

Literature of the Minority in South Sulawesi Endangered

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Abstract: This study observed three ethnic minorities in South Sulawesi, Indonesia: Bentong, Konjo and Bajo. These three ethnic minorities have their own local languages which they use in daily life. They are categorized as minority groups, since, they form a very small proportion of the total population of this province. They live in relative isolation. The Bentong ethnic group lives in the mountainous regions of Barru District, the Kajang people lives in forested area of Bulukumba District and the Kajo group live along the gulf of bone. They endeavor to preserve the traditions and culture of their ancestors. One tradition of interest is that the way they preserve their oral literary heritage through the generations. For them, literature has a moral value and can be used as a guide to life. From diachronic perspective, their literary heritage are now threatened with extinction as the attitude of the younger generation towards language begins to shift. This study is exploratory in nature using a participative observation approach. The methods applied were indepth interview, note-taking, check and recheck. The results show that the ethno-literature of the three ethnic groups is the mantra category. Furthermore, the mantras themselves have become an integral part of their belief system.

Key words: Ethnic groups, oral literature, endangered, mantra, animism, moral value, survival

INTRODUCTION

In recent year there has been much discussion ethnic literature by Steinberg (1981), Dixon (1997) and Kramsch (1998). The study of ethnic literature has almost always been associated with local languages, minorities and endangered languages. An endangered language is defined as a language at risk of running out of speakers or the speakers are shifting to another language. The theory of language extinction has been discussed by Tsunoda (2006), Evans (2010) and Vellnagel (2011). They conclude that the extinction of a language includes the elimination all linguistic matters relating to the culture of society, including the literature. It is proof that language is very important in human life. For Oyinloye, it appears as if all the activities of man are anchored on the use of language. Therefore, the language of the minority needs to be maintained by the speakers. If eventually the language losses all its speakers, the language will become extinct. As a result all aspects of the culture which are related to the language will also disappear including literature.

Questions of literature and ethnicity are extremely complex. The essence of the terms themselves is open to discussion and consequently, consideration of their relationship is fraught with difficulties. Ethnicity is a pivotal in social and political theories. It is a constructed from one or multiple primordial features such religion, language, race or caste. One consideration here is that it is almost certain that every ethnic group will have its own

characteristic culture and traditions where literature will form a part of the cultural heritage. Thus, the literature of each ethnic group can be seen as an integral part of its ethnic identity. Literature as an identity is referred to as ethno-literature. Ethno literature is generally in an oral form which is maintained by the owners by passing it down through generations.

Based on the points mentioned above this research aimed to) obtain an overview of ethnic minority groups with their own literature) uncover the relationship between societal belief system with the mantras they have and) to map out literature preservation strategies for ethnic minorities.

The first objective can be achieved through the investigation of the oral tradition of each ethnic group. The second goal can then be achieved through participative observation of everyday life and behaviour of the communities as well as the current implementation of the ceremonies where mantras are used. The third objective can be achieved through consciousness action: socialising the threat of extinction and increasing awareness of the importance of preserving oral literature. Thus, this study will contribute to the preservation of the literature of minorities in South Sulawesi.

This study is about the relationship between one type of such ethno-literature (the mantra) and the ethnic group of minorities with in which it has developed, specifically in the context of perserving this heritage.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Mantra and belief: The material of the study is mantra. Mantra is supposed to be a part of belief system. A mantra is a collection of words that are believed to have mystical or magical powers. From the structural aspect, the mantras often include elements from ancient poetry but they also have a distinctive nature, since, they are closely related to deep seated customs and traditional beliefs. A mantra is usually recited at a specific time and/or place or in response to a specific need, the aim is generally to generate or strengthen particular abilities or power's in the people who recite it. Mantras are generally learn, studied in depth and finally mastered only by certain people such as shamans and spiritual leaders.

One of the things that justify the illusion of the mantra in the oral literary category is its language style which is very dynamic and rhythmic. This actual words of the mantra which frequently include methapors and culturally specific allusions can be a complimented by the way in which it is delivered for example the use a tone and extension of certain sounds or even whispered so as to be scarcely audible and thus more mysterious. Mantras can be of many types each of which it has its own efficacy and usefulness. For example there are mantras to cast out demons or ghosts to treat people who are sick to ensure abundant harvests and many others.

