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The Influence of Religious Law on Customary Marriage Practices in South Kulawi

Faren Chrismac¹, Susi Susilawati², & Rosnani Lakunna³

^{1,2,3}Tadulako University, Indonesia

E-mail: farenchrismac1@gmail.com

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah menganalisis pelaksanaan perkawinan adat Kulawi Selatan dan menganalisis pengaruh hukum agama terhadap hukum adat perkawinan Kulawi Selatan. Dalam penelitian ini, penulis menggunakan metode penelitian hukum yuridis empiris dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara dan dokumen. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan perkawinan adat Kulawi Selatan hingga kini tetap mempertahankan keberlakuan hukum adat sebagai warisan leluhur yang memiliki nilai sakral dan berfungsi sebagai identitas budaya masyarakat. Setiap tahapan prosesi, mulai dari *mampewiwi* (bertanya), *mekamaro* (peminangan), *memua* (pelaksanaan perkawinan), dan *mepantodui* (penerimaan anak mantu) dilaksanakan dengan menggunakan bahasa adat yang mencerminkan upaya pelestarian tradisi di tengah arus modernisasi. Di sisi lain, agama memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan dalam pelaksanaan perkawinan adat tersebut. Melalui proses *inkulturasi*, nilai-nilai agama terintegrasi dalam setiap tahapan adat, berperan memberikan arah moral dan spiritual terhadap pelaksanaan adat terutama untuk menentukan sah atau tidaknya suatu perkawinan menurut iman kristen. Walaupun adat tetap menjadi dasar pelaksanaan perkawinan, agama memberikan batasan tertentu seperti tidak memberkati perkawinan hasil perselingkuhan dan tidak mengizinkan perkawinan di bawah usia sembilan belas tahun. Dengan demikian, adat dan agama saling melengkapi dalam menjaga kesakralan, moralitas, serta kelestarian nilai-nilai budaya masyarakat Kulawi Selatan.

Kata Kunci : *Hukum Adat, Hukum Agama, Perkawinan Adat, Kulawi Selatan*

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyse the implementation of traditional marriage in South Kulawi and to examine the influence of religious law on traditional marriage law in South Kulawi. In this study, the author employs an empirical juridical research method, utilising data collection

techniques such as observation, interviews, and document analysis. The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of traditional marriage in South Kulawi continues to uphold customary law as an ancestral heritage possessing sacred value and serving as a cultural identity for the community. Each stage of the process, starting from *mampewiwi* (asking), *mekamaro* (proposal), *memua* (marriage ceremony), and *mepantodui* (acceptance of the daughter-in-law), is carried out using the customary language, reflecting efforts to preserve traditions amidst the tide of modernisation. On the other hand, religion has a significant influence on the implementation of traditional marriage. Through the process of inculturation, religious values are integrated into every stage of the tradition, playing a role in providing moral and spiritual guidance for the observance of customs, particularly in determining the validity of a marriage according to the Christian faith. Although customs remain the foundation for the conduct of marriage, religion imposes certain restrictions, such as not blessing marriages resulting from adultery and not permitting marriages involving individuals under the age of nineteen. Thus, customs and religion complement one another in maintaining the sanctity, morality, and preservation of the cultural values of the South Kulawi community.

Keywords: *Customary Marriage, Customary Law, Religious Law, South Kulawi*



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 email koresponden: farenchrismac1@gmail.com

Introduction

Indonesia is a country with a diversity of local cultures that form the distinctive identity of the people of the Archipelago. The traditions and marriage systems that have developed among the various ethnic groups in Indonesia are not only rooted in customs but are also influenced by religious teachings such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, as well as elements of Western culture. In human life, religion and culture are closely intertwined. Religion and culture are not independent elements; they are connected by a dialectical relationship, mutually sustaining and supporting one another. This diversity of influences gives rise to variations in marriage norms and practices across different regions.¹

¹ Teresia Noiman Derung et al., "Journal of Religious Education and Theology, The Role of

The era of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia gave rise to a pluralistic system of marriage law. Different laws were applied depending on whether Europeans or other groups followed the same family law norms as the Dutch (the *Civil Code/Burgerlijk Wetboek* (BW)), whether indigenous Indonesians (customary law) relied on their beliefs: Islam (religious law integrated into customary law), Christianity (*Huwelijk Ordonantie Christen Indonesia*), or Eastern foreigners (the Civil Code with minor adjustments).²

Religion in Social Behaviour," *In Theos: Journal of Education and Theology* 2, no. 11 (2022): 373–80, <https://doi.org/10.56393/intheos.v2i11.1279>.

