

ROLAND BARTHES'
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SEMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS:
KAYAN DAYAK TRIBAL HAND
TATTOO
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ROLAND BARTHES' STRUCTURALIST SEMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: KAYAN DAYAK TRIBAL HAND TATTOO

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ABSTRACT

Tattoo tradition and the Kayan Dayak tribe are two things that unity. Tattoos are a tradition that has been around for a long time. Unfortunately, their existence is almost extinct. Tattoo as an activity of painting the body has a complex symbolic meaning also a personal interpretation for the owner. Tattoos are essentially necessary for the Dayak tribe because they become a symbol or identity. This study will examine the meaning of tattoos in the Dayak tribe, especially on the hands in the role of a form of nonverbal language communication using Roland Barthes' semiology structuralist analysis as a framework that restates the organization of symbols in a cultural system with a process of calculating significance in a structured arrangement. Sign interpretation by Roland Barthes is according to a review of the marking process at the denotation level as a general meaning or true meaning and the connotation level as a special meaning or hidden meaning. A tattoo's complexity conveys a nonverbal message about social status. The hand tattoo also implies that the hand is a part of the body as the centre of life. The hand tattoo represented a person's life journey, delivers stories of life through visual communication.

BACKGROUND

Tattoo or tattooing is an activity of painting on the body's written dermis layer by making specific patterns through the application of temporary or permanent ink or dye through the process of pricking the skin with a fine needle to insert the pigment. Tattoos found on preserved ancient human mummies show that

tattooing has been performed world-wide for centuries (Deter-Wolf et al., 2016). The oldest tattoo on the body of a man named Otzi found under a glacier in the Alps. More than 1960 different tattoo images have appeared from 3250 BC. Also, the world's oldest figurative tattoos found on two mummies from Egypt between 3351 and 3017. There are decorative tattoo images (tattoos with no specific meaning), symbolic tattoo images (tattoos with a connotation related to the wearer), and tattoo images that picture only an object or a person. Furthermore, tattoos can potentially apply as a means of distinguishing oneself from others.

Tattooing, which means "to make a sign," is a Kalimantan cultural heritage that has become part of the tradition and still has different meanings for each tribe that owns it. Tattoos from Kalimantan, which are arguable as the oldest, are more than just an ornament or body decoration; they also imply social, cultural, and religious beliefs, as well as an existential and life perspective. The tribes of Kalimantan depict tattoo images as a representation of one's life journey and the process of interacting with one's natural surroundings. The Kalimantan tattoos is an intriguing structuralist study: each element of form, field, and space created in the tattoo motif has an authentic symbolic meaning.

Structured semiology, according to Roland Barthes, is a framework that restates the organization of symbols in a cultural system with a process of calculating significance in a structured arrangement. The interpretation of sign science by Roland Barthes based on a review of the marking process at the denotation level as a general meaning or true meaning and the connotation level as a special meaning or hidden meaning (Hawkes, T., 2005). The denotation system is the first level of significance (interpretation), and the connotation system is the second.

PROBLEM LIMITATION

The structural semiotic paradigm will study the Kalimantan tattoos encircle the entire hand, from the shoulders down to the arms, and then the wrists to the fingers. Kalimantan tattoos come in a variety of styles (shapes, types, and classifications). As a result, structuralist semiology studies will prioritize the Kayan Dayak tribe, which has also made significant contributions to the development and transformation of tattoo motif designs in five other large ethnic groups, including: (1) the Kenyah family; (2) Kenyah-Kalimantan (Peng, Lepu Lutong, Uma Tow, Long Giat and Uma Luhah); (3) the Kalimantan clump; (4) Murut (Uma Long, Dusun, Kalabit, Long Utan, Biajau, Ot-Danum, Ulu Ajar, Kahayan, Bakatan, and Ukit); and (5) the Iban family.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tattoos (English), *Tatoeages* (Dutch), *tatoveringer* (Norwegian), *tatouages* (French), *Tatuajes* (Spanish), *Tattoo* (Latin), *Abstinence* (Iban tribe), *Tedak* (Kayan tribe) all refer to the same thing: the implantation of micro pigments into the skin layer. Tattooing is an activity that is also part of Indonesian culture, particularly among the Dayak tribe in Kalimantan. It is done on the skin of the human body as a form of body modification and animals as identification. Tattoos are a form of body carving as well as a cultural tradition in the Dayak tribe that has existed since ancient times and has a different

meaning for each tribe. Tattoos in Borneo are used as a nonverbal communication medium through pictures, writings, photos, or specific themes that are poured on the top of the skin using a needle and inserting dye so that it becomes a work of art, as well as a body modification or identification (Karyadi, 2017).

