

The Essence of Economic Stability in Marriage of the Kaili Da'a Tribe, Sigi Regency, Indonesia (A Socio-Legal Study)

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the nature of marital stability among the Kaili Da'a community in Sigi Regency from a socio-legal perspective. In Kaili custom, marriage is not simply a legal contract but a socio-cultural institution shaped by customary norms, collective recognition, and interaction with formal law. Based on field findings, marriage in this community is understood as more than the union of two individuals. It is a collective process that connects families, reinforces social positions, and preserves cultural values across generations. In this context, marital stability is constructed through a layered system of legitimacy. Customary practices play a central role and must be observed before the wedding ceremony is held. In other words, social legitimacy rooted in tradition tends to precede formal legal validation. A key element in this process is the *novate* and *nokeso* ritual, which serves as a marker of social maturity and appropriateness. Marriages that undergo this ritual are more widely accepted within the community, while those that do not are often viewed as less stable, even if they are recognized under religious or state law. The study also shows that stability is not limited to the early stages of marriage. Instead, it is continuously maintained through everyday household practices. These practices are guided by internalized customary values that shape the division of roles between husband and wife and promote a sense of fairness within family life. From a socio-legal perspective, this reflects the coexistence of multiple standards of legitimacy. Customary law operates as a living law that strongly influences social recognition, whereas formal law provides legal certainty and protection of rights. Therefore, this research highlights that marital stability within the Kaili Da'a community is best understood as a form of layered social legitimacy. This concept not only contributes to discussions on customary law and legal pluralism in Indonesia but also offers insight into how social order and community cohesion are sustained through culturally embedded practices.

KEYWORDS: Economic stability, marriage in Islam, marriage customs, Kaili Da'a tribe, socio-legal study

I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a natural and instinctive moment in human life (Finnis, 2008). Every living being has the right to procreate through marriage, which is carried out according to the culture and customs of various regions in Indonesia. Through marriage, humans maintain the continuity of their lives. Indonesia has a diverse range of marriage customs, reflecting the cultural variations that exist in each region (Buttenheim & Nobles, 2009; Utomo & McDonald, 2016). According to customary law, marriage is a bond between a man and a woman to form a household, carried out according to their respective customs and religions. Indonesia has a diverse range of tribes, ethnicities, religions, and cultures, including marriage customs. This is evident in the existence of ethnic groups with distinct lifestyles and cultures. Nearly every region in Indonesia has unique wedding traditions and regulations, influenced by the culture and environment in which the community lives, as well as by their knowledge, experiences, beliefs, and religion.

Understanding marriage is often closely linked to the culture and social context of a particular society (Barber, 2004). Marriage is a basic need for many individuals, including the Kaili Da'a people. For the Kaili Da'a people, marriage holds special meaning and values related to their traditions, customs, and beliefs. Marriage can be a means of maintaining cultural identity, strengthening family ties, and building a harmonious community. In this context, marriage is considered an important institution in the social and cultural life of the Kaili Da'a people. The Kaili Da'a people are an ethnic group inhabiting the mountainous region of Sigi Regency, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia (Rustina et al., 2026). This community has a rich cultural heritage and traditions, including traditional wedding practices that have been an integral part of their lives for centuries. Marriage in the Kaili Da'a culture is not merely a ceremony, but also a ceremony steeped in social, cultural, and religious values. This tradition plays a crucial role in

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maintaining the identity and cultural sustainability of the Kaili Da'a people. Although customary marriage traditions have long been a part of the Kaili Da'a community, it is noteworthy that in recent decades, the influence of Islam, including Islamic law, has increasingly influenced the practices of this community. This has brought about changes and transformations in the institution of customary marriage.

The Kaili Da'a people, as a sub-ethnic group of the Kaili people, are geographically isolated and maintain their traditions and culture closely. They have a rich social and cultural system, with various customs and norms that influence daily life, including marriage. Within the Kaili Da'a community, marital stability has a unique meaning and is strongly influenced by local customs and cultural values. This stability is not only seen from an economic perspective but also encompasses emotional, social, and spiritual stability within the household. These values encompass harmony in the roles of husband and wife, the extended family's involvement in supporting the couple, and adherence to customs and traditions passed down through generations. Research into the nature of marital stability among the Kaili Da'a people is of significant urgency, particularly for cultural preservation, improving quality of life, and deepening understanding of the region's social and cultural dynamics. Although numerous studies on marriage have been conducted across various cultural contexts, research on the Kaili Da'a remains limited. This research focuses on the Kaili Da'a tribe in Central Sulawesi, which has not been studied in depth with respect to marriage and stability.

