

## Bajau's Tekodon: A Preliminary Study

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### Abstract

Riddle is a form of oral literature that is very popular in Malaysia. Amongst the different ethnic groups in Sabah, ownership of riddles are identified by their ethnic origins. The 'sundait' is the riddle of the Kadazandusun, the 'antuka' of the Iranun, and the 'tekodon' of the Bajau. Riddle is a poem in question format, which is meant for guessing. It also creates a sense of togetherness in the rural community. Tekodon has developed among the Bajau community living in the rural areas in Kota Belud on the West Coast of Sabah. The Bajau's 'tekodon' has forms and themes similar to Malay riddles in Peninsular Malaysia.

### 1. Introduction

Riddles are prosaic questions conveyed through specific language which invite others to guess the identify of the object being asked. Riddles live on and develop in a community's language. Districts might have distinct variations in the spoken language and riddles reflect these. As with other oral literature, riddles reflect thought patterns, cultural heritage and values of the societies which own them. According to Brundvand (in Danandjaja, 192:21) riddles are part of oral folklore, particularly the question types.

A total of 158 riddles were collected from eight villages in the district of Kota Belud and Tuaran. These respondents are from the West Coast Bajau ethnic group. The riddles which had been collected were translated into Malay. The question and answer which constitute the riddle were classified according to their structure and theme.

### 2. Bajau ethnic group

Bajau is one of the minority ethnic group in Sabah. Until today, the Bajaus' origins are still unclear. There are studies which indicate that the Bajaus originated from the South Sulawesi. Others claim the Bajaus are splinter groups from the Philippines who migrated to Northern Sabah. There are also claims that they are descended from a princess from Johore who was Philippines bound but her men were attacked in Bruneian waters. The princess ended up marrying the ruler of Brunei and her men stayed on the coast of Northern Borneo (Gusni, 2010).

Present day Bajaus in Sabah are divided into two groups, the West Coast Bajau and the East Coast Bajau. The former is also known as the *Sama*, and they inhabit the west coast of Sabah from Kudat to Kota Kinabalu. They are concentrated in the districts of Kota Belud, Tuaran, Kota Kinabalu and Papar. Some East Coast Bajau prefers to be known as *Bajau Kubang* and they are found on the east coast of Sabah, mostly in the mainland districts of Semporna and Lahad Datu. Other East Coast Bajaus who inhabit the waters and islands around Semporna and Lahad Datu are known as *pala'u*. Despite being separated demographically, and the two versions of Bajaus are quite different, the two groups share the language family (Sather, 1997).

Writings and studies on the origins of the Bajau can be traced back to the 20th century; including works by Warren, Sopher, Saleeby, Alliston, Nimmo and Sather. In the late 20th century, prolific researchers producing articles and books on the West Coast Bajau community are Yap Beng Liang (1990), Gusni, Miller (2007), Saidatul Normis (1999; 2012) and Halena Sandera (2012). Nevertheless research and writings about the folklore of the West Coast Bajau are less encountered; no studies on the Bajau's tekodon has been found.

### 3. Bajau riddles

The Bajaus, like other ethnic groups, have their rich culture and oral literature. The Bajaus have the *kalang sama'* or Bajau pantun, which are often sung during festivities like weddings and *barunsai*. Other than *isun-isun*, the Bajau riddles known as *tekodon* has been rarely studied. This could possibly be due to riddles now being rarely used as a tool to test the cognitive abilities of members of the community. Very few people could remember Bajau riddles. In the past, riddles had been used to past time, particularly amongst Bajaus who lived in the interiors and had minimal facilities for entertainment. Riddles therefore provided pleasure to the speaker and the people around him. It had the ability to create rapport and familiarity. They also used riddles to create humorous atmosphere and to test each others' cognitive prowess.

### 4. The structure of riddles

Based on riddles' content, riddles have structure (Sukatman, 2009), Sukatman classified riddles into (1) metaphoric riddles, (2) pornographic riddles, (3) acronomic riddles, and 4 *kecohan* riddles. Sukatman also divided riddles according to their theme: (1) humour based on plants, (2) humour based on unique animals, (3) pornographic humour, (4) humour based on teasers or its lack of logic, and (5) humour based on unique objects. According to Inon Shahrudin (1976), riddles' structure is achieved by way of hints (*pembayang*) and answers. Inon Shahrudin studied Malay riddles, which he divided by hints and number of words. Lokman Abdul Samad (2004) studied the riddles of the Kadazandusun, known as *Sundait*. He classified the *sundait* by their theme and form, e.g., themes based on flora, fauna or home appliances, and themes of a sexual nature.

