

## “BALIA” ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE SYSTEM OF THE KAILI PEOPLE OF THE PALU VALLEY

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to provide a descriptive explanation of the *Balia* ceremony, a cultural ritual of the Kaili people of the Palu Valley for treating the ill. This study used a qualitative research method. Data was collected via in-depth and free interviews with nine informants. Results of the study showed that all nine informants had previously fallen ill as a result of unexpected supernatural disturbances with what were considered physical maladies, driving them to seek doctors for treatment. Doctors failed to discover the causes of their illnesses and professional medical treatment did not aid in their recoveries. The informants turned to traditional, personalistic, practice-oriented medicine systems. These traditional healers ruled the symptoms of their illnesses to be a warning from ancestral spirits. These traditional practitioners recommended treatment via the ritual of *Balia* as a curative and preventative measure. Having undergone this ceremony, the informants claimed to have recovered from illnesses such as infertility (this patient had children). Some among the informants were selected to become *sando muda* for their inner potential for healing.

**Keywords:** *Balia*, traditional medicine systems, Kaili, Palu.

### INTRODUCTION

Culture holds a strategic position in the lives of men and serves as the primary medium for solving the variety of problems in life. One such problem that often haunts and eats away at the peoples' lives is the fragility of health. One must constantly learn how to overcome the many health issues they will experience. The results of this long learning process constitute the culture of a certain peoples. This is how health problems are faced, all is integrated within the traditions of these people. At this level, health becomes a need that must be fulfilled for each individual; this is why health has a dimension that is quite urgent and strategic in peoples' lives.

At the moment, Indonesia is growing and developing several models of medical treatment outside of modern medicine, namely alternative and traditional medicine which are rooted in ancestral heritage. This kind of phenomena offers an indication that the blooming traditional medicine system has a significance to the belief in local communities of the many diseases that befall them and their subsequent recoveries.

A willingness to dig into and develop ancestral culture serves as a form of recognition that Indonesia is a nation of many cultures that can offer positive contributions to the quality of the lives of its people.

One example of a community that is ever striving to preserve and cultivate their local culture as an expression of their love for the culture of their ancestors is the Kaili people of the Palu Valley. Though now is an era of change where the primitive has been replaced with the modern, birthing modern cultures, yet in the day-to-day realities of life, there are still those who preserve and conduct the cultures passed down by their ancestors in their cultural activities. This kind of phenomena can be seen in the healing rituals of the Kaili people, traditional medicine, one such example of this is the traditional ritual known as *Balia*.

The *Balia* ritual is a tribute ceremony rooted in the beliefs of the Kaili people of the Palu Valley. *Balia* is a ceremony conducted with a specific purpose, such as healing, worship, consecration, protection, and sacrifice to the supernatural powers that the Kaili people believe in and worship.

*Balia* means "to change (it)" or "to combat (it)". Whatever may be the cause of an illness, be it devils or evil spirits that can disturb the lives of men, must be combated. *Balia* can also mean a change occurs within an individual, in this case the Tobali-to*Balia* or the sando (shaman) who act as vessels for the spirits in the healing process.

There are several classifications of *Balia* ritual:

1. *Balia Ntomanuru*, *Balia* oriented towards worship of supernatural powers.
2. *Balia Meloso*, a ritual for entertainment in the form of arts.
3. *Balia Bone*, a healing ritual in the form of dancing for the god of fire.
4. *Balia Jinja*, a healing ritual in the form of worship to the god of water.
5. *Balia Tampilangi* a healing ritual performed by spirits that are believed to be the heaven's vanguard capable of facing the challenges of severe sicknesses. This form of *Balia* is also called *Balia pemberani* (*Balia* of the courageous) when compared to other forms of Kaili *Balia*.

However, one reality that cannot be denied is that empirical criticisms of the *Balia* rituals do not reduce the love of the Kaili people for their culture; they remain steadfast in their efforts to preserve it. Proof of this is evident in the way the Kaili people continue to conduct and partake in traditional healing ceremonies through the *Balia* ritual.

The commitment of the Kaili people for their culture acts as proof that, amidst the debate and nay-saying regarding its continued practice, the *Balia* ritual is not sufficiently described as merely the personification of spiritual aid or healing, but also serves to revitalize the local genius of the Kaili people.

