

IN ALTRE LINGUE / IN OTHER LANGUAGES

The comic hero (or anti-hero) of the Punan Tuvu' in Kalimantan, Indonesia

Antonia Soriente

Università di Napoli L'Orientale

asoriente@unior.it

ISO 639-3 code: puj

DOI: 10.23814/ethn.21.25.sor

The foolish hero in Borneo and the Malay world

One of the leitmotifs of oral literature in Borneo and elsewhere in the Indonesian archipelago and in the Malay world is the story of the foolish man, always in opposition to his generally wiser and more pragmatic wife.

Examples include the well-known character of Pak Pandir and Mak Ande from the Malay tradition, or Apai Aloï from the Iban of Borneo and his wife Indai Aloï (Sather 1981), also known as Apai Saloi (Wan Busrah et al 2018), or Mpé and Buzu from the Kenyah Òma Lóngh (Soriente 2006), and the story of Olong Apa and Olong Jam from the Penan Benalui community. The 'adventures' of the foolish guy serve as social critiques of different strata of the community. The jokes in these folk tales usually criticise the non-exemplary attitudes of the members of the community, such as the story of Mat Jenin, Pak Pandir, Lebai Malang, to name a few. The character is naive, impertinent and sometimes absurd. This is true of Pak Pandir, Pak Kadok and the other anti-heroes of classical Malay literature, but it is also true of characters such as Apai (S)Aloï, a comic hero in Iban folktales who is “a cautionary figure, a model, instead of how not behave and [...] with his family reverts and parodies Iban ideals of family life” (Sather 2013:58). In the old days, Apai Saloi folk tales were often told to young people at night by an elderly caretaker. This type of folk tale contains many moral values: ‘Apai Saloi is famous for his foolish and stupid deeds, but there is always a lesson behind the stories.’ (Wan Busrah et al 2018).

The adventures of Mbui Kuvong in the Punan Tuvu' language

In the Punan Tuvu' ethnolinguistic community of North Kalimantan, Mbui Kuvong is the quintessential example of stupidity and naivety, so much so that the storytelling done by a few elderly people is thought to be able to attract dozens of villagers, young and old, men and women, eager to hear the funny stories of this guy. Mbui Kuvong is the name of the character, although in the Punan Tuvu' language, *mbui* is also the name of a genre, the *mbui*, which describes the stories, myths, legends of people and animals of ordinary and extraordinary kind, heroes and fools, spirits behind which are found moral teachings. In the many adventures of Mbui Kuvong, the character is seen as a model to not follow but at the same time the stories show the interrelationship between the animal world and the human world, where the listener vividly sees details of their natural environment, their cultural practices, their hunting and gathering practices, their relationship with the animals of the area.

Yes, Mbui Kuvong is a simple man, very inexperienced and also the object of his wife Unyu's laughter and ridicule. When his wife Unyu' is fed up with his stupidity, she

just sends him away to look for things such as table and chairs in the bottom of the river, and he comes back with turtles carapaces in exchange. Mbui Kuvong, as we will see in the following text, does not even know how to distinguish the sound of wood creaking from the chirping of a bird but he is very attentive of each event in the forest from which he learns. On the other hand, he has some superhuman qualities, as he can live for fifteen years at the bottom of the river where he jumped to catch a stone that his wife dropped from the bridge they were walking on. This was the only escamotage the wife found to get rid of his bothering behavior. While Amat Kirut (the storyteller) was telling the story of Mbui Kuvong in Respen Tubu in 2013 (Césard et al: 2015:150), children were sitting on the floor on their mothers' laps, old people were very intent on chewing their sirih leaves and laughing to death as they heard how incredible and unbelievably funny was the behaviour of Mbui Kuvong who is forced to live in the depth of the river for fifteen years because his hand is stuck between stones while he sees all the creatures living in the river and natural events happening.

The only time Mbui Kuvong can reappear to surface is when a great flood pushes his body against the stones and he can free his hand. Nature has shown that this is the only way to restore balance. The audience cannot stop laughing at Mbui Kuvong's adventures when he goes back home after fifteen years and is not recognized by his own wife because he covered his body with the smooth bark of meranti trees. His misdeeds are neverending. He sets fire to his paddy-field and believes that the body of a deer he finds in the burnt paddy is that of his wife. And he cries, cries of grief over the dead deer he bring back home, and when he discovers that his wife is happily preparing his dinner in the kitchen, he simply reacts by eating the deer that she had cooked instead. These stories told in the forest, where parents taught their children about edible plants, medicines, poisonous plants, how to hunt, how to avoid wild animals, how to catch a fish, how to recognize an animal and other ways of maintaining a sustainable life, contain many messages that seem self-evident but are in fact very profound. Despite the aftermath of Mbui Kuvong's deeds, we can see some typical characteristics of the Punan people reflected in these oral stories. In these communities, the forest is used as a medium and a place to teach the Punan their knowledge and traditions. Mbui Kuvong is not a model to imitate, is not an example of manly prowess or of accomplishment but of something to avoid. The fact that there is no heroism in these stories is proof of an egalitarian culture, of the need for man to live in harmony with nature, of his dependence on natural resources, of communal culture, of sharing, but also of diversity, on the light acceptance of people who are not so clever still have a role in society, in the Punan communities like elsewhere. But still there is wit in the parody of the conjugal ideals, in the realization that Mbui Kuvong is always a loser, he always experiences disaster but he keeps going with his foolishness and is resilient.

