, b, t, d, k, g/ and /ʔ/.

There are five fricatives (or affricates) in Sekujam. The voiceless alveolar fricative, /s/, appears in all positions.³¹ For example,

³¹ In another Ibanic language, Ketungau, which is spoken towards the west and north of Sekujam communities, /s/ undergoes lenition and becomes [h] in word-final position (Collins 2004a: 28). Among the Sekujam variants studied in this essay, none demonstrates this allophonic variation.

/s/

səmpaaʔ 'kind of large spider'

asuʔ 'dog'

mpuŋas 'wash other's face'

The voiceless alveopalatal fricative, /c/, and also its voiced counterpart, /j/, can be found only in initial and medial positions, as follows:

/c/

cəkaʔ 'choke (the neck)'

ŋacoʔ 'poke or prod (fruit)'

/j/

jaŋi 'hand, forearm'

bujoŋx 'straight, curveless'

The voiced uvular fricative, /ʁ/, occurs in all positions.³² But in the word-final position, this phoneme /ʁ/ often is weakened until it “trails off” or “fades out” and the segment is pronounced with a voiceless off-glide, namely a weak voiceless uvular fricative. So, phonetically it occurs as [ʁ^x]; but, sometimes, the final /ʁ/ is simply devoiced and is pronounced as a voiceless uvular fricative, [χ].³³ Some examples of this distribution are found below:

kəkũ: 'neck'

bakaʔ '(glowing) ember'

suak^x 'punt, pole'

kotoχ 'dirty'

The voiceless glottal fricative, /h/, only appears in intervocalic and word-final positions; note:

kahã 'jaw'

majoh 'eat (said in anger)'

However, it must be admitted that in the existing Sekujam corpus, intervocalic /h/ is rarely found.

³² There is another Malayic language, Benawas, spoken in hamlets neighbouring Sekujam-speaking communities, and some Desa dialects which also display the phoneme /ʁ/ from Proto-Austronesian *ɣ. Apparently, some Ibanic variants spoken further east along the Ketungau River also use /ʁ/, but the distribution of the allophone is not clear; see Chong (2006).

³³ It might be useful to compare this Sekujam phonetic variation of /ʁ/ with the discussion in Ladefoged and Maddieson (1996: 233-234) about the change between the uvular fricative and the uvular approximate in standard German.

Sekujam displays four nasal consonants. The bilabial, alveolar and velar nasals /m, n, ŋ/ can be found in all positions, but the palatal nasal phoneme /ɲ/ does not occur in word-final position. The velar nasal phoneme /ŋ/ occurs in word final position but in two allophonic forms. If word-final /ŋ/ follows a front vowel, [i] or [e], assimilation occurs. The phoneme /ŋ/ in that conditioned position appears only as the front nasal allophone, [n].³⁴ Furthermore, if word-final /ŋ/ follows a non-front vowel, /ŋ/ leaves only a nasal trace on the preceding vowel, [Ṽ:]. This means that /ŋ/ is not pronounced but the preceding vowel is lengthened and nasalized /Vŋ/ → [Ṽ:]. Some examples of the distribution of all nasal phonemes are presented below:

/m/	/n/	/ŋ/	/ɲ/
<i>mulah</i> 'make'	<i>naʔ</i> 'want'	<i>ŋuŋap</i> 'chew'	<i>ɲucup</i> 'suck'
<i>kəmay</i> 'swollen'	<i>manoʔ</i> 'chicken'	<i>aŋin</i> 'wind'	<i>məŋadi</i> 'other's relative'
<i>nanam</i> 'plant (s.t.)'	<i>kanan</i> 'rightside'	<i>uɤã:</i> 'human'	---
		<i>idō:</i> 'nose'	

Based on the data available, /ŋ/ only occurs in final position in two allophonic forms, namely as [n], when following a front vowel, and, when following non-front vowels, as nasality and length associated with the preceding vowel (that is /aŋ/ → [ã:], /uŋ/ → [ũ:] and /oŋ/ → [õ:].

