

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOKESO TEETH-MODIFYING TRADITION AMONG THE KAILI COMMUNITY IN PELAWA BARU VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-cutting tradition among the Kaili people in Pelawa Baru Village and to identify the factors influencing changes in its practice. This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. The informants in this study consist of the village head, customary leaders, community leaders, and community members who are knowledgeable about and have been involved in the execution of the *Nokeso* tradition. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Based on the research results regarding the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-cutting tradition among the Kaili people in Pelawa Baru Village, the researcher concludes that the *Nokeso* tradition is a cultural heritage of the Kaili community that is still recognized and respected today as part of their cultural identity. However, throughout its development, the tradition has undergone changes marked by a decline in frequency, the simplification of customary procession stages, reduced community involvement, and a diminishing number of traditional leaders or *sando* who fully comprehend the complete procedures. These changes are influenced by shifts in the community's way of life, advancements in education and technology, evolving religious understanding, a shortage of practicing *sando*, and low youth engagement in preserving the tradition. Nevertheless, the community still views the *Nokeso* tradition as a symbol of maturity, respect for tradition, and a cultural heritage possessing values of culture, togetherness, responsibility, respect for parents, and cultural preservation that need to be maintained amidst modern developments

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui perkembangan tradisi potong gigi Nokeso pada masyarakat Kaili di Desa Pelawa Baru serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi perubahan dalam pelaksanaannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Informan dalam penelitian ini terdiri atas kepala desa, tokoh adat, tokoh masyarakat, serta masyarakat yang mengetahui dan pernah terlibat dalam pelaksanaan tradisi Nokeso. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian mengenai perkembangan tradisi potong gigi Nokeso pada masyarakat Kaili di Desa Pelawa Baru, peneliti dapat menarik kesimpulan bahwa tradisi Nokeso merupakan salah satu warisan budaya masyarakat Kaili yang hingga saat ini masih dikenal dan dihormati sebagai bagian dari identitas budaya. Namun, dalam perkembangannya, tradisi tersebut mengalami perubahan yang ditandai dengan berkurangnya frekuensi pelaksanaan, penyederhanaan tahapan prosesi adat, berkurangnya keterlibatan masyarakat, serta semakin sedikitnya tokoh adat atau *sando* yang memahami tata cara pelaksanaan secara utuh. Perubahan tersebut dipengaruhi oleh perubahan pola kehidupan masyarakat, perkembangan pendidikan dan teknologi, perkembangan pemahaman keagamaan, berkurangnya *sando* sebagai pelaksana adat, serta rendahnya keterlibatan generasi muda dalam melestarikan tradisi. Meskipun demikian, masyarakat masih memandang tradisi Nokeso sebagai simbol kedewasaan, penghormatan terhadap adat, serta warisan budaya yang memiliki nilai budaya, nilai kebersamaan, nilai tanggung jawab, nilai penghormatan kepada orang tua, dan nilai pelestarian budaya yang perlu dipertahankan di tengah perkembangan zaman.

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1. Introduction

In the era of modern societal development, various local traditions are increasingly challenged to survive amidst changing times. Technological advancements, education, social mobility, and the gradual influx of foreign cultures have influenced public perceptions of the traditions inherited from their ancestors. Customs that were once considered vital to community life have begun to undergo modification, simplification, or are even being progressively abandoned by some because they are deemed no longer relevant to contemporary needs. This condition demonstrates that culture is dynamic and continuously changes in tandem with the development of its supporting community. Koentjaraningrat (2015) explains that culture is a comprehensive system of ideas, actions, and human creations passed down from generation to generation through a learning process. This perspective suggests that culture will perpetually evolve following the dynamics of community life. Social change, the development of science, technological progress, and interactions with other cultures serve as driving factors influencing cultural shifts. Nevertheless, the core values embedded within a tradition remain guidelines for community life if they continue to be transmitted to the next generation.

According to Edward Burnett Tylor (2014), culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society. This definition indicates that customs are an inseparable part of culture, as they serve as guidelines for the community in conducting their social lives.

