

## RIJOQ: VOCAL MUSIC OF DAYAK BENUAQ FROM KUTAI, EAST KALIMANTAN

Ester\*

Agastya Rama Listya\*\*

\*Satya Wacana Christian University of Salatiga, Indonesia  
E-mail: [ester\\_syg@yahoo.co.id](mailto:ester_syg@yahoo.co.id)

\*\*Satya Wacana Christian University of Salatiga, Indonesia  
E-mail: [agastya123@yahoo.com](mailto:agastya123@yahoo.com)

Received: June 2013. Accepted: Februari 2014. Published: Maret 2014

---

### Abstract

*Rijoq*, a Dayak Benuaq vocal music, has been passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition for hundreds of years. When and how it was founded, developed and preserved in the Dayak community remains questionable. But according to some research done by scholars, *Rijoq* has its origin from Dayak Bawo, a tribe living in the borderlines between Central, South, and East Kalimantan. *Rijoq* is normally performed during festivities, such as: initiation, reconciliation, *menugal* (rice planting) and *potong kerbau* (buffalo slaughtering). *Rijoq*'s texts have very deep messages which are considered still relevant to today's life context. On the one hand, it speaks about the horizontal relationship – human beings and their fellows, and human beings and its nature –; and on the other hand, the vertical relationship – human beings with their Creator. The primary concern of doing this research is to preserve *Rijoq* as written and recorded documents. So far, this research has been successful in notating and recording five kinds of *Rijoq*, that is *Peket Muat Bolupm* (working together to build lives), *Rijoq Patuk Ajer* (advice), *Rijoq Natal Tautn Bayuq* (Christmas and New Year), *Rijoq Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe* (the expression of a man's feeling who is falling in love with a woman), and *Rijoq Lati Tana Oreknng Tapa* (forests and lands are disappearing and gone). But this paper is not intended to discuss these five kinds of *Rijoq*. *Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe* is chosen as it is the oldest and the most difficult *Rijoq* among the rest.

© 2014 Sendratasik FBS UNNES

**Keywords:** *Rijoq*; Dayak Benuaq; Bekeleeu

---

### INTRODUCTION

In general all Dayak tribes were the descendants of Chinese immigrants that emigrated from Yunnan in South China (Commans, 1987, p. 3-4). No wonder that some names such as Apui, Bi Lung and Kun Dung Ga which are very common in South China also used as Dayak's names in East Kalimantan (Soemargono et. al, 1992, p. 12). Some scholars believe that Dayak Benuaq was a mixture between Malay, We-doide and Mongoloide, and characterized

by some physical similarities. Ahmad Yunus concludes that Dayak Banuaq originated from the borderlines between Central Sulawesi and Serawak, Malaysia (Yunus, 1992, p. 31). The Ahmad Yunus' conclusion is supported by some similarities found in these two areas, particularly tools used for cultivating the field, battling, hunting the animals, burying the dead bodies, and worshiping the souls of their ancestors.

In their original place, Dayak Benuaq was formerly called "*Luangan*". Due to geographical situation and the pressure

brought by an Iban tribe from the Northern area, Dayak Benuaq has been forced to move to East Kalimantan. In their new home place, they called themselves "Benuaq", which possibly came from the word "Benuaqkn", a name of their new place.

According to their belief, Benuaq is associated with Ningkah or Nyingkah Oloo, a figure of demigod (Dyson, 2008, p. 16-17). The descendants of Nyingkah Oloo spread from the riverside (close to Samarinda, South Kalimantan) to the upper course of Mahakam, a place known as *Gunung Lipan* (Centipede Mountain). On this mountain, Nyingkah Oloo built his home, a place where many poisonous centipedes were living (Dyson, 2008, p. 19-20).

Nyingkah Oloo was married to a Bugis woman, named Dayaang Beliaant. However the name of Tenggara as the capital of Kutai palace did not come from the Bugis words "tangga arung" (king's ladder), but from "wakaai engkaruukng" (Benuaq words meaning wooden root that is frequently used for a fireplace when the people are working together to build their new city). Benuaq people call Tenggara with "tengkaruukng".

### Rijoq

Dayak Benuaq sing their songs in the social and the religious events. The texts of these songs are written in the high literary language that only can be understood by the language experts. Every singer who wants to master the texts and the songs used in the religious events should go through a ritual process.

