

BETWEEN BELIEF AND RELIGION: THE DYNAMICS OF ERLAU-LAU AS A TRADITION IN TIGA BINANGA DISTRICT, KARO REGENCY

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Abstract

There are two sides to natural phenomena in human life. These natural phenomena have the potential to be both a blessing and a curse, affecting human social and economic life. To deal with this situation, humans attempt to reconnect with nature and their environment. With culture, humans create a means to facilitate the unification reconnecting process, making it easier for them to go about their daily lives. The culture is then carried out consistently in order to establish a tradition, which then becomes part of the community's local wisdoms. In the modern era, changes are occurring to the tradition, along with the changes to the society itself and their culture, in order to remain relevant and to survive. This also happens to the people of Tiga Binanga District, Karo Regency, who hold and practice the Erlau-lau tradition. After a lengthy period of practice, this tradition was eventually modified in order to accommodate the existing characteristics of modernity. This paper discusses the dynamics of Erlau-lau, which has been adjusted to modern values, especially religion, considering the fact that traditions exist prior to religions. The discussion begins with the background of the society, their social, economic, and cultural lives, and concludes with the transformations of Erlau-lau in Tiga Binanga District.

Keywords: Karo Ethnicity, Modernity, Erlau-lau Tradition, Religion

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country populated by various ethnicities residing all over the country's territory. Each ethnicity possesses its own characteristics of custom, tradition, and local wisdom, which acts as an identity to differentiate one ethnicity with another. Tradition is a heritage or rules, goods, norms, customs, and conventions, which were carried out by the ancestors and later inherited by the next generations. (Sibarani, et al., 2021b)

Local wisdom, in general, could be defined as a human effort to apply beliefs, learned through the process of thinking, to accomplish something, to have knowledge of certain objects, or of any phenomena occurring in their environment or at certain places (Mulyani et al., 2018). Theoretically, local wisdom is defined as the values and norms practiced in a community, which validity has been accepted as the foundation for acting and behaving in daily life. Therefore, local wisdom is a subsistence that significantly determines the dignity of a person in the community (Perbawasari et al., 2019). Tradition exists to meet the needs of the people, and it will continue to exist and survive as long as the people, as its holder, continue to maintain and preserve it. (Sibarani, Deliana, et al., 2021)

Today, the challenges faced by the society related to the existing traditions are becoming more significant, particularly in regions with pluralistic societies. A pluralistic society is one in which two or more elements live independently in one political unit without any assimilation between one another. The diversity that occurs in an area causes each community to maintain its own traditions and culture. (Nasution et al., 2018, Sibarani, et al., 2021; Sibarani, et al., 2021)

This challenge becomes more severe now that we're in modern day, where community's customs and culture are gradually shifting. Various things are considered incompatible to the values of modernity and are gradually beginning to be abandoned, including traditions and culture that tend to be considered backward. When in fact, traditions and cultures are a form of modernity achieved by the ancestors in the past. Besides the tradition and culture emerging in the modern



era, the religions growing in the society threatens the existence of tradition and culture. (Silaban et al., 2020)

The massive growth of religion could possibly cause the already fading existence of local wisdom to vanish entirely. Whereas, tradition emerged prior to all existing religion. Culture provides a means to make life easier for the people's daily life. The resulting culture is then implemented continuously until it becomes a tradition. The community's continuous implementation of traditions is an effort to keep them alive (Sundram et al., 2022).

The theoretical and practical clashes that occur between tradition and religion create contradictions in the society, who has to choose between two choices. This is, of course, a difficult choice to make, considering the fact that these two entities are equally necessary and are part of their identity. Nonetheless, the community will choose one of the two entities, which in the end forms two groups in the community's social and cultural interactions (Edwita et al., 2019).

If these two elements are not brought together, the existence of tradition in the form of local wisdom might dim, if not perish, especially if elements like traditions that are horizontally oriented are constantly associated with religious doctrines that are vertically oriented. Thus, issues arise concerning the presence of culture through local wisdom that exists in every ethnic group in Indonesia, particularly how these two entities can coexist and grow in people's lives. Of course, this issue must be resolved so that religion and culture can continue to coexist. (Halimatussakdiah et al., 2020; Octavianna et al., 2021).