The foolish guy in some way solves all his problems thanks to natural events, but he shows that he learns from experience by observing what happens in nature. He is forced to live in the water of the river for fifteen years and is finally freed when a great flood brings him back to the surface. If we ask what is the role of stupidity, we could probably answer that if a human trait causes a disruption of order, then it is nature that becomes the cause of recomposition of order. If from one side disharmony must be harmonised, on the other disharmony has to be accepted as part of nature and life. In a time when the children attention span is very limited as they are attracted, in Kalimantan as elsewhere to cellphones, games and other gadget, it was considered a great success, for Amat Kirut to gather people listening to the funny stories of Mbui Kuvong to capture

and hold the children and adults' attention. Beyond the funny side, the stories, for a researcher interested in the local and threatened languages, are indeed a great source of information of the family life of the Punan in their own community and given their light message that talks about 'normal' people, are easy to follow.

A note on Punan Tuvu' language, its phonology and orthography

Punan Tuvu Punan Tuvu' (aka Punan Tubu) is classified as a separate language within the North Sarawakan branch (Simons and Fennig, 2018). Punan Tuvu' is spoken in some villages along the Tubu and Malinau rivers in North Kalimantan by a population of about 4,000. Despite some dialectal differences amongst the Punan communities of Punan (Malinau, Mentarang, Semeriot, Dulau etc.), these varieties are quite homogeneous. The Punan Tuvu' language has been strongly influenced by other dominant and prestigious languages of the area, in particular languages of the Kayan and the Abai. It is with speakers of these languages that the Punan Tuvu' interacted most closely. Being the language of a (former) hunter-gatherer group, Punan Tuvu' has absorbed the same kind of linguistic and cultural influence observed in other hunter-gatherer languages, which have a strong tendency to absorb features from more dominant and prestigious groups with which they interact. Socio-linguistically, most of the Punan Tuvu' today can speak fluent Indonesian (the national language) and many of them have a good knowledge of the other surrounding languages. Nowadays, only a few Punan Tuvu' groups still live at river heads and are therefore in more isolated areas. The story presented here was collected in Respen Tubu (a resettlement village) next to the town of Malinau in the Indonesian province of North Kalimantan (Soriente 2020 and 2022).

Punan Tuvu' has 24 phonemes: 18 consonants: /b/, /d/, /j/, /g/, /p/, /t/, /c/, /k/, /ʔ/, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /ɲ/, /l/, /r/, /s/, /w/ and /y/ and 6 vowels: /a/, /ɛ/, /ə/, /i/, /o/, /u/. Punan Tuvu' does not allow /r/, /l/ and /s/ in final position, and /b/ is in complementary distribution with [v] in intervocalic position. The preferred cluster consists of a nasal + voiced occlusive. The orthography of Punan Tuvu' follows the orthographies with which the communities of speakers are familiar, that is the spelling of the national language, Indonesian. Some of the consonants and vowels are conventionalized in Indonesian writing. For this reason, the glottal stop is written with an apostrophe ['], the phoneme /ɛ/ with [é], the schwa /ə/ with [e], the velar nasal /ŋ/ with [ng] and the palatal nasal /ɲ/ with [ny]. (Césard et al. 2015)

