

## **BEBAYUH: FROM HEALING RITUAL TO TRADITIONAL PERFORMANCE**

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### **Abstract**

This study deals with the *bebayuh* ritual performance which originated from animistic beliefs as a healing practice. This qualitative research using ethnographic studies focuses on the relationships between human behaviours and culture. The *bebayuh* ritual is analyzed from the perspective of the theory of cosmology which sees human beings entrenched in the world not only in terms of space and time but also within the physical and non-physical worlds. Man's relationship with the world would produce all forms of creativity and extraordinary ability to produce artistic works. These different art works, symbolize man's innate being, their cosmology and their beliefs. It is also closely related to the four cosmological perspectives of earth, air, fire and wind. The resultant art work is also believed to have its own soul. The theory of cosmology will help to cement the various time-space components and becomes an important aspect to understand the function of *bebayuh* as a curing ritual. The community of *bebayuh* practitioners believe that the physical world is influenced by the metaphysical world, especially where it concerned the existence of other worldly beings, the myths and spirits associated with their ancestors. They also believe that the places they inhabit are also shared with the presence of these other worldly, spiritual beings. Based on these beliefs, offerings are prepared and rituals are done in the *bebayuh* performance with the main aim of respecting and asking permission from these spiritual beings to help with the healing process, which in the *bebayuh* ritual can be categorized as *faith healing*, vis-à-vis ritual practices which are related to religious beliefs. The healing came about because of the belief in the intervening powers and abilities of these spiritual/other worldly beings. This study shows that this ritual still plays an important role in the lives of the Melanau people providing them with an alternative form of curing. It also shows how the *bebayuh* has been modified to now become a cultural heritage performance.

**Keywords:** *Bebayuh*, Ritual, Animism, Cosmology, Curing