According to Septianus B., Dayak Benuaq's songs are divided into two, that is sacred and secular. The sacred pieces are in the form of magic formula or sung story that only can be performed during the religious rites. Some kinds of secular pieces are: *dodo* (sung poetry or fairy tale), *dequg* (poetry or fairy tale similar to *dodo* but sung in the faster tempo), *loak* (songs used during the kampong thanksgiving ceremony), *lengot* (similar to *loak* but written in different rhythm and notation), and *rijoq* (a traditional poetry that is sung during spe-

cial or wedding ceremonies).

### The History of Rijoq

None of the *Rijoq* players know when *Rijoq* was born, but they all are convinced that *Rijoq* has been passed down from generation to generation for hundreds of years. F. Setianus B., *Rijoq* is truly convinced that *Rijoq* was originated from Dayak Bawo living in the borderlines between Central, South, and East Kalimantan (now is known as North Barito district). North Barito once was known as a tribe with high cultures and so much influenced by Hindu. This tribe is well known as the creator of noble literatures, such as metaphors, aphorism, fairy tales, and *Rijoq*.

According to the mythology, all joyful arts including *Rijoq* have its origin in *bekeleu* ceremony. This ceremony began with the victory of Tatau Mukng Batuq over the Aput Pererawetn village. After the battle, Tatau Mukng Batuq got a serious illness although *beliatn* ceremony had been offered. One day, Tatau Mujaaq Tuhaaq, Batuq's father, had a dream. In his dream, an old man with white hair telling him that Batuq's illness was a result of *nayuuq*'s and tiger's curse. The spirit of *nayuuq* and the tiger got mad at Tatau Mukng Batuq for not holding *pesengkeet nayuuq* ceremony as a thanksgiving over the victory he had achieved. This old man, then suggested Batuq's father to hold a *bekeleu* ceremony to expel the evil spirits that were sent by *nayuuq* and the tiger (Madrah, 1997, p. 136).

*Bekeleu* ceremony has marked the beginning of all joyful Dayak arts, including *Rijoq*. It has become a strong reason why performing *Rijoq* during the times of sorrow will result in *buhotn* (struck down by death) (Irwanto, 2010, p. 63).

Dayak Benuaq has adopted a lot of Dayak Bawo literatures, e.g. *rijoq* and *beliatn* ceremony. It was possible because Dayak Benuaq did a lot of travels to other Dayak kampongs. Another reason is Dayak Benuaq lived side by side and intermixed with Dayak Bawo.

### The Functions of Rijog

*Rijog* is usually performed during joyful ceremonies. It is first an amusement for the performers itself, particularly during *menugal* (sowing the rice seed), buffalo slaughtering, or when the women preparing the logistic for *menugal* (Irwanto, 2010, p. 63), or when the women picked up *doyo* leaves for making *ulap doyo* (piece of cloth made of leave *doyo* fiber. The making process takes quite a long time because the fibres should be separated first from its leaves before drying and spun). Later, *Rijog* is also sung during the initiation, such as: birth, marriage, expelling calamity (*nalitn tautn*) and peace ceremonies (*nuaak mi-kaat lait*). *Nalitn tautn* is ceremony aims to expel the disaster caused by incest, so that the farmers may harvest rice.

### The Lyrics and the Forms of Rijog

*Rijog* is a speech literature – a kind of literature that has been passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition, for instance, a traditional poetry – that is sung without any music accompaniment. Therefore, a *Rijog* singer is required to be able to show his/her musical ability. In this present day, *Rijog* is no longer an unaccompanied song, but it has been furnished with musical instruments such as: *sapeq*, guitar, drum set, synthesizer, *sulking* (a wooden flute that's rarely found in the performances today). Its verse comprises of two couplets with each line ends with a rhyme. Its texts speak about the relationships between human beings and its Creator, human beings with their fellows, and human beings with its nature. At the beginning *Rijog* was written in an archaic Benuaq language, but later to adjust to the situation, *Rijog's* texts use modern language.

*Rijog* is sung by one singer or two alternates. *Rijog* has a unique ornament that usually placed on the syllables that are located at the beginning or in the middle, and never in the end of a song phrase. The main feature of *Rijog* is the absence of refrain. It has a lyrical melody, tempo which is relatively constant throughout the song,

and quite a complicated rhythmic pattern. The skill of the singers will determine the complexities of its *Rijog's* rhythmic pattern. In the other word, the more skilful the singer, the more complicated the *Rijog's* rhythmic pattern will be.

### *Rijog Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe* (The expression of a man who is falling in love with a woman)

*Rijog Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe* has three motives (figures 1, 2, and 3) and all texts are set in the strophic form.



