



The Structure of *Tempuutn Langit Tana*: An Ethnographic Study of an Indonesian Myth

Endonezya Mitolojisi Üzerinde Etnografik Bir Çalışma:
Tempuutn Langit Tana Efsanesinin Yapısı

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Abstract

One of the myths in Indonesia is *Tempuutn Langit Tana*, namely the myth of the creation of the world (heaven and earth) in the Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung communities. This study aims to describe the structure of *Tempuutn Mate* in the Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung tribes. This research is a qualitative descriptive study with an ethnographic method following the Levi Strauss approach. The data source is the mythological book entitled *Tempuutn: The Myth of Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung* by Michael Hopes, Madrah, and Karaakng. Data were collected by reading and recording and validated using library source triangulations and interviews with Dayak Benuaq community leaders. Results revealed that *Tempuutn Langit Tana* created a cultural phenomenon, still preserved today, based on (1) a geographic level scheme in the form of a journey to meet a human god couple and their descendants who will inhabit the earth and heaven, (2) the techno-economic level in the form of creation process of the earth and heaven, (3) the sociological level related to

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society regarding the history and purpose of the wedding ceremony, as well as problem-solving, and (4) the cosmological level in the form of the unseen world since at that time the world had not yet been created, the purpose of the creation of astral beings, and the original emergence of religious ritual activities remaining and carried out by the Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung tribal communities today.

Keywords: *Tempuutn Langit Tana, Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung, the creation of earth, myth, Levi Strauss*

Öz

Endonezya’da yaşayan Dayak Benuaq ve Tunjung kabilelerinin dünyanın (gök ve yer) yaratılışını anlatan efsanelerinden biri *Tempuutn Langit Tana*’dır. Çalışmanın amacı, Dayak Benuaq ve Tunjung kabileleri arasında anlatılan *Tempuutn Langit Tana* efsanesinin yapısını betimlemektir. Bu çalışma, Levi Strauss yaklaşımına (Levi Strauss yaklaşımı, efsanenin mesajını çözmek için kullanılmıştır) dayanan etnografik yöntemi ile yapılan nitel betimsel bir çalışmadır. Çalışmanın veri kaynağı, Michael Hopes, Madrah ve Karaakng’ın *Tempuutn: Mitos Dayak Benuaq dan Tunjung* adlı mitolojik kitabıdır. Verilerin toplanma teknikleri, okuma ve not alma şeklindedir. Verilerin geçerliliği, referans kaynakları üçgenleme ve Dayak Benuaq kabilesinin lideri ile röportaj yapma yöntemleri ile doğrulanmıştır. Bu çalışmada şu maddelere dayanarak *Tempuutn Langit Tana*’nın bugün hâlâ korunmakta olan kültürel bir fenomen yaratabileceği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır: (1) Bir çift yarı tanrı insanın karşılaşma yolculuğunun ve yeryüzünde ve gökyüzünde yaşayacak olan nesillerinin hikâyesi şeklindeki coğrafya düzey şeması, (2) Yeryüzü ve gökyüzünün yaratılış süreci şeklindeki tekno-ekonomik düzey, (3) Toplumun sorunları çözmek için yaptıkları şeyler ve düşün töreninin târihi ve amacı şeklindeki sosyolojik düzey, (4) O sırada dünya henüz yaratılmamış olduğu için görünmeyen âlem şeklindeki kozmolojik düzey, görünmeyen varlıkların yaratılış amacı ve Dayak Benuaq ve Tunjung kabile halkları tarafından bugüne kadar yapılagelen dinî ritüel aktivitelerinin ortaya çıkışının kökeni.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Tempuutn Langit Tana, Dünya’nın yaratılışı, efsane, Dayak Benuaq ve Tunjung, Levi Strauss*

Introduction

Mythologies emerged more during the early period of human history. Mythology is a collection of traditional or past stories considered sacred and functioning to describing a belief in culture. (Cassirer, 1953: 5). Myth as a philosophical analysis provides a similar portrayal like a mirror reflection and philosophically interprets the characteristics of materials and the origin of the world (Calvo, 2017: 87). (Bronner, 2007:56) stated that myth, as a folklore, is a significant source as it focuses on stories considered sacred by the supporting community and explains the creation process of the world and human life to become what they are now, and thus the myth can guide human’s behaviors (Frias et al., 2015: 595). In other words, beliefs and myths have been indirectly installed in their awareness (Gürçay, 2017: 72). Furthermore, folklore is a medium for preserving ancient fragments, cultures regarded inferior, and primitive human culture (Storey, 2003: 6)