In addition to these allophonic variations of /ŋ/, in fact, /m/ and [n] (both the allophone of /ŋ/ and also word-final /-n/) each display an additional phonetic form when they occur in word-final position, where the consonant that begins that final syllable is not a nasal consonant. So, in the position CVN#, where C is not a nasal consonant, N becomes CN, as noted in the following formula:

$$-N \rightarrow -CN / CV_ \#.$$

This nasal fortition is a regularly conditioned change in Sekujam's final nasals. Thus, the phoneme /m/ in word-final position when it does not follow a vowel preceded by a nasal appears as [pm]. Similarly, in the same conditioned position, /n/ and also [n] (from /ŋ/ after front vowels) appears in its allophonic form, [tn]. We can summarize by saying that each nasal in that conditioned position is accompanied by a (strengthening) homorganic occlusive. Allophonic changes like this occur in many (but not all) languages and dialects of West Kalimantan, although the details of the phonetic conditions for these changes may differ from language to language and dialect to dialect. This change in nasal consonants can be considered consonantal diphthongization or nasal preocclusivization. A few of the examples found

³⁴ Anderbeck (2018: 176-177) notes that this innovation, although found in Seberuang, is not common among Ibanic variants and may be an indication of influence of local non-Ibanic Malayic languages.

in the Sekujam corpus are set forth in Table 2.

Nasals following nasals		Nasals following non-nasals	
<i>nanām</i>	'plant (something)'	<i>jaɤurɤm</i>	'needle'
<i>aŋĩn</i>	'wind'	<i>kabatn</i>	'friend'
<i>kənĩn</i>	'forehead'	<i>gasitn</i>	'a top'

Table 2. The pronunciation of word-final nasal consonants in Sekujam, I.

There remains, however, one more detail in this conditioned change to discuss, albeit briefly. As is the case in many languages of the Malay World,³⁵ including some of West Kalimantan's languages, in the Sekujam language the consonant cluster NC, that is a nasal (N) followed by a non-nasal consonant (C), is pronounced as NC, only if that consonant (C) is voiceless. So there are words such as:

<i>mampu?</i>	'wash clothes'
<i>pantax</i>	'platform (floor)'
<i>maɤcal</i>	'fool around, aimlessly play around'
<i>paŋkũ</i>	'strike something (with a tool or weapon)'

But, if the consonant (C) of the phonemic NC sequence is voiced, only the nasal is heard. For example:

<i>nima?</i>	'dip or draw (water)'
<i>mani?</i>	'bathe'
<i>paɤay</i>	'long'
<i>jeɤex</i>	'cock's comb'

However, we must emphasize that the N of the phonemic sequence /NC/ is different from /N/, the N that is a free-standing consonant and not part of a phonemic consonant sequence, /NC/. This is demonstrated by the fact that the impact of N (<NC) on the sounds that follow it is different from the impact of N from /N/. If N that arises from the phonemic structure /NC/ occurs, the following vowel is not phonetically nasalized. Furthermore, the word-final nasal following a non-nasalized vowel undergoes the strengthening

³⁵ Among those languages displaying this phonetic change is Malay. Numerous Malay dialects treat NC clusters in different ways depending on whether the consonant of the cluster is voiced or not; see, for example, data from Kedah Malay spoken on the far north-western edge of the Malay World (Collins 1976).

phenomenon discussed above. So, the N of the sequence /NC/ is pronounced [N], but it does not trigger nasality in the following vowel and, thus, the word-final nasal occurs as its strengthened allophone, [CN], the so-called preocclusivized nasal, or nasal diphthong. This phenomenon can be observed in Table 3, in which word-final nasals that occur after N from /NC/ are contrasted with word-final nasals that occur after phonemic (single) /N/.

Nasals following single nasal phonemes		Nasals following nasal-consonant (/NC/) phonemes		
<i>nanām</i>	‘plant (something)’	<i>κənapm</i>	‘soak’	< /nd/
<i>aŋĩn</i>	‘wind’	<i>piŋatn</i>	‘plate’	< /ŋg/
<i>kəniĩn</i>	‘forehead’	<i>diniĩn</i>	‘wall’	< /nd/

Table 3. The pronunciation of word-final nasal consonants in Sekujam, II.

So, although phonetically the voiced consonant that follows N in the sequence (/NC/) (when C is voiced) is not heard, phonemically (phonologically) the influence of that C (in the sequence /NC/ still occurs – demonstrated by the fact that the following vowel is not nasalized. Thus, the word-final nasal can be diphthongized (preocclusivized). We note, for example, that /dindiŋ/ > [diniĩn] ‘wall’, has undergone diphthongization:

[–n] → [–tn],

but /aŋĩn/ > [aŋĩn] ‘wind’ has not; indeed the final vowel underwent phonetic nasalization.