Mbui Kuvong¹
By Amat Kirut

<p>Melu' nuh Mbui Kuvong. Melu' nuh Kuvong.</p> <p>Jadi hén la' oroh, ipah oroh inan Mbui Tu'ih: ngeran réh Unyu'.</p> <p>Jadi iro Unyu' iro Mbui Kuvong inah, iro inah petróh. Tubit teniran doh. Nah, jadi iro melu' ngeran.</p> <p>Iro petróh, iro ku'ung leloh. Ovi' niro melai mena' anak.</p> <p>Déh-déh Mbui Kuvong déh Mbui Kuvong kah nyupit déh ngan upit, telo', ugéi.</p> <p>Jadi Mbui Kuvong pelulup: “Oh... Ja'inah mon koli'! Hok koli'!” kéhén, keMbui Kuvong. Hén co kéhén uli' nah, uli', uli', uli', uli' lemok kén uli' an lepou; hén an lun hén ngan Unyu'.</p> <p>Iro inah Mbui Kuvong rin déh réh Unyu' nih lo'ah, menyou la'ui, ne menyou lilai inih. Inih Mbui Kuvong durui réh hén déh mocop, déh jét pa' ja'inah rin mon keperun Unyu'.</p> <p>Nah ja'it déh tat luang ungéi pépit ripa Kayan iréh, ja'it iro déh. Unyu' pén ke batuh, hén lekén keréh kenih tengah ulun tén hén tanih; iré kah. Unyu' lulung, Mbui Kuvong ba' penuk hén ba' uri', déh-déh iro an belua' livou lalom Kayan iréh, hén leruh-leruh ke batuh ‘nebung’ déh nyan livou ungéi.</p> <p>“Hei!” téi ke Mbui Kuvong “Tu'uh tén! Hoh néi ne yam tén kelekan nuh!”. “Hoh néi ne yam tén kelekan nuh!” ‘Perak-perak’, ke ‘tembaung-tembaung’ kehén déh menot kah.</p> <p>Déh-déh karap jo, karap jo kelekan hén an tang batuh. Batuh iréh tén leruh véi kah déh, mengarap nyong tén anjut an kelop-kelop mom</p>	<p>Once upon a time there was a man called Mbui Kuvong.</p> <p>He married Unyu', the younger sister of Mrs Mbui Tu'ih.</p> <p>Unyu' and Mbui Kuvong were married. They both lived together. Well, that's what we call their situation.</p> <p>They lived together as husband and wife. But they did not have any children.</p> <p>Mbui Kuvong went out to hunt with his bowpipe the darts container and his machete.</p> <p>Then Mbui Kuvong thought, “Oh... Let me go home,” he said. Then he walked back to the house where he lived with Unyu'.</p> <p>That's how Mbui Kuvong and Unyu' were. Mbui Kuvong seemed to never feel tired or exhausted. He didn't even feel hungry. Meanwhile, Unyu' suffered and started feeling fed up with the situation.</p> <p>In the middle of the Kayan River there was a bridge that was used to cross from one side to the other. As the two of them climbed up to cross, Unyu' picked up a stone and clamped it between her legs. They continued walking, Unyu' in front and Mbui Kuvong behind him. When they reached the centre of the bridge, where the Kayan River was calm, they heard a ‘boom’. The stone fell into the river.</p> <p>“Hey!” shouted Mbui Kuvong. “That's her sex. I have to catch it.” ‘Prak prak, splash’ came the sound of somebody diving deep. Mbui Kuvong then went down and down to the river to dive.</p> <p>He began to grope here and there, chasing the stone that had fallen quickly from Unyu's legs. Mbui Kuvong kept looking</p>
--	---

¹ This story is included in a different version and translated in Indonesian in Césard et al 2015:150.

<p>doh hén. Kah hén ledang meja' inih, ne penuk kelop. “Oh... inih ne réh inih-inih ne batuh Unyu!” Kelop-kelop ju a'an muli' teloh tat luang ungéi, njuk déh vou. “Pai ke déh Unyu? Hoi ini réh inih nepom hén! Ah pén kerin noh kelop an ah!”</p> <p>“Hei! Inih lanan, lanan inih pom! Déh pén menot nyong-nyong kelop!” kéhén. Pén kelop nih kah uli' pa' juk mai Unyu: “Lu' nuh lanan Unyu.” Déh-déh ne déh lo'ah kenah nah batuh ung an luang ungéi iréh peketip unan recip ah an réh. Hén déh ngarap nyong batuh Unyu'.</p> <p>Inih deréh, hén déh nyélok inah deréh an tang ketip batuh wo' deréh. Nggang hén ih nah unan takin, nah takin, nah takin bekurung ngeran rin juk doh. Nggang-nggang kah ke takin bekurung kelenan ngat an luvang batuh, an tang rin ketip batuh; ti' ke hén mejat menyou, ti' ke hén mejat pih, hén tapong ne uli' nih ovih; menyou belelék nehén, menyou ne ka'én, ain hén menyou, ain bokup menyou, hén ain tapong hén, menyou belelék inéh batuh. Tinggal tolang, tapong ngenong melu' nah péti'.</p> <p>Kah ne doh bacou déh ba' inah: “Kou mena' nuh héi inih? Oh hei inih? Oh hei ngeram?”; “Mbui Kuvong nuh pena' tanah hok nih inih?”. “Hok kelenan nih, hok parut an nih kenetip batuh inih nih, inih nih.” “Kou inih tukén nuh kou muit tukén nuh kou nih koli?” “Hei!” kén, “ruéi-ruéi pinih mubéh!” kén, “hén ma' takin bekurung.” “Déran toh tat nuh rin ih? Paca' tenuh rin ih mubai?” kéhén. Téi bowai, téi jelau, téi karan doh kelavang ma' an hén, ja'inah ne lou'in nén nyi'uh doh, hén ma' rin ang melai paca' rin ang, melai taruh.</p> <p>Belum ah hén melu' neréh, melu' noh, ji' puluh limoh luman hén an luang livou ungéi inah, téi ne ungéi hari lou jét. Ucan batuh téi ne paih meroh, téi ne pambat, hén idah ke tang berung keni' noh terunga'-terunga' an luang ungéi iréh. Téi ne panggung nyuran, téi te ricuh doh, ma' panggung nyuran nah réh doh, ma' kayuh ayo inah anggung wo' ayo, anggung tah, anggung lalou téi réh; ntang-ntang kinah déh an tang</p>	<p>for Unyu's stone among the swimming turtles. The back of the turtle was as wide as a table. “Oh this looks like Unyu's stone!” He lifted the turtle from the middle of the river, pushed it up, with the intention to bring it home. “Where are you, Unyu? Here, take it! Take the turtle!”</p> <p>“Hey! Here's a chair, take it in 'ya! Go dive for the turtle!” said Mbui Kuvong. He caught the turtle and went home and gave it to Unyu: “Keep this chair Unyu!” Then he went to the river again and saw a big rock in the water. He grabbed the rock wall and groped around to find Unyu's stone.</p> <p>He put his hand in the holes between the stones. He had a big bracelet on his hand, 'takin bekurung' was its name. The bracelet got stuck between the holes in the rock. He tried to pull his hand out but failed. He pulled again and pulled again. All the skin on his hand peeled off. Some of the flesh also peeled off. Eventually only the bones remained, all the flesh of his hand was gone.</p> <p>Then a fish passed by him and asked, “Where are you going? What is your name?” “My name is Mbui Kuvong.” “What do you do here?” “I am forced to stay and survive here, my hand is stuck in this stone hole.” “Then when will you get your hand out? When will you go home?” “Heh! It's not that easy. I get out when this bracelet is rotten, crushed into ashes. We don't know when it will dissolve, when it will crumble.” Then the crocodile, dragon, and a soft shelled, pig snout turtle came to ask questions. Mbui Kuvong told everyone that it would take a long time for it to decay.</p> <p>So he lived in the water with his hand in the hole for fifteen years, until one day a flood came. Very heavy rains and stormy winds caused the flood and many logs were washed away. He prepared his chest so that the logs would hit him on his chest. Then came huge logs, from the roots to the tops of the logs, which had been washed upstream. There were even bigger ones like</p>
---	--