### 5. The structure of the Bajau tekodon

Based on structuring work done by Sukatman, Inon Shahrudin and Lokman Abdul Samad, the structure of the *tekodon* can be divided into its hint and answer. Then its answer can be classified by theme, as done on the Kadazandusun's *sundait* by Lokman Abdul Samad. The identified structure of the Bajau *tekodon* is given below.

#### 5.1 Metaphoric riddles

Based on its semantic structures, metaphoric riddles can be further divided into three types, namely plant – animal metaphor, object – human metaphor, and plant – human metaphor. These riddles use metaphoric questions or comparison of one essence to another to create unique and symbolic situations. The symbols describe or represent the object being hinted for listeners to guess. Examples of plant – animal metaphors are given below:

##### 5.1.1 Plant – animal metaphor (personification)

The hints in these riddles use animals as metaphors with human personification.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Tanduk kerabau diom tana'.*

Answer: *Besinah kayu.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Tanduk kerbau dalam tanah.*

Answer: *Ubi kayu.*

(in English):

Riddle: Buffalo horns in the ground.

Answer: Cassava.

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Sisik ni sisik naga, jambul ni jambul kuda.*

Answer: *Peranggi.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Sisiknya sisik naga, jambulnya jambul kuda.*  
Answer: *Nanas.*

(in English):

Riddle: Its scales are of a dragon, its tuft are of a horse.

Answer: Pineapple.

These riddles are arranged using direct comparative association (metaphor), i.e., comparing the buffalo's horns to cassava, and scales and tuft to pineapple. The pairs of metaphors associate physical characteristics of animals to plants with almost similar physical appearance.

#### 5.1.2 Plant – human metaphor (personification)

The hints in these riddles use plants as metaphors with human personification.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Amun dikik makai badu, amun oyo nantang.*

Answer: Ponn bok.

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Bila kecil pakai baju, bila besar telanjang.*

Answer: *Pokok buluh.*

(in English):

Riddle: Wears clothes when young, naked when adult.

Answer: Bamboo.

#### 5.1.3 Object – animal metaphor (personification)

The hints in these riddles use objects as metaphors with animal personification.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Amun tiyo jadi motor, amun sikot jadi doktor.*

Answer: *Namuk.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Bila jauh jadi motor, bila dekat jadi doktor.*

Answer: *Nyamuk.*

(in English):

Riddle: When far it's a motor, when near it's a doctor.

Answer: Mosquito.

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Papan ta' dia', ungut enjata'*

Answer: *Kuro-kuro.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Papan di bawah, tempurung di atas.*

Answer: *Kura-kura.*

(in English):

Riddle: Board underneath, shell above.

Answer: Tortoise.

#### 5.1.4 Human – object metaphor

The hints in these riddles use human beings as metaphors to give life to objects.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Pensoan betong nei, baru senengak kelong nei?*

- Answer: *Karung.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Dikenyangkan perutnya, barulah diikat lehernya?*  
Answer: *Guni.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: Fill up its stomach, then tie its neck?  
Answer: Sack.
- (ii)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Lo ensedi, songom engtengak.*  
Answer: *Pelita.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Siang ke tepi, malam ke tengah.*  
Answer: *Pelita.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: To the side during the day, to the centre during the night.  
Answer: Lamp.
- (iii)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Songom so, lau lengantuh.*  
Answer: *Kelambu.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Malam kenyang, siang lapar.*  
Answer: *Kelambu.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: Full at night, hungry during the day.  
Answer: Mosquito netting.

Riddles which use human feelings as metaphors show objects being given human characteristics. For example, the sack which has its neck tied and its stomach filled up, and the mosquito netting which is portrayed as full at night and hungry during the day for not having eaten. All the riddles in this category show how plants, animals and objects were given human traits.

## 5.2 Riddles with lines of hints and words.

This type of riddles have their structure determined by the number of words in one line. The answers given could be in one or two words. In the case of Bajau tekodon, there can be found hints arranged into four lines akin to the Malay riddle pantun.

### 5.2.1 One line hint and one word answer.

This form is the most numerous of all forms of collected tekodon. Each line is simple and has two descriptive elements comprising of eight to twelve syllables.

- (i)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Kuro-kuro menaik dinding.*  
Answer: *Kuali.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Kura-kura panjat dinding.*  
Answer: *Kuali.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: Tortoise climbing wall.  
Answer: Wok.