Besides the nasal consonants with somewhat complicated phonological details, in the Sekujam language, there is one alveolar lateral, /l/, which appears as [l] in all positions:

/l/

linsa ‘head lice eggs, nits’

kəlinā: ‘durian flowers in bloom’

maŋcal ‘play around’

In Sekujam there are two semi-vowels, the bilabial, /w/ and the palatal /y/,³⁶ both appear in medial position; examples include:

³⁶ Again local orthography and usage, not IPA, is used here.

/w/		/y/	
<i>tawã</i>	'pond, pool'	<i>kayu</i>	'vegetables'
<i>pəkaway</i>	'kind of durian [Durian <i>kutejensis</i>]'	<i>bəkayoh</i>	'paddle (a boat)'

In word-final position, [w] and [y] occur as components of diphthongs, or as off-glides in phonetic diphthongization processes. These occurrences of [w] and [y] are discussed in the following section about vowels and diphthongs.

VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS

A careful examination of the data presented so far in this essay about Sekujam consonants indicates that there are many vowels in this language. Among them are [a], [ɑ], [ã:], [ə], [i], [e], [u], [o], [ũ:], [õ:]. Nonetheless, at this stage of analysis, it is likely that in Sekujam there are only four vowel phonemes, as suggested in Table 4.

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid		ə	
Low		a	

Table 4. The distribution of vowel phonemes in Sekujam.

All the other vowels that appear in the Sekujam corpus are considered allophones of one the four phonemes in Table 4, as we shall see below. There are also diphthongs in the corpus.³⁷

In Sekujam, there are two central vowels, /ə/ and /a/. The mid central vowel, /ə/, only appears in pre-penultimate or penultimate positions. In the corpus at hand, /ə/ is found only in interconsonantal positions. For example,

/ə/	
<i>mpədu?</i>	'gallbladder'
<i>kəbat</i>	'tie (rope)'
<i>nəlipatn</i>	'centipede'
<i>pəlanʔkatn</i>	'a wallow, mud hole'

Rarely, if the speaker chooses to emphasize a word, /ə/ can be heard in the word-initial position. The village name, Engkersik, usually [ŋkəksi?], might be pronounced emphatically (or identically?) as [əŋkəksi?], following the official spelling of the place name.

³⁷ In fact, the corpus contains a limited number of examples of the diphthongs /oy/ and /uy/. If more data were available, the status of these forms could be analysed.

The low central vowel, /a/, occurs in final and penultimate positions. In the penultimate syllable, /a/ appears as [a]. Usually the allophone of /a/ in final closed syllables is also [a]. However, if the final consonant is /ŋ/, nasality shifts from /ŋ/ to /a/ which then is pronounced as [ã:], a nasalized low central vowel, often lengthened; the (underlying) phoneme /ŋ/ is not heard. For example,

/a/	
<i>dautn</i>	'leaf'
<i>ana?</i>	'child'
<i>ɤməyan</i>	'kind of rambutan'
<i>kana:</i>	'animal pen or stall'
<i>puã:</i>	'empty'

However, in final open syllables or in final syllables closed by the glottal plosive phoneme /ʔ/ (see above), /a/ appears in its allophonic form, [a], a low unrounded back vowel.³⁸ Examples include:

/a/	
<i>mata</i>	'eye'
<i>nada</i>	'no, not'
<i>dua?</i>	'two'
<i>kɤa?</i>	'long-tailed macaque' ³⁹
<i>səmpao?</i>	'kind of large spider'

The high front vowel phoneme, /i/, appears in final and penultimate syllables. When /i/ appears in final open syllables, /i/ often undergoes diphthongization through the addition of the off glide [y]; so, in this essay [i^y] is considered an allophone of /i/. Note:

³⁸ The distribution and allophonic features of /a/ in Sekujam differ considerably from Steinmayer's (1999: 10-11) description of Iban vowels.

³⁹ Apparently, when /a/ precedes the phoneme /k/, /a/ is pronounced as [a], even though /k/ in word-final position appears in its allophonic form [ʔ]. So, the vowel of [kɤaʔ] 'long-tailed macaque', ending in a phonemic /ʔ/, contrasts with the vowel of [kɤaʔ] 'scorched crust of cooked rice', ending in the phoneme /k/, pronounced as [ʔ].