As described by Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra (2006:66-69), revitalization is "efforts or activities for making something important once again". A kind of study that focuses attention on culture as "whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members".

This study aims to contribute to the field of ethnoscience, meaning "knowledge" (Werner and Fenton, 1970:537). Ethnoscience is a term that describes the collective knowledge of a nation, or more specifically that of a tribe, ethnicity, or specific social group. The study of ethnoscience includes research in the fields of health/healing (ethnomedicine, ethnohealing).

Based on thought that man adapts to his environment through the culture that they adhere to, it can be said that every community has its own methods for adapting. Such efforts make it possible to uncover problems from the perspective of local communities as practitioners of culture.

Behavior and attention to locals serves as a means of saving their cultures. This thought makes protection of local communities not only physical in nature, but also implies preservation of the indigenous knowledge that they hold leading to preservation of intellectual property rights. The indigenous knowledge of the Kaili people expressed through the use of sando practitioners is manifested in the *Balia* ritual, an ethnomedicinal ceremony.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies in ethnomedicine prove the originality of this study, among them: studies conducted by Geertz (1960), Atkinson (1989), Riyanto (1999), Naniek (2002), Girapon (2004), Iskandar (2007), Sirait (2009), Sani (2010), Sidik (2011), Ali Nurdin (2012), Munir (2015), Yusuf Islami (2016) and Sapriallah (2017). The results of this research comprise local wisdom in the field of health and healing (ethnomedicine; ethnohealing). It is the writer's hope that the results of this ethnoscience research may be used to further scientific knowledge of healing and medicinal procedures founded in local indigenous cultures.

### 1. Ethnomedicine

Health studies in the field of anthropology are studies that put a spotlight on the aspects of health from a socio-cultural perspective. Health anthropology itself includes a special sub-topic on understanding indigenous medicine systems, also known as ethnomedicine: According to Huges (1968), ethnomedicine is the beliefs and practices relating to sickness that are the result of real and explicit cultural development, not the conceptual frame of modern medicine (in Foster and Anderson, 1986:6). Lieban (1977): ethnomedicine is the treatment of a people, classification of different maladies, and traditional therapy and preventative rituals (Heggenhougen and Draper, 1990:2).

This study emphasizes to things: knowledge and behavior of a community in their strategies for preventing and curing illnesses. According to George M. Foster and Barbara G. Anderson, illnesses are a part of the environment, in a sense illnesses are clearly biological, yet in reality social, psychological, and cultural factors also play roles in triggering illnesses. "Healing" is purely cultural (1986:15).

According to Pallegriano (1963), every culture holds and develops its own system of medicine. Medicine systems are very important for the preservation of the lives of members in a community. Thus, medicine systems must always take into consideration the perspective of its community. Additionally, medical behavior from individuals and groups can not be understood when viewed independently from the cultural history of its community. Medicine systems are an integral element of culture (Foster and Anderson, 1986:48-49).

## 2. Concepts of Health, Illness, and Disease

In traditional medicine systems, one can find differences between the concepts of illness and disease. Primarily in studies on traditional medicine systems, the concepts of illness and disease as defined by the locals is critical for understanding the concept of health in a community.

Health can be interpreted differently based on community and modern media experience (research). The concept of health based upon research is described by Linda Ewles & Ina Simmet (in Dumatubun, 2002:24) is comprised of 6 components: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social.

According to Twaddle (1974, in Sani, 1992:16), disease, illness, and sickness are three different concepts. Disease is a health problem defined by medical professionals, illness refers to the patient's experience, and sickness is the social role attached to the individual experiencing health problems; this social role is influenced by the community at large. Additionally, Koos (in Foster and Anderson, 2006:1973) explained the behavior of an illness, its role, and the role of the afflicted are strongly influenced by factors such as social class, ethno-national differences, and culture.

## 3. *Balia*

The term "*Balia*" comes from the language of the Kaili people and can hold many meanings according to the spirit of the ceremony being conducted.

a. *Balia* from the words "bali" and "ia" In the language of the Kaili people, "bali" means "combat" or "battle"; "ia" means "it/him/her". The two words combined make "*Balia*" which essentially means "combat it/him/her". This term describes the function of the shaman who combats maladies caused by supernatural disturbances.

b. *Balia* may also come from the word "nabali" meaning "to change" This explanation of the etymology of the term "*Balia*" refers to the act of the shaman experiencing a change within himself, switching from their personal identity to that of the spirit that possesses him, affecting his behavior (read Syamsuddin et al., 1985; Nainggolan, 1990; Sidik, 2009; Sani, 2010; Irmawati, 2011; and Salham Munir, 2015).

