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Book review; Petualangan Unjung dan Mbui Kuvong; Sastra lisan dan kamus Punan Tuvu' dari Kalimantan.

Bernard Sellato

Centre Asie du Sud-Est (CNRS, EHESS, and INaLCO), PSL Research University, Paris,
bernard.sellato@wanadoo.fr

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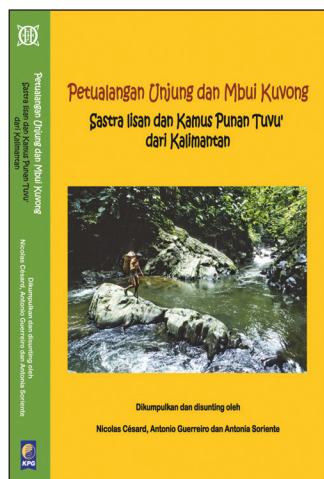
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Nicolas Césard, Antonio Guerreiro, and Antonia Soriente (eds), *Petualangan Unjung dan Mbui Kuvong; Sastra lisan dan kamus Punan Tuvu' dari Kalimantan*. Jakarta: École française d'Extrême-Orient and Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia [Series: Naskah dan Dokumen Nusantara 35.], 2015, 381 pp. ISBN: 978-979-91-0976-7 [Indonesia]; ISBN: 978-2-85539-197-7 [France]. Price: IDR 55,000 (soft cover).



Bernard Sellato

Centre Asie du Sud-Est (CNRS, EHESS, and
INaLCO), PSL Research University, Paris
bernard.sellato@wanadoo.fr

This volume appears as a late sequel of a research program, Culture and Conservation in East Kalimantan (C&C), carried out from 1990 to 1997 in Bulungan (now Malinau) District with recurrent funding from the Ford Foundation in Jakarta, and focused on the immense Kayan Mentarang Nature Reserve (then 1.6 million hectares; later gazetted as a National Park), where WWF Indonesia Programme then started running the Kayan Mentarang

Conservation Project on behalf of the Directorate General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation (PHPA) and in collaboration with the Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI). The C&C program, in its heyday involving up to fifty people, investigated the many facets of local traditional peoples' interaction with their forested environment, including their views of the forest as transpiring through their language, oral literature, and customary law (*adat*) (Two volumes of selected C&C research report, respectively 573 pp. and 297 pp., see: C. Eghenter and B. Sellato 1999; C. Eghenter, B. Sellato, and G.S. Devung 2003).

In 1995, the Foundation for Research and Development in Borneo (Yayasan Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Borneo) was registered in Jakarta, and it soon established in Samarinda a Center for Culture and Nature in Kalimantan (Pusat Kebudayaan dan Alam Kalimantan), also known as the Kalimantan Resource Center (KRC). The KRC library collection, then holding about 1,400 titles, was later (2010) transferred to Balikpapan and expanded to over 3,000 titles, possibly making it the largest library collection on Borneo located in Kalimantan. It is now nicely accommodated at Rumah Bhakti Lestari (Jl. Wiluyo Puspayudho No. 13, Klandasan, Balikpapan; see also <http://total-indonesia-foundation.com/>).

Among C&C researchers were several linguists, as well as a large number of Kalimantan scholars and students, to document the local languages and collect oral literature and history. KRC's mission included the publication of

C&C research output, in several series – “Dictionaries” (vernacular languages), “Oral Literature” (bilingual), “Adat”, and “History” – and its dissemination to source communities and a wider readership, in the hope that this output could be used as “local content” (*muatan lokal*) at village schools. By 1998, when it came to a standstill, KRC had released seven titles.

Almost two decades later, this new volume merges revised and expanded versions of two 1998 KRC volumes by Drs Dollop Mamung on the language and folk literature of the Punan Tubu (or Tufu’), an important traditional community established in Malinau District. The Punan Tubu – here encompassing closely related groups in the Malinau, Mentarang, and Sekatak river drainages – are scattered in some forty settlements (maps pp. 27, 32), for a total population of 3,500 to 4,000 people (pp. 26, 33). The Punan Tubu language has been listed as part of the North Sarawak Group, but its exact position remains ambiguous (pp. 47-49).