- (ii)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Batu ae ben lubang.*  
Answer: *Lesungan*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Batu ada lubang.*  
Answer: *Lesung batu.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: Stone with a hole.  
Answer: Stone mortar.

### 5.2.2 Two line hint and one word answer.

There are several tekodons with two lines of hint. Such tekodons strive to give more descriptive elements and more clarity for the listeners to guess the answer.

- (i)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Tenekon ponsot ni,  
poyo moto ni.*  
Answer: *Selait.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Ditekan pusatnya,  
besar matanya.*  
Answer: *Lampu picit.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: Press it centre,  
its eyes widen.  
Answer: Torch light.
- (ii)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Amun yo penakai teniman,  
amun nia penakai tenagu.*  
Answer: *Jala.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Kalau diguna kita buang,  
Kalau tidak diguna kita simpan.*  
Answer: *Jala.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: We cast it when we use,  
We keep it if we do not use.  
Answer: Net (fishing).

### 5.2.3 Three line hint and one answer.

Despite these riddles have three lines, the words are short and the answers point to one object.

- (i)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Ponni pon kayu,  
gamut ni buai,  
buak ni buak sukak.*  
Answer: *Senduk.*

- (in Malay):  
Riddle: *Batangnya batang kayu,  
akarnya rotan,  
mulutnya kelapa.*  
Answer: *Senduk.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: The stem is wood,  
the root is rattan,  
the mouth is coconut.  
Answer: Ladle (the type commonly used by the Bajaus).

#### 5.2.4 Four lines and pantun-like.

Like the Bajau *kalang* which is similar to the Malay pantun, Bajau riddles which are pantun-like either have two lines or four lines. Some examples are given below.

- (i)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Abang lumaan ta songom tarang,  
Besomo-somo dayang puteri,  
Anak ini ramai eyang ni dendangan,  
Bila genisil pengen api.*  
Answer: *Pendidit kayu.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Abang berjalan di malam terang,  
Bersama-sama dayang puteri,  
Anaknya ramai ibu seorang,  
Bila bergesel, berapi-api.*  
Answer: *Mancis kayu.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: Man walks in the bright night,  
Together with the princess' maid,  
One mother with many children,  
When there is friction, they are fiery.  
Answer: Wooden match sticks.

#### 5.3 Teasers and illogical riddles.

These riddles are statements or questions which are mere teasers to disrupt logic. Answers to this type of riddles could be just about anything as long as they are connected to the riddles. These type of riddles can be further divided into several forms, i.e., (a) play on logic, (b) play on sounds of language, (c) illogical riddles, (d) play on language, and (e) rationalisation of answers. However in Bajau riddles, there are only play on logic and rationalisation of answers types.

##### 5.3.1 Rationalisation of answer riddles

These riddles show that the answers to the riddles do not make sense, and are not definitive, but rationally they are acceptable. The sought after answers are answers which do not make sense at all but have their own rational. What is sought is a silly answer to humour the people. Examples of such riddles are given below.

- (i)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Iko-iko ding, ding yan yang sedin?*  
Answer: *Ding haruan.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Banyak-banyak ikan, ikan apa yang sedih?*

Answer: *Ikan haruan.*

(in English):

Riddle: Of all fish, which fish is sad?

Answer: *Haruan fish (Channa striata).*

(The root word *haru* in Malay means overwhelmed, moved).

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Iko-iko bungo, bungo yan paling langa?*

Answer: *Bungo moto lau.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Banyak-banyak bunga, bunga apa yang paling tinggi?*

Answer: *Bunga matahari.*

(in English):

Riddle: Of all flowers, which flower is the highest?

Answer: Sunflower.

These riddles show as long as the question and answers have a connection, they are considered rational; the important element being they appear humorous to listeners.

### 5.3.2 Play on logic riddles.

These are riddles which are answered according to logic acceptable to the person offering the answers. Sometimes the answers have no connection to the question but they make sense. Often answers for these riddles are also humorous. Several examples are given below.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Un duangan seq, dendangan pesuut lekat Kudat, dangan lagi pesuut lekat Sipitang. Minggo gai setemu.*

Answer: *Bukit Padang.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Ada dua orang sahabat, seorang berundur dari Kudat, seorang lagi berundur dari Sipitang. Di manakah mereka akan bertemu?*

Answer: *Bukit Padang.*

(in English):

Riddle: There are two friends, one walked backwards from Kudat, the other walked backwards from Sipitang. Where will they meet up?