¹ Tattoos are a legacy of tradition passed down from generation to generation for the Dayak tribe as sacred and noble things, and they should not be made carelessly or removed from their customs (Coomans, 1987). Tattoos represent a person's social standing in society and a form of respect for one's abilities, which leads to the rules for image selection and tattoo placement. Some tattoos describe the tattoo owner's ethnicity of origin or place of residence so that it is closely related to the tattoo owner's social system. Tattoos are an important part of Dayak rituals and worship, artistic activities, and headhunting traditions (Sellato, B., & Perret, G., 1992). The Dayak tribe creates black tattoos with resin soot mixed with water or sugarcane juice. This black tattoo, according to legend, will light the way after death because it has become one with them. As a result, tattoos can also refer to rajah, which is a representation (in the form of writing, pictures, or specific letters) used as an amulet (repels disease, repels dark power, supernatural powers, salvation, or compassion).

Malays use the term Dayak to refer to residents of mountain areas, but it also refers to non-Muslim residents of Kalimantan's interior (Leeming, D.A., 2010). The term Dayak comes from the Sungen language (an ancient Dayak language) and means bakena in Indonesian (Riwut, T., 1993). Dayak is also derived from the Kenyah word *daya*, which means upstream or inland. Dayak comes from the Malay word *aja*, which means "original" or "indigenous" (Maunati, Y., 2004).

The Dayak tribe descended from immigrants from South China's Yunnan region who wandered into the Indonesian islands, particularly Kalimantan (Coomans, 1987). There are seven tribes in the Dayak tribe, eighteen tribal or sub-tribal children, and 405 kinship tribes. The Dayak tribe is divided into six clumps: (1) the Kalimantan (Klemantan) or the Dayak Darat or Bidayuh in Sarawak, West Kalimantan, and East Malaysia; (2) the Dayak Kayan, Kenyah, and Bahau clumps in Sarawak, East Kalimantan, and West Malaysia; (3) the Murut family in North Kalimantan, Brunei, Sabah-Sarawak, East Malaysia; (4) the Ot-Danum or Barito family is the parent of the Ngaju Dayak family and its distribution covers almost all Dayak tribes in Kalimantan; (5) the Punan in West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan and Central Kalimantan; (6) Iban or Sea Dayak family are scattered in West Kalimantan, Sarawak and Brunei. Thus, the Dayak tribe's tattoo culture has influenced by their ancestors' culture from the South China mainland (Olong, H. A., 2006).

ANALYSIS METHOD

The analytical method used in Dayak tattoos is Roland Barthes' structuralist semiological analysis. The main characteristic of structural analysis is a structured depth of meaning which explains the surface meaning as objective analysis. Semiology is the study of signs in society or the general science of

signs (Piliang, 2012). The structuralist study based on Saussure's approach to linguistic theory, which states that signs as the human's language of communication, is made up of two parts: the signifier is a meaningful sound, and the signified is the concept of language.

The signs, which are made up of the signifier and the signified, are related to the structure that governs them and how they apply to art, religious ritual activities, and other forms of cultural phenomena found in human life. Saussure investigates the science of signs based on their relationship (signifier-signified) in two dimensions, namely the vertical dimension (synchronic) and the horizontal dimension (diachronic). The synchronic analysis focuses on opposing and hidden patterns in the text (paradigmatic structure); the diachronic study focuses on a series of events or events that form a narrative (syntagmatic structure) (Piliang, 2003).

Roland Barthes is the thought successor to Saussure, emphasizing the interaction between text and individual experiences and user's culture; the intertextuality between text conventions and conventions experienced and expected by users. In his work of thought, Barthes continues to use the terms signifier and signified. The orders of signification are Barthes' ideas, which include denotation (the true meaning) and connotation (the second meaning that is born from the cultural experience and is personal) (Fiske, 1990).