Tempuutn Langit Tana of Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung tribes is one of Indonesian mythical stories telling the situations before the world was created and the creation of the heaven and earth as the origin of the creation of the world. The cultural structure in *Tempuutn* can be revealed through folklore studies using Levi Strauss structuralism. Levi Strauss structuralism views the structure of the human subconscious mind in living life by using mythical media believed by the community supporting Levi Strauss structuralism as a truth. This subconscious structure is then transformed into various cultural phenomena since, basically, folklore shows how to judge something from the past by documenting the stories, sayings, and attitudes that they then share in the present (Wilson, 2006: 3).

Levi Strauss structuralism is used by dissecting myths into the smallest units and then finding the relationship between the comparative elements, revealing cultural phenomena inherited through that structure, and interpreting through cultural structures related to the geographical, techno-economic, sociological, and cosmological levels. Through Levi Strauss structuralism, the researchers can explain the process of Dayak people's trust in *Tempuutn* and the impact perceived by the community. This is carried out because of the communication patterns and traditions in myths and rituals (Finnegan, 1992: 1).

The Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung are two of the tribes in Indonesia. The Dayak tribe is one of the majority ethnic groups in the Kalimantan region. (Riwut, 2007: 89) described that the Dayak tribe is divided into tens of ethnic groups, and the tens of nations are divided again into hundreds of tribal branches. The Dayak tribe in Kalimantan consists of seven tribes, and the seven tribes are divided into 18 *sedatuk* (branches of tribe), and the 18 *sedatuk* tribes are divided into 405 *sedatuk* families. The Benuaq Dayak tribe is one of the small tribes of the large Ngaju Dayak tribe which is the descendant of the Lawangan Dayak tribe. Hopes, Madrah, and Karaakng (Hopes et al., 1997:1) stated that the word "Dayak" means the native people of Kalimantan living upstream of several rivers. The Dayaks do not inhabit the coastal areas, but generally live upstream, and along smaller creeks or in the hills as far as water can be easily obtained (Staal, 1940: 55).

Method

This research is a qualitative research using ethnographic method based on Levi Strauss approach (Leavy, 2017: 9). This research mainly aimed to explore, describe, or explain people having distinctive characteristics over a long period to give rise to the daily routines of society related to norms, rituals, and social interactions as their cultural peculiarities (Yin, 2011: 309). Ethnographic research requires observation with the observed cultural community to explain the community daily life (Terrell, 2016: 157). Ethnography studies human groups and seeks to understand how they collectively form and maintain a culture (Marshall & Rossman, 2016: 64). Qualitative research was chosen because it studies the meaning of people's lives in real-world conditions (Yin, 2011: 86). The data in this study are quotations in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in the *Tempuutn Mate* text with the data source in the form of written text originating from the *Tempuutn* Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung mythology

in the book collection of myths *Tempuutn: Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung* myths by Dalmasius Madrah T and Karaakng. This is in accordance with Terrell's expectation that qualitative data can be text-based by using a narrative text (Terrell, 2016). The data were collected by reading and noting method using a research instrument in the form of a data card. The data were validated using triangulation of sources from various literature studies and interviews with Emanuel as a leader of the Dayak Benuaq community in West Kutai, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. The data analysis consisted of data reduction and verification, as well as drawing conclusions.

Discussion

Tempuutn is the forerunner of the emergence of customs carried out by the supporting community. The customs are such as traditional ceremonies, norms, values of social life, and all matters related to the concept of custom. The origin of the customary law and ritual ceremonies is explained along with the places so that they can be followed properly. In line with this, tradition must always be understood as a reflection of the past and present as a unity (Vansina, 1985:xii). Religious beliefs and rituals are conducted by making actions in the social contract of human life then standardized traditionally and subject to supernatural sanctions so as to strengthen the bonds of human cohesion (Bell, 2007: 35). Folklore characterizes the whole culture (Oring, 1996:13), and myth is a significant mediator transferring the past culture to the recent culture by delivering information related to the society (Sivri & Akbaba, 2018: 53). *Tempuutn* is a medium characterizing the entire culture existing in the Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung tribal communities.