2. METHODS

The method used in this research is historical methods, including heuristics, verification, interpretation and historiography. This research uses library sources and uses primary and secondary data. The data were obtained through observation in Tiga Binanga District, Karo Regency, as the area of research object. Supporting data were obtained from competent institutions, such as North Sumatra Provincial Library, Karo Regency Library, and North Sumatra University Library, in order to find books or other forms of publication relevant to the research. Additionally, data were also obtained through interviews with members of local communities. The obtained data were later verified, interpreted, and transformed into an academic paper. (Sibarani, et al., 2021a; Sibarani, et al., 2021).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. General Description of The Karo Ethnicity in Tiga Binanga District

The Karo people resides in the Karo highlands. The Karo Regency is located at 2o50'-3o19' North Latitude and 97o55'-98o38' East Longitude with an area of 2,127.25 km². Kabanjahe is the administrative center of the regency. The Karo ethnicity is native to this region. However, there are other ethnic groups inhabiting this region, such as Toba, Javanese, Nias, Malay, Minang, Simalungun, Pak-Pak, Nias, etc. In addition to a pluralistic ethnicity, pluralism in the religious aspect also exists in this Regency.

There are several opinions regarding the origin of the Karo ethnicity, one of which believing that the Karo ethnicity comes from the Haru (Aru) kingdom which existed since the 13th century. This kingdom extended from Siak to Langkat. Around the 16th century, there was an attack on the Aceh kingdom which destroyed the whole kingdom. Its people fled to various places, including the Karo Highlands.

Like any other ethnic groups, the Karo ethnicity identifies themselves based on their own culture. Ethnic groups were formed because of the characteristics determined by the ethnicity itself.^[5] In the Karo community, there is an identity called *Merga* for men and *Beru* for women. The *Merga* or *Beru* is descended from the father's lineage. This is in line with the patrilineal system adopted by the Karo ethnicity. There are 5 main clans (marga) in Karo called *Merga Silima* which means five clans, namely: Karo-karo, Ginting, Tarigan, Sembiring, Perangin-angin. Each of these clans are divided into sub-marga's.

In addition to the *Merga* which is passed down from the father's lineage, in the Karo ethnicity, from a mother's lineage, Bere-bere is determined. Bere-bere determines a person's role and status in cultural positions related to kinship (relationships and greetings). *Merga* or *Beru* is attached after someone's name. During introductions, this becomes an important identity to determine the position and greetings based on customs. Even further, it identifies the taboo relationship for people with the same *Merga* and *Beru* (between men and women). These people are not allowed to marry each other because they are considered relatives by blood.

Another cultural identity besides *Merga* or *Beru* is *Sangkep Sitelu*, or better known as *Daliken Sitelu*. This explains the existence of three important elements in kinship in the Karo ethnicity. The three elements include: *Sukut*, *Kalimbubu* and *Anak Beru*. Each person holds the role as *Sukut*, *Kalimbubu*, and *Anak Beru*, based on the time and context of place or event. Each role comes with different responsibilities.

Sukut consists of *Sembuyak* and *Senina*. *Sembuyak* means siblings, while *Senina* means siblings from the father and mother (*Senina Sepemenen*, *Sepanibamen*, *Sepengalon*, *Sedalaman*). *Kalimbubu* is a respected family member from a woman's side. There is also *Puang Kalimbubu*, which is the *Kalimbubu* from a *Kalimbubu*. *Anak Beru* is the family of a man who takes a daughter from a family to be his wife. Status and role in this kinship shows how a person should behave when an event based on customs is held.

Tiga Binanga District as the research object area is located at 3072'4 North Latitude and 98034'5 East Longitude, with an altitude of 490-750 meters above sea level. The area measures about 160.38 km², which consists of 1 sub-district and 19 villages. The people in Tiga Binanga District mostly work as farmers with rice as the main commodity and alternated with other types of perennials. However, in recent times, rice fields seem to be replaced by corn farms.