Technically, *Balia* is a religious ceremony involving a specific sequence of steps that are considered magical in nature performed by a person known as a sando (shaman) for a specific purpose. The sando uses special tools and equipment, -- symbols of supernatural power -- that function to combat illness.

With the introduction of the religions of Islam and Christianity, the traditional *Balia* ceremony become increasingly rare. Many *Balia* rituals are performed in secret, closed environments.

According to Nainggolan, the different types of *Balia* ritual are as follows: a) *Balia* Bone Meloso, b) *Balia* Bone Biasa, c) *Balia* Tampilangi and d) *Balia* Salonde Ntomanuru. Of the four types of *Balia* ritual listed above, only *Balia* Tampilangi will be explored in this study. *Balia* Tapilangi is the most common form of *Balia* ritual performed in the Palu Valley.

## 4. Religious Origins

Herbert Spencer described the origins of religion as the awareness and fear of death. According to Edward B. Taylor, the oldest religion is Animism, the worship of spirits that act as the personification of the souls of those passed. It is a certainty that every person will experience that which is known as "dreams" (a universal fact) (Taylor in Koenjaraningrat,

1980:2). Dreams are experienced as strange situations where we experience something during a state of sleep. This is felt as the presence of something within our bodies that acts independently of the physical body. Further, Taylor explained that there among the spirits there are those considered important, such as kings or chiefs, and upon their passing their spirits are worshiped and honored, leading to what is known as Polytheism. Certain spirits were selected above the others ultimately leading to a single, superior spirit. This belief in a single superior entity is known as monotheism. There are weaknesses to Taylor's theory, as religion does not arise from thought as Taylor described. This concept is too abstract to primitive man whose thoughts were quite limited.

According to Maret (1989), the origins of human religion can be traced to an emotion or spiritual calling that arises from man's amazement at things and phenomenon that are The oldest form of religion in Maret's theory is called pre-animism.

Similarly, Kruyit, a Christian evangelist working in the heart of Central Sulawesi, together with Ruth Benedict, described the first religions as animism and dynamism.

In their daily lives, the Kaili people believe that all forms of disease, malady, natural disaster that afflicts their community, and all supernatural disturbances that affect harvest can be attributed to a heavenly punishment or the wrath of the rulers of the sky, sea, and land. All disaster and physical and spiritual ailment are the consequences of the ungratefulness of man or their negligence and indiscipline in worship, offerings, or failures to perform traditional rituals, many of which are compulsory without negotiation or exception.

To prevent all of this, individuals known as sando act as spiritual leaders for the Kaili people. Sando serve as mediators between the spirits and men. The term itself can be translated as "person with the knowledge to understand the signs of nature and communicate with supernatural powers". These people are believed to have special powers to heal the sick.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study is basic research. In the paradigm map of social culture, this study falls under ethnoscience. Epistemologically, this study can be categorized as a phenomenological study. In phenomenology, studies primarily focus on behavior and culture (Ahimsa-Putra, 2007:41-44). Thus this study will attempt to explore the knowledge, practice, and behavior systems of the prevention and healing of diseases as believed and performed by the Kaili people of the Palu Valley.

This study uses a phenomenological approach that emphasizes the perspective of locals (emic view). The researcher must make great efforts to integrate with the subjects of their research in order to properly and adequately understand what and how local knowledge develops in the daily lives of indigenous peoples. The subjects of this research are believed to have the ability to express their experiences through the process of interaction (Endraswara, 2006:44). Below is a detailed description of the methodology of this study:

### 1. Research Location

This research was conducted in the Palu Valley in Bantaya Balaroa, district of Balaroa, regency of West Palu, Palu. The location was chosen for its high population of *Balia* practitioners who could provide detailed information relevant to the *Balia* Tampilangi ritual. Additionally, according to a local sando, Sahlan, the *Balia* Tampilangi ritual is an annual

ceremony in Bantaya Balaroa that takes place every March. Bantaya is where the mosiromu, totua nugata (community figures), and cultural Kaili figures meet.