Levi Strauss main goal is to find a generative source of cultural gifts in the universal structure of the human brain as a subconscious mental structure giving rise to culturally mediated experiential changes of consciousness. Levi Strauss stated that under the diversity of human cultural experiences, there is an invariant and common structure that can be seen in all societies (Throop, 2003: 376). The logical development of the mythical structure shows that the intellectual process in the mystical thought of primitive societies was as rigorous as that of scientific thought (Strauss, 1963:xiv). Then, it indicates something more than just folklore or local belief systems (Schneider, 2008: 69).

The structural approach of Levi Strauss can also use four levels consisting of geographic, techno-economic, sociological, and cosmological levels. These four levels are used to reveal the message and contained in a story so it is called the story structure. In myth, there are two aspects, namely the sequence and schemata aspects. Sequence aspect relates to the sequence of stories in myth, while the schemata aspect contains four schemes or levels explained as follows (Putra, 2006: 124).

Misnawati & Anwarsani (2019: 29-30) stated that myths always have a relationship with the past events. The structure in researching myths can be divided into two patterns, namely one myth and many myths. Research using one myth can be focused on the structure of the story, characters, and ideology. Meanwhile, researching with many myths is carried out by

analyzing each story and then comparing its structure to find similarities between existing myths. However, Levi Strauss structural analysis can be adapted to the existing myths in the area. Therefore, the structural analysis of the Dayak Benuak and Tunjung areas will be adapted to the existing conditions in Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan Province.

This structural study model is different from literary structuralism. Literary structuralism stems from the unanimity of intrinsic meaning which opposes mimetics as an imitation of reality, expressive theory assuming that literature is a reflection of the author's feelings and character, and reception theory viewing literary meaning based on the reader's responses and horizons. Literary structuralism is seen as autonomous and objective based on its intrinsic aspects. The weakness of literary structuralism is that literary works are not related to their context and function; they are separated from social, historical, and other relevance outside of the literary works. Meanwhile, Levi Strauss structuralism utilizes ethnographic data. Hence, the weaknesses existing in literary structuralism do not occur in Levi Strauss structuralism. However, this approach also has some weaknesses, namely the formulation of objective items and column divisions difficult to trace. These weaknesses are overcome by simplifying the formula and schema (Taum, 2011: 192)

Three foundations for the structural analysis of myth are (1) meaningful things in mythical elements are not found independently or separately from others, but they are found in a combination of all elements; (2) myth is not an ordinary language since it has different characteristics; (3) myths have complex characteristics more complicated than those of language so that they can be found at a level above language (Taum, 2011: 175).

Schematic or geographical level shows the direction of the figures' journey of their union with the gods. This scheme tells the pattern of the character's journey before the heaven and earth were created. Scheme 1 describes the beginning of the meeting of *Imaang Mangkaleyakng* (male) living at the end of the *Batuq Diikng Dingkikng* rock and *Ayaakng Lolaakng Kintaakng* (woman) living at the end of the *Batuq Rangkaakng Bulaau* rock. The ends of the boulder were opposite each other and then after the characters got married, the stones united together and the location was named *Batuuq Diikng Dingkikng Leputukng Rangkaakng Bulaau*. The union of these figures later became the forerunner of the earth formation. After getting married, they had children named sun, moon, stars, etc. Because their descendants continued to grow, they felt that the location was too narrow, so they wanted a wider place to live. Scheme 2 describes the character's journey in asking the family for directions to make a spacious place to live. The journey started from where he lived in *Batuuq Diikng Dingkikng Leputukng Rangkaakng Bulaau* to his family's residence in *Belikutan Tana, Bengkolookong Langit*, then headed to his wife's home location in *Tana Power*, and returned home for deliberation. After their deliberation, it was finally decided that their place of residence was called earth and heaven.