Roland Barthes defines myth (myth) as the second level of the sign system, or at the connotation level. Myth is a cultural way of thinking, the way of conceptualizing or comprehending something. According to Barthes, myth is a concept-related link. The myth is not only a fairy tale or fantasy (superstition), but it is also a language and a description of facts. The language classified as verbal (spoken or written) or nonverbal (not spoken or written) in this case (all material interpreted arbitrarily). Myth considered as an extension of connotations imprinted on a population or public. The meaning of myth has formed by communal forces that eventually result in the myth becoming a myth (a cultural-meaning). The literal meaning is natural, while the denotative is oppressive (closed-meaning) (Fiske, 1990).

A myth is valuable (Barthes, 2004). This semiotic value uses to demonstrate a myth's ability to be exchanged for an idea (ideology) and compared to other myths. So, myths are formed or constructed from a pre-existing chain of meaning; in other words, myths are also part of the second level meaning system, and myths can have a sign (signifier) and several concepts or ideas (signified).

A sign operates on the second level through myth. A myth, in this context, is a story told by a culture to explain or comprehend some aspect of reality or nature. Ideology exists in the text by deciphering the myth's connotations and then revealing the truth of the dominant value order that applies to a particular period (in a community).

SEMIOLOGICAL STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF KAYAN DAYAK TRIBAL HAND TATTOOS

The Concept of Dayak Hand Tattoos

Structuralist semiological analysis of Dayak tattoos initiate by exploring the tattoo images or objects (signifier) and concepts or ideas (signified), followed by analysing the relationship between the signifier and signified to obtain identification results in the form of principles, meaning, language, and interpretation of the tattoo object as a symbol. The human body's part from the arm to the hand consists of shoulders, the forearm between the elbow and the hand, the elbow, the wrist, the palm, the fingers. The tattoo design will be placed between the elbow and the hand. Aside from the hands, other body parts prefer for tattoo applications include the legs (including calves and ankles), chest, back, neck, and waist, except for the face. Men have tattoos on almost every part of their body, whereas women only have them on their hands and feet.

Tattoos are body decorations for the Kalimantan tribe that also have a meaning or a sign that they have done something or achieved something. The tattooing process typically carried out in childhood. However, it is unknown when a member of the Kalimantan tribe initiated the tattoo procession. Whereas for Dayak women, tattooing began in adolescence (puberty) as a way to commemorate their life's journey or as a record of attaining certain ranks (achievements, mastering particular traditional skills, holding positions or professions in society) include social status in society (Maunati, Y., 2004). Tattooing is a more cultural or customary practice that is not always associated with traditional rituals or ceremonies.

The concept of Kalimantan tattoo patterns or motifs stems from the tribe's attachment to its environment, nature or forests. The use of tattoo images to represent plants, animals, or other objects found in nature, such as the texture or geometric rhythm of an object's surface. Furthermore, one of the skills of tattoo makers who practising for years is the distortion or stylization technique in the design of the tattoo motif, which is later used as a reference for tattoo prototypes from other tribes. Reliable tattoo artists, including those who apply the tattoos, are usually women, whereas men work on making stamps or stamp tattoo motifs from wood or stone.

Tattooing still practised in the Kalimantan tribe according to their tradition passed down from generation to generation. This method involves tapping the tattoo needle on the skin layer, causing a wound that will eventually result in the tattoo's appearance, and frequently accompanied by a fever that does not require treatment. Traditional equipment for Dayak tattoo making consists of *lutedak* (tattoo stick made of ironwood with a variety of deer antler or buffalo horn material with a needle - formerly the thorns of an orange tree - attached to the end); *tukul tedak* (a stick made of ironwood to be placed as a beater on *lutedak*); *klinge* (pattern design or tattoo motif engraved on a piece of wood bought as a stamp or stamp); and *bungan tedak* (small cup or bowl made of

ironwood or *belian* wood as a place for tattoo dye - soot, charcoal resin mixed with sugarcane juice -). (small cup or bowl made of ironwood or *belian* wood as a place for tattoo dye - soot, charcoal resin mixed with sugarcane juice -).