/i/	
<i>itapm</i>	‘black’
<i>iju?</i>	‘pull’ ⁴⁰
<i>pəjidu?</i>	‘bucket, dipper, bail’
<i>mija</i>	‘table’
<i>ini?</i>	‘grandmother’
<i>bɛkapiʸ</i>	‘cook (especially prepare rice)’
<i>gigiʸ</i>	‘tooth’

However, we need to note that in the Sekujam data there are forms such as these:

/i/	
<i>kɛe?</i>	‘bite’
<i>bəbale?</i>	‘move forward then turn around’
<i>bibɛɣˣ</i>	‘lip’
<i>mikeɣˣ</i>	‘think’
<i>puteh</i>	‘white’
<i>pədəh</i>	‘painful, ill’

At this point, a tentative analysis might be that in these cases /i/ is lowered from its high front position to the mid position, [e], when /i/ precedes a back consonant such as /k/, /ɣ/ and /h/. If so, [e] is a conditioned allophone of /i/.⁴¹ Indeed, some dialects of Sekujam may display more widespread lowering of /i/ to [e] in all closed final syllables. We should observe that, unlike /a/ and /u/, the phoneme /i/ does not appear in a nasalized allophone in final syllables. The final velar nasal, /ŋ/, triggers the occurrence of nasalized final vowels, but all /-ŋ/ that follow /i/ have become /n/; so the environment that triggers nasalization does not occur.

⁴⁰ This word, [iju?], has a variant form, [ju?], bearing the same meaning. Similarly, [jat] ‘wicked, bad’ appears in addition to [ijat]. Perhaps in these two variant pairs the high front vowel [i] functions as a prothetic vowel, when a monosyllabic word begins with a high front consonant, namely the palatal fricative. This analysis requires testing with data from a larger corpus.

⁴¹ Nonetheless, there are words, usually loanwords, that display [e] in other positions. We note [les lawā:] ‘door or window frame’ (Dutch *lijst*). Likewise, probably the word [jɛŋɛɣˣ] ‘cock’s comb’ with [e] in the penultimate syllable is a loanword from Indonesian *jengger* because in some Sekujam dialects (Timai dan also Serirang Setambang) the term [səxudu] bears the meaning ‘cock’s comb’. The Sekujam word [dagetn] ‘flesh, meat’ may also be an Indonesian loanword (*daging*). At this stage in the research, the loanwords displaying *e* in unexpected positions are not treated as evidence for supporting an additional phoneme in Sekujam.

In Sekujam the high, back rounded vowel, /u/, occurs in the final and penultimate syllables. This phoneme is usually pronounced as [u]. But, if the final consonant of the final syllable is /ŋ/, /u/ is lengthened and nasalized and occurs as [ũ:]. The final /ŋ/ is no longer distinct from the lengthened and nasalized /u/. In addition, when /u/ occurs in an open final syllable, /u/, like /i/, is often diphthongized by adding an off-glide. Thus, [u^w] is considered an allophone of /u/. Some examples are cited below:

/u/	
uḱã:	‘human being’
gukitn	‘lie down’
strum	‘electrical current’ ⁴²
mampu?	‘wash (clothes)’
ŋapũ:	‘float, rise to the surface (of water)’
ḱəkũ:	‘neck’
bau ^w	‘shoulder’
səpu ^w	‘blow’

In the Sekujam corpus, we find another back vowel, the mid back vowel [o], which apparently only occurs in certain phonetic environments. For example,

/u/	
tupno?	‘finger’
mano?	‘chicken’
dapox ^x	‘kitchen’
təsuykoḱ ^x	‘fall head first’
munoh	‘kill’
gucoh	‘punch, strike with the fist’
bəkayoh	‘paddle (a boat)’

Again we must specify the context. In the final syllable, if /u/ is followed by a back consonant, namely /k/, /ḱ/ or /h/, it is lowered and becomes [o]. Because a specific phonetic setting determines this height change from /u/ to [o], we consider this [o] an allophone of /u/.

Sometimes in the final syllable /u/ is also lowered, lengthened and nasalized, if the word ends in /-ŋ/ (although the /-ŋ/ no longer appears),

⁴² This (late?) loanword from Dutch *stroom*, perhaps through Indonesian, does not show the shift of /-m/ > [-pm] that usually occurs when /m/ is word-final following a non-nasal consonant at the beginning of the final syllable.

such as the following,

/u/

idō: 'nose'

mpajō: 'bed'

pasō: 'grasp'

But, as we have noted above, usually /u/ becomes [ū:] in such a position. At this stage in the analysis, using the data available, [ō:] is considered an allophone of /u/, although we have not identified what might condition the occurrence of [ū:] rather than [ō:].