Economic stability plays a crucial role in the construction of marriage in the Kaili Da'a community. The economic stability serves not only as a formal requirement under customary law but also as a symbol of an individual's readiness and ability to fulfill social and cultural responsibilities (Moore, Wood, & Wu, 2023). This demonstrates the complex interaction between law, social norms, and cultural values in determining the structure and dynamics of marriage in the Kaili Da'a community. Therefore, this study will explore how economic stability is constructed, interpreted, and applied in the context of marriage in the Kaili Da'a community, and its implications for cultural sustainability and social integration.

Research on marriage in indigenous tribal communities across various regions of Indonesia, as far as the author has explored, is grouped into three categories based on research tendencies (Utomo & McDonald, 2016). The first group is legal interaction (Scott, 2000). Research in this group tends to explore the relationship between customary law and national law. These conflicts arise and efforts to harmonize between the two legal systems in the context of marriage. The second group is social change and gender (Jackson, 2012; Robinson, 2007). This research tends to focus on how social change, modernization, and education affect marriage practices and gender roles in indigenous tribal communities, and the third group is the Economic and Social Alliance. Research in this group explores the role of economics in marriage, including dowry and family alliances, as well as how marriage is used as a tool to strengthen social and political relations. Of the various studies that have been conducted, none have discussed the nature of stability in marriage. Moreover, no specific research has been conducted on the Kaili Da'a tribe using a legal ethnography approach. These prompted the author to conduct more in-depth research into the nature of stability in marriage among the Kaili Da'a tribe in Sigi Regency.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Concept of Marriage

Humans tend to interact and build relationships with others in everyday life, so they are also called social creatures. This is in line with the basic nature of humans as social beings. Building relationships with others and being part of a group is one of the important needs that must be fulfilled in the hierarchy of human needs, namely the need for love and belonging (Gomes, 2011; Zalenski & Raspa, 2006). The need for love and belonging, or love and belongingness needs, is the third level in the hierarchy of human needs. The need for love describes the basic psychological need of humans to feel affection, warmth, and emotional bonds with others (Reis & Aron, 2008). Fulfilling these needs is important for mental and emotional health because it plays a role in building a person's identity and psychological stability.

The concept can be expressed through the process of giving and receiving affection between individuals, one of which can be realized through a bond called marriage.

Marriage in Islam is defined as a sacred bond between a man and a woman with the goal of achieving a harmonious life, mutual support, and the procreation of good offspring (Erkoc Baydar, 2023; Fauzi, 2019). In the scholar's view, marriage is not merely a physical or social relationship but also an act of worship that involves the intention to maintain personal purity, fulfill responsibilities, and strengthen one's relationship with God. Marriage is a means to achieve peace of mind, fulfill each other's emotional needs, and foster a prosperous and blessed family. On the other hand, scholars also define marriage as "a socially recognized and legally sanctioned union between two individuals, which establishes rights and obligations not only between the partners but also between them and their children, extended families, and society as a whole" (Fineman, 2006). It is a socially recognized and legally sanctioned bond between two people that creates rights and responsibilities not only for the couple but also for their children, extended family, and community.

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Marriage is a socially recognized and legally sanctioned bond between two individuals (Bell, 1997). This bond not only forms the foundation of the spouses' relationship but also establishes comprehensive rights and responsibilities. In the context of the nuclear family, marriage establishes the roles and obligations of both parties in maintaining household harmony, meeting emotional and material needs, and creating a stable environment for children to grow up. The relationship built through marriage includes a commitment to mutual support, both in facing challenges and in achieving shared goals. Furthermore, marriage has broader dimensions that impact relationships with the extended family and society. As the smallest unit in the social structure, marriage not only serves to form a family but also contributes to the stability and sustainability of society as a whole. The relationships forged through marriage create social networks that strengthen ties within the extended family while contributing to the community. Thus, marriage encompasses not only personal aspects but also plays a vital role in the broader social order.