<p>berung hén iné' ungéi, tekia' ne ngguh takin 'kak'.</p>	<p>ironwood and mangaris. Then one came crashing into Mbui Kuvong's chest and at the same time there was the sound of his bracelet breaking: 'praak'.</p>
<p>Keréh taruh bi'ang 'cebok' kehén. Uli' muit noh lo'ah toi an luang ji' puluh limoh luman. "Kenorip toh a' inah?" Uli' nén muit, moman mekéi an betang, moman noh, moman, moman, moman, moman, ji' puluh limoh luman kelali' hén moman tou. Ungéi nah pa' ah aru njuh-njuh.</p>	<p>The bracelet shattered, the 'praak' sound broke from the impact of the wood, and out came his hand from the crack in the rock that had been there for fifteen years. "Can humans live like this in water?" he thought. Then he drifted along with the tree trunk. He drifted for fifteen years too. What kind of river is this, how come people can drift for fifteen years too, it's really long.</p>
<p>Moman, moman, moman déh livah réh. 'Civit, civit, civit' kengguh janéi hén. Déh ba'-ba' lirin nén koli' népang wat ungéi. "Eh! Nyivit hok kuén janéi nah koh!" kehén. Nah ke bavuh aih déh tanah, bavuh kayuh, bavuh laran. Hén civit-civit. Kedéh nyivit bavuh kayuh.</p>	<p>He drifted, drifted and drifted until finally he reached the downstream and he heard the sound of birds, 'chirp-chirp'. As he was being carried along by the river he said: "He! It turns out there's a bird on a branch over there. He's the one making the chirp-chirp sound," (Mbui Kuvong exclaimed). But actually, it was the branch that made the bird-like sound.</p>
<p>Kadit kén ah, nah moman ne betang ne réh déva, hén koli' ngenuan da'an kayuh inah. Hén koli' muwo membéh tano'. Uguk-uguk bulah palan, bulah jawéi, hén mekevoh iné' darom. Ruai pén melu' lou'ah luang ne ungéi iréh, ji' puluh limoh luman. Mekéi noh, menyou nén jam, hén nyapai-nyapai déh ih. Keréh pén a'ai déva a'ai décu nah hén, nén ngenong nah novo' tanah.</p>	<p>He clung to the end of the log and drifted with the log that carried him downstream. He came down from the branch to the ground. He was trembling, his whole body pale, from the soles of his feet to the palms of his hands to his face as pale as a corpse from the cold caused by his long stay in the water. It wasn't easy living in water for fifteen years. After climbing up on the bank of the river, he looked around but had no idea where to go home. He looked upstream, looked downstream. Still he had no idea of direction. Then he saw a piece of wood lying on its side.</p>
<p>Déh hén déh nah, nah ne betang lo'op. Hén mekevoh hén iné' darom; bulah mucum, bulah jawéi, uguk-uguk, irik-irik terok hén. Hén juk kehén muruk an aun betang: nyovi pekanan hén jan, ja'inah réh "Miri' hok mon!" kéhén. Hén piri' kehén. Hén meturui miri'.</p>	<p>He went over to it. It turned out to be a meranti log. He was shivering with cold, almost freezing to death. His lips were pale, his face ashen, his neck trembling, his whole body shaking. He sat down on the log, he didn't feel very well, so he lay down. "I'd better lie down first," he thought. He lay down. He fell asleep for a while.</p>
<p>Kat tenah noh, kat 'kak' kengguh aih ma' 'kak'. Dui iné' nyekadit kelak upa' lo'op an penuk hén. Hén tekukup kéhén pa'. Nekukup, nekukup,</p>	<p>When he woke up, there was a sound, 'kak'. It turned out that the meranti bark was stuck to his back. Then he turned round and lay</p>