## 2. Informant Selection Technique

Informants were selected through purposive sampling -- the researcher selected individuals that were considered very knowledgeable of local problems and traditions, and had the social connections that would allow the snow ball method to work as intended. The informant population is as follows: 1. Cultural figures, 2. Community figures, 3. To *Balia* (practitioners of *Balia*) 4. Families that come to practitioners to be healed

## 3. Data Collection Technique

The data collection techniques used in this study included observation of the *Balia* ritual, sando inauguration ceremonies, and the observation of sando methodology in the conducting of *Balia*. Additionally, interviews were conducted in two levels of depth: introductory interviews and in-depth interviews. Focused Group Discussions were also held with informants. Observation of the daily lives and activities of the sando focused on how the Tina Nu Sando (female sando), Toma Nusando (male sando), and bule-bule (drum beaters) led magical-religious rituals. Intense observation was conducted during healing rituals and sando selection and inauguration ceremonies.

## 4. Data Analysis Technique

Data and information was collected through observation, individual interviews, and focused group discussion. Data was analyzed in cooperation with the informants, and interpreted during the writing of the report through association with theories relevant to the topic.

## DISCUSSION

### ***Balia* Tampilangi Traditional Medicine System in Bantaya Balaroa Palu**

*Balia Tampilangi* a healing ritual performed by spirits that are believed to be the heaven's vanguard capable of facing the challenges of severe sicknesses. This form of *Balia* is also called *Balia* pemberani (*Balia* of the courageous) when compared to other forms of Kaili *Balia*.

*Balia* Tampilangi is unique for its use of a tampi (a spear with a branched and spurred point). This weapon is believed to be a weapon of the god of power from the sky (Tampi Langi). The following is a detailed description of the entire *Balia* Tampilangi procession:

### 1. Executors of the Ceremony

The executors of the *Balia* ritual are:

- a. *Toma Nusando* (male shaman) who serves as the leader and primary executor of the *Balia* processions.
- b. *Tina Nusando* (female shaman)
- c. *Bule* (gong and drum beaters)
- d. *Topokoro Balia* (individual whose body can accept spirits; possession), permanent fixture of ceremonies and dancer
- e. Tona Dua
- f. Sando *Totua Nungata* (well-known community leaders and figures)

### 2. Place and Time of the Ceremony

The *Balia* Tampilangi ceremony takes place over 3 consecutive nights and never during the day. All *Balia* Tampilangi are conducted in Bantay Marawola. Supporting members of the ceremony are expected to provide: 1) Guarantee of security 2) A solemn atmosphere in an isolated, tranquil location situated nearby a holy place, 3) Location is easily reachable by the

executors of the ceremony 4) The location is typically an open field, yard of a home, or place made specifically for spiritual rituals, known as Bantaya

### 3. Tools of the Ritual

Bali Tampilangi for the purposes of prevention of illness or healing of disease requires a variety of tools and equipment that act as supporting media for the executors:

- a. *Buto*: a required tool for the *Balia* ceremony comprised of 7 rice baskets (*tambobo*) containing rice grains, a basket of coconuts carved and bound with white thread that acts as a dish (*baku karae*), and *jajaka* containing a single egg, areca nut, a clump of brown sugar, a hand of bananas, and a cotton lamp (*poindo taru*).
- b. *Uve Vongi* (scented water) is water poured into container and mixed with a variety of plants and flowers such as golden cane palm, *bunga mbalu* (*frangipani*, *tulasi*, *tamadie*, *pandanus*, and *jasmine* to make it fragrant.
- c. *Ue Ntobugi* is water poured into a container of similar composition to *Uve vongi* with the exception of golden cane palm which is substituted with virgin coconuts.
- d. *Ue kayu nggopo* (literally: hard wood water) is a large cauldron containing a wooden top, chisel, money, and white cloth. A variety of leaves are collected: *tiro* leaves, *molotuwa*, *antoli* wood, *langsar*, *lanta bulu*, *betel* leaf, *pelu laves*, *taba*, *ucu tamangepe* wood, *tamambuli*, *paenjena*, *viago* shoots, and *sipenena* leaves. These leaves are bound together with rattan rope. During the ceremony, this bunch of materials is used to lightly hit the patients of the shaman to guarantee health.
- e. *Gana Nubulo* (supplementary bulo): as stated in point a above, supplementary materials include: a variety of rices (red, white, yellow, green), *Tula Boka*: grain rice or corn kernels fried or roasted and placed into a drinking glass.
- f. *Mpole*: a set of traditional royal clothing, a dress-suit, *mesa* cloth (cloth made from thick cotton), a skull cap, and sharp, bladed weapons are placed onto a tray.
- g. *Mbara-mbara*: various sets of clothing for men and women. *Buya sabe* (silk sarong cloth), yellow cloth, green cloth, and gold are placed atop a large plate. Other complementary items include "*Pangulusunga*" which contains a single egg, some rice, *patola* (white cloth rolled up to make a long cylinder) is placed atop a container, and several varieties of banana.
- h. *Ose Ragi* is made up of several different varieties of rice stored in a tray together with: *Tuvumbuli* (*tava siranindi*) and a glass of *tava kado mbuku*, one raw egg, one boiled egg, a hand of bananas, and *lemang* of 4 different colors of rice.
- i. *Povombo Bulu* consisting of 4 meters of white cloth and 4 meters of yellow cloth, shoots of palm leaves for decoration, 4 *balaroo* stalks, and 4 stalks of yellow bamboo as supports.
- j. *Vala Suji* (square fence), a four-sided container containing food such as 4-colored sticky rice, a hand of bananas, sweet cakes (*doko-doko*, *bua sampa*, *lemo sampa*, *lemo gampa*, *faje ode*, *susuru pisang goreng*).

### 4. Rundown of the Ceremony Procession

- a. **Preparation Period** The Preparation Period is a period of discovery, submission, and request for the many individuals looking for healing from a shaman and the ritual's executors. During this period, all potential "patients" are given time to consult with the executors involved in the ritual. The purpose of this preparation period is: physically and mentally prepare the patients for the ritual, collect funds for the ceremony from donations from the patients or other parties, find more patients to help cover the monetary costs of the ritual.

Once the problem of funding has been finished, a meeting is held (known as *molibu*) to determine the time and place for the ceremony. In the days before the appointed

date, all tools and equipment for the ceremony (as described above) are prepared and stored in a single location. Before the ceremony, the items are lifted by cart to the location of the ceremony. The shaman checks and prepares all tools and items for the ceremony, puts all items in their designated place.

- b. *Mopadanga Padanga* is the reading of a mantra addressed to the supernatural powers that cause illness and disease. The mantra is known as Padanga Nto Manuru and is read aloud by a bule (drum beater) designated for that function.

The words of the mantra padanga nto manuru are as follows:

*“Do bara ta sei kamiu tomanuru  
nekenika jua, nekenika dua ntanoana  
nekenika pane, lente nuvuku  
Seimo bagia miu... (sambil memotong ayam)  
Alahu-alahu-alahu*

*mangka riala yando sina, yando sana,  
sagala nabi, sagala malaeka  
anaku mananta jariuja, jari mani  
tabea majumpa mani kundi lara suruga*

"Do it may be for this that you Tomanuru  
bring disease, and disease of the head  
disease of heat and the body becomes weak,  
this is your work...  
Alahu-alahu-alahu

it is deserved that you all are free both there and here  
all prophets and angels  
however a person's condition may be  
for his illness (live or die)  
greet them in heaven."

- c. *Molave* (rolling out of traditional garb)

Molave is a ritual where traditional clothing is laid out, as one would lay out clothes to dry in the sun. The purpose of this is to invite the attention of To Manuru, enticing them to descend from the heavens to the place of the ritual and visit and observe those afflicted by illness so they may be healed. Simultaneously, the tools and items for the ritual are also laid out as an offering to the descended spirits. Once all is ready, the Mantaro stage of the ritual may begin.

- d. *Mantaro Mantaro* is a performance involving a sequence of specific movements (a type of dance) performed by Topokoro *Balia*, the shamans who are prepared to receive the spirits' into themselves. The Mantaro is accompanied by the beating of gongs and drums to several different rhythms.