² Prawirta Thalib Saepudin Muhtar, Anwar Rachwan, *Indonesian Marriage Law from the Perspectives of Civil Law, Islamic Law, and Administrative Law*, 1 (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2020).

In Indonesia's pluralistic society, marriage is subject not only to statutory law but also to the strong influence of religious and customary law, both of which continue to evolve.³ Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, as amended by Law No. 16 of 2019, seeks to integrate this diversity of laws, particularly in Article 2(1). This provision stipulates that a marriage is valid if conducted in accordance with the teachings and beliefs of the respective religion. This provision underscores the importance of religious law in determining the validity of marriage in Indonesia. Therefore, religion can be viewed as a primary human need of a spiritual nature, whilst culture is a complementary need that serves as the tangible manifestation of religious practice.

Like other tribes across the archipelago, the Southern Kulawi tribe possesses customs that form part of its cultural and social heritage. The Kulawi people are one of many tribes in Central Sulawesi Province. They inhabit Kulawi Sub-district in Sigi Regency. They possess a rich cultural heritage, encompassing architecture, crafts, textiles, cuisine, and various forms of folklore, whether oral, semi-oral, or non-oral.⁴ The Kulawi people have inhabited the region since prehistoric times, as evidenced by the discovery of megalithic artefacts dating back over 3,000 years. Since 1913, the majority of the Kulawi people have been Christians, although traditional values continue to be held in high regard in daily life.

³ Benedictus Julian Thomas, "The Legal Status of Customary Marriage in the National Marriage Law System," *Jurnal Kewarganegaraan* 7, no. 2 (2023): 2223–29, <https://doi.org/10.31316/jk.v7i2.5651>.

⁴ Andi Bismawati and Tamrin Tamrin, "Cultural Characteristics of the Kulawi Ethnic Group in Rego Folk Poetry," *DEIKTIS: Journal of Language and Literature Education* 5, no. 1 (2025): 126–39, <https://doi.org/10.53769/deiktis.v5i1.1348>.

Customary law is a system of *folk law*. Indonesia's distinctive customary law is an embodiment of the 'living law' theory, which has grown and developed in *coexistence* with Western legal systems and religion. A customary law community is a group of people who have lived for generations in a specific geographical area within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. These communities are united by ancestral ties and are closely connected to the land, territory, and natural resources. They possess customary governing bodies and a customary legal system within their customary territories. The To Kulawi customary law community generally resides in Ngata-Ngata, located in the sub-districts of Kulawi, South Kulawi, and Lindu.⁵

Marriage can be defined as a lawful and symbolic bond between a man and a woman, aimed at creating a spiritual and physical union. This bond is often regarded as a form of shared commitment, with the aim of establishing an extended family and achieving eternal happiness.⁶ Religion is a matter relating to beliefs and rituals shared by a community. Religion relates to 'transcendent experience'—that is, an experience with 'the Higher Power', or something beyond, something intangible.⁷ Marriage, from a religious perspective, is viewed as a form of worship, whilst under customary law it constitutes a tradition passed down through generations. The relationship between custom and religion

⁵ Asri Lasatu et al., "Spousal Equality in To Kulawi Traditional Marriage from a Human Rights," *Amsir Law Journal* 4, no. 2 (2023): 162–71, <https://doi.org/10.36746/alj.v4i2.205>.

⁶ Nurul Miqat et al., "Marriage in Kabalutan Village, Tojo Una-Una District: A Perspective on Indonesian Marriage Law," *Media Iuris* 6, no. 2 (2023): 193–204, <https://doi.org/10.20473/mi.v6i2.39884>.

⁷ Denny Najoran, "Understanding the Relationship Between Religiosity and Spirituality in the Millennial Era," *Educatio Christi*. 2020 1, no. 1 (2020): 64–74, <https://ejournal.teologi-ukit.ac.id/index.php/educatio-christi/article/view/11/8>.

is a social phenomenon closely interwoven in the organisation of community life, so that the two cannot be separated.