<p>nekukup hén. Ano' hén kat hén ano' 'kak' kengguh réh pa'. Nah ngenong nyekadit upa' lo'op ba' auk hén. Hén tekeling kehén ba' tau' pa' melu' hén toi ka hén, ja'inah pupa' ah ma' juk kén bah buléi. Melu', melu', melu', melu' hén bah buléi kat kenuli' 'kak'.</p>	<p>on the bark to sunbathe. Back and forth he went and when he got up there was another 'kak' sound. Now the front of his body was covered in meranti bark. Then he lay on his right side on the log, and when he got up he did the same. The bark was stuck on all his body. He turned to his left and lay down. He stayed on the wood for a while, then got up and the bark was also stuck to his body on the left side. 'Kak' it sounded again.</p>
<p>Keréh pa' ngenong upa'-upa' doh! Ja' temén puét ulén néi nehén an luang rin lo'ah, puét ulén an luang upa' lo'op belum ne ah hén co hén koli' noh. Koli' ne lo'ah énuh peketu'ah bi' upa' inah, kah déh nyekadit an la' an nit kén ja'ah. Koli', koli', koli', koli' ne nenoh keréh, nah déh nak iro wo' ngeran Ilah Kiyán kuén doh nah uyung neréh. Nah ngenong ke kelovih ah uli' nah a', uli' taréh uli' ba' ja'it inah pa rin déh réh ah, "Uli' mé' ke kelovih ah".</p>	<p>He saw his whole body wrapped in meranti bark like a caterpillar in a cocoon. Then he went home. We wonder why he had the strength to go home carrying all the bark wrapped around his body. He kept going, going, going until he reached home where his wife was. They both had a young child named Ilah Kiyán. The child saw someone coming down the bridge and exclaimed "Hurray my father is home!"</p>
<p>"Hei! Man tat nuh inah?" ke Unyu'. "Ano' réh ma' koli' mé', mé' uli', mé' iné'" kehén, "Man tat nuh pa? Mam menyau mekevoh uron iréh" kehén pa an noh. Téi dékin nehén lo'ah ngenong kehén, memang léi hén nenah ah Mbui Kuvong. Ah tui iné' senggá-nggá keniñ nehén uli' unan upa' kayuh ah taréh: "Hei! Unyu' inih hok uli'! Hok uli' unan épang kayuh pui nuh inih" kéhén. "Pom nekayuh pui kenuh tenin ah? Kenuh hok la' ah?" ke Unyu'. "Oh... Ticih nuh réh!"</p>	<p>"Hei! Which father?" Unyu' asked. The child said, "Mummy, he said daddy is home!". "Which father? Your father is gone, he died a long time ago." Unyu' said and looked closely, and it was true that the man who came was Mbui Kuvong. Alas, what kind of a man was he, wrapped in a long, thick bark. "Hey Unyu' I'm home! Here I brought firewood for you," said Mbui Kuvong. "How can I get it from your body?" asked Unyu'. "oh, cut it!" replied Mbui Kuvong.</p>
<p>Pén kapak hén kelak, kapak ayo' ka'én lé'ép temeruh ninah. Kapak tanah déh hén Unyu' 'caiyu' nicih upa' lo'op inah uli' tat penuk uli' tat lah hén, ji' luman inah ne Unyu' ah nicih iréh, nah réh tenah nah réh. Ngelekañ tat penuk, Mbui Kuvong nah uli' nehén, lemok nehén, jan nehén uli' tat ah.</p>	<p>Unyu' took a large axe, as big as a rhino's shoulder. He began to split the bark, 'hack, when the axe hit Mbui Kuvong's body. She split the meranti bark from Mbui Kuvong's back again. Unyu' worked for a year cutting the bark from the back until it was all removed from Mbui Kuvong's body. Mbui Kuvong was saved and he returned to life as before.</p>
<p>Iro melu', iro melu', nah melu', melu'. "Ja'inah réh mena' umoh nok mon!" kéhén. Hén déh demirik, belum dirik umoh iné' hén, hén nevong, belum tevong hén mepong, belum pong hén mengo' tutung, mengo' to'un déh réh lo'ah to'un neréh. "Ih lou'ih nehok nutung, la'ét lou'ah, ngo' belua' lou tukén lou tekerong, hok</p>	<p>So they lived together again. One day Mbui Kuvong said, "I want to make a field now." He then went out to cut. After that he began to cut down the trees and cut off the branches. He collected the branches and burned them, waiting for the time to burn, waiting for the dry season. When the dry</p>