Figure 1. Rhythmic Motive 1 *Rijog Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe*



Figure 2. Rhythmic Motive 2 *Rijog Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe*



Figure 3. Rhythmic Motive 3 *Rijog Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe*

*Rijog Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe* is also decorated with some ornaments which in Western notation similar to acciaccatura, trill, and slide (figure 4). *Isik Asekng Sookng Bawe* is considered as an old *Rijog* and demands high skills of its performers. This *Rijog* is performed without any accompaniment so singer's creativity and musicality are required.



Figure 4. *Rijog Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe's* ornaments

*Rijog Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe* is a traditional poetry consisting of six stanzas. Each stanza has six lines with the rhyme orders as follow: a – a – a and a – b – b. The

sentence *dodoi dinang ayoq sayang* which does not have any meaning is added to complement the existing melody. Its texts talk about the love between a man and a woman. This *Rijoq* may be performed by male and female singers as a responsorial.

The message of this *Rijoq*: love relationship is a holy one and it is not merely about sexual relationship. Every Dayak person should understand the true meaning of love and should find his/her partner seriously.

*Empit incatn mungih ori*

*Kakatn mungih manan langit akuq  
lilikng langit  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang langit akuq lilikng lan-  
git  
Kami kemkepm mungih kami  
Elokng mungih bungaq kami akuq  
kemkepm lei kami  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang kami  
kemkepm lei kami*

*Empit incatn mungih ori  
Oroq mungih manan langit kuq  
lilikng lei langit  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang langit akuq  
lilikng langit*

*Kami kemkepm mungih kami  
Ituq mungih bungaq kami akuq  
kemkepm lei kami  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang kami akuq  
kemkepm kami  
Empit incatn mungih lewekng*

*Epuq mungih manan langit akuq  
lilikng langit  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang langit akuq  
lilikng lei langit  
Asekng kemkepm mungih aseknng  
Elokng mungih bungaq kami aseknng  
akuq kemkepm lei aseknng  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang aseknng*

*Empit incatn mungih lewekng  
Oroq mungih manan langit akuq  
lilikng lei langit  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang langit akuq  
lilikng langit  
Asekng kemkepm mungih aseknng  
Elokng mungih bungaq kami aseknng  
akuq kemkepm lei aseknng*

*Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang aseknng*

*Ayo butuq mungih umaq  
Amen mungin bungaq konaq akuq  
masengkonaq  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang konaq akuq  
Masengkonaq  
Ruku bere mungih ruku  
Ayoq mungih alukng ruku akuq bere  
lei ruku  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang akuq bere  
lei ruku*

*Ayo botuq mungih suru*

*Aweq lekaq nyalaq akuq nentakng lei  
nyalaq  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang nyalaq  
akuq nentakng lei nyalaq  
Ruku bere mungih ruku  
Uhatn mungih olukng ruku akuq bere  
lei ruku  
Dodoi dinang ayoq sayang ruku akuq  
bere ruku*

Meaning:

A sparrow perches on a house post  
I wish to wander around the sky  
I wish to wander around the sky  
Holding hands together  
To find the flowers to hold on  
To find a girl to marry

A sparrow perches on a house post  
To walk far away circling around  
the sky  
To walk far away to all  
destinations  
Holding hands together  
That is the flower to hold on  
This is the girl that is ready  
to marry  
A sparrow perches on a rice  
winnow  
Have travelled circling around  
the sky  
Have travelled to all destinations  
Sweetheart  
To find the flower  
Sweetheart  
To find a girl, my heart desire  
A sparrow perches on a rice  
Winnow  
To walk far away circling around  
the sky  
To walk far away to all

destinations  
 Sweetheart  
 To find the flower,  
 Sweetheart  
 This is the girl, my heart desire  
 Sweet potatoes in the field  
 If the flower agrees  
 If the flower does not mind  
 to meet  
 Could we meet directly?  
 Let us make a promise to meet  
 Sweet potatoes in the field that has  
 been burned  
 There is nothing wrong  
 There is no need to feel shy and  
 guilty  
 to meet  
 We are about to meet  
 We will meet immediately

## CONCLUSION

The deep moral message of *Rijog's* texts is still considered relevant to today's context. *Rijog Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe* is just an obvious example of how a hundred-year text could bring a strong message to today's people who are ignoring the holiness of love. This research is just a beginning indeed. Many remain hidden and covered. Hopefully, this research will stimulate other researches which try to in-

ventories and to preserve *Rijog* as a completed written document.