Customs can be defined as social practices passed down from generation to generation. These practices are the result of human emotions and will. This legal system is the result of the rationalisation and formalisation of social norms, guided by the capabilities and practices of the community. The existence of every individual is inseparable from the traditions and culture of each ethnic group. Every ethnic group regards these traditions and cultures as an inseparable heritage that ensures social order. The existence of customs and culture within each ethnic group is steadfastly upheld from generation to generation.⁸

In Indonesia, customary law regards marriage as a civil bond, a customary bond, and a relationship of kinship and neighbourliness. Therefore, entering into marriage affects not only civil relations but also customary relations concerning inheritance, family, lineage, the local community, and customary and religious rituals.⁹ Customary marriage refers to a set of norms governing marriage, encompassing pre-marital customs, customary ceremonies, and post-marital customs. The forms of customary practices within a marriage ceremony vary greatly from region to region, as they are influenced by the local environment and culture.¹⁰

⁸ In Turyani, Erni Suharini, and Hamdan Tri Atmaja, "Customary Norms and Values in Everyday Life in Society, SOSIAL: Journal of Social Studies Education," *SOSIAL: Journal of Social Studies Education* 2, no. 2 (2024): 234–35, <https://doi.org/10.62383/sosial.v2i2.224>.

⁹ Hilman Hadikusuma, *Indonesian Marriage Law* (Bandung: CV. Mandar Maju, 2022).

¹⁰ Aifan and Rosnani Lakunna, "Legal Aspects of Nikah Soro in Kaili Ethnic Group Marriages in Donggala Regency," *Jurnal Indragiri Penelitian Multidisiplin* 2, no. 1 (2022): 10–16, <https://doi.org/10.58707/jipm.v5i3.1083>.

Traditional marriage also reflects the social structure and cultural values of the local community. The traditional marriage process is not merely a family event, but also a means of preserving the collective identity and norms of the community.¹¹ The marriage culture of the Kulawi Selatan indigenous community incorporates religious values that complement the sacred perfection of a marriage. In the conduct of a traditional wedding ceremony, the community places great importance on organising and carrying out the traditional rituals properly. Marriage constitutes a legal bond; thus, the traditional marriage of South Kulawi may be regarded as a unifier of the groom's family and the bride's family. From this marital bond, a strong sense of kinship is forged, characterised by mutual respect. Several previous studies have examined the relationship between customary law and religious law in the context of marriage across various regions in Indonesia. However, specific research in the Central Sulawesi region, particularly Sigi Regency, remains very limited. The objectives of this study are: 1) To examine the practice of the Southern Kulawi traditional marriage, and 2) To examine the influence of religious law on the customary marriage law of Southern Kulawi.

In this study, the author employs an empirical legal method, which is an approach that emphasises the use of primary data by examining the legal realities occurring within the community.

Discussion

The Practice of Traditional Marriage in Southern Kulawi

¹¹ Divani Aina Nurlita, Elvira Damayanti, and Daffa Arjuna Arya Putra, "Marriage from the Perspective of Indonesian Customary Law: Diverse Systems, Traditions, and Modern Challenges," *TarunaLaw: Journal of Law and Sharia* 3, no. 02 (2025): 99–116, <https://doi.org/10.54298/tarunalaw.v3i02.448>.

The Southern Kulawi community adheres to marriage rules established in accordance with customary law. This practice, which constitutes customary law and is a hereditary legacy from their ancestors, must be preserved and is binding on the entire community. Should any violation occur during the process, the parties concerned will be subject to a fine or customary sanctions. The traditional marriage process of the Southern Kulawi tribe is carried out in four stages, namely: asking (*mampéwini*), betrothal (*mekamaro*), the wedding ceremony (*memua*), and the acceptance of the son-in-law (*mepantodui*). Specifically, the author states that there are four stages in the traditional marriage process of Southern Kulawi, namely:¹²

1. Enquiry (*Mampewini*)

Mampewini is the initial stage in the traditional marriage process of the Southern Kulawi. At this stage, the groom's family sends a representative or spokesperson to the bride's parents' home to convey the intention to propose. Upon arrival at the bride's home, the representative is welcomed in accordance with custom, usually with a betel nut offering as a sign of respect and acceptance of the guest.