In the religious aspect, Tiga Binanga District is very diverse. Religions adhered by the people in the district include Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, with every person from each religion living side by side in harmony. Even though Protestantism is the majority religion adhered by the population, the other religions (Islam and Catholicism) can still carry out their religious duties comfortably due to the presence of strong tolerance. The cultural values bind the relationship in the families. In every event, be it related to joy or sorrow, the community support each other according to their status and role based on the *Sangkep Nggeluh (Daliken Sitelu)*. (Sibarani, et al., 2021a; Silaban, Sibarani, 2021)

The Tiga Binanga people rely on the agrarian sector as one of the main sources of income. Therefore, natural conditions and the surrounding environment are central to the community. As a result, different efforts have been made by the community to maintain favorable natural conditions. One of the measures done to preserve the nature in order to maintain the community's wellbeing is to associate nature with religious aspects, which play a vital role in maintaining the bond between humanity and God.

In order to keep this vertical relationship well established, everybody needs to be in their best behavior every day, especially by avoiding immoral actions or cultural norms violations. Every behavior is considered to have an impact on harmonious relationships with the natural environment. In addition, relationships with the deceased ancestors must also be maintained, so that the ancestors do not feel disappointed and sorrowful. ^[8]

Religion is now a significant element of many people's lives. Before the entrance of religion in Karo, the Karo ethnicity had embraced a belief called *pemena (perbegu)*. The Karo ethnicity believes that in every element of life, an invisible force plays a role. This includes ancestral spirits as well as from other supernatural powers. The Karo ethnicity believes that The Creator is always involved in everything that happens to humans.

There are 3 concepts of God in Karo, which is known as *Dibata Sitelu*, namely:

- *Dibata Datas*, which means God as the possessor of the nature;
- *Dibata Tengah*, which means God as the possessor of the world;



- *Dibata Teruh*, which means God as the possessor of the underworld, which is believed to be where the spirits are or the world of the dead.^[9]

The relationship between the three concepts of *Dibata* must be maintained in a harmonious situation. The Karo people does certain ceremonial traditions in the hope that the situation will remain conducive for the community. When a problem or disaster occurs, people often associate it with these *Dibata*. There is an assumption that if there is a behavior or situation that is not pleasing to *Dibata*, then problems may befall the community. This view also applies to the Karo ethnicity in one of its traditions, which is known as *Erlau-lau*.

4. ERLAU-Lau

Rainfall is one of the most reliable supplies of water, particularly for Karo people who work in agrarian and agricultural fields, especially during the dry season. Tiga Binanga District is one of the regions in Karo Regency where the bulk of the population works in the agrarian and agricultural sectors. One of the community's efforts to bring rain is the custom known as *Erlau-lau*.

Erlau-lau is a tradition of the Karo people, which is associated with the hope of rain. This practice is also known as *Ndilo Wari Udan*, which is made out of three words: *Ndilo*, which means to call, *Wari*, which means day, and *Udan*, which means rain. As a result, this event can be viewed as a call for a rainy day.

Because of the community's anxiety and problems as a result of the protracted drought, this practice is carried out. If the drought lasts long enough, the community will seek the assistance of a shaman to perform the *Ndilo Wari Udan* ritual.^[10] The community's fear of not being able to harvest rice and other crops is the cause behind this tradition, as the community's livelihood is primarily based on agricultural products.

Ndilo Wari Udan is performed when the dry season has been extended to the point that plant development has been hindered and the leaves have begun to turn yellow. The locals will become restless, and this will spark a serious discussion in the community, leading to the decision to hold the ceremony with proper preparations and arrangements.^[11]

In the Karo ethnic group, the *Ndilo Wari Udan* ritual has been passed down from generation to generation. This tradition is essentially a reflection of the community's acknowledgement of other forces that control and play a role in the process of human life. The community then consciously develops a relationship with the owner of these forces, which is transformed into the concept of *Dibata Sitelu*, with the goal of creating a harmonious relationship.

Human conduct can create an unbalanced atmosphere, which can be created by a variety of factors such as disrespect for the environment, unethical or immoral acts, or things that contravene customary norms. The occurrence of the aforementioned conditions displeases the Ruler of nature, prompting Him to give a warning or punishment. Furthermore, disrespect for spirits or ancestral spirits may also be a cause. The warning given is believed to be through natural signs, one of which is the occurrence of drought. Meanwhile, for the Karo people who rely on agriculture, water is definitely important.