In the moments leading up to the Mantaro, all participants are ordered by the sando to cleanse themselves with prayer water, clothe themselves in traditional attire consisting of kebaya, silk sarong, stagen, veils, gold jewelery, and a hand fan. Once all are prepared both mentally and physically to receive the spirits, the shaman performs Moduli Ntolu (rolling of a chicken egg). Ue vongi (scented water) is applied to the shaman's head and specific body parts while he utters mantras. The whole of this part of the ceremony occurs to the accompaniment of the gongs and drums.



For this activity, all executors enter the ritual arena led by a Tina Nusando (female shaman) and a Toma Nusando (male shaman). Drummers and gong players, known as Bule, must be trained experts and masters of a variety of different beats and rhythms. The beating and rhythms of the drums are considered magical in nature, stimulating and provoking, facilitating the entering of a trance-like state for all involved in To Pokoro Balita.

At the center of the arena, the Topokoroa *Balia* sit, faces veiled and bodies ready to receive the spirits.

This part of the ceremony is known as Nomperata (awaiting the entering of the Nto Manuru spirit into oneself), and is performed to the rhythmic thumping of drums. If an individual is slow to enter a trance, the drummers and gong players gradually increase the pace and volume of their playing to accelerate entrancement, the process led by a sando. One way of inciting entrancement is known as Moranggi.

Moranggi are two plates, one overlapping the other. Ranggi is the act of spinning these plates, the friction of their rubbing producing a distinct sound that is believed to encourage the entering of spirits into human bodies.

Meanwhile, the beating of the drums and gongs is consistent and unstopping.

Once all participants have entered a trance, they walk in a circle revolving around the Vunja Nto Manuru 3 or 7 times. They are free to include any extra movements or dancing during this part of the procession, accompanied by the steady drumming. This free dancing continues until the sando instructs participants to return to their seats.

Before they enter a trance, the female shamans unfurl the Bulo in front of the Topo *Balia*.

After entering their trance, these female shamans examine the Patola and Pangulusunga and invite them to stand up and begin moving and dancing around the Vunja. This typically induces a trance state in the Topo *Balia*. Occasionally, the excitement of the ceremony and the trance will cause some individuals to pass out. Their unconscious bodies are arranged to face the Bulo.

All Topo *Balia* that complete the first lap around the Vunja return to their starting point, scrambling to take the Toya kodi that hangs in the vicinity of the procession; he who successfully claims the Toya kodi is considered blessed, as the Toya Kodi, a bassinet/cradle, represents their "baby-like" nature, worthy of attention and love from the Nto Manuru.

*e. Nompaya Puntti* (cutting of the bananas)

The ceremony continues with the Mompaya Puntti, an activity symbolizing the battle against and to remove the maladies and sicknesses of those who are to be healed by this procession. This is performed by all Topo *Balia*, witnessed by two shamans, to the accompaniment of gongs and drums that begins slow but builds up to a quick-paced fervor (known as Kandasara rhythm). To close this stage of the ceremony, a male executor of the procession fells a banana tree. This felling of a banana tree is symbolic of the efforts to dispel disease and prevent its returning (like the shoots of the banana that regenerate even after being cut).

*f. Moraro* This stage of the ceremony is significantly more mystical in nature. Moraro involves the Topo *Balia* spearing live animals (such as goats) until they are wounded. The goats are then slaughtered and their meat used as offerings to the spirits as well as food for the participants of the ceremony.

To the soft beating of the drums and gong, a specific rhythm known as Soandoyo, the Topo *Balia* with Pengulusunga in hand grab a Patola (a rolled-up white cloth) to be used to bind the goat that will be sacrificed. This goat is escorted around the Vunja

Nto Manuru, circling it 6 times -- 3 times with the Vunja to its left, and 3 again with the Vunja to its right.

When the time comes to spear the goat, the drum rhythm change to the Kandasara to excite the Topo *Balia* and provoke the violence in their nature and desire to harm the prepared animal.

As the goat is stabbed and speared, the other members of the ceremony dance and move to the beat of the percussion. It is common for these dancers to fall unconscious, a sign that their spirits have been visited by the ancestral spirits of the Nto Manuru. Moraro is performed with the purpose of providing an offering of a sacrifice to the Nto Manuru spirits, an admission of the human negligence and forgetfulness in performing rituals to honor the dead thus leading to sickness. With this offering, the spirits of Nto Manuru accept and forgive the imprudence of men and can begin to heal the afflicted.

g. *Nantau* (lowering of the offering) *Nantau* has important meaning in *Balia*. *Nantau* means to lower or bring all offerings to a specific location, to be offered to the Nto Manuru. Among the offerings: the four colored varieties of rice; a boiled egg, chopped into small slices; banana leaves upon which the offerings are served. This part of the ceremony is done exclusively by the male shamans.