2. The Proposal (*Mekamaro*)

Mekamaro is the engagement or proposal stage that takes place after both families have reached an agreement through the *mampewini* process. This ceremony is usually held after 12 noon, as the people of South Kulawi believe, for religious reasons, that this time of day brings blessings and prosperity, coinciding with the sun's ascent. During the *mekamaro* procession, both the groom's and bride's families wear full traditional attire as a sign of respect for the cultural values and customs held in high regard. Both are also accompanied by a young male attendant,

whose role is to carry the betrothal items using a traditional cloth slung over the shoulder. The marriage proposal items in the *Mekamaro* tradition typically consist of various symbolic objects representing good intentions, sincerity, and respect for the family of the prospective bride, such as:¹³ One tray, either with or without legs, with large, connected serrated edges and free from defects. One piece of traditional *mbesa* cloth, which serves as a protective covering for the prospective bride. One axe, symbolising the groom's desire and readiness to start a new family as a husband.

According to Suminto Todapa,¹⁴ Once the envoys arrive, a traditional welcoming ceremony is held to receive the goodwill they bring. Following the welcoming ceremony, a traditional dialogue takes place in the local language, during which the traditional elders from both sides exchange words with full courtesy and politeness in accordance with the traditions of Southern Kulawi. Next, the betrothal gifts were formally presented to the parents of the prospective bride. This handover ceremony marked the climax of the betrothal proceedings, signifying that both families had reached an agreement to proceed to the stage of a traditional marriage.

3. The Wedding Ceremony (*Memua*)

The *Memua* ceremony is a traditional ritual that usually takes place in the afternoon, just before sunset. As part of the preparations, a series of activities are held at the groom's home to accompany him in a procession to the bride's residence. Upon arrival, the members of the wedding party are welcomed in

¹² Fiqman Sunandar, ANTARAFOTO, 2017, <https://www.antarafoto.com/id/foto-cerita/view/390/mengenal-adat-pernikahan-suku-kulawi>.

¹³ Suminto Todapa, SH, *Head of the South Kulawi Customary Institution*, Interview on 26 March 2025

¹⁴ Interview in March 2025 in Tompibugis Village, Sigi.

accordance with tradition, in the following order:¹⁵

Traditionally, traditional drums are beaten; usually five drums are used as a welcome. Next, five young women perform the *rego bolai* wedding dance. This dance is accompanied by drums and a two-verse poem, *libu ngkokoyio* and *libu ngkaromu*. This poem can be interpreted as a metaphor for the groom's family's private deliberations in their efforts to select a prospective mother for their child. In the context of this consultation, the expressions '*romu mosarara*' and '*pangulintotua*' hold special significance. Both are terms used to convey the outcome of the consultation, namely the agreement reached to unite their children. Continuing the proceedings, the *rego mpemua* dance is performed, a traditional choreographed expression associated with wedding celebrations. This performance is accompanied by a three-verse poem.¹⁶

After the *rego mpemua* dance, the leader of the procession stamped his feet three times to signal the arrival of the groom's procession. A traditional elder inside the bride's house speaks in the local dialect and asks those present, "*hema hangami?*", meaning "who is outside?". The leader of the procession is then asked to state the groom's name, ensuring it is pronounced correctly. If the name is mispronounced, the door remains closed and the question is repeated until the name is stated correctly.¹⁷ Next, a dialogue begins between the leader of the procession and the spokesperson in the bride's house.

¹⁵ Suminto Todapa, SH, *Head of the South Kulawi Customary Institution*, Interview Date: 26 March 2025

¹⁶ Suminto Todapa, SH, *Head of the Southern Kulawi Customary Institution*, Interview Date: 26 March 2025

¹⁷ Reza Stanzah, "The Raego Song in the Traditional Weddings of the Maradika Kulawi People in Central Sulawesi Reza Stanzah 1," *Selonding* 13, no. 13 (2018): 1971–86, <https://doi.org/10.24821/selonding.v13i13.2920>.

Once the entire series of events is complete, this signifies an agreement has been reached and is immediately followed by the '*maboda tono*' ceremony, wherein the traditional leader escorts the groom to the bride's chamber, after which the traditional wedding ceremony takes place. The traditional elder then exits the room to lead the couple to sit side by side on the wedding dais. This signifies that the *Memua* ceremony has concluded.