Ndilo Wari Udan is held to maintain a nice connection or to reestablish a harmonious atmosphere. This tradition is considered a means of spiritual engagement and communication between the society and natural rulers, supernatural rulers, spirits, and ancestral spirits, hoping for a chance of redemption for the mistakes of the community. In other words, *Ndilo Wari Udan* can also be considered as a means for the community to improve their relationship vertically.

Even though they are the same, *Ndilo Wari Udan* in the Tiga Binanga area is most commonly referred to as *Erlau-lau*. *Erlau-lau* in Indonesian can be translated to "playing with water". *Er* is a verb that means "to do" or "to play," and *Lau* is a word that means "water." In general, this custom is similar to the custom of requesting rain. In practice, however, each region has its own set of characteristics. Tiga Binanga District has its own distinct characteristics from the rest of regions in the Karo Regency.



These differences exist in several villages in Tiga Binanga District, for example, Kuala village, Tiga Binanga village and Kuta Buara village. In Tiga Binanga village and Kuala village, there is a special procession at the beginning of this tradition. The implementation of *Erlau-lau* in these two villages is always done simultaneously and would begin with a procession from the site of *Nini Galuh* (Kuala Village) to the tomb of *Nini Pagar* in Tiga Binanga. The procession uses complete traditional drum equipment and involves *Guru Sibaso*. In Kuta Buara and neighboring villages, however, the community only performs it within the village. The implementation of other processes, on the other hand, is essentially the same.

The procession in Kuta Buara village begins by cleaning up *Nini Galuh's* tomb. Because it is occupied by the village's guardian spirit, this site is considered sacred. A young coconut is placed on top of a bamboo that has been split in three, but not to the base, after the area has been cleaned up. The people then make the following request:

“O Nini Galuh kam lap buah uta-uta si njaga kuta. Lit mana kai pe si danat nani kam si njagai kami einaha meluah kami. Ban min udan wari e o Nini”

Which means:

“Nini Galuh, you are the guardian and the protector of our village, who keeps us away from all dangers from the outside. Please give us rain, o Nini.” After the request is made, the whole tradition officially begins.

After this process, *Erlau-lau* begins. There are several rules in conducting *Erlau-lau*:

- The water used must be clean river or fountain water.
- Splashing or sprinkling each other with water must be done by adhering customary guidelines. Splashing water on persons who must be respected according to customary laws is definitely prohibited (*Simehangke*). For instance, *erturangku* (husband or wife of a brother/sister), *erturang* (opposite gender brother/sister), and in-laws (*bengkila, mama, mami*). This is a violation of the customary norms, and it will turn the goal of bringing rain into an issue.

In Kuta Buara Village and neighboring communities, the tradition officially begins once the spirit is asked to protect the village. However, there are certain differences in Kuala village. The community, along with *Sangkep Nggeluh*, would gather at the *Nini Galuh* site in Kuala Village in the morning of the first day of this event, after the performance of this customary event was agreed upon. Offerings and requests would be made after the location has been cleaned up. The community then would walk ±6 kilometers to *Nini Pagar's* tomb in Tiga Binanga, followed by traditional drum music. Some would walk, some would dance. The whole process of this event is accompanied by a person who is considered to have the spiritual ability to communicate with the spirits of the rulers of nature and the spirits of ancestors.

Even when the event is only getting started, *Daliken Sitelu* (*Sangkep Nggeluh*) is heavily involved in this area, even if they live in a different village. In the past, for example, bamboos were also provided by *Anak Beru* (Tarigan Pergendangen). The bamboos would be washed downstream and sent to Tiga Binanga. Furthermore, when the participants are about to begin the event on the first day, they would have a meal together where the ingredients would be provided by community members and cooked by *Anak Beru*.

In the past, community members generally still had kinship ties to one another either because of their origins or marriage. This kinship ties grow along with the development of the village. However, community members who are immigrants, although not large in number, have been considered to be part of the kinship so that they are also involved in the implementation of several traditional practices, including *Erlau-lau*.