Mantra in the three communities studied consisted of several types including mantras for more medical treatment, mantras to avert disaster, martial mantras and mantras for immunity weapons/wounds. The type of mantra discussed in this study comprises mantras for reinforcing connection with specific culturally important aspects of nature and wellbeing. For these ethnic minority communities, the mantra has become a part of their belief and at the same time mantra has become a spiritual need. Mantra also boosts self-confidence and so, it also becomes identity and integrity.

As an important legacy from their ancestors they still transfer the mantra down through the generations. However, there is now a new generations which no longer uses their language actively. As a result, a number of people still know the mantras even they do not understand its meaning. The new generation still makes use of the mantras because they perceive, it as useful not based on the actual meaning. In conservation efforts, they perform the mantras at an annual event as a means to pray for the safety and the welfare of community.

Ethno/oral literature: The Konjo people also known as the Kajang are an ethnic group that live in the rural

hinterland of Bulukumba District. The people still adhere to the the cultural heritage of their ancestors. Geographically, the Konjo community is basically divided into two groups, 'Konjo dalam' (inside the core indigenous area of territory) and 'Konjo luar' (outside the core territory). The 'Konjo luar' do not live on customary land. People belonging to the Konjo ethnic group are easily recognized through certain external characteristics such as wearing black clothing with no footwear.

Pasang or Pappasang is the name of their oral tradition. This oral literature is a doctrine that has become the basis of belief. All the rules by which they live are contained in the Pappasang which is not written down but passed down orally. Thus, the Pappasang is memorized by the Ammatoa (community leaders) and taught to the people orally. In this teaching, the ethnic group strongly upholds the teachings of their ancestors. In addition, the Kajang ethnic group also still maintaining the spirit of mutual cooperation in various activities. They live in a protected forest and they care deeply for their natural environment (Fig. 1).

The oral literature of Bajo ethnic group is called 'mamma' and is a form of mantra. Mamma mantras are read every time before they go to sea. This is a kind of prayer which is jealously guarded from and closed to outsiders. Bajo mantras primarily address marine issues, perhaps because the Bajo communities live in the coastal areas and rely on fishing as a livelihood. The Bajo people strongly believe that the incantations are a manifest effort to achieve the safety and success. To that end, the mantra is essential and cannot be separated from their lives. Mantra and society are intimately connected. In other words, the mantra exists because there are people who use, pass on and value this inheritance. The persistence of mantras in the community is a manifestation of a belief or faith. The people believe in the existence of a supernatural force and that belief drives them to conceptualize or ritualize that power into a tangible form to meet their spiritual needs.

As one of the ancient poetry genres, the mantra arises as a natural result of people's imagination and animistic belief system. People believe there are an occult and supernatural powers. They believe in the existence of ghosts, jinn and demons. In their belief system, the ghosts, jinn and demons are evil and always interfere with human life but there are also other supernatural powers which are good. These good supernatural beings have the power to help human activities such as hunting, farming, fishing and so forth. But they can only provide help if people master and use a certain mantra. This means that there is a strong belief that the reading of a certain mantra can have a magical effect and that it tends to increase self confidence.



Fig. 1: Map of the ethnic minorities

Table 1: Ethnic group and its oral literature

Ethnic groups	Location/district	Natural surrounding	Oral literature	Alternative names
Bentong	Barru	Mountainous region in Barru District	Poada	Dentong
Konjo	Bulukumba	Forest area in Bulukumba District	Papaseng	Kajang
Bajo	Bone	Along the coast of the Bone Bay	Mamma	Sama, Sea Gypsies

The third and the last ethnic group observed is the Bentong whose language is also called Dentong (or sometimes Bentong) language. This small ethnic group lives in the mountainous region of Barru District and relies on traditional agro-forestry for their livelihood. They are supposed to have settled in this region several hundred years ago, however, there is no clear historical evidence regarding their origin and the number of Bentong speakers is in continued decline.

The lives of Bentong are guided by a philosophy of life that they inherited from their ancestors. This philosophy of life is in the form of a set of moral teachings that they guard and protect. None of the bentong would dare to break the rules as stated in their oral literature. According to their beliefs if they violate the customary rules, someone will suffer a disaster.

The situation, estimated population and oral literature the three minority ethnic groups observed in this study are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the settlement area of the ethnic minority groups represents a mountainous region (Bentong) tropical rain forest (Konjo) and coast site (Bajo). The three ethnic groups did not know each other.