<p>inih nutung. Karan ketou nak nuh Unyu' ém ketou kah éh! Ketou ano' tutung!" kéhén. "Ho!" kedoh. Doh melu' co.</p> <p>Ano' réh tekerong an belua' langit ne lou'ah, déh ne Mbui Kuvong nutung, pén pitik, pén tudan, pén karun, pén cih, co Mbui Kuvong déh an umoh. Umoh inah ayo' inah, ledang umoh inah, ji' haok ungéi ninah kadéh. Ungéi wo' ka'én Metarang inih tat lo'o lemok pai héi, iah ila' umoh pia' inih. Hén pén pitik inah; hén juk kinah an karun ah, hén pena' an ke kitiyu keréh nah, hén ovu keréh kelat, hén nabét ke tudan, hén abét kerin an tudan rin ilu' ah; hén pén kecih-cih belevan, hén abét keréh nah abét nah hén njuk kén, déh tutung kumoh déh hén-hén ba' nang.</p> <p>Méno déh-déh nehén koli' ba' lirin iréh, déh nehén réh. 'Cerup-rup rup-rup rup-rup' kah hén téi taréh téi nyang luang pui kenih kepuk! Hén déh an luang pui ngenong kén mekevoh nah aih inah. Ngenong kén "Iiih!" kén. "Mekevoh nih Unyu'!" kén, "Hei! luang metan Unyu' koh. Hok ma' ang néi hén ketou kah tutung ketou kehok unéi. Énuh pu'un lun hén kah? Mekevoh néhén lou'ah, nan tutung nehén lou'ah nan."</p> <p>Kéhén hén co kén, nyovi' nén pelulup inih pui inih lela' an betang, lela' an tungun iné', hén kacip déh mai oroh oh mekevoh kuén. Hén nah, hén co, kén déh, hén ngga, hén bi' inan. Kelung tangih Mbui Kuvong uli' taréh nirau: "Hén bok énuh ah?" ngenong kéhén. Pébi' nén unan nenong telau' hén Unyu' juk hén. Hén sekulim luang tilung, hén pékop tilung co.</p> <p>Kén uli' noh hén pén. Pepiri' kat telau' inih an luang an aun tau noh, hén pén kah cenati', hén ah mok, hén pén ke ceninoh ah noh, cenati' ma' doh inah, ceninoh inah ma' doh; jaman inah rin</p>	<p>season came he said, "This is the time to burn, it is already hot. Wait for midday, just as the sun is in the middle I will burn. You and our child don't go anywhere, you'll both get burnt", Mbui Kuvong told Unyu'. "Yes!" they replied. The two of them stayed at home.'</p> <p>When the sun was right in the middle, Mbui Kuvong went to set fire to the field, he made a match from bamboo, resin, and fossilised wood (torch made of natural material) and then he threw it into the field. Off he went into the field. The field was huge, as big as a stretch of river. This big river, the Mentarang river from the mouth to the headwaters, was as big as the field. Then he lit his bamboo match and burnt the fossilised wood and shook it. He blew on the fire to get it lit. He took some resin and burned it. With the resin he began to burn the field below.</p> <p>He walked while burning to the end and returned from the other side still burning the field. Then he heard the sound of 'cerup-rup rup-rup rup-rup', the sound of living beings entering the fire. He then went to the centre of the fire to see if anyone had been burnt to death. "Alas, Unyu' is dead!" he cried. Unyu' begged for mercy. "I told you not to go outside, you'll get burnt. This is what I said earlier. Why are you walking? You're dead now Unyu'!" Mbui Kuvong said again. "Unyu' is dead. Burn up Unyu'."</p> <p>Off he went, not caring about the fire or the burning logs. He wanted to see his burnt-out wife as soon as possible. He went there, he took hold. He lifted and carried the burning carcass. He cried all the way. His cries were very loud. Meanwhile, Unyu', who was still alive in her house, heard Mbui Kuvong crying: "What is he doing now?" when she saw her husband carrying the deer carcass. Then she went into the room and locked it.</p> <p>Mbui Kuvong then went into her house and laid the dead deer on the floor. She took a cenati cloth and a ceninoh cloth, which is a sarong, the most precious of all. What is now</p>
--	--