Islamic jurisprudence scholars define marriage with various wordings adapted to the understanding of each school of thought (Rehman, 2007). According to the Hanafi school, marriage is defined as a contract that grants a man the right to have sexual relations with a woman who is not legally permitted to marry. This definition emphasizes the legality of sharia, which permits marital relations. Meanwhile, the Maliki school views marriage as a contract that permits sexual relations with women who are not *mahrams*, non-Magicians, or slaves of the People of the Book. This approach emphasizes certain conditions for the validity of the marriage contract, including the woman's identity. Therefore, this definition encompasses certain prohibitions related to religious status or kinship. The Shafi'i and Hanbali schools provide broader definitions and include specific terms for the marriage contract. According to the Syafi'iyah School, marriage is a contract that includes the permissibility of sexual relations using *nikah lafadz*, *tazwij*, or other *lafadz* with equivalent meaning. Similarly, the al-Hanabilah School emphasizes that *nikah* is a marriage contract that is recognized if the *lafadz nikah*, *tazwij*, or *lafadz* are used with the same meaning. These two schools of thought emphasize the use of certain editorials as evidence of the contract's validity.

B. The concept of economic stability in marriage

Economic stability is generally associated with an individual's ability to meet their living needs adequately. Economic prosperity is defined as a stable condition (good, firm, secure, prosperous, unwavering, stable, and mature) in one's life (Fritz & Koch, 2016). In a financial context, the term "established" can be interpreted as a person's financial and economic stability, enabling them to meet their needs without relying on others (Shaoguang, Angang, & Yuanzhu, 2003). From an Islamic perspective, the principle of "establishment before marriage" is not an absolute requirement. This is because, if marriage were only permitted for those who are financially stable, many individuals would be unable to marry, even though marriage is one means to prevent adultery. Several verses of the Quran and hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them) encourage marriage, but none stipulate that an individual must be established before marrying. Family or marital economic stability refers to the stable, sustainable functioning of a family in meeting its members' needs and effectively carrying out its social roles. The concept of stability encompasses not only economic aspects but also legal, social, cultural, and psychological dimensions that interact to create sustainable family life. Research on stability indicators often adopts a multidimensional approach to examine family resilience in a more comprehensive context.

One important dimension of family stability indicators is family economic resilience. This indicator encompasses a family's ability to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, health, and a stable income and employment. Economic resilience is considered a crucial foundation because unstable economic conditions often increase relationship stress and can trigger domestic conflict or even divorce. In addition to economic indicators, the legality and legitimacy of relationships are also important components of stability. Legally recognized marital status, as well as possession of a marriage certificate and birth certificates, demonstrate an administrative order that provides legal protection for family rights and obligations. This legality also reflects a strong structural foundation for a stable family life. Physical and environmental resilience of the family is also part of stability indicators. This includes ownership of adequate housing, access to sanitation and basic health facilities, and safe and healthy housing conditions. Families living in supportive environments are better able to maintain their members' well-being and reduce the risk of health problems and internal conflict.

In the psychosocial realm, family stability is also measured by the ability to maintain healthy interpersonal relationships, including couples' ability to manage conflict, communicate effectively, and maintain mutual respect and love (Cutrona, Russell, Burzette, Wesner, & Bryant, 2011). Global research shows that aspects such as good communication, commitment, and emotional attachment are significant protective factors for long-term marital stability. Family stability is inseparable from social support and community integration. Healthy relationships with extended family and social networks in the surrounding community provide additional sources of social capital that can help families cope with external pressures, including moral support and material assistance. This social support indicator is also included in the national family development index through an official index.

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Indonesian national policy also identifies indicators of stability within the Family Development Index framework, which is measured through three dimensions: family security, independence, and happiness (Faridmarandi & Komasi, 2025). These dimensions reflect relevant indicators such as family legality, fulfillment of basic needs, health and education security, and harmonious family interactions—all of which play a role in assessing overall family stability. Overall, indicators of family/marital stability reflect the interaction of economic, legal, physical, psychological, and social variables that collectively determine the quality and stability of family life. This multidimensional approach is crucial for social research and policy development because it provides a holistic picture of how families thrive in a variety of dynamic social and cultural settings.