Research procedure and methods: To obtain a detailed picture of the three ethnics minority, the researcher conducted a participatory observation, visiting and interacting. This is important to witness the community way of life directly. In addition, interview with key

informants were carry out with the help of interpreters, the researcher also witnessed mantra recitation ceremonies.

During the research and observation there were several constraints such as) written resources about the communities are very limited) they are closed societies which do not readily interact with a foreigner and) they do not want to share the content of the mantras they know.

Data were collected through a gradual and culturally sensitive observation approach, note-taking, check and recheck methods and then the data were interpreted. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. The completion of this study took 2 years.

Based on field data (interviews) the key characteristics of mantras of the three ethnic groups were identified. A mantra would generally:

- Consist of a series of words with rhythm and sound as well as the importance of pronunciation tone and enunciation
- Address or attempt to influence human relations with occult powers
- Form an indivisible whole, which cannot be understood through each of its component parts
- Contains esoteric elements on every word
- Be valued more on its merits (efficacy) rather than its meaning
- Be practiced for a particular purpose
- Contain content and concepts illustrating the confidence of a society in a given place and time

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The characteristic of mantra of the three ethnic groups:

Based on the observations made, the three oral literatures mentioned above have the same genre which is that of the mantra. In each community, the mantra is something important to guide people lives. The mantra is considered to be sacred because it is believed that it will give peace and safety in other words, mantra recitation is a form of effort to achieve the safety and success in life.

Observing the way of life of each people it could be seen the mantra had become a part of their belief system. For the Kajang and Bajo in particular there were two ways to preserve this aspect of their culture) mantra recitation (incantations) before doing any activities and holding annual festivals with communal incantations as prayers for salvation.

The observed oral literature including one ancient poetry genre, mantra seems to have arisen as a natural result of the people's imagination and animistic belief. Animism is the belief in ghosts and spirits and is considered as the principle form of religious beliefs that first appeared among primitive humans. Animists believe that every object in the world (such as a particular region forest, ocean and mountains) has a soul which must be respected, so that, the spirits do not bother humans or on the contrary, so that, they may be expected to help people avoid calamity.

The belief of people in the power of the mantra can be considered as part of the local wisdom. Oral literature is a mental artefacts that illustrates the dreams, ideals aspirations, desires, hopes, laments and so, one of a people, all of which are part of the ethnic knowledge system. The owners transmit the oral literature through time, from generation to generation, so that, the content of the oral literature becomes internalized and served as guidance in addressing the challenges of life. They believe that there are values behind the mantra. There is cause for concern about the future of these mantras because in many cases they are now only understood by the older generation, indigenous leaders and a very few other people while the younger generation are increasingly ignorant of their meaning. They believe in the importance of these mantras but they cannot understand the language.

The characteristic of Paseng (Kajang oral literature) is about environmental care, Mamma (Bajo oral literature) is about fishermen and fishing in the sea and Poada (Bentong oral literature) focuses on agricultural issues. To save the oral literature from extinction it is necessary to do the transcription of these oral texts. The goal of such an effort would be to preserve the values of local wisdom that

had been known only by the parents or their for ebears. The younger generation as heirs to their respective cultures could then learn the values of local wisdom through the reading the transcript of their folk literature. In this way such an initiative would also be an attempt to preserve both their language and culture.

Literature of the minority: The three ethnic groups examined in this study each have their own language. But they do not have their own writing system (e.g., pictographs or an alphabet). They rely on oral traditions and collective memory. Traditionally they have lived in harmony and peace with communal sharing of many things and close ties of brotherhood. Their way of life is not glamorous and in some communities is still almost untouched by modernism. They inter-marry within their own communities. In general they have a subsistence economy, working to fulfil their own needs. Each of these ethnic group holds an annual gathering, a kind of festival with culturally important (ceremonial rituals). Using their respective oral traditions, they recite specific mantra (often considered similar to casting a spell) that is believed to be a means of praying. These traditional ceremonies are led by traditional leaders.

The practices briefly described above are of interest as the focus of both cultural and linguistic study in terms of language and literature-especially as the people who are involved are not aware of concepts such as the preservation of language and literature. They do not realize that their language and ethno-literature considered endangered they only realize that they are a minority group. That awareness reinforces their perceived, need to live together in peace, cooperation and for mutual protection. Therefore, this phenomenon is of great concern to the linguist, anthropologist, social scientist and literary expert.