<p>nén doh celindang bénih. Rin nedoh, pelikot rin nedoh. Buro' wo' jan bénih inah ma' doh ceninoi. Ma' cenatih mok hén péput keréh an hén.</p> <p>“Kou mekevoh inih Unyu'! Inih ne pawam inih, nepemai nuh iné' ku' néi hén! Ém jét tun! Ém ngotuh! Ém jét an katou! Nak ku' hok mon déh mena' tebening nuh!” kéhén.</p> <p>Pén kapak kiam, pén pikung co, hén déh mena' tebening. Lu' tevong kayuh tepuyong, hén ludung kinah, hén pena' keréh tebening, hén ju' kenah uli' an lela' levu' an ah. Déh hén, lom mumit kéhén, uli' mena' réh cuik uli', mena' réh jan ledun, hén déh mena' tebening inih muit ne Unyu'. Uli' tat tilung, uli' Unyu'. Hén i'ah keréh buro' cenatih unih ah wo' penéput hén unih telau' unih mok hén. Hén yén pén ke telau' nyuh keréh; hén tanok keréh, hén keman réh, ne Mbui Kuvong ujom an lela' réh.</p> <p>Jadi hén déh rin ti' Mbui Kuvong mena' tebening an lela' keman Unyu' an livou: “Kenuh netenin oh ma' inah an hén bénih?” ke Unyu', mok hén pepetih telang réh déh an penuk hén petih-petih. “Hei! Ém meram Unyu'! Ém jét tun! Ovi' tebening inih belum inih ano' Unyu'! Kou jan-jan tun nuh!” kehén an rin pa.</p> <p>Hén ti'-ti', ti'-ti' mena' tebening an lela' ano' réh, dedéh pih nih juk Unyu' tat livou ba' tang tau hén. Leruh hén pa telang réh, leruh hén pa inau telang réh déh an hén: “Énuh-énuh nih?” ke Mbui Kuvong, “Énuh nih-nih?” ngenong hén nah aih pulut-pulut dingot-dingot ja' inau. Hén cila keréh “Mih jan. Hei!” kén.</p> <p>“Gita' nih-nih aih jan unih?” hén juk-juk kén uli' lengah pikung, lengah kiam iné' hén, uli' ngélé' mekéi uli' livou ngenong telenjéng Unyu' iné' unih menyou mahu. Hén ngenong nyerukéh noh: “Unyu' hén keman tevúi luang metam ko'!” ke Mbui Kuvong, “Kuok kunéi</p>	<p>called batik cloth, shawl cloth, belikat cloth, just the best cloth to be used as a shroud. He covered the carcass with this cloth.</p> <p>(In his view the dead animal was his wife's corpse) “You are dead Unyu'. These are gifts for you, these are things from me to bury. Don't get evil spirits, don't frighten people, don't be mean to us, Unyu'. Unyu' I go now to make your casket.”</p> <p>He took the axe and bikung and went to make the casket. He cut down the forest terap wood (tepuyong), he cut it into pieces to make the casket. He brought the materials home to work under his house. Again he cleans it, makes it thinner, decorates it and makes it nice. While Mbui Kuvong was working on the casket, Unyu' came out of his room and opened the shroud, the cenatih cloth used to wrap the deer. He took the deer carcass, dissected its stomach, boiled it and cooked it. Mbui Kuvong continued to work at the bottom of the house.</p> <p>While Mbui Kuvong worked on the casket below, Unyu' ate the deer at the top of the stilt house. “How can I tell Mbui Kuvong?” Unyu' thought. Then he dripped his cooking water from the top of the house onto Mbui Kuvong's back under the house. “Heh Unyu', don't be rotten! Let alone your evil spirit. Don't let this casket of yours go unfinished. Be kind to me!” said Mbui Kuvong.</p> <p>Mbui Kuvong kept working downstairs making the casket and Unyu' kept eating upstairs. Unyu' dropped more of his cooking water, sago water. “Eh, what is this?” asked Mbui Kuvong. Mbui Kuvong saw a slimy, sticky drop like sago on his body. He licked it and exclaimed, “Hey, it's really good!”</p> <p>“Hey this might be a good one.” Then putting down his bikung and axe, he climbed the stairs quickly to see Unyu' lying down. Eh, it was gone, vanished. He was shocked to see Unyu' sitting down and eating. “Hey, crazy, you're no joke. I</p>
--	--