Recognition of kinship given by the local community to the immigrant community is a form of respect for each individual from the migrant community who declares themselves to be part of one of the families in the village, which is followed by the choosing of adoptive parents or adoptive siblings, with the aim to strengthen their position in society. When they hold traditional events, the adoptive parents or siblings would play a role with their *Sangkep Nggeluh*.



After having a meal together, the group would make offerings and pray to *Nini Galuh* for rain, then walk to Tiga Binanga, specifically to *Nini Pagar's* tomb, who is also considered the community's guardian spirit. They would be accompanied by traditional drum music along the route. Members of the community may be possessed by the spirits of the ancestors who are said to enter the raga merek at times during the procedure. They would leave offerings and ask for generosity at *Nini Pagar's* tomb.

Furthermore, the community would leave the tomb and proceed to the village area after performing ritual prayers and dancing to the traditional drums. *Erlau-lau* begins with this, and people would splash water onto each other according to customary norms.

At night, mothers and fathers would gather in the village lawn square (*kesain*). A bamboo node (*sengawan*) would be prepared to be buried in soil that has previously been dug. The bamboo's top would be drilled and filled with water, after which pandan would be placed within. Pandan is used to produce mats and is known as *bengkuang* in the Karo language. After being placed in an air-filled bamboo, the pandan is covered with a coconut shell and stones are placed on top of it to keep it from moving. When the pandan has softened, an event known as *dengok-dengok* would be held in the evening.

The event is called *dengok-dengok* because the sound of the pandan being pulled resembles a ringing sound (*dengok*). The mothers would sit on mats surrounding the bamboo loaded with pandan at the commencement of the evening ceremony, with the fathers behind them. Then 3 mothers would pull the pandan causing it to make loud sounds. The neighboring community are allowed to observe this event. Parents sing in unison when pulling the pandan:

Mothers would sing : "*Dogal-dogal Dibata*"

Fathers would answer : "*Udan ko wari*"

Mothers would answer: "*Pancur-pancur*"

Fathers would answer: "*Pancur ko wari, Udan ko wari*"

This song continues to be sung in unison while the mothers pull the pandan. This procession shall be done in a sincere manner and not playfully/casually. During the event, the neighboring communities are allowed to watch.

When the fourth day has passed and there is no sign of rain yet, the village would continue the event. They would travel to Batu Rekep, also known as Karang Kapor, a big rock in Kuta Buara Village. At the spot, they would splash water on each other from above and below. The participants would continue to splash water at each other as the event progressed. They would, however, perform an event known as "*Siageng-agengen*," in which they would paint other people's faces black.

The term *siageng-agengen* comes from the word "*ageng*", which is the residue of the wood burnt in the kitchen. People (especially young people) would take *ageng*, mix in some water and use *ageng* on each other's faces to make them seem awful, unclean, and dark. This seems to indicate a sense of sadness over the situation so that they would make themselves appear awful.

In addition to *siageng-agengen*, there is another event that would be done in case the rain has yet to fall. This event is called *ngombah gomtang*, which means "to wash away *gomtang*/cans". Although it is called "cans", they would actually use bamboo instead. People would go to the river bringing bamboo and kaffir lime along with coriander from cumin (known as *Lau penguras*). *Lau Penguras* would be inserted into a bamboo and washed away in the river while the people say: "*Udan ko wari*" (Please come, rain).

They also collect the sago from sago palm plants that have been cut down. This event takes place in the morning. The sago palm tree will be climbed by one of the community members, the branches and midribs would be cleaned, and then the tree will be chopped down and scraped with the *trongtong*, a tool constructed of bamboo with a wooden stalk. This tool will be used to hit and pick up sago, similar to a hammer. People would take the scraped sago to the river in groups, then soak and crush it to extract the sago to be used later.



The sago collected would be divided equally among the community members involved in this event, to be cooked by their family at home. In fact, the activity of cutting down sago trees and collecting the sago is actually done to prove something; when there are a lot of sago being collected, it is considered as a sign that it will rain, but when only a little sago is collected, it means that the rain would not come anytime soon.

If there is no sign of rain even after four days of events, the people would go on with the event for another four days. During the time, there would always be activities related to this event. This is actually meant to prevent people from being apathetic regarding the current situation. Based on the testimony of several informants, as far as they can