Such a high level of concern is certainly reasonable because the phenomenon of the extinction of a language does not only have implications for the linguistic dimension itself such as aspects of language with its structure but it can also imply loss of the cultural dimensions that are inherently attached to the language. This is because the community perspective on things is seen through the lense of cultural constructs such as the rules, traditions and beliefs of the ethnic group which can only be fully known and understood through the language in which they were created (Dixon, 1997).

UNESCO <<http://www.unesco.org>> is very attentive to the problem of endangered languages. It has provided five 'classification system's to show the degree of endangerment. The classifications are as follows vulnerable-most children speak the language but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home) definitely and

Table 2: The degree of language endangerment

Ethnic groups	Estimated population (2016)	Degree of endangerment	Intergenerational language transmission
Bentong	94.000	Critical endangerment	The youngest speakers are grandparents and older and they speak the language partially and infrequently
Konjo	2.873	Vulnerable	Most children speak the language but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)
Bajo	1.116	Severely endangered	Language is spoken by grandparents and older generations parents generation may understand it, they do not speak it to the children or among themselves

endangered-children no longer learn the language as a ‘mother tongue’ in the home severely endangered language is spoken by grandparents and older generations the parents generation may understand it they do not speak it to the children or among themselves critical endangerment-the youngest speakers are grandparents and older and they speak the language partially and infrequently and extinct there are no speakers left.

Based on the criteria mentioned above the degree of endangerment of Bentong, Konjo and Bajo language can be classified Table 2.

In terms of preservation of language, tradition and literature, the three ethnic groups have significantly different world views and ways of life. This is due in part to the level of their adherence to the culture of their ancestors. Konjo (Kajang) people are very respectful of their customs and obedient to the command of their traditional leaders (called the Ammatoa). They live isolated from surrounding communities. The commands of the Ammatoa must be followed. This is a cultural absolute.

On the other hand Bajo communities in the gulf of bone are now beginning to open up and interact with surrounding communities. In particular, their children interact widely with other people outside the Bajo community. The Bajo are often called called ‘sea people’ or ‘sea gypsie’. Once living from birth to death on boats, most Bajo communities have now settled on the shore, though their main livelihood is still fishing. The Bajo people describe themselves as ‘sama’ rather than Bajo, though this term is rarely used by outsider. Their language and literature in critical (severely endangered) category, since, their language is now only mostly spoken by older generations the parents generation may understand it but they do not speak it to the children or among themselves. Their children learn other local languages but people around do not learn the Bajo language.

Finally, the Bentong people (sometimes called Dentong) belong to isolated communities that lives in the inland of Barru Disctrict. The core residents group consist of just 9 people. They believe that this number should not be increased because if it is then the extra people will die.

Other groups of Bentong people live the surrounding area but they are few in number <100 people. One distinguishing characteristic of the Bentong people is a blotchy skin dark with irregular white/pale patches. They are also often called to Balo which means spotted. Their culture and literature are in a more critical condition compared to those of the Konjo and Bajo group.

CONCLUSION

This study can be formulated as follows the minority oral literature form observed (mantra) is a mental artefacts that illustrate the dreams, ideals aspirations, desires, hopes, laments and so on which are parts of the ethnic knowledge system if a mantra has become an integral part of a belief system it is difficult to separate it from the society in which it originated. This evidenced for example in younger generations continuing to recite a mantra without understanding the meaning of it language is a medium of literature, safeguarding the language from the threat of extinction is one way to save the oral literature of ethnic groups and the three ethnics studied have a different thematic aspect Kajang mantras are about perserving their environment, Bajo mantras are about fisheries and the sea and Bentong mantras are related to plantations and agriculture.

As a part of human cultural heritage, the literature and language of the minorities must be protected. However, if there are signs that an endangered language may be moving towards extinction as may naturally happen it should be anticipated it with methods including transcription, recording and translation. To perform oral literature is one strategy to perserve the language while another is to promote its being spoken in everyday interactions.

The results of this study shows that the oral literature of Kajang and Bajo ethnic groups has a high likelihood of suvival, since, it is used for ritual purposes while poad a (Bentong oral literature) can be considered very likely to become extinct, since, its language is no longer being learned by the new generation. Suh a loss would of course be very unfortunate because in every local wisdom there is something very valuable to human life on these

grounds there is an urgen need for action toensure the preservation of this language and culture, including its oral ethno-literature.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher would like to thank Professor Burhanuddin Arafah, Hum who read this article before submission. I would like also to thank Abigail Moore. Who helps me correct the English.

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