There are at least two diphthongs in Sekujam, /ay/ and /aw/. Both of them only occur in word-final position. Among Ibanic languages, these diphthongs in certain words provide the principle basis for considering Ibanic a distinctive branch of Malayic; see for example Anderbeck (2018). In this brief descriptive essay, neither the arguments about the origin of some of these classificatory diphthongs nor historical comparative theories regarding them are discussed.⁴³ Instead, below we simply present a few examples of /ay/ and /aw/ from any source:

/aw/

pulaw 'island'

limaw 'citrus fruit'

isaw 'machete'

mijaw 'borrow'

jikaw 'cut, slice'

ləmaw 'lazy'

ɲaw 'with; and'

/ay/

səɣay 'lemon grass'

pətay 'kind of tree, *Parkia speciosa*'

muay 'throw away'

məɣay 'grasp'

makay 'eat'

jalay 'walk'

apay 'father'

Certainly, the phonology of the Sekujam language is far more nuanced than the structuralist outline presented here. Moreover, this brief discussion would benefit from instrumental measurements. However, the intent of this simple introduction was only to suggest the complexity of the structure of this seldom studied language and perhaps to interest other linguists in examining Sekujam. In the next section the complexity of the social setting of Sekujam is touched upon.

⁴³ In Collins (2004a) a brief sketch of the history of this academic discourse was presented; see also Anderbeck (2018).

3. THE STATUS AND FUNCTION OF SEKUJAM

Sekujam-speaking communities occupy an area of high linguistic diversity. In addition to a number of other Ibanic languages in the vicinity, such as Desa, Seberuang, and Ketungau, Sekujam speakers interact on a daily basis with speakers of Benawas and Kerabat, two Malayic languages that are not Ibanic.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Sekadau Malay serves as the vehicular language of the area (Chong 2005); Indonesian is also used, especially as the sole language of schools and churches, as well as the principle language of government offices.

In a language ecology as complex and layered as this, it is not surprising that bilingualism, indeed multilingualism, is the norm. In an interview in early 2003, one of our informants, a young man 18 years old, declared he could speak Kerabat, Benawas, Mualang, Sekadau Malay, and Indonesian, as well as some Desa and Ketungau; but his first language, the heritage language of both his parents, was Sekujam. So, by his report, through his day-to-day interactions, he could speak five languages well – in addition to his mother tongue.

The language competencies claimed by this young man were not tested; perhaps he was not a fluent speaker of all those languages. However, the issue here is not language proficiency but language attitudes. We should focus on his perspective of language choice in this diverse setting. Clearly, that Sekujam speaker was very positive about the other languages used in and around his village. This self-reported attitude was rather different from the attitudes of most Sekadau Malays residing in the town of Sekadau, such as Sungai Ringin village; very few of that local (urban) Malay population claim to know any languages but Sekadau Malay and Indonesian. Most of the local Chinese population of Sekadau town, who speak Khok and/or Hok-lo⁴⁵ as their home languages (Chong 2005), report language attitudes that seem to be similar to those of the Malays of Sekadau town. These speakers of one or two Sinitic languages as their first language(s) usually only speak Sekadau Malay and Indonesian as their second and third languages. In general, then, both the Malay and Chinese communities of Sekadau town are not receptive to or interested in local languages, except, of course, Sekadau Malay, the dominant language of the area.

This apparent situation in the town area contrasts with the attitudes and practices of the non-urban communities of the Sekadau regency. In many areas of the Sekadau river valley it is precisely multilingualism that has been observed.⁴⁶ For example, most speakers of the Menterap language in the Nanga Taman district can speak Taman, Mentuka', Sekadau Malay, and Indonesian, besides their heritage language. Likewise, most Menterap speakers in the Nanga Mahap district speak Mahap, Taman, Mentuka', Sekadau Malay, and

⁴⁴ See Collins (2014) for a brief discussion of the relations and roles of some of these languages.

⁴⁵ These languages are also known as Hakka and Teochew, respectively.