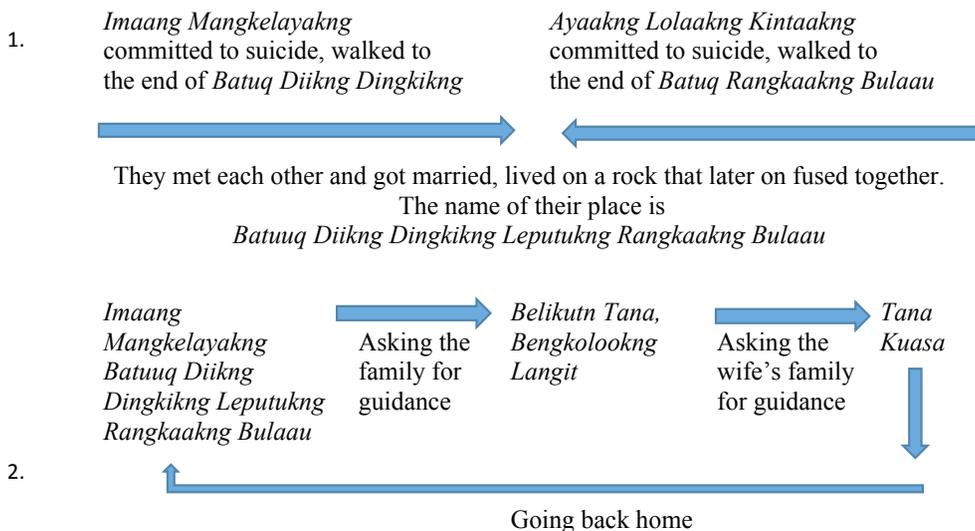


Diagram 1. Geographical Scheme of *Tempuutn Langit Tana*

Technoeconomics schemes present mythical elements describing the characters' experiences, economic activities, and results. This is because work really shapes their cultural perspectives (Oring, 1996: 76). Technoeconomics is influenced by local beliefs in these people's lives (Stoczkowski, 2002: 139). At *Tempuutn Langit Tana*, the *Dayak Benuaq* and *Tunjung* communities, the activity took place in the form of the process of creating the heaven and the earth as depicted in the schemes.

The scheme indicates an oppositional relationship, namely intending and having a place to live. Through this binary opposition, a harmonious binary opposition is formed (Misnawati & Anwarsani, 2019: 33). The creation of heaven and earth began with preparing the materials, transporting the materials, and drying the materials. Every time the material was opened for drying, *Yaai Logat* (large caterpillar) was sacrificed. When the construction of the land (earth) covering an area of 1 fathoms was finished, the soil was still loose and then sacrificed again. The blood of *Yaai Logat Langit* was smeared then the earth became solid. On the first day, the created heaven and the earth were 1 fathoms and 2 fathoms, respectively. On the second 1000 fathoms of heaven and 2000 fathoms of earth were successfully created, then *Seleggutung Ikui* (an animal believed by *Dayak Benuaq* and *Tunjung* communities) was sacrificed, a heaven-holding stick was added, and the earth foundation was strengthened. At first, the heaven was as high as a banana tree, then the heaven was raised up to eight levels. Every one level of the raised heaven formed one cloud layer. At this stage, *Wook Malukng Leneeq* (a kind of ghost) was sacrificed by using its colorful blood to decorate the heaven and the earth. The heaven and the earth were finished, then the sun, moon, and stars lived in the heaven. This explains that in every activity the *Benuaq Dayak* community required objects sacrificed as offerings so that their goals were facilitated.