## REFERENCES

- Commans, M. (1987). *Manusia Dayak Dahulu, Sekarang, Masa Depan*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia.
- Dyson, P.L. (2008). *Sejarah Sendawar 2*. Surabaya: Airlangga University Press.
- Irwanto. (2010). *Kesenian Rijog: Fungsi dan Keberadaannya*. Thesis. Surakarta: Master's Degree at Postgraduate Program at Institut Seni Indonesia Surakarta.
- Soemargono, K. et al. (1992). *Profil Propinsi Republik Indonesia-Kalimantan Timur*. Jakarta: Yayasan Bhakti Wawasan Nusantara.
- Madrah, T.D. (1997). *Tempuutn: Mitos Dayak Benuaq dan Tujung*. Jakarta: Puspa Swara.
- Yunus, A. (1992). *Upacara Tradisional (Upacara Kematian) Daerah Kalimantan Timur*. Jakarta: Depdikbud.

## Interviews:

- Interview with F. Setianus B. on June 25, 2009.
- Interview with F. Setianus B. on August 8, 2011.

## Appendix

## Rijoq Isiq Asekng Sookng Bawe

Em-pit in-cati mu ngih o - ri Ka- kati mu- ngih ma- nan la-ngita-kuqli- likng le - i

la-ngit Do - do - i - a di - nanga - yo sa- yang la-ngit a - kuqli-likng le - i la- ngit. Ka-mi kem

kepni mu ngih ka- mi e- lokng mu ngih bu ngaq ka- mi a-kuq kem kepni le - i ka- mi Do -

do - i - a ding nanga - yo sa- yang ka-mi a - kuq kem kepni Le - i ka - mi. Em-pit in - cati mu ngih o

ri o - roq, mu- ngih ma nan la-ngita-kuqli- likng le - i la-ngit Do - do - i - a ding

nanga - yo sa- yang la-ngit a - kuqli-likng le - i la- ngit. Ka-mi kem kepni mu- ngih ka- mi i -

tuq, mu ngih bu ngaq ka- mi a-kuq kem -kepni le i ka- mi Do - do - i - a ding nanga - yo sa-

yang ka-mi a - kuq kem kepni Le - i ka - mi. Em-pit in - cati mu ngih le wekng e - puq mu ngih ma nan

la-ngita-kuqli- likng le - i la-ngit Do - do - i - a ding nanga - yo sa- yang la-ngit a - kuqli-

55  

 ting le - i la - ngit. A-sekng kem- kepri mu - ngih a - sekng e - lokng mu - ngih bu ngac

60  

 a-sekng a-kuq kem kepri le - i a-sekng Do - do - i - a ding -nanga - yo sa -

65  

 yang a-sekng a - kuq kem kepri le - i a-sekng. Em-pit in - cati mu ngih le wekng o - roq mu ngih ma na

71  

 la-ngita-kuq fi- ting le - i la-ngit Do - do - i - a ding -nanga - yo sa - yang la-ngit a - kuq le

77  

 ting le - i la - ngit. A-sekng kem- kepri mu - ngih a - sekng i - tuq mu - ngih bu ngac

82  

 a-sekng a-kuq kem kepri le - i a-sekng Do - do - i - a ding -nanga - yo sa -

87  

 yang a-sekng a - kuq kem kepri le - i a - sekng. A- yaq bo - tuk mu - ngih u - maq a -

92  

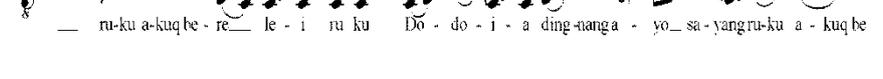
 men mu ngih bu ngac ko-naq-a-kuq be - tuk mu-seng o-naq Do - do - i - a ding -nanga - yo sa -

98  

 yang ko-naq a - kuq be - tuk mu-seng o - naq. Ru-ku be - re mu ngih ru - ku a - yaq ma ngih o lukng

104  

 ru-ku a-kuq be - re le - i ru ku Do - do - i - a ding -nanga - yo sa - yang ru-ku a - kuq be

110  

 re le - i ru - ku. A yaq bo - tuk mu ngih su - ru a - wek le - kaq nya laq a-kuq bo-tuk nen

116  

 takng le i nya-laq Do do - i - a ding -nanga - yo sa - yang nya-laq a - kuq nen takng le - i nya

122  

 laq. Ru-ku be - re mu ngih ru - ku u - hati mu ngih o lukng ru-ku a-kuq be - re le - i

128  

 ru ku Do - do - i - a ding -nanga - yo sa - yang ru-ku a - kuq be - re le - i ru - ku.