As part of the traditional wedding customs, the *Memua* procession ceremony is followed by the presentation of the dowry to the bride's family. The dowry consists of two parts, namely: (1) First Dowry. *Hia Ibi Rate*, which involves carrying a banana leaf and a tray, aims to safeguard the integrity of the marriage by protecting it from negative influences, particularly ancestral spirits and other malevolent entities. *Jaramaya Hancamoko* involves carrying two banana leaves and a piece of *mbesa* cloth (traditional cloth). The purpose is to inform the groom's family that the dowry payment must be completed in full during the second phase of the dowry payment. *Pabua Peroro* involves carrying two banana leaves, a tray, a piece of *mpebala*, and an axe. This symbolises unity and harmony within the marriage. (2) Second Dowry. The second dowry, known as the main dowry, consists of two parts. The first comprises 69 trays and 10 pieces of traditional cloth (*mbesa*). The second part consists of two buffaloes. During the dowry presentation ceremony, a traditional elder from the bride's side will gather banana leaves to be arranged into a garland. This arrangement of banana leaves is one of the requirements for the second part of the dowry that must be fulfilled before it is delivered and officially handed over to the groom's side.

4. Reception of the Daughter-in-Law

Mepantodui is the ceremony for the acceptance of the daughter-in-law. This must be carried out, as failure to do so will result in the daughter-in-law being refused entry to her in-laws' home as a member of the married couple's family. This situation

may also be considered a breach of prevailing customs, and may therefore incur appropriate sanctions. After the traditional wedding ceremony on the evening of the wedding, the bride's family, accompanied by the traditional elders, escorts the bride to the groom's house; thereafter, the bride no longer hesitates to reside in the groom's household as *the mepantodui* has already been performed.

The Influence of Religious Law on Traditional Marriage in South Kulawi

Before religion arrived in Southern Kulawi, the community was already familiar with traditional marriage through their ancestors. This tradition is a heritage passed down through generations, which to this day is still preserved, maintained and practised by the people of Southern Kulawi. Traditional marriage, as generally understood, enables both parties to build a family relationship characterised by happiness, harmony, and peace. Traditional marriage is an affirmation of loyalty to the family, manifested through concrete actions.¹⁸

The majority of the people of South Kulawi are Protestant Christians. Given this majority, there is a need for a new understanding of what it means to live as a Christian. If the Gospel is to be communicated effectively, it must be conveyed in language that is easily understood, so that culture is not viewed as something negative or contrary to faith. In the practice of traditional South Kulawi marriage, age is not the primary concern. However, according to religious provisions and statutory regulations, marriage cannot be performed for couples under the age of 19, as age is one of the factors influencing the mental maturity and sense of responsibility of the

prospective couple.¹⁹ As stipulated in Article 7 of Law No. 16 of 2019 amending Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage.

According to Christian religious law, a marriage resulting from an affair cannot be blessed as it is considered a form of adultery. Conversely, from a customary perspective, although an affair constitutes a serious offence, the guilty couple may still be married after undergoing a customary sanction known as *Pora'eo* (village cleansing), led by the customary leader. Once the *Pora'eo* ceremony has been performed, the church is present only in the form of prayer without blessing the marriage, as in Christian teaching marriage can only take place once in a lifetime. Consequently, the church refuses to conduct the marriage of the couple resulting from the affair. However, the customary authorities still consider the marriage valid after it has gone through the applicable customary stages.²⁰

A process of *inculturation* occurs in every aspect of the religious life of the people of South Kulawi. This is clearly evident in various traditional marriage rituals, which always begin with a prayer. From the asking-for-hand ceremony (*mampewini*), the betrothal (*mekamaro*), the traditional marriage ceremony (*memua*), to the welcoming of the son-in-law (*mepantodui*), these four stages always involve a minister of God to lead the prayer as the event begins. This *inculturation* occurs because the people of South Kulawi are open to Christian teachings, allowing religious values to blend with custom without negating one another. Thus, custom and religion coexist in shaping the sacredness of each stage of the marriage.

¹⁸ Suminto Todapa, SH, *Head of the Southern Kulawi Customary Institution*, Interview, 26 March 2025

¹⁹ Suminto Todapa, SH, *Chair of the Kulawi Selatan Customary Institution*, Interview, 26 March 2025

²⁰ Suminto Todapa, SH, *Head of the Kulawi Selatan Customary Institution*, Interview Date: 26 March 2025

Marriage is not an experiment but a lifelong relationship or bond between a man and a woman. In other words, marriage itself is not temporary but permanent.²¹ This is also affirmed in the Bible. (1) In Mark 10:8-9: “So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” This view affirms that a man and a woman who marry are no longer two separate individuals, but become a single, complete unity before God. Marriage is a noble institution because it is a gift from God dating back to before humanity fell into sin. (2) In Genesis 1:28, it is recorded that “the Lord blessed Adam and Eve before commanding them to be fruitful and multiply”. (3) And Matthew 19:3–6 affirms: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