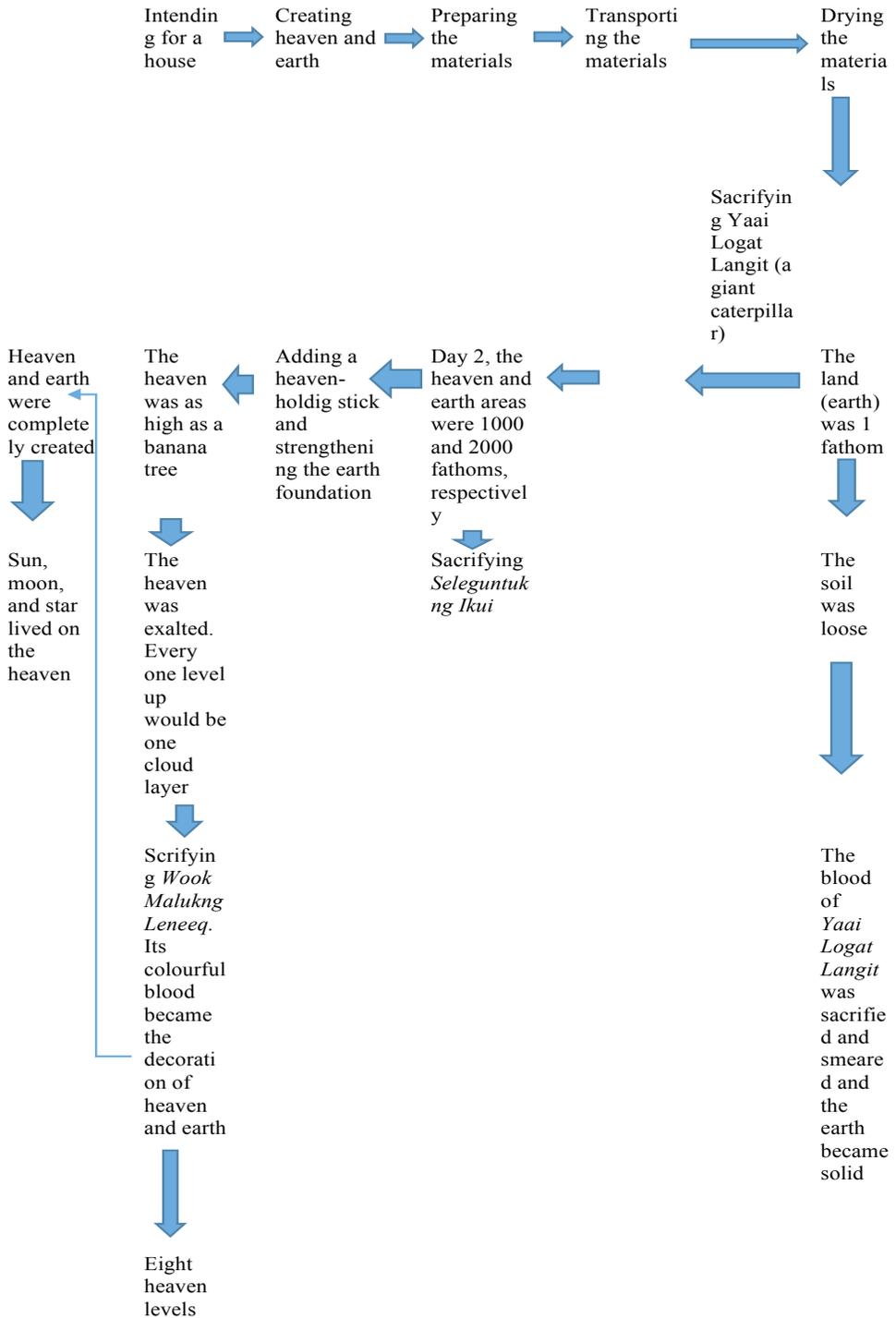


Diagram 2. Techno-Economic Scheme of Tempuutn Langit Tana

Sociological schema deals with social problems. This scheme depicts the journey from nature to the future culture, from primitive to civilized man by expressing in a complex society and having a sociological function. (Clement, 1985:130). Moreover, the sociological scheme is also related to the the characters' social status. In Tempuutn Langit Tana, there are 2 sociological schemes. Scheme 1 illustrates that initially, male and female demi-gods had intercourse freely so that they often caused misfortune. Finally, the assessment team ordered the leaders of Imaang Mangkaleyakng (male) and Ayaakng Lolaakng Kintaakng (female) to formalize their relationship by getting married and holding a *pelulukng* (a kind of marital ceremony). Since then, they had been spared from disaster. Until now, the community still performs the *pelulukng* ceremony.