A Denotative Study: Elements and Principles of Hand Tattoo Designs in The Kayan Dayak Tribe

The designs of Dayak Kayan tribal tattoos have influenced the designs of other tribal tattoo motifs. The Kayan Dayak tribal tattoo design has been simplified or combined with alternative patterns to create a new design. Figure 7 shows a design of a Kayan tribal tattoo motif on the wrist (*lukut* - the name of the antique bead that the Kayan tribe highly valued). The *Punan* tattoo motif designs for the underside of the biceps in the Kayan style (Figure 8); the dog motif or *udoh asu* (a transitional form of an elongated dog animal into a decorative form) (Figure 9) The character of the dog is very prominent in the art of Kayan tribal tattoos and is regarded as a tribute through the prototype of the *udoh asu* motif that has been copied by many tribes with degradation and name changes on the forearm and thigh; ornamental motifs on the shoulders or chest, shaped like flowers from wood or stone carvings, resembling a star, adapting a strip of cloth in the shape of a flower to be pinned to the shirt, possibly from the dog's eye pattern, which was later thought to be similar to the *plukenetia corniculata* fruit plant, cultivated by the Kayan tribe and known as *jalaut*; on hand tattoo painting (Figure 5) The image contains several elements, including *tegulun*, which is a figurative shape on each finger segment of a human representation (called *silong*); a face, which is an anthropomorphic form; song *irang*, which is a triangular shape on the crook of the knuckle; bamboo shoots, as well as a zigzag line called *ikor*; and a straight line. The *udoh asu* tattoo design on the male thigh is particularly isolated, but if it is on the hand, it becomes a serial design.

Kayan women have intricate tattoo motif designs all over their forearm, back of hand, entire thigh, below the knee, and above the metatarsal surface of their foot (the long bone at the top of the leg that connects the ankle to the feet finger). This tattoo design category includes a lengthy process - the making of tattoos, complex ceremonies at the time of tattoo application on the body, and a tattooing activity - that can last four years and divided into several stages. Starting with a pre-adolescent child around the age of ten (because of soft skin texture), tattoos on the fingers and upper part of the feet, about a year later the forearm, continued for the next three years for part of the thigh, are all possible. The entire process of making tattooing has completed before puberty.

Tattoo painting motif designs are classified as serial motif designs because they contain reduplications or patterns that follow each other in a serial sequence of several elements or elements of points, lines, shapes to create texture, space, and large or small sizes create contrast or emphasis on objects in the tattoo. Dayak tribal tattoos are typically black in colour because they believe that they will turn into gold after death and through the *Tiwah* ritual, illuminating the path to immortality (a sacred ceremony of death to deliver the soul or spirit of a deceased human to the world of the dead which located in the seventh heaven) (Kusmartono, V. P. R., 2007).

The limitations of social status or class represented by the naked eye through the tattoo design of the hand part of the Kayan Dayak tribe cannot be recognised accurately, though it is always possible to distinguish between the tattoo motif for a tribal chief's daughter and an ordinary woman or even a slave. The number of lines arranged demonstrates, the fewer the number of lines, the lower the social status or rank of a Dayak woman. The women within low social status's tattoos are typically simpler, and they are tattooed freely in general.

The tattoo motif for the forearm of high-ranking women (Figure 2, second image) is the tattoo of a Dayak Kayan tribe from the Uma Pliau sub-tribe who lives in the Baram river. There are several repeating patterns, such as (A) three concentric circles (moon circumference or full moon); (B) each triangle, each of which is formed from several parallel lines (*during harok* - boat arcs); (C) spiral shape (*uluinggi* - hornbill head), commonly referred to as *krowit* or hook; (D) thick transverse zigzag lines - *wi* leaf, rattan leaf; (E) the design pattern of tuba root ties (*tushun tuva*) is also called *poesoeng* or *tushun*.

A Connotative Study: The Mythology of Hand Tattoos in The Kayan Dayak Tribe

Tattoo paintings of the Dayak Kayan tribe are closely linked to rituals or beliefs, social status, and cultural traditions of the community, both general and specific, bypassing down customs from generation to generation. The process of creating Kayan Dayak tattoos involves special rituals in the form of sacred ceremonies and prayers, intending to ensure that the tattoo that has been inscribed provides protection for the owner and that the tattoo owner can also maintain and respect the tattoo's existence. Tattoos are a symbol of social status for selected men who have travelled far, whereas tattoos are a symbol of social status for women of aristocratic descent.