Answer: Bukit Padang.

(Note: In Sabah, Bukit Padang is synonymous with the mental hospital located in that area.)

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Yan sebab suka' labu'?*

Answer: *Sebab eyo ta'jata'.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Apa sebab kelapa jatuh?*

Answer: *Sebab ia di atas.*

(in English):

Riddle: Why does the coconut fall?

Answer: Because it is above.

(iii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Amun dikau tandan soka labu diom soang, dangai yang pelantung ?*

Answer: *Debagi.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Kalau satu tandan kelapa jatuh dalam sungai, berapa yang timbul?*

Answer: *Separuh.*

(in English):

Riddle: If a bunch of coconut falls into the river, how many will surface?

Answer: Half.

All Bajau riddles demonstrate a simple and free structure. Metaphors can be found in Bajau riddles, like Sukatman reported metaphors in Javanese riddles. Language used is simple and generally cannot be described as 'refined' because these riddles were coined by simple village communities. Despite the presence of hints in the Bajau pantun riddles, they are not as refined as the hints encountered in the Malay pantun riddles.

## 6. Theme of Bajau tekodon.

The collection of Bajau tekodon could be classified into several types, i.e., (1) objects and household items, (2) flora and fauna including edible plants, and animals on land, in the sea and river, (3) human beings including anatomy, physiological functions and human actions, and (4) events in their environment.

The dominant theme in Bajau riddles include objects and household items, flora and fauna, natural events, as well as human anatomy and actions.

### 6.1 Objects and household items.

Objects chosen in the Bajau riddles are items used by the Bajaus in their everyday living. For example, kitchen equipment such as pots, mortar stone, knives, ladle, coconut grater, lamp, wooden match sticks, etc. Equipment include farm tools, and fishing equipment including fish hooks, net, *parang* (machete), saw, etc. There are also riddles which refer to the structure of a house, e.g., stairs and roofs. It is unique that Bajau riddles include modern vehicles like the school bus, cars and trains in their theme. This observation could be attributable to the ongoing socio-economic development, as well mixing with and borrowing from Malay riddles which can be found in Sabahan society.

#### 6.1.1 Examples of riddles on other objects.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Songom so, lau lengantuh.*

Answer: *Kelambu.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Malam kenyang, siang lapar.*

Answer: *Kelambu.*

(in English):

Riddle: Full at night, hungry during the day.

Answer: Mosquito netting.

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Amun songom jadi paie, amun lou jadi yu'.*

Answer: *Tipoh.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Kalau malam jadi pari, kalau siang jadi yu.*

Answer: *Tikar.*

(in English):

Riddle: A stingray at night, a shark during the day.

Answer: Mat.

(iii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Un dekahuk barang, barang ni langkau,  
Engko ni langkau pandai lumahan, jadi kawan anak dendo.*

Answer: *Jarum engkok benang.*

(in Malay):

- Riddle: *Ada satu benda, bendanya panjang,  
Ekornya panjang pandai berjalan, menjadi teman si anak dara.*  
Answer: *Jarum dengan benang.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: There is one thing, it is long,  
Its tail is long and likes to wander, a good friend of the maiden.  
Answer: Needle with thread.
- (iv)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Teniup bulikni, poyo motoni.*  
Answer: *Pudan.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Ditiup pantatnya, besar matanya.*  
Answer: *Rokok.*  
(Note: In Malay spoken in Sabah, *pantat* refers to the buttocks.)  
(in English):  
Riddle: Blow its ass, its eyes widen.  
Answer: Cigarette.
- (v)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Pasok mengiring, peluak pan mengiring.*  
Answer: *Butang badu.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Masuk mengiring, keluar pun mengiring.*  
Answer: *Butang baju.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: Enter sideways, exit sideways too.  
Answer: Shirt button.

#### 6.1.2 Examples of riddles on household and kitchen appliances.

- (i)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Niyak mangan amun niyak buas putek.*  
Answer: *Kukur.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Tak makan kalau bukan beras putih.*  
Answer: *Kukuran.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: Won't eat anything but white rice.  
Answer: Grater.
- (ii)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Tis buek selang, matai si dayang-dayang.*  
Answer: *Suuk pom.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Surut air laut, mati si dayang-dayang.*  
Answer: *Lampu pam minyak tanah.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: When the sea recedes, the maidens die.  
Answer: Pressurised kerosene lamp (British: paraffin lamp).