<p>kou inah unéi kou mekevoh!” kéhén an Unyu'. Ma' déh Unyu' an hén: “Tevéi luang metam kou mengiyan kou jam kun kou, jam ka jam aih kou?” kehén. “Ah nyou kou jam inih kun mih, nyou kou jam inih telau' aih kun kai, aih mih aih.</p> <p>Jan an Mbui Kuvong keman. Kun auh inih! Maling ji' sebelik hén, inau telang ja'inah telau' ah kinan ke ngeruat Mbui Kuvong. “Tat rin ja'inah rin tén Unyu', hok déh nyong telau' kou melu' nih wo' pena' nuh hén, hok kah nutung telau' hok inih mih laun nih, nan jan laung nih nan!” ke Mbui Kuvong. “Oh déh nekou!” kén.</p> <p>Idih hén pitik, pén tudan, pén karun, pén ugén, telikét kam déh ba' umoh, nyong-nyong, nyong-nyong telau' an umoh. Menyau mahu hén, kah nyan lunang pelok nehén telau' genong" kehén, “Nan telau' oh rin réh!” kéhén. Déh hén déh, lemok déh an timan telau' inih but pitik, hén mitik, hén mé' rin an karun, hén novu ke karun kenih an urung telau' gerup. Telau' kavou pa kelekan, kelekan, kelekan, celogan hén telau' deréh ano'. Pena' hén ja'inah peréh mitik pehén, mena' pui an karun pén, ovuh hén kedéh an urun telau'.</p> <p>Tanah déh iro telau' nah petelekan ji' luman inah hén iréh telekan an lunang tup pai Metarang, tup pai Tuvu', tup pai Belinau, pulong koli' an ungéi Kayan, petelilit an haok lalem Kayan iréh. Nelengé leloh ne Mbui Kuvong mekevoh iné' la'ui, mekevoh iné' ruyah kun auh irih hén ah. Lun hén ang pén kebulun lun, hén ang pén ke tén, réh lutuk telau' liou pila' ang lo'ah.</p> <p>Inah an déh jerait Mbui Kuvong wo' lun doh ma' hén. Mbui Kuvong inah ja'inah kibi aih ah réh, ja'inah peluh neréh.</p> <p>Inah noh tandik Mbui Kuvong wo' dorok, wo' nema' mé' nema' aduh koh noh. Ka'én lo'ik noh.</p>	<p>thought it was you who died,” Mbui Kuvong said to Unyu'. “Hey, you're crazy! How do you know food, how do you know meat, how do you know anything?” said Unyu' to her husband. “You don't know good food, you don't know this deer? Can it be eaten? The most delicious food?” asked Unyu' again.</p> <p>Then Mbui Kuvong ate too. Mbui Kuvong ate all the sago and deer in less than a spoonful. Mbui Kuvong then said: “If it's really this good, Unyu', I'll go and find the deer again. You stay at home. I'll go this way. I'll burn the deer, it's really delicious!” “There you go!” said Unyu'.</p> <p>He went and got matches, resin, durian skin for burning, and a machete tied around his waist. Then he jumped off the top of the house and went into the field to look for the deer. He searched and searched but to no avail, nothing. Then he entered the forest. There he saw the deer, found the animal. “Oh there it is!” He then approached the deer from the front, pulled out his lighter, lit it on the dry durian skin fuel and blew into the animal's nose. The deer ran away. Mbui Kuvong chased it until he got it. Then he burnt the durian skin again and blew into the animal's nose.</p> <p>For a whole year he chased the deer. They both chased it up the Mentarang River, up the Tubu River, up the Malinau River, across the mountains and into the Kayan River, all along the Kayan River. Finally Mbui Kuvong got tired, almost died and failed to catch the deer. Damn it he didn't manage to take the antelope's fur, rump and body.</p> <p>This is the story of Mbui Kuvong as told by the people. Such is the style of the foolish Mbui Kuvong.</p> <p>This is the story of Mbui Kuvong that I know, as told by my father and grandmother. This is where the story ends.</p>
---	--

References

- CÉSARD Nicolas, Antonio GUERREIRO & Antonia SORIENTE (2015), *Petualangan Unjung dan Mbui Kuvong Sastra lisan dan Kamus Punan Tuvu' dari Kalimantan*, Jakarta: EFEO – Gramedia.
- SATHER, Clifford (1981). Origin of the Iban comic hero Apai Alo. *The Sarawak Museum Journal* XXIX n. 50: 73-96.
- SATHER, Clifford (2013). Entangled narratives: Encounters with Father of Alui, Dayak studies and some reflections on a Iban gothic tale. In Said, Sanib, Jayl langub & Awang Azman Awang (eds). *Perspectif, masyarakat dan budaya Sarawak*. Kota Samarahan: UNIMAS: 57-80.
- SIMONS, Gary F. and Charles D. FENNING, eds. (2018). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world, 21st ed.* Dallas, TX: SIL International. www.ethnologue.com.
- SORIENTE Antonia (2006). *Mencalèny & Usung Bayung Marang. A collection of Kenyah stories in the Òma Lóngh and Lebu' Kulit languages*. Jakarta: Atma Jaya University Press: 50-59.
- SORIENTE Antonia (2020). "Hunter Gatherers of Borneo and their languages" in Güldemann, Tom, Patrick McConvell and Richard Rhodes (eds.). *The language of hunter-gatherers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 262-308.
- SORIENTE Antonia (2022). "Language contact in Borneo. The influence of Indonesian on Kenyah and Punan of Kalimantan". In Pierre Le Roux, Alexander Adelaar, Bernard Moizo (eds): *Bornéo au coeur. Hommage à Bernard Sellato, argonaute de la forêt tropicale/Into the heart of Borneo. A tribute to Bernard Sellato, anthropologist of the tropical rainforest*, Neuilly-lès-Dijon: Murmure editions: 985-1034.
- WAN Busrah, S. F.1, Abdul RAHMAN, K. A. A., and Anna DURIN. (2018). Character of Apai Saloi in Iban Folktales. *Journal of Borneo-Kalimantan*. Vol 4(2): 29-42.