The symbol is defined as a type of sign, has an arbitrary relationship between a signifier and a signified associated with historical interpretations that will affect a person's understanding, how the sign functions, and the individual as the user. Tattoos for the Kayan Dayak tribe are sacred symbols passed down through dreams or based on the guidance of spirits in *Apo Lagaan* (the soul's path to heaven) through *shamans* (*dayung*). Tattoos are thoughts to repel evil spirits, evil influences, or diseases while attracting positive forces.

The meaning of this Dayak Kayan tattoo is a representation and interpretation of the trilogy concept - the human-to-human relationship, the human relationship with God, and the human relationship with nature -. The concept of trilogy interrelationship is implemented in the Dayak Kayan tribe's social order, ritual traditions and sacred ceremonies that are followed in every cultural activity of the Kayan Dayak tribe. Furthermore, various ornamental symbols in tattoos come from nature (animals, plants, and mythological creatures from the spirit realm such as dogs (*aso*), dragons or large snakes (*sangiang*), scorpions, etc.) as well.

The Dayak Kayan tribe that has a tattoo or *tedak* means that they are capable of carrying out responsibilities, such as for women whose identity is as a daughter of aristocratic descent, as well as showing their marital status (not married or married) markers of achievement in certain fields such as shaman (*dayung*), weaver, bead maker, healer, tattoo maker. It is said that having a tattoo shows a man's ability to be responsible as a man who protects the family; defends the village and its people; as a symbol of courage, a leader or warlord; and as an attraction for women.

There are several taboos that must be considered related to tattoo culture, especially for women. The process of making tattoos is endeavoured to finish before becoming pregnant because it is considered impolite or inappropriate if a woman is tattooed after becoming a mother. In addition, the process of making tattoos cannot be carried out on women who are menstruating and if someone dies whose body is still in the house (not yet buried). For a husband and wife, a tattooed woman is not allowed to eat monitor lizard or pangolin meat, and this taboo will continue until they have offspring. If they have daughters only then they are not allowed to eat monitor lizard meat until their daughter is ready to be tattooed. If you have a son, the husband and wife are not allowed to eat monitor lizard meat until they become grandparents.

Tattoos are primarily used in the Kayan Dayak tribe to represent identity as participation in a culture that ends in fulfilling life as well as meeting the needs of community life. Tattoo meaning for the owner is a way of understanding their identity as a member of the Kayan Dayak community. Tattooing or making *tedak* is an activity that is part of the traditional system that has been in place from ancient times to the present, despite the fact that it is accompanied by various value transformations and changes in the contextual substance of tattoos as cultural objects.

CONCLUSION

A typical Dayak or *tedak* tribal tattoo is a work of art as well as a sacred and noble cultural sign that has existed for a long time. The meaning of Dayak tribal tattoo culture cannot be separated from the values of tradition and customs, religiosity, and the social system. This is a symbolic representation of meaning that takes the place of tattoos not only as an aesthetic but also as a cultural object. Tattoos, as a medium of representation and interpretation, have become an inseparable part of Kalimantan culture, serving as a symbol of tradition, social status, skill mastery, a means of healing, religion or belief and spiritualism, evidence of travel, masculinity, and courage, particularly for men. *Tedak* can only be granted to those who have met the eligibility requirements. Meanwhile, tattoos are a priority for women because of their added value which functions for beauty and is believed to beautify them. Women who don't have tattoos are considered the most despicable in front of men. Women who do not have any tattoo will be called *layah* (smooth without tattoos) and even when they reach old age is not married.

Overall, authentic Kayan Dayak tattoo designs are elementary or simple, adapting forms from the surrounding environment such as plants, animals, and the appearance of various textures of objects found in nature. The level of

complexity of a tattoo conveys a nonverbal meaning to social status, particularly what distinguishes Kayan Dayak women from ordinary people or slaves. The tattoo's placement on the hand also implies that the hand is a part of the body that is one with the body as the centre of life. The tattoo owner's life journey can be told through the centre of life, which nourishes life through visual communication.

The Kayan Dayak tribe is a tattooed race that is most commonly found in Kalimantan. Tattoos from the Kayan Dayak tribe are also regarded as having the best tattoo designs from an artistic standpoint, and serve as an ideal reference for other tribes in Kalimantan in particular, as well as aesthetic inspiration for existing tattoos from various countries in general. Kalimantan tattoos, an almost extinct narrative tradition, eventually became a way for Bornean tribes to be able to create cultural structures and voluntarily determine their structures in order to build the sustainability of their living environment.