#### 6.1.3 Examples of riddles on work tools.

These riddles refer to objects used for everyday work like farming, fishing, etc.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Amun penakan suk,  
amun penebenen jadi lemak.*

Answer: *Guk / badi'.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Kalau diberi makan jadi kurus,  
kalau dibiarkan jadi gemuk.*

Answer: *Parang.*

(in English):

Riddle: If fed it is thin,  
if ignored it is fat.

Answer: Machete.

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Titi kayu jati,  
Boleh meli boleh bedagang.*

Answer: *Timbangan*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Titi kayu jati,  
Boleh dijual boleh membeli.*

Answer: *Timbangan*

(in English):

Riddle: Bridge made of teak  
Can be sold, and can be bought

Answer: weighing scale

#### 6.1.4 Examples of riddles on house structure.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Jomo too pelebos, jomo mura' menaik.*

Answer: Ban

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Orang tua turun, orang muda naik.*

Answer: *Atap*

(in English):

Riddle: the elders come down, the younger one go up

Answer: Roof

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *anakni ternidak-tindak, yangni niurut-urut.*

Answer: *Odon*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Anaknya dipijak-pijak, ibunya diurut-urut.*

Answer: *Tangga*

(in English):

Riddle: step upon the child, massage the mother

Answer: Steps (stairs)

### 6.1.5 Examples of riddles on vehicles.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Anak nangis, eyang ngarait, emak mudan.*

Answer: *Keretapi.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Anak menangis, emak menjahit, bapa hisap rokok.*

Answer: *Keretapi.*

(in English):

Riddle: Child crying, mother sewing, father smoking.

Answer: Train.

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Amun tenutup eyo buli lumahan,  
amun binuka eyo nia buli lumahan.*

Answer: *Keretapi.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Bila tutup dia boleh jalan (lintas),  
bila buka dia tak boleh jalan (lintas).*

Answer: *Keretapi.*

(in English):

Riddle: When it is closed, he can cross,  
when it is opened, he cannot cross.

Answer: Train.

(Note: Most train crossings in Sabah are level crossings).

(iii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Eko-eko kerita, kereta eyen nyak pnanggil kereta?*

Answer: *Teksi.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Sebanyak-banyak kereta, kereta apa yang tidak dipanggil kereta?*

Answer: *Teksi.*

(in English):

Riddle: Of all cars, which car is not called a car?

Answer: Taxi.

(iv)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Entan ku tangan no, main ku betis noh.*

Answer: *Baskal*

(in Malay)

Riddle: *Kupegangn tanganmu, kumain kakimu*

Answer: *Basikal*

(in English)

Riddle: I hold your hands I play with your feet

Answer: bicycle

### 6.1.6 Flora and fauna theme

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Titik agung diom tana'*

- Answer: *Kadi.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Hujung gong dalam tanah.*  
Answer: *Keladi.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: The ends of gongs in the ground.  
Answer: *Yam.*  
(Note: A *gong* is a musical percussion instrument, which is a round and flat metal disc.)  
(ii)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Ponni retak ta bunda'  
dunni berjari-jari,  
bua' ni oyo betaik tikus.*  
Answer: *Kepayas.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Pokoknya retak ke depan.  
daunnya berjari-jari,  
buahnya besar bertahi tikus.*  
Answer: *Betik.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: The tree is cracked down its front,  
its leaves have fingers,  
its fruits are large with mice droppings.  
Answer: *Papaya.*  
(iii)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Dikit doko' sumpit, oyo doko perisai.*  
Answer: *Dun saging.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Kecil macam sumpit, besar macam perisai.*  
Answer: *Daun pisang.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: When small it looks like a blowpipe, when big it looks like a shield.  
Answer: *Banana leaves.*  
(iv)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Seeko-eko kapal, kapal yan lemiyang diak rumak?*  
Answer: *Mamanuk beriyu.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Sebanyak-banyak kapal, kapal apa terbang di bawah rumah?*  
Answer: *Burung layang-layang.*  
(in English):  
Riddle: Of all ships, which one flies under the house?  
Answer: *Swallow (bird).*  
(iv)  
(in Bajau):  
Riddle: *Bai ku mangan ketupat,  
hai temban sedeh telaga,  
seiko- iko daeing tenat,  
daeing heen kah nia pan lak.*  
Answer: *Udang.*  
(in Malay):  
Riddle: *Sudah makan sebiji ketupat,*

*tertinggal tepi telaga,  
sebanyak-banyak disebut ikan,  
ikan apakah yang tiada darah?*

Answer: Udang.