⁴⁶ Nonetheless, it is not clear that in all areas of the Sekadau Valley the same degree of multilingualism and the same patterns of language use occur. For example, a survey along the Kiungkang River, a western tributary of the Sekadau river, apparently only the Taman language and Sekadau Malay, as well as Indonesian in formal settings, are used.

Indonesian, in addition to Menterap. See Collins (2004c) for a description of the domains of language use in that area. These two cases of language competencies among Menterap speakers are drawn not from urban settings but rural areas, just as we have noted in the case of Sekujam communities.

If we review the social network in and around the locations of Sekujam villages, apparently the attitudes of Sekujam speakers reported thus far differ in detail from speakers of other languages in the vicinity. In early 2002, a 20 year old male informant of the Benawas language was interviewed. He reported that he spoke only his heritage language, Benawas, Sekadau Malay, Indonesian, and a little Kerabat. But in subsequent sessions months later, in fact, his knowledge of the Sekujam language was comparable to that of first-language speakers of Sekujam of the same age! He did not display a negative attitude towards the Sekujam language; he merely did not consider himself a speaker of Sekujam. In his village, he interacted daily with neighbouring villagers who spoke Sekujam during those interactions. But, Sekujam was not his language, and he never spoke it. So he did not mention it in that first inventory of his language skills. He understood but never uttered Sekujam.

After further research, including observations in a Benawas-speaking village, namely Sejaong, it became clear that language use in the vicinity of Sejaong was very complex. In, at least some of the villages, the phenomenon of split dialogic bilingualism occurred (Collins 2004c). In this variety of bilingualism, throughout a spoken interaction each speaker will only use his or her heritage language. Thus, an ethnic Benawas speaks only Benawas and the Sekujam villager only Sekujam. Each participant understands the other but never uses the other's language. As summarized in Collins (2014: 41):

Speakers choose to maintain their own language even when the chief language of the conversation or the setting is different. In an area where multilingualism is widespread, this is one of the ways of "managing" language use.

Derani (2006: 128) reported a similar strategy in a Sekujam village:

...[T]erdapat dua sampai tiga orang yang merupakan penutur bahasa Benawas yang menikah dengan orang Sekujam dan tinggal di tengah masyarakat Sekujam (di Segori), misalnya, selama puluhan tahun, penutur Benawas masih tetap menggunakan bahasa Benawas untuk berbicara dengan anak cucunya, bahkan sesama pasangan (suami ataupun istri) yang merupakan penutur bahasa yang berbeda.

There are two or three Benawas speakers who have married members of the Sekujam group and reside in the midst of a Sekujam community (Segori), for example, for decades. These speakers of Benawas still consistently use the Benawas language when they talk with their children and grandchildren, indeed, with their spouses (husband or wife) who are speakers of a different language.

In Sejaong the dominant language is Benawas and in Segori Sekujam is dominant; the distance between these two villages is about five kilometres. Yet, the bilingualism that obtains in those proximate villages is "split dialogic

bilingualism". Language praxis in other nearby villages has not been surveyed; however, it is likely that similar patterns of language praxis occur. This pattern of language use in some parts of the Kayu Lapis area is not unique. Indeed, it brings to mind the research of Gomez-Imbert (1996: 443-444) about "linguistic exogamy" among the indigenous peoples of the upriver Amazon region near the border between Brazil and Bolivia:

Since marriage is patrilocal, the dominant language in a local community – traditionally a longhouse – tends to be the father's language; but each in-married woman has her own language and must use it throughout her life in all situations, particularly with her husband and children.

Perhaps we can compare language choice and linguistic exogamy in the upper Amazon with language choice in Segori and Sejaong in the upper reaches of the Sepauk and Sekadau river basins. Apparently in a setting of language diversity, at least in language interactions between speakers of two of the languages functioning in the domestic and family domain, both languages are used but without code switching or language accommodation. Each speaker uses his or her heritage language and each understands the other. Note, however, there are striking differences.

One difference with broader implications is that the patterns of language choice in Segori and Sejaong are not determined by gender differences. Data collected in Segori (30 December 2006), where the dominant, indeed one might say the patrilocal, language is Sekujam, there are thirty-five families considered indigenous families, that is distinguished from Javanese *transmigrasi* families or Malay newcomers. Of this total, eight families (22.9%) are comprised of couples in which only one spouse is ethnic Sekujam. In those eight "mixed" families that reside in Segori, four husbands are not Sekujam; two are Kerabat, one Benawas, and the other Ketungau. There are four non-Sekujam wives; three of them are Benawas and one is Kerabat. According to Petrus Derani (personal communication, 5 January 2007), in all eight families the non-Sekujam spouses who "married in" continued to use their mother tongues with their Sekujam spouses and children, although they had resided in Segori 10-30 years.