C. Structural Functionalism Theory

Structural functionalism theory (Izadi, Mohammadi, Memar, & Nasekhian, 2024; Kingsbury & Scanzoni, 1993) is a major approach to anthropology developed in the early 20th century. One of the key figures behind this approach was Bronislaw Malinowski, a Polish-born anthropologist. Malinowski conducted fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands during World War I, when he began to formulate his ideas about how culture meets human needs. This theory emerged as a response to the evolutionist approach, which viewed cultural development as linear. Instead, Malinowski emphasized the importance of understanding culture in its specific, functional context. Malinowski was influenced by the thinking of Émile Durkheim, who also emphasized the importance of function in society. Durkheim saw society not simply as a collection of individuals, but as a social reality that exerts a "compelling force" on how people think and act. Therefore, when he spoke of function, he was actually answering the question: what contribution does a social practice—rules, customs, institutions, and rituals—contribute to collective survival? Durkheim distinguished two often-conflated concepts: cause (why a practice arises) and function (what purpose the practice serves within the social whole). In *The Rules of Sociological Method*, he asserted that explaining a social fact scientifically means exploring its social function, namely, how it helps maintain the order, integration, and continuity of society. In this way, social phenomena are not simply assessed as personal choices, but as mechanisms that regulate solidarity and broader social "health."

This idea becomes particularly clear when Durkheim discusses religion and ritual (Tole, 1993). In **The Elementary Forms of Religious Life**, he shows that religious rituals are not only about humans' relationship with God, but also how society reproduces solidarity. When people gather in ceremonies, they experience a "collective energy" that affirms a shared identity, renews moral commitment, and strengthens the boundaries between the "sacred" and the "profane." This means that the function of ritual is to maintain social cohesion and reinforce shared norms—a pattern that can be extended to many other institutions, including marriage. In Durkheimian logic, a stable marriage is not simply a matter of two compatible individuals, but rather one in which the institution of marriage fulfills its social functions: regulating family relations, stabilizing role divisions, providing moral legitimacy, and maintaining community order. Thus, Durkheim's influence on discussions of functionalism lies in his emphasis that social practices persist not by "chance," but because they fulfill the needs of the social system: solidarity, integration, and the reproduction of moral order. However, Malinowski's approach places greater emphasis on the cultural and institutional aspects that support individuals' needs within society. His research in the Trobriand Islands during World War I provided an empirical basis for his ideas about the functions of culture. From a functionalist perspective, marital stability is understood as the stability and harmony achieved through the appropriate fulfillment of roles by each family member. Functionalism views society and its institutions (including marriage) as interconnected structures that work together to maintain social balance.

The theory used in this research is functionalism, as developed by Bronislaw Malinowski and Emile Durkheim (Sahay, 2024). It serves as a grand theory for understanding social norms, community solidarity, and customary and religious institutions that support the stability of marriage in mountain/remote communities. According to Malinowski, structural functionalism is an approach that views each element of culture as having a specific function to meet the needs of individuals or society (Foks, 2018). In this view, culture is an integrated system consisting of interconnected institutions designed to ensure social stability and the continuity of society. This theory places great emphasis on the function of cultural institutions in creating social balance. Furthermore, Malinowski argued that culture develops in response to human biological and social needs. He identified seven basic human needs: reproduction, security, comfort, movement, growth, health, and social activity. In his theory, each cultural institution, such as religion, family, economics, and law, emerged to meet these needs, thus serving a practical function.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research is socio-legal, not doctrinal-normative. This study uses qualitative methods. In qualitative research, the use of theory is only a guide for data gathering and analysis (Nurdin & Pettalongi, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2016). The data was collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis at the research site (Rusli, Hasyim, & Nurdin, 2021; Rusli & Nurdin, 2022). The research was conducted in the Kaili Da'a ethnic group in several villages and sub-districts

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in Kinovaro and Marawola Districts, Sigi Regency, to gain an in-depth understanding of the context of marriage and stability. This study provides a new contribution to the literature on this ethnic group, which remains relatively underexplored in academic research.

Data were collected through direct observation, focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, and written document analysis. The interviews involved three school principals, five teachers, and one staff member. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcript results were reviewed with the participants to obtain their consent (Nurdin, Scheepers, & Stockdale, 2022; Nurdin, Stockdale, & Scheepers, 2014). The data analysis used a deductive approach, which can be interpreted as a research procedure that produces deductive data from interviews and field notes. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis from Strauss and Corbin (1998). The analysis started with open, axial, and selective coding. The final result of the data analysis is the themes found from the data.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Nature of Economic Stability in Marriage in the Kaili Da'a Tribe

This research findings section is structured based on field findings obtained through in-depth interviews with religious leaders, traditional leaders, married couples, and several family members involved in the marriage process. Excerpts from these interviews are presented to demonstrate how the Kaili Da'a community understands marital stability, what they consider the requirements of propriety, and how social recognition is shaped through customary practices. For ease of reading, the interview excerpts are organized thematically according to the research's main findings: the meaning of marriage as a collective event, the role of customary management before the date is set, the role of novati/nokeso as a marker of maturity and stability, and their relationship to daily household practices. The identities of some informants have been disguised for research ethics, but the relevant content and style of the narrative have been maintained to enable readers to understand the community's logic and perspective fully.