At the Paradidia (a location considered sacred) the baskets for the offerings, four-legged and three-legged baskets known as Suampela, are prepared. In the Paradidia, threads of various colors, betel nuts and coconuts are hung, and a single goat is tied to a post prior to the Moraro. When the time comes for *Nantau*, all participants in the ceremony take part, led by the main shaman (*sando*).

As night falls, the procession walks with great care and calmness by foot to the Paradidia, and seat themselves encircling the Suampela. The *sando* begins the ceremony by reading aloud mantras to the Nto Manuru spirits, declaring the arrival of the procession to the special location to fulfill the requirements of the ceremony, and begging for healing from the maladies they suffer from. After this is completed, they all return to Bantaya to rest.

*Nosipandusi* (to wash [one another]). This part of the ceremony is performed after all participants have woken from their rest, slowly finding themselves released from the control of the spirits that entranced them.

*Nosipandusi* is the ceremonial washing/spraying of your neighbor with water infused with *Ue vongi* to the *Ndolu*, songs of the *Balia*. The beating of the drums and gongs slow to a calmer pace, a rhythm known as *Lede Sumanga*, a rhythm for calming and reinvigoration.

Dancing is performed once again, if deemed necessary by the *sando*, and may go on until the breaking of daylight. This is dependent on whether the Topo *Balia* and shamans are able.

#### h. *Mogero Vunja Nto Manuru*

*Vunja* is a special place in the ceremony venue made of a many-branched cut of yellow bamboo where various food items are hung, such as ketupat (rice tightly-packed in banana leaves), bananas, and coconuts. During the *Mantaro*, the dancers circle the *Vunja* for 3 nights. The *vunja* is considered the location where the Nto Manuru spirits descend to the earth.

*The Vunja Nto Manuru* is considered a guarantee that the Nto Manuru will visit those who call them, as the Nto Manuru are believed to manifest from bamboo. The damaging, breaking, or pulling out of the *Vunja* from its place to the quick beating of percussion (*kandasara*) signifies the end of the *Balia*.

The participants then eat together. After eating, they say their farewells to the spirits that visited them. Thus ending the *Balia* Nto Manuru, a traditional healing ceremony of the people of the Palu Valley. According to Symasuddin (1985:37), the *Balia* ceremony is a traditional ritual of offering that is closely tied to the beliefs of the Kaili people of the Palu Valley. *Balia* is a ceremonial system for the purpose of asking for healing, worshiping the spirits, displaying dedication to the passed, a plea for help to the ancestors, asking for forgiveness. These pleas are offered to the supernatural powers they believe and worship. Healing through *Balia* is very rarely done in urban areas. Yet the tradition of *Balia* continues to thrive in the isolated rural towns of the Palu Valley, though not always in the grand and ceremonious manner described above. According to Syamsuddin, these sando and shamans sit with their healing tools, encircling those afflicted with disease and sickness. Three Ibule are tasked with playing a flute, beating a small drum, and hitting a gong. The music is played softly and gently to accompany the singing of the afflicted; often even spectators may partake in the singing. The lyrics of the song appeal to the gods above to return the afflicted to health and free them from the disturbances of devils, demons, and other mystical sources.

## CONCLUSION

The *Balia* traditional ceremony is a concrete manifestation of the long-held spiritual beliefs of the Kaili people. Every movement, dance, sound, note and voicing, and all tools and supplementary equipment of the ceremony holds significant religious symbolic meaning. Although modern *Balia* is not as solemn nor conducted with the same comprehensiveness of *Balia* of old, the Kaili people continue to practice the ritual as a symbol of gratitude and an expression of spiritual satisfaction derived from the cultural heritage passed down to them from their ancestors, despite many Kaili youth recognizing the wrongness of the ceremony in light of the religions they hold.

Even so, to this day there is still a small group of Kaili people who wish to revive the *Balia* ritual for the purpose of conserving this ancestral tradition and are of the belief that this local ritual is a primary need and its preservation a responsibility of the Kaili people.

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