Marriage is a lifelong bond of love between a man and a woman until death parts them, sealed by the blessing of holy matrimony. This principle forms the basis of Christian teaching on the sanctity of marriage.²² The relationship between religious law and customary law is closely linked to a theory widely accepted in customary law: the theory of *receptio in complexu*. This theory offers a fundamental analysis of the interaction between customary law and religious law in Indonesia. According to its proponents, the theory of *receptio in complexu* asserts that the application of customary law depends on respect for the religious law prevailing in society. Thus, Hindus adhere to Hindu law, Muslims adhere to Islamic law, and Christians adhere to Christian law.

²¹ Captain Alexkonti, S.Th., *Lead Pastor of the Salvation Army Church in Tomua Village, South Kulawi District*, Interviewed on 9 April 2025

²² Zakaria and Urbanus, “The Church’s View on Divorce and Polygamy Amidst Various Christian Ethical Perspectives,” *Veritas Lux Mea (Journal of Theology and Christian Education)* 5, no. 1 (2023): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.59177/veritas.v5i1.193>.

When analysed from the perspective of customary marriage law, the concept of *receptio in complexu* can be used to describe the marriage practices of the Southern Kulawi community. This is because the Southern Kulawi community is known for its strong religious character, particularly as followers of the Christian faith. Christian values are not only present in social life but have also been integrated into every stage of customary marriage. This theory was first proposed by C.F. Winter and Salomon Keyzer, and later developed by van den Berg. The theory of *receptio in complexu* emphasises that the customary practices and legal systems of a particular community essentially constitute a holistic acceptance of the religion practised by that community.²³ In other words, custom and customary law cannot be separated from the religious values that have permeated and formed the basis of social practices within the community. Thus, the conduct of traditional marriages in South Kulawi can be understood as a tangible manifestation of the community’s acceptance and internalisation of Christian teachings, which are subsequently reflected within customary traditions.

Indonesia also applies a legal system that encompasses religious law and customary law. From a religious perspective, the norms of human life are comprehensively regulated, ranging from social interaction, conduct, community life, and state affairs, to the provisions governing the conduct of marriage. In addition to marriage provisions derived from religious teachings, the Indonesian state has also established a legal system governing the validity of marriage according to positive law. This is enshrined in Law No. 1 of 1974 on Marriage, which contains various provisions and procedures for the conduct

²³ Dedisyah Putra, “The Status of Customary Law in Islamic Law Regarding Certain Sinners,” *El-Qanuniy* 9, no. 4 (2023): 12–30, <https://doi.org/10.24952/el-qanuniy.v9i1.7776>.

of marriage to ensure it possesses legal validity recognised by the state.

Whether from a religious, ethnic, or cultural perspective, pluralism in Indonesia creates a distinctive legal reality. No single legal system is entirely dominant; rather, there is a coexistence between state law, religious law, and customary law. In practice, these three legal systems not only coexist but also influence one another, creating their own unique dynamics. This diversity is a key characteristic of the legal system in Indonesia, whilst also requiring a contextual, adaptive, and compromising approach to its application.

Conclusion

The practice of traditional marriage in South Kulawi continues to this day to uphold the existence of customary law as a sacred ancestral heritage. Every stage of the ceremony, encompassing the proposal (*mempewini*), betrothal (*mekamaro*), the wedding ceremony (*memua*), and the acceptance of the son-in-law (*mempatudui*), is still conducted using the customary language as a means of communication and a symbol of the community's cultural identity. Consistency in the application of this traditional language and customs reflects efforts to preserve traditional values amidst the influence of modernisation. Thus, the traditional marriage customs of Southern Kulawi play a vital role in sustaining cultural values and preserving the identity of the indigenous community amidst changing times.

Religion exerts a significant influence on the conduct of traditional marriages among the people of South Kulawi. This influence is evident through the process of inculturation between traditional values and Christian teachings at every stage of the marriage ceremony. Religion provides moral and spiritual guidance for the observance of customs, particularly in determining the validity of a

marriage according to the Christian faith. Although custom retains the authority to validate marriages based on tradition, religion imposes certain restrictions, such as refusing to bless marriages resulting from adultery and not conducting marriages for couples under the age of 19. This demonstrates that custom and religion do not negate one another, but rather complement each other in upholding the values of sacredness, morality, and the preservation of the culture of the Southern Kulawi community.

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