To more fully understand the meaning of marital stability, the author maps the process into three phases as follows:

- a. The pre-marital phase, which is the period when socio-cultural readiness begins to develop before the marriage ceremony takes place;
- b. The initial post-marital phase, when the couple begins to adapt and build the foundation of their household in the early days of living together; and
- c. The sustainable stability phase, which is the stage when household stability is maintained over the long term, even as time passes, life's burdens change, and new challenges arise.

This division is not to compartmentalize family experiences, but to capture the temporal side of establishment that does not appear all at once, but is built up slowly, tested in certain situations, and then maintained through repeated practice.

B. Pre-marital economic stability

Based on in-depth interviews and observations, the author found that, for the Kaili Da'a community, marriage is understood as both a path to following the Prophet's tradition (sunnah) and a primary means of procreation and lineage continuation. One participant stated that

"Da'a people marry to continue the lineage." Kemal echoed this sentiment, explaining in more detail that this orientation toward procreation is strongly reflected in the perspectives of Topo Da'a's parents: "When Topo Da'a people marry, it's primarily because they want to have children. When Topo Da'a asks their parents, they want children. If they don't have children, they remarry. Besides marriage being an act of worship, Topo Da'a's parents' cultural understanding places procreation as the goal of marriage. So, the issue of procreation is a priority because we Topo Da'a are proud of our ancestors."

This statement is supported by the statement of another informant who said that: "The Topo Da'a people marry to have children," while Habibie, as an informant, linked the two dimensions together as follows: "I married because I wanted to follow the sunnah of the prophet and have children." This statement shows that, in the social experience of the Kaili Da'a community, marriage is understood not only as worship but also as a large-family project to maintain lineage continuity. In the view of the Kaili Da'a community, offspring are regarded as a symbol of honor and a marker of the extended family's continued existence. Therefore, the birth of children is often understood as the main goal of the marriage bond, not only in the biological sense, but also as part of the social values that uphold the genealogy, heritage, and good name of the family.

The findings also reveal a strong social expectation for married couples to have children quickly. Consequently, couples who have not yet or are unable to have children are at risk of experiencing pressure, both within the household and from their

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social environment. According to several informants, this situation can trigger tension and, in some cases, lead to divorce or remarriage, which is considered a "natural" way, under customary law, to increase the opportunity for children. Meanwhile, the determination to enter marriage is not always based on economic factors. Rather, physical readiness and the ability to fulfill roles are more strongly determined. Men are considered worthy when they are able to clear land, farm, or hunt, including the ability to cut down large trees with a circumference of approximately 100 cm, a symbol of resilience and independence. For women, their success is measured by their ability to cook and clear land, reflecting their readiness to manage the household and support their husband's work. These abilities are not merely technical skills, but are part of the customary values that bind each person's social role within a marriage. Another informant said as follows:

According to our Da'a customs, if a man and a woman have reached puberty and are willing to marry, they can marry, even if they are under 19, as per government regulations. We in the Da'a tribe don't impose any burdens on husband and wife. Slaughter a chicken, and you can get married. Our religion also states that the most important thing is that we Da'a people have reached puberty, and then we can marry. After marriage, we strive to support our household and achieve financial stability. That's why cooperation between partners is crucial in building a household. That's why parents must provide understanding to their children so that they can work together and understand each other when they are married."

The research also shows that the logic of "role readiness" is evident in the pattern of raising boys accustomed to clearing land and doing heavy labor. In contrast, girls are accustomed to cooking and domestic work. This practice is not understood as merely technical skills, but as a form of cultural education, so that children are ready to carry out social roles in the household. One informant even described the general principle of his community: "We, the Da'a tribe, when it comes to marriage, are simple, flexible, and essentially make things easy; what is expensive later is the custom." Statements like this are important because they show a separation in the community's mind between the "marriage contract," which can be simple, and the "fulfillment of custom," which is actually the determinant of social recognition.