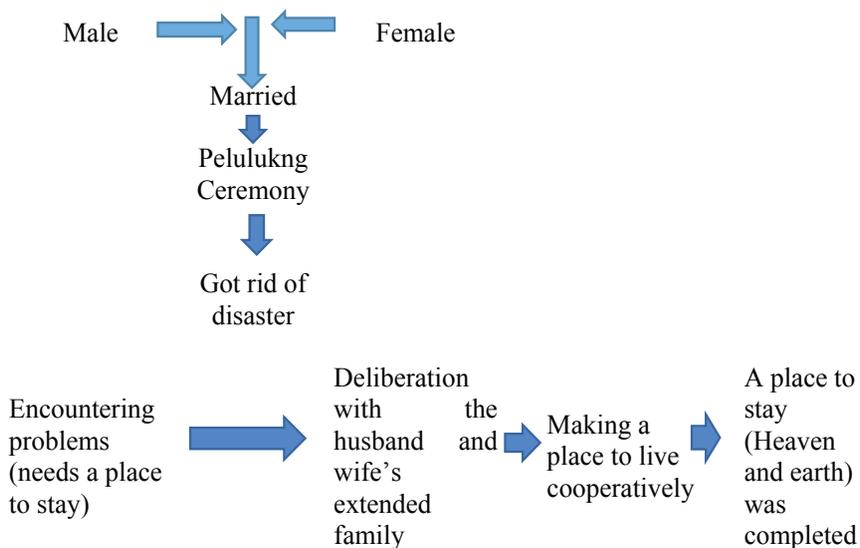


Diagram 3. Sociological Scheme of *Tempuutn Langit Tana*

The cosmological schema deals with the supernatural world, the world of non-human beings, and clearly shows top-down oppositional categories. If the scheme is started by combining the signs of the Macrocosm and the Microcosm (God and Man), it will be found that they will provide an internal outline signifying the state of love between the two. The cosmos is oriented to the place around its Center, and revolves above the concept of God and under the concept of life (Gray, 1980: 56). Furthermore, the cosmological schema is also related to rituals dealing with the supernatural offering a unique type of joy, namely communication related to the spirits of the dead (Tucker, 2008: 114).

The analysis of Tempuutn Langit Tana describes the origin of the creation of the world. Because the world has not yet been created, the location told is in the form of the supernatural or heaven. Perejadiiq Bantikng Langit (the name for God by the Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung people) created an assessment team whose job was to observe and assess. Then, he created five separate plots of land inhabited by demi-gods. The separate locations caused residents

to experience deep sadness because they could not visit each other. Then, he created Beniaaq Angaatn Langit (a kind of giant eagle) under whose there was a Tentaakng Laaq Mentaakng (a kind of giant spider) producing a cobweb containing the five plots of land. After that, Uook Ngesok (a ghost in charge of shifting and closing five plots of land) was created. The five plots of land were successfully merged. The assessment team stated that the five plots of land were not strong because they had no foundation, and thus two large stones were created in the middle of the five plots of land. The unified land allowed residents to meet each other and caused promiscuity so that uncontrolled birth and death happened due to falling from the dwelling. Batuq Diikng Dingkikng was inhabited by Imang Mengkelayakng, a man who had been married seven times and all of his wives died due to falling from their habitation. Batuq Leputukng Rangkaakng Bulaau was inhabited by Ayaakng Lolaakng Kintaakng, a woman who had been married seven times and all of her husbands died when they fell from their habitation. The assessment team considered the need to carry out a ceremony to avoid harm, and thus eight spirits were created to accompany the cultural ritual activities. Imang Mengkelayakng and Ayaakng Lolaakng Kintaakng got married and the assessment team ordered them to perform a *pululukng* ceremony to avoid accidents and unnatural deaths. Other cultural ritual activities were in the form of entanglement ceremonies to treat and prevent various diseases, praying for Itah Otur’s blessings for all the works and results, and *besagiiq* (a great ceremony to solve the residents’ problems), *wara wayukng/sentangih* (a praying ceremony) to save the spirits of the dead. The cultural ritual activities were also artistic in the form of dance, singing, and *beguliq*.