The volume’s preliminaries include a short Preface by Antonio Guerreiro, an experienced French scholar of Borneo, and a substantial Introduction (pp. 21-45) by Nicolas Césard and Antonia Soriente. Césard, a French anthropologist, wrote his doctoral thesis on social change among Punan Tubu; Soriente, an Italian linguist with an MA degree from Universitas Indonesia, took her PhD in Kuala Lumpur on Borneo languages and spent years in East Kalimantan.

Dollop, himself a Punan Tubu and an officer of the Punan Adat Council of East Kalimantan, described the “Fonologi bahasa daerah Dayak Punan Tubu” in his 1981 BA (S1) thesis. He then toiled on his own on a Punan Tubu dictionary, generating in 1994 a thick typed draft, which was turned into his 1998 KRC publication. Later yet, he and Soriente painstakingly revised the phonology and transcription system, expanded the dictionary’s corpus, and extensively revised the oral literature texts and Indonesian translations.

After a general presentation of former nomadic groups in Borneo, the book’s Introduction offers a brief history of the Punan Tubu and describes their modern situation, from the 1970s government-prompted resettlement schemes to recent migratory moves back to their upriver territories. It then focuses on their linguistic situation: Punan Tubu, like its Malinau and Mentarang variants, is an endangered language, due to intense cultural mixing in Malinau District and current coal mining activity, and the same holds true of their oral literature.

Albeit dwindling, the Punan Tubu corpus of oral literature – folk tales (*mbui*), folk songs (*keledu’*), epics (*ketuya’*), and healing ritual texts (*wanglangit*) (p. 35) – is quite rich. However, most of the texts that had been recorded since the 1980s have yet to be transcribed and translated. And the present volume, taking its title from the names of two major characters – Unjung, the quintessential beautiful, daring, and independent-minded woman, and Kuvong, a fearless, though somewhat thoughtless, (male) hero – only offers a selection of nine short folk tales (*mbui*), as a small tribute to this literary wealth.

Soriente then discusses at some length the problems met in committing oral texts to paper, the particulars of this corpus, the selected stories, their

contents and mythical components, their construction, their performance and its context, their environment (the village, forest, and river) and the animal characters featured. She concludes by stressing the tales' unique cultural and moral teachings from the not-so-remote times when Punan Tubu were still roaming the hinterland's thick forests as nomads (p. 43).

The folk tale section itself covers a hundred pages (pp. 63-163) with text in Punan Tubu and Indonesian on facing pages. It is preceded by Soriente's brief description of Punan Tubu language (pp. 47-62), successively examining its phonology and morphology, and finally the Punan Tubu kinship system. The 3,000-entry revised Punan Tubu dictionary (pp. 195-372) is preceded by a few introductory pages. A short section devoted to medicinal plants (pp. 165-185) stands as a sort of annex, derived from a 2007 manuscript by Kasim Amat, a Punan Tubu expert, listing 44 species with bilingual descriptions and guidelines for folk medicinal use on facing pages, complete with Linnaean names. In a list of fifteen Punan Tubu informants (p. 373), surprisingly, only one is a woman. The final pages include the editors' biodata and a list of references. A page of Errata was later circulated.

This volume is a most welcome addition to our knowledge of the languages and literatures of Borneo, and in my eyes especially important as it is one of extremely few that ever focused on a minority community of former nomadic hunter-gatherers. Despite a few factual errors – for example, Bulungan is a Murutic isolect, like Tingalan (or Agabag) and Tidung, not a Malay dialect (p. 13) – it is an invaluable accomplishment, for which it would only have been fair that Dollop and Soriente be properly credited as the book's principal editors.

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