C. Customary Administration Mechanism as a Prerequisite before Marriage

Our study found that the path to marriage is almost always preceded by a stage called customary arrangements. This stage is treated as a primary requirement before the wedding day is determined. One informant explained that when two families have agreed to marry their children, the parents of the prospective bride and groom first visit traditional leaders to discuss the customary provisions that must be followed. Once the customary matters are deemed complete, the time and day of the ceremony are determined and announced to the community, including the imam. The informant stated frankly: "So, perhaps the marriage matter is a third-order matter. After the customary matters are completed first, then the wedding ceremony can be discussed." The emphasis on the position of traditional leaders also emerged from one informant who stated that:

"We Topo Da'a people, if we want to get married, must first get the knowledge of the traditional leader, because the traditional leader is the one who knows the customs that apply best, and this applies to all Da'a people. "In marriage, it is adjusted to the woman... for example, the custom is seven or nine... if the custom is seven, it means... seven goats come out... if the custom is nine, then the goats must be nine. Well, other matters, such as rice, can be bargained for. But if the custom is that which cannot be bargained for, it must be complete."

Research data shows that custom is not simply a "ritual," but a normative system with both fixed and flexible elements, with traditional figures as administrators of standards of propriety. In this context, traditional figures play a role in determining social appropriateness, not merely complementing the procession. They serve as a reference when families want to ensure that the steps taken align with community values. Consequently, marriage is not treated entirely as a private decision of the couple, but operates within a broader sphere of social control because its ratification rests on customary legitimacy. In practice, marriage serves as a vehicle for the expression of customary values passed down through generations. The traditions embodied in the wedding procession are not merely ceremonial rituals, but rather a reflection of the value system deeply rooted in the lives of the Kaili Da'a people. These values are realized through a series of structured stages with strong symbolic meaning.

The research also shows that each stage of the marriage ceremony, from the proposal to the reception, is carried out according to established traditional procedures. This series of ceremonies is not only procedural but also serves a communicative function, demonstrating various important aspects of the social structure. These aspects include the family's position in the social hierarchy, the social status of the parties involved, and the collective values that form the foundation of community life. The implementation of marriage customs plays a strategic role in strengthening the cultural identity of the Kaili Da'a tribe. By maintaining traditions in the marriage procession, the Kaili Da'a people maintain their cultural distinctiveness amidst the dynamics of changing times. These customs serve as markers of identity that distinguish the Kaili Da'a tribe from other community groups and serve as a mechanism for passing on cultural values to future generations.

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Furthermore, marriage customs also serve as an instrument for maintaining social harmony in a broader context. Inter-family relationships formed through marriage are strengthened by adherence to mutually agreed-upon customary norms. Thus, marriage not only creates bonds at the micro level between two individuals but also contributes to stability and social cohesion within the Kaili Da'a tribal community as a whole.

D. Nokeso and Novati as a Sign of Economic Stability and Social Maturity

Interview results: This research also found that in the Kaili Da'a tradition, one of the most powerful markers of social stability or maturity is the performance of the Nobau–Nokeso–Novati ritual. This ritual is understood as a stage that gives social weight to marital status. Therefore, when informants speak of an "established marriage," the question often returns to one issue: whether Nokeso/Novati has been performed. A traditional leader explained the symbolic reasoning as follows:

"This custom is mandatory because it's a form of respect for ancestors, as their descendants have already carried out this custom. Therefore, during the process, the traditional elders perform rituals to demonstrate that this has been done in accordance with ancestral heritage, so that the children will be considered established according to tradition. That's why we Da'a people avoid the assumption that a child is naughty or frequently does things that don't align with the values upheld by the Kaili Da'a community. "Maybe this child has the wrong vati or has never had their vati made."

The research findings show that in the Kaili Da'a tradition, one of the most powerful markers of social stability or maturity is the performance of the Nobau and Nokeso/Novati rituals. These rituals are not understood as complementary events, but rather as stages that give social weight to marital status. Therefore, when informants talk about established marriages, the reference often returns to whether or not Novati/Nokeso has been performed. Based on the author's research, the Nokeso Ceremony is one of the adulthood initiation traditions that the Kaili Da'a people still maintain. It is not simply a traditional event, but a clear sign that someone is transitioning from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, the procedures are not carried out haphazardly. There is a sequence, there are rules, and everything refers to patterns passed down across generations. This, at some point, also shows how society instills values, discipline, and social boundaries through ritual.