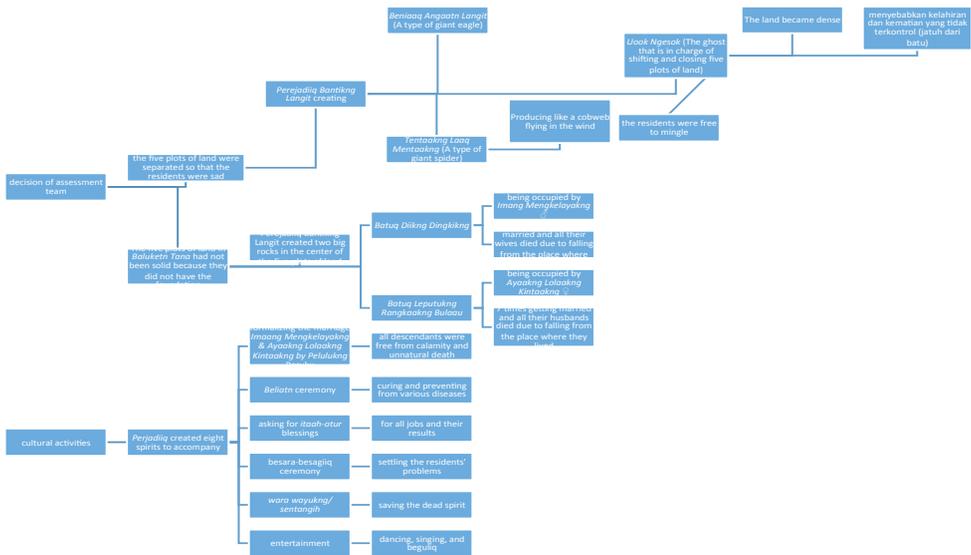


Diagram 4. Cosmological Scheme of *Tempuutn Langit Tana*



Figure 1. The ceremonial process. Opening is by chanting a spell



Figure 2. *Pemeliatn* (shaman) begins to dance to the music in the healing ceremony of *beliatn*

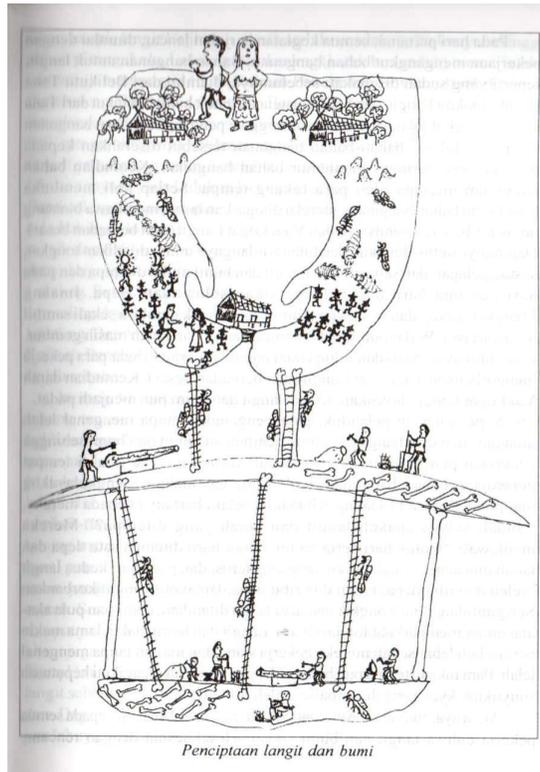


Figure 3. Illustration of the Creation of Heaven and Earth (hopes et al., 1997:23).

Conclusion

Tempuutn Langit Tana is a myth about the origin of the creation of heaven and earth in the Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung tribal communities. This study finds four levels, namely the geographical, the technoeconomic, the sociological, and cosmological levels. The geographical level is the journey of meeting a human god pair as the initial story of how heaven and earth came to exist and their descendants who later inhabited the earth and heaven. Then, the techno-economic level is the process of making the earth and heaven. The sociological level is related to the community and the beginning of the wedding ceremony and its purpose, as well as the way it was carried out in dealing with a problem. The cosmological level is in the form of the told unseen world because at that time, the world had not yet been created, then the creation of astral beings and the purpose for which they were created, and the origin of the emergence of ritual activities, namely the *pululukng* ceremony to avoid unnatural disasters and deaths, *beliatan* ceremony to treat and prevent various diseases, asking for blessings for all the work and its results, great ceremony of *besagiiq* to solve the problems of residents, and *wara wayukng/sentangih* to save the spirits of the dead. The ritual activities were also artistic including dance, singing, and *beguliq*. These ritual activities are still carried out by the Dayak Benuaq and Tunjung people to this day.

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