(in English):

Riddle: Have eaten one rice dumpling,  
left on the side of the well,  
of all fish,  
which one is bloodless?

Answer: Prawn.

(v)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Papan ta' dia', ungut enjata'*

Answer: *Kuro-kuro.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Papan di bawah, tempurung di atas.*

Answer: *Kura-kura.*

(in English):

Riddle: Board underneath, shell above.

Answer: Tortoise.

## 6.2 Human anatomy and behaviour theme.

Riddles with a human theme includes anatomy, physiological function and human actions. The actions become the subject in building tekodon. Human actions like carrying a corpse, smoking cigarettes, brushing teeth, defecating, and sleeping are made into riddles. The anatomy used in Bajau tekodon include teeth, sole, and umbilical cord.

### 6.2.1 Examples of tekodon using the human anatomy are given below.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: Eyan barang amun meya' tak bukud tei?

Answer: *Tapak betis.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Barang apakah yang selalu di belakang kita?*

Answer: *Tapak kaki.*

(in English):

Riddle: What is it that is always behind us?

Answer: Foot prints.

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Iko-iko tali, tali yan mesti niopo'?*

Answer: *Tali ponsot.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Banyak-banyak tali, tali apa yang mesti dipotong?*

Answer: *Tali pusat.*

(in English):

Riddle: Of all cords, which cord must be cut?

Answer: Umbilical cord.

### 6.2.2 Human actions.

Riddles involving human actions seek for answers which are work done by people in their everyday lives. The answers

include the work of carrying a corpse to the burial ground.

(i)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Guyak enjatah, uran media'?*

Answer: *Jomo ngayak tepung.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: *Ombak di atas, hujan di bawah?*

Answer: *Orang mengayak tepung.*

(in English):

Riddle: Waves above, rain below?

Answer: People sieving flour.

(ii)

(in Bajau):

Riddle: *Deriber empat, penumpang endangan.*

Answer: *Ngakat jomo matai.*

(in Malay):

Riddle: Pemandu empat, penumpang satu.

Answer: *Mengangkat orang mati.*

(in English):

Riddle: Four drivers, one passenger.

Answer: People carrying corpse.

On the whole, the theme of riddles are rooted in the surroundings of the community, which includes flora and fauna, objects, as well as human actions and behaviour.

## 7. Conclusion.

The Bajaus have rich oral traditions, which include the *isun-isun*, *kalang sama*, oral tales and *tekodon* (riddles). Studies on *tekodon* have never been conducted. Despite problems like shortage of materials to be collected and plausible diffusion and borrowings from Malay and Iranun riddles, this is an effort to preserve *tekodon* before they become extinct. From this present study, Bajau riddles show similarities to studies done by Sukatman on Javanese riddles' structural construct. However pornographic riddles have not been found in the Bajau *tekodon* unlike their presence in Javanese, Iranun and Dusun riddles.

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## Respondents

- Seling Bin Simbul. 74 years. Kampung Lingkodon, Kota Belud, Sabah.
- Puan Kunah Binti Dari. 40 years. Kampung Nongkolud.
- Jamlan Sorek. 49 years. Kampung Nongkolud.

Dato Golkan Hj Lambok, 67 years. Pekan Kota Belud.  
Mahadi and Hj Mashul Hj Draman, Pekan Kota Belud.  
Hisab bin Diasa, 49 years. Kampung Penimbawan, Tuaran.  
Suding Bin Sawall, 61 years. Kampung Penimbawan, Tuaran.  
Hajjah lamah bt. Mandin, 68 years. Kampung Bobot, Kota Belud.  
Puan Piluk bt. Maidan, 70 years. Kota Belud.  
Puan Didong bt. Massa, 57 yeras. Kampung Bobot, Kota Belud.  
Puan Rubayah bt. Hj. Ajim, 55 years. Sekolah Kebangsaan Rangalau, Kota Belud.  
Osman Awang, 47 yeras. Sekolah Kebangsaan Tempasuk 1, Kota Belud.  
En. Kauli bin Jalawi, 64 years. Kampung Gunding, Kota Belud.  
Puan Masnikah bt. Adap, 55 years. Kampung Linau, Kota Belud.  
(Note: Sekolah Kebangsaan, or its acronym SK, is Malay for primary school. Kampung, or its acronym Kg., is Malay for village).