However, in the upper Amazon where exogamy is the cultural practice, it is only the women who marry and move to their husband's patrilocal village (longhouse); so it is only the women who maintain their language as a minority language in a community with another dominant language. In the Sekadau and Sepauk watersheds (the Kayu Lapis area), both men and women marry into communities with other dominant languages. At least some of those who "marry into" communities speaking languages other than their own persist in speaking only their own heritage languages.

The Indonesian scholar, Petrus Derani, reported the case of a Sekujam grandfather who had married into and took up residence, indeed opened a general goods shop, in Sejaong, a village that speaks Benawas as their emblematic language. Although he had lived there for fifty years in the midst of a Benawas-speaking community, Derani (2006: 129) wrote:

[H]e still consistently maintained the use of the Sekujam language when he talked with members of the Benawas group, even with his wife (an ethnic Benawas), his children, and grandchildren. It was observed that he also used the Sekujam language with whomever he interacted, for example traveling salesmen from Pontianak, Malay villagers selling their rubber, as well as people who stopped briefly or visited the [Benawas] village [of residence]. But this Sekujam man spoke Indonesian [only] with those persons who did not know the Sekujam language at all.⁴⁷

Let us emphasize that this language behaviour not only demonstrates loyalty to his heritage language, but also reflects the norms and expectations of a multilingual civilization that has determined these patterns of language use and language choice. The linguistic behaviour of this Sekujam grandfather in Sejaong or of the Benawas grandmothers in Segori can be maintained because these communities, this civilization, practice split dialogic bilingualism such that their choices are in line with the cultural norms of the region.

In the case of the Sekujam and Benawas languages along the Kayu Lapis road, perhaps we might see proof of a democratic attitude in which each speaker and each language has equal value. But this conclusion may be difficult to prove because there are two issues that should be considered. First, the number of Sekujam persons in this area is probably ten times larger than the number of Benawas.⁴⁸ One may assume that more Benawas speakers “know” the Sekujam language than Sekujam speakers “know” Benawas. Second, among the Benawas community of Kayu Lapis, the Sekujam language, indeed, plays an important role in ritual discourse. Of course, the main ritual language in the area’s Benawas communities is now Indonesian because almost all Benawas speakers in the area have embraced Catholicism and only Indonesian is used in church rituals (Collins 2014; Derani 2006). But in rituals outside of church and prayer meetings Sekujam plays a prominent role. For example, in the ceremony following the felling of a forest tree to prepare for the planting of swidden rice fields, the mantras that are recited contain numerous Sekujam words and phrases (Derani 2006: 132-133). Similarly, numerous traditional rituals are carried out in Sejaong. Collins (2014: 44) summarized one such event that took place when he was in the village:

On 10 July 2004 one of these rituals was held in Sejaong. This was a *perajah mimpi* ritual intended to deflect the consequences of an unlucky dream; see Derani (2004) for some examples of unlucky dreams and their interpretations. The family

⁴⁷ The original Indonesian:

Dia masih tetap mengekalkan penggunaan bahasa Sekujamnya dalam berbicara kepada orang Benawas maupun istri (orang Benawas), anak dan cucunya. Diperhatikan bahwa dia turut menggunakan bahasa Sekujam dengan siapa saja yang berinteraksi dengannya, misalnya penjaja barang dari Pontianak, penjual karet dari kampung Melayu maupun orang yang singgah maupun orang yang datang di kampung tersebut. Tetapi orang Sekujam ini berbahasa Indonesia dengan orang yang tidak tahu sama sekali bahasa Sekujam.

⁴⁸ The total Benawas-speaking community of the Sekadau regency is divided into two discontinuous areas; only three Benawas villages are located east of the Sekadau River in the vicinity of the Kayu Lapis road. See Collins (2005c).

holding the ritual in 2004 was a Benawas family, but the ritual specialist was an ethnic Sekujam practitioner. The entire ceremony was conducted in the Sekujam language.

In the geographical area where Sekujam is spoken, we have observed a high level of awareness about multilingualism and even language tolerance that perhaps supports the maintenance of the numerous languages spoken in that bounded geographic area. Nonetheless, all of these observations (some of which are now ten years old or more) and the resulting tentative analyses should be reviewed, studied and tested because our understanding of the historical and social connections among these communities is limited.