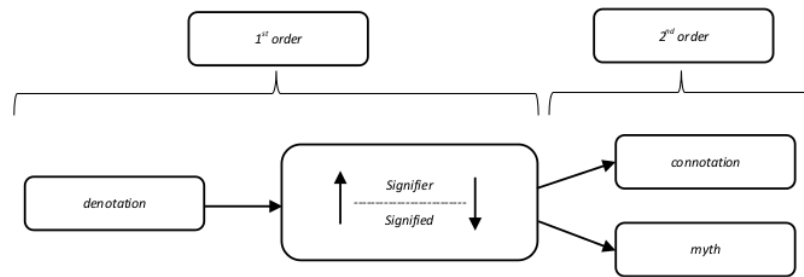


Figure 1. The Orders of Significations, Roland Barthes.

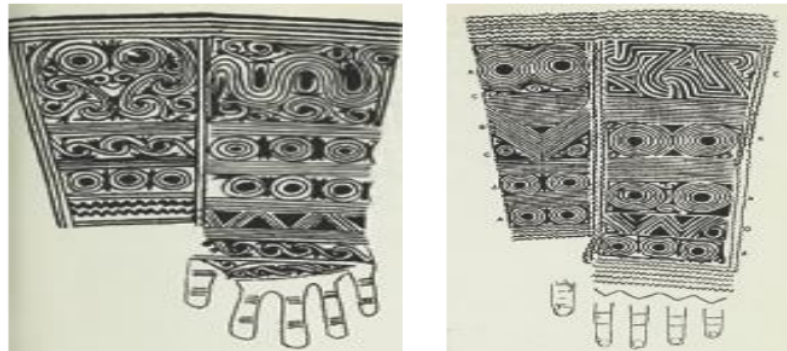


Figure 2. Motif of Dayak Kayan Uma-Lekan, Motif of Dayak Kayan Uma Piau, (Higher Class Women's Arms). Drawing by C. Hose and W.



Figure 3. Motif of Peng Area (Men's Arms), Motif of Kahayan River – Dayak Ngaju (Men's Arms), Motif of Long Utan (Women's Lower Arms). Drawing by C. Hose and W. Mcdougall.



Figure 4. Motif of Lepu Lutong (Women's Lower Arms), Motif of Dayak Kalabit (Women's Lower Arms), Motif of Dayak Kalabit (Uma Long Women's Forearms). Drawing by C. Hose and W. Mcdougall.



Figure 5. Motif of Dayak Kayan In Sekapan (Tribe Elders). Drawing by C. Hose and W. Mcdougall.



Figure 6. Motif of Dayak Ngaju (Men's Body and Arms). Drawing by C. Hose and W. McDougall.



Figure 7. *Lukat*, Dayak Kayan. Drawing by C. Hose and W. McDougall.



Figure 8. *Lukat* Punan, Dayak Kayan's style. Drawing by C. Hose and W.



Figure 9. *Udoh Asu*, Dayak Kayan. Drawing by C. Hose and W. McDougall.

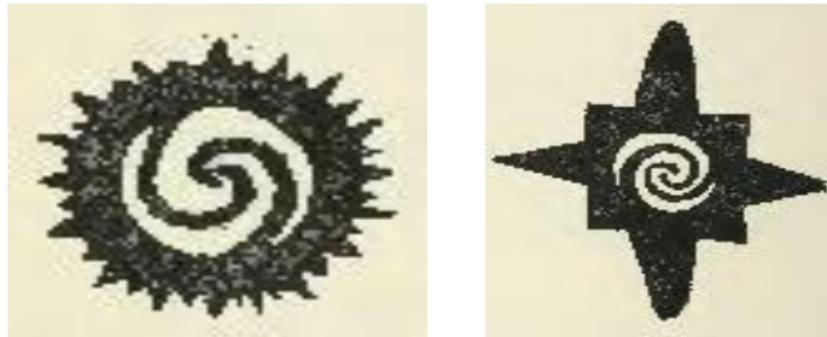


Figure 10. *Jalaut*, Dayak Kayan. Drawing by C. Hose and W. McDougall.



Figure 11. Hand and Forearm Tattoos. Pictures By @nak.sasak

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