The research also shows that Topo Da'a is a community that remains devout and consistent in upholding its customs. This devotion is evident not only during major events but also in how they organize their daily lives, as if tradition were a "framework" that provides direction, not merely an accessory. On the other hand, some aspects make their cultural practices interesting to study more deeply. Although many community members have embraced a particular religion, some of their practices still show traces of animism. This does not mean they are "non-religious," but rather indicates that formal beliefs and local cosmological heritage coexist, sometimes without any perceived contradiction. These traces of animism are most evident when they enter the realm of ritual, particularly lifecycle rituals or rites of passage. It is then that custom becomes more than just a symbol. It becomes a system that regulates when someone is considered to change status, how the process works, and who has the right to lead each stage.

Among the rituals that remain consistently performed, one of the most prominent is the Besi traditional ritual. Besi is a ritual exclusively for Topo Da'a women and is not merely optional. It is seen as an obligation that should ideally be fulfilled. Interestingly, Besi is not always performed individually. In some places, this ritual is performed collectively, with entire villages taking part. In Topo Da'a Kalora, for example, Besi has become a regular event and evolved into a kind of traditional community festival. Because it is performed simultaneously, the scale of the event tends to be large. They gather residents who will undergo the ritual, unify the time and space for the ceremony, and then work the procession as a social event witnessed by many. So it's not just the "family" that is involved, but the wider community.

Regarding the timing of the ceremony, Besi is not actually tied to the calendar. It relies heavily on the family's financial availability. Here, we see custom directly confronting economic reality: the obligation exists, but its implementation often depends on ability. Even for No Lama, there are situations in which the ritual can be postponed, even after the mother has given birth, because the costs are not yet sufficient. Interestingly, this ritual is only performed once, even if a woman has been pregnant or given birth more than once. This means that custom has its own logic of "enough" and "finished and complete." Specifically for No Vati/No Keso, the subject is a girl who has reached puberty. This ritual's position is quite strong because it is considered a mandatory requirement before marriage. If it has not been performed, the woman is deemed not yet eligible for marriage, even though she is already an adult. From this, it is clear that Nokeso/Novati is not simply a ceremony that "decorates" adolescence. It truly marks a transition in status and, at the same time, serves as a social mechanism for regulating access to the next phase of life—especially marriage.

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Etymologically, the term "No" is explained as "way" or "ritual procedure," while "Keso" is interpreted as brushing teeth. The practice uses ingredients such as eggs, brown sugar, or coconut. Here, there's a distinctive combination: seemingly simple actions, but imbued with symbolic meaning and social consequences. Local beliefs also place moral pressure on the performance of this ritual. According to informants, if No Keso/No Vati is not performed, the girl's growth is considered unhealthy, and she will become susceptible to illness. Thus, the ritual is not only related to social status but also linked to health and safety. Interestingly, Nokeso/Novati follows the customs of the mother's side, but the primary performer and funder comes from the father's side. This creates a division of roles that does not always align with the principle of lineage. The customs are maternal, but the practical responsibility is paternal. The consequences are felt in the event of divorce or death. If the father is divorced or dies, responsibility for the ritual can shift to the father's family, the paternal parents, who will perform it. However, the mother's side usually still contributes to covering the remaining costs. It seems there is a shared principle that the ritual must be carried out regardless of the circumstances.

V. CONCLUSION

Economic stability is not understood as a status automatically derived from a marriage contract or the fulfillment of formal requirements, but rather as social recognition based on living customary norms. This stability is established through a hierarchy of legitimacy: customary arrangements are a prerequisite for setting a wedding date. At the same time, the novati/nokeso ritual serves as a maturation mechanism and verification of propriety, distinguishing established marriages from those that are not established in the eyes of the community. In this context, custom functions as living law, regulating the sequence of processes, affirming the quality of marital status, and exercising social control to maintain household stability. Economic stability within marriage directly contributes to the order of interfamily relations because marriage is positioned as a kinship bond that engenders reciprocal obligations, solidarity, and social support. At the household level, stability is maintained through the internalization of customary values, which serve as a reference for the division of roles between husband and wife and a measure of justice in family relationships. This makes conflict more easily managed through mutually understood standards of propriety. At the same time, the stages of marriage customs and rituals serve as a medium for passing on cultural values and identity, so that the continuity of tradition is maintained not only through narrative but also through social practices that are continuously repeated and recognized across generations.

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