CONCLUSION

Fifteen years ago, Collins (2003b) lamented:

Sekujam is neither a written language nor does its name appear in the standard language atlas of the area (Wurm and Hattori 1983), Indonesia's latest official language survey (Wati 2002) or The Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Ethnologue overview of Indonesian languages (SIL 2001). It is not surprising, then, that the overall task of describing and documenting this language had never been undertaken prior to this research project.

Since then, the situation has changed, but only very little. Written Sekujam texts now appear in social media, albeit as brief texts usually only in private exchanges. However, Indonesia's Badan Bahasa (Mahsun 2008) and SIL's *Ethnologue* [<https://www.ethnologue.com/browse/names/>] still does not mention it. There is some information in Alloy et al. (2008) and a few other published sources. So, in this brief essay, we presented merely a partial description of the structure of Sekujam as well as a look at its sociolinguistic setting with regard to language use in a multilingual ecology. Of course, results and analyses are tentative. Many aspects of language description and language use are not discussed in this essay.

The structural description was limited to a brief sketch of only the phonology. Numerous phonological phenomena were not discussed, for example the sounds of the Sekujam ideophones.⁴⁹ Sekujam morphology and syntax were not touched upon in this essay.⁵⁰ In fact, a discussion of morphology may have yielded insights towards the classification of Sekujam in the Ibanic family and also information about possible convergence with the languages of the area. The sociolinguistic analyses set forth here focused on the role and function in the multilingual setting of the area. Unfortunately, we could only mention in passing factors that may have had an impact on the development of this language ecology. We considered in some detail the rather recent reconfiguration of communication and transportation through

⁴⁹ In many of the Sekujam stories recorded and transcribed, numerous ideophones occurred, as has been the case in other Malayic languages, such as Kedah Malay (Collins 1979) and Tioman Malay (Collins 1984).

⁵⁰ Collins (2007b) discussed some affixational processes of Sekujam.

road construction and palm oil agriculture. But we did not discuss the historical westward movement of other Ibanic groups, such as the Seberuang, due to colonial incursions and back migration of Sarawak's Ibans. The social and economic importance of the salt springs near Sejaong and Engkersik (Westenenk 1897) in setting the ground work for the specific features of Sekujam-Benawas bilingualism was also not explored.

Cultural phenomena related to language choice were only noted in passing. Although the importance of Sekujam in the mantras and rituals of the Benawas language community was mentioned, the rituals and belief systems of the Sekujam speakers themselves in their own communities were not considered. Indeed, ritual registers are inter-connected with oral literature. Collins (2011) discussed the continuity of themes and topoi in Sekujam and Kerabat oral literature,⁵¹ but, in fact, in the project's corpus there are twenty-three recorded and transcribed folk tales that have not yet been studied in detail.

With only 3000-4000 speakers of Sekujam, it is imperative that language planners and local cultural groups assess the level of vitality of this language, lest the Sekujam language, which is only now being recognized, become another obsolescent minority language. Sekujam and most of the local languages of west Kalimantan compete for social domains with the dominant vehicular language, in Sekujam's case, Sekadau Malay, and the national Indonesian language, the language of education, religion and government.⁵² Moreover, the impact of the arrival of newcomers unaccustomed to the patterns of the delicate local language ecology has not been studied.

The essay presented here is modest, limited and outdated! The observations about language choice and the impact of education and religion ten or fifteen years ago are almost certainly in need of revision. Moreover, the structural description of Sekujam phonology presented here would benefit from a more contemporary approach. Nonetheless, this essay can shed some light on the path or paths that need to be taken by other scholars whose appreciation and understanding of the cultural and language networks of Kalimantan are both deep and sustainable. Incomplete surveys (Mahsun 2008) or mere hearsay (*Ethnologue* (SIL 2001) and its online version) can neither encompass nor explain the complexity of the language ecology of western Borneo.

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⁵¹ Please refer to the texts produced by Derani (2004a, 2004b).

⁵² It has already been reported (Collins 2005b) that some Sekujam speakers in their 20's demonstrated difficulties understanding and explaining Sekujam folk tales. Does this reflect a generation gap or simply the backgrounds of a few speakers? One senses a widening distance between traditional culture and emerging cultural movements.

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