One form of culture that continues to thrive in Indonesia is the customary traditions passed down through generations. Tradition constitutes habits that are continuously maintained because they are deemed to hold significant meaning and value in public life. According to Soerjono Soekanto (2017), tradition refers to activities carried out repeatedly by a community and passed down from one generation to the next as part of

social and cultural identity.

The Kaili people, who inhabit the Central Sulawesi Province, are among the community groups that still maintain various customary traditions. These traditions constitute an essential part of community life as they contain social, moral, and cultural values inherited from their ancestors. One well-known tradition among the Kaili people is the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition.

The *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition is a customary ritual performed as a symbol of an individual's transition into adulthood. In the view of the Kaili community, this tradition is not merely interpreted as a process of filing teeth, but also as a form of character education that teaches politeness, responsibility, respect for parents, and appreciation for customs. Every stage of the *Nokeso* implementation carries a philosophical meaning related to the formation of a person's personality, enabling them to navigate community life in accordance with prevailing customary norms.

According to Amran Mahmud (2022), the *Nokeso* tradition is a cultural heritage of the Kaili people that contains character education, moral values, and social values transmitted through the performance of the customary ritual. These values are reflected in every stage of the implementation, which involves the family, customary leaders, and the community as a form of collective responsibility in shaping the character of the younger generation.

Furthermore, Ulfianti (2014) explains that *Nokeso* is a transitional ritual that serves social and cultural functions within the Kaili community. This tradition acts as a medium for transmitting cultural values because each implementation is invariably accompanied by advice, prayers, and moral messages conveyed to the child undergoing the procession. Thus, *Nokeso* functions not only as a customary ritual but also as a means of cultural education. In its development, the *Nokeso* tradition has undergone various changes. These changes are influenced by modernization, educational advancements, shifts in public mindsets,

economic conditions, and the dwindling number of customary leaders who understand the procedures for its execution. Consequently, the implementation of *Nokeso* is no longer carried out routinely as it was in the past. While some members of the community are still familiar with the tradition, only a few understand its complete procedural execution. According to Hidayat (2021), cultural development is a continuous process of change as a form of public adaptation to changing times. These changes can occur in the execution procedures, functions, or the meaning of a tradition. Nonetheless, such changes do not necessarily eradicate the existence of a culture; rather, they serve as a form of adjustment to the social conditions of the community.

Based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher in Pelawa Baru Village, Central Parigi District, Parigi Moutong Regency, it was found that the community is still familiar with the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition as part of the Kaili cultural heritage. However, its implementation has become exceedingly rare. In fact, throughout the research process, no performance of the *Nokeso* tradition was found. Information obtained from customary leaders, the village government, and the community indicates that the tradition is increasingly seldom performed due to various factors, such as shifts in the community's way of life, the decreasing number of *sando* (traditional practitioners) who understand the customary procedures, and the low engagement of the younger generation in preserving their culture. This finding is also supported by field research results, which show that the community continues to recognize *Nokeso* as part of the Kaili cultural identity, even though its practice is increasingly limited.

Previous research on the *Nokeso* tradition has been conducted by several scholars. However, those studies focused more on the symbolic meanings, cultural values, and procedural execution of the tradition. Meanwhile, this

study focuses on the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition in Pelawa Baru Village by analyzing changes in its implementation, the forms of execution that are still maintained, and the factors influencing the sustainability of the tradition amidst modern societal development. Accordingly, this research is expected to contribute to the development of cultural history studies while serving as a reference for local cultural preservation efforts within the Kaili community

2. Method

This study utilizes qualitative research with a descriptive approach. According to Sugiyono (2022), qualitative research methods are often referred to as naturalistic methods because the research is conducted under natural settings; they are also known as ethnographic methods because they were initially used primarily in cultural anthropology research. They are termed qualitative methods because the collected data and analysis are predominantly qualitative. This study aims to understand, describe, and elaborate on the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition in Pelawa Baru Village. Descriptive qualitative research is employed because the researcher seeks to directly describe the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition in Pelawa Baru Village, as well as the factors causing changes in its execution among the Kaili community in the village. The research outcomes are expected to provide an easily understandable overview of the *Nokeso* tradition in Pelawa Baru Village.

The research subjects are individuals deemed knowledgeable about the research focus. They were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the retrieval of in-depth data. According to Sugiyono (2022), purposive sampling is used in qualitative research to identify key informants who possess the greatest insight into the research problem. The subjects of this study consist of traditional leaders (*tokoh adat*), community leaders, parents who have carried out the *Nokeso* tradition, and members of the Kaili community in

Pelawa Baru Village.

Data analysis in this study employs the interactive model by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña (2020), which encompasses data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data analysis is a crucial stage in research, as it processes the field data to effectively address the research questions. In this study, the qualitative interactive data analysis technique proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020) is applied, where data analysis activities are conducted continuously until the data reaches saturation.

Data analysis began as soon as the researcher started collecting field data through observation, interviews, and documentation regarding the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition among the Kaili people in Pelawa Baru Village. The stages of data analysis in this study comprise data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data is presented in narrative descriptions detailing the development of the *Nokeso* tradition. The data display also encompasses information regarding the changes occurring in the execution of the tradition, along with the underlying factors influencing these shifts.

The final stage in data analysis is conclusion drawing. At this stage, the researcher interprets all the reduced and displayed data to uncover the meaning behind the findings. The resulting conclusions must adequately answer the predetermined research questions. In this study, conclusions are drawn by evaluating the results of interviews, observations, and documentation concerning the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition among the Kaili community in Pelawa Village. The final conclusion focuses on how the tradition has evolved and the factors driving changes in its implementation.

3. Resultand Discission

Based on the research findings obtained through observations, interviews, and documentation in Pelawa Baru Village, it was revealed that the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition is still recognized by

the community as part of the Kaili cultural heritage passed down through generations. However, the execution of this tradition has undergone significant evolution compared to its practice in the past. This change is reflected in the declining frequency of its implementation, the dwindling number of community members who fully comprehend the customary procedures, and the decreasing number of families who still perform the *Nokeso* procession.

Throughout the study, the researcher did not observe any execution of the *Nokeso* tradition in Pelawa Baru Village. Based on the interviews with informants, this condition is attributed to the fact that the tradition is now very rarely performed. Nevertheless, all informants asserted that *Nokeso* is still perceived as a vital cultural identity of the Kaili people that needs to be introduced to the younger generation. This finding is consistent with the field data in the undergraduate thesis, which indicates that the community still recognizes *Nokeso* as a cultural heritage, despite its increasingly rare implementation.

The Head of Pelawa Baru Village explained that *Nokeso* is not merely understood as a tooth-filing activity, but rather as an integral part of custom (*adat*) that carries character education values. The tradition teaches the importance of politeness, respect for parents, and appreciation for the customs inherited from ancestors. According to him, the current changes are driven more by the development of community life rather than a loss of belief in the tradition itself.

This statement is corroborated by Satri Maja, who explained that in the past, the *Nokeso* tradition was almost always performed by families who strictly adhered to custom. The tradition served as a symbol that a child had entered a more mature phase of life, and was thus expected to maintain good behavior, respect parents, and abide by the prevailing norms in the Kaili community. However, this differs from the current situation, as only a small fraction of the community still maintains its practice.

Nur Fiah also explained that changes in the implementation of *Nokeso* have affected how

the community transmits cultural values to the younger generation. Previously, these values were taught directly through the execution of customary rituals. Today, however, most families prefer to convey the values of politeness, responsibility, and respect for parents through daily life advice. This shift indicates that the community has not abandoned the cultural values of *Nokeso*, but has rather adapted the method of transmission to suit contemporary living conditions.

A customary leader, Sahban Wandu, explained that the evolution of the *Nokeso* tradition is also marked by the declining number of people who understand the entire sequence of the customary execution. According to him, several stages that were once vital components of the procession are no longer performed due to limited community knowledge and the diminishing number of *sando* (traditional practitioners) who understand the procedures of *Nokeso*. This condition has led to a simplification of the tradition without eroding the core values embedded within it.

These research findings indicate that the changes in the *Nokeso* tradition cannot be interpreted as the loss of Kaili culture. Rather, the transformation reflects a process of cultural adaptation to societal development. Modernization, shifts in mindsets, and increased social and economic activities have led the community to make adjustments to the form of traditional execution. Nonetheless, the values embedded in *Nokeso* are still maintained as guidelines in family and community life.

According to Koentjaraningrat (2015), culture is the product of human creation, feeling, and will (*cipta, rasa, dan karsa*) that continuously evolves in tandem with the dynamics of community life. Cultural change is a natural process as long as the community retains the core values that define that cultural identity. The findings of this study demonstrate that the community of Pelawa Baru Village still preserves the values of *Nokeso* even though its ritual execution has been simplified.

Furthermore, Hidayat (2021) explains that cultural development is a form of societal adaptation to social, economic, educational, and technological changes. This theory aligns with the research findings, which show that the changes in the *Nokeso* tradition occur as a result of the changing lifestyles of modern society. This adaptation allows the community to preserve their cultural identity without having to perform the entire sequence of rituals as they did in the past.

Consequently, the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition in Pelawa Baru Village indicates that local culture still holds an important position in the lives of the Kaili people. The changes that occur are directed more toward the form of implementation, whereas the values embedded within it are still passed down through family education, parental advice, and character building in daily life. This demonstrates that the existence of a culture is determined not only by the continuity of its rituals, but also by the community's ability to maintain the foundational values of the tradition.

The Form and Procedural Execution of the *Nokeso* Tooth-Filing Tradition among the Kaili Community in Pelawa Baru Village

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation conducted in Pelawa Baru Village, it was revealed that the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition consists of execution stages that have been passed down through generations by the Kaili people. Although its implementation is now rare, community members who still comprehend the tradition remain knowledgeable about the sequence of the procession, which constitutes an essential part of the customary execution. This indicates that knowledge regarding the *Nokeso* procedures still endures in the memories of customary leaders and residents who were once directly involved in the implementation of the tradition.

The research findings show that before the procession takes place, the family first holds a deliberation (*musyawarah*) to determine the timing of the execution and to prepare

various customary necessities. This deliberation aims not only to decide on the day of implementation but also to divide responsibilities among family members in preparing the equipment to be used throughout the procession. This activity reflects the values of togetherness and mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), which remain vital components of Kaili community life.

Based on the interview results, Sahban Wandu, as a customary leader, explained that all customary equipment is prepared prior to the implementation of *Nokeso*. This equipment includes traditional attire, bracelets, *sileguri* leaves, a machete-shaped piece of wood, breadfruit (*sukun*) leaves, and other paraphernalia inherited from ancestors. The child undergoing the procession is referred to as the *Toniosa* and wears full traditional attire before being carried around the house seven times. This is then followed by the recitation of prayers, the *tola bala* (warding off misfortune) ritual, the tooth-filing procession led by a *sando*, and concludes with the delivery of advice by parents and customary leaders. This sequence of stages corresponds to the interview data obtained in the study.

Based on the observations, each stage of the *Nokeso* implementation carries symbolic meaning. Family deliberation reflects the values of togetherness and shared responsibility. The use of traditional attire demonstrates respect for the cultural identity of the Kaili community. The procession of circling the house seven times is interpreted as a hope for the child to obtain protection, safety, and a good life. The recitation of prayers indicates that the Kaili community integrates customary values with religious values, while the tooth-filing procession symbolizes an individual's maturation process to foster self-control, respect for parents, and adherence to customary norms in social life.

The Head of Pelawa Baru Village explained that in the past, the implementation of *Nokeso* was much more festive, as it was attended by the extended family, customary leaders, and the surrounding community. All customary stages were executed completely in accordance with the stipulations handed down by ancestors. However, today, the implementation is far simpler and is generally attended only by the nuclear family along with a few customary leaders. This simplification was carried out as a form of adjustment to the changing

social and economic conditions of the community.

The research findings also indicate that although the form of implementation has undergone simplification, the community still maintains the stages considered to hold the most critical meaning, namely the recitation of prayers, the customary procession led by the *sando*, and the delivery of advice to the child. These three stages are viewed as the core of the *Nokeso* execution because they embody the moral values and character education that serve as the main objectives of the tradition.

According to Koentjaraningrat (2015), every cultural element possesses a social function related to the life of its supporting community. Tradition does not merely function as a ceremonial activity but also serves as a medium for transmitting norms, values, and cultural identity. Therefore, changes in the form of a tradition's implementation do not necessarily indicate the loss of that culture, provided that the community still retains the core values underlying its execution.

This perspective aligns with the findings of this study. Although some stages of *Nokeso* have been simplified, the community of Pelawa Baru Village still preserves the primary meaning of the tradition as a medium for character education. The values of politeness, respect for parents, responsibility, and appreciation for custom continue to be transmitted to the younger generation through both customary processions and education within the family environment.

The findings of this study are also supported by research by Ulfianti (2014), which explains that the *Nokeso* tradition is a rite of passage that serves social and cultural functions within the Kaili community. The ritual serves not only as a symbol of an individual's maturity but also as a medium for transmitting cultural values to the next generation. Research by Amran Mahmud (2022) also demonstrates that every stage of *Nokeso* contains character education values that remain relevant to contemporary community life.

Based on the overall research findings, it can be understood that the form and procedural execution of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition have undergone changes in line with societal development. Nevertheless, these changes have occurred predominantly in the technical aspects of implementation, whereas the cultural meaning and values embedded within it are still maintained by the Kaili community in Pelawa Baru Village.

This demonstrates that local culture possesses the capacity to adapt to changing times without losing the identity and values that form the foundation of its existence.

Factors Influencing the Development of the *Nokeso* Tooth-Filing Tradition among the Kaili Community in Pelawa Baru Village

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation conducted in Pelawa Baru Village, the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition is influenced by various interrelated factors. The research findings indicate that this change is not driven by a single factor alone, but is rather the consequence of ongoing social changes within community life. Modernization, educational advancements, shifts in public mindsets, the diminishing number of customary leaders who comprehend the procedural execution, and the low engagement of the younger generation serve as the primary factors causing the *Nokeso* tradition to be performed increasingly seldom. These findings demonstrate that cultural change is a gradual process that occurs in tandem with the evolution of community life.

Based on the interview results with the Head of Pelawa Baru Village, it was revealed that shifts in the community's way of life constitute one of the causes for the declining implementation of the *Nokeso* tradition. According to him, contemporary society is increasingly preoccupied with occupational activities, education, and economic necessities, such that the execution of customary traditions is no longer prioritized as it was in the past. Nevertheless, the community continues to regard *Nokeso* as an integral part of the Kaili cultural identity that must be respected and introduced to the next generation. This statement indicates that the transformation occurs predominantly within the practical implementation, whereas the appreciation for cultural values remains well-preserved.

Satri Maja also explained that educational advancements have exerted an influence on the younger generation's knowledge regarding the *Nokeso* tradition. According to her, today's youth are familiar with the name of the tradition, but the majority do not understand its procedural execution because it is very rarely organized. Consequently, the process of cultural transmission, which previously took place through direct involvement in customary practices, has become increasingly diminished. This condition has resulted in the knowledge of the *Nokeso* execution stages being confined to a small fraction of customary leaders and residents who have

previously participated in the procession.

The interview with Nur Fiah indicates that shifts have also occurred in the way families transmit cultural values to their children. While in the past character education was provided directly through the execution of the *Nokeso* tradition, today most families choose to convey these values through daily life advice. According to her, the values being taught remain fundamentally the same—namely concerning politeness, respect for parents, and responsibility—but the medium of delivery has undergone a transformation. This demonstrates that the community has not abandoned the cultural values, but has instead adapted the method of transmission to modern living conditions.

Meanwhile, Sahban Wandu, as a customary leader, explained that one of the primary causes for the growing rarity of the *Nokeso* execution is the dwindling number of *sando*, who possess the specific knowledge regarding customary procedures. According to him, the *sando* who previously led the implementation of *Nokeso* have passed away, causing the community to face difficulties when wishing to perform the tradition in accordance with the customary rules inherited from ancestors. This condition has caused several customary stages to no longer be performed completely, as there is no longer anyone who truly understands the entire sequence of the procession. Furthermore, the low interest among the younger generation to learn the tradition has hindered the regeneration process of customary leaders.

Based on field observations, the researcher found that the advancement of information technology has also exerted an influence on the sustainability of the *Nokeso* tradition. The younger generation interacts more extensively with external cultures through social media and digital technology, thereby causing knowledge regarding local culture to diminish. This condition does not imply that the younger generation rejects their regional culture, but rather reflects a shift in cultural orientation due to the changing times. Therefore, cultural preservation efforts that can adapt to technological advancements are necessary so that the *Nokeso* tradition remains recognized by the younger generation.

The research findings demonstrate that the transformation of the *Nokeso* tradition constitutes a form of societal adaptation to continuous social changes. According to Koentjaraningrat (2015), culture possesses a dynamic nature, meaning that it will undergo changes in line with the development of its society. These changes can occur in the form of implementation, social

function, or the way the community interprets their culture. Nonetheless, as long as the core values are maintained, a culture can still be considered alive within the community.

This perspective is corroborated by Hidayat (2021), who states that cultural development is a process of societal adjustment to changes in the social, economic, educational, and technological environment. In the context of this study, the community of Pelawa Baru Village has not completely abandoned the *Nokeso* tradition, but has rather made adjustments to its execution to align with modern living conditions. The values embedded within the tradition continue to be passed down through family education, even though the customary rituals are no longer performed in their entirety.

The findings of this study also align with the view of Salim (2022), who explains that the sustainability of a culture is heavily determined by the process of value transmission from one generation to the next. If this transmission process fails to function effectively, a tradition will experience a decline and potentially disappear. The research findings show that the low engagement of the younger generation and the diminishing number of customary leaders constitute the main challenges in preserving the *Nokeso* tradition in Pelawa Baru Village.

When compared to the studies by Andriansyah (2024) and Amran Mahmud (2022), the results of this study share the similarity that the *Nokeso* tradition still contains character education values that are highly relevant to community life. The difference lies in the fact that this study places greater emphasis on analyzing the development of the tradition and the factors influencing its sustainability amidst the community's social changes. Thus, this study provides an overview that cultural preservation cannot rely solely on maintaining the ritual form, but also requires efforts to transmit cultural values through family education, educational institutions, customary leaders, and government support.

Based on the overall research findings, it can be concluded that the development of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition is influenced by modernization, shifts in the community's way of life, educational advancements, the diminishing number of *sando*, changes in the method of cultural value transmission, and the low participation of the younger generation in safeguarding the tradition. Although the execution of the ritual is increasingly rare, the community of Pelawa Baru Village still recognizes *Nokeso* as a Kaili cultural heritage that

possesses moral, social, and cultural value. Therefore, the preservation of the tradition needs to be pursued through cultural documentation, local wisdom-based education, youth empowerment, and strengthening the role of customary leaders, ensuring that the values embedded within the *Nokeso* tradition remain preserved and transmitted to future generations.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings regarding the Development of the *Nokeso* Tooth-Filing Tradition among the Kaili Community in Pelawa Baru Village, Central Parigi District, Parigi Moutong Regency, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition among the Kaili community in Pelawa Baru Village remains recognized as a cultural heritage passed down through generations. This tradition signifies a symbol of maturation, respect for parents, character building, and appreciation for the customary traditions of the Kaili people. However, in line with the changing times, the implementation of the *Nokeso* tradition has undergone transformation. These shifts are evident in the simplification of procedural execution, diminished community engagement, and the omission of certain customary stages that were once practiced in the past. Nonetheless, the cultural values embedded within the *Nokeso* tradition are still preserved by the community as an integral part of the Kaili cultural identity.
2. The factors driving the transformation in the execution of the *Nokeso* tooth-filing tradition encompass modernization, shifts in public mindsets, socio-economic conditions, declining interest among the younger generation toward local culture, and religious developments that prompt adjustments in several stages of the tradition's implementation. In addition to these factors, the research findings demonstrate that the most dominant factor is the dwindling presence of *sando* as traditional practitioners. The passing of *sando* who fully comprehend the procedures of *Nokeso*, coupled with the absence of regeneration capable of replacing their role, has caused the

community to face difficulties in performing the tradition according to customary stipulations. This condition has ultimately led to the increasingly rare implementation of the *Nokeso* tradition in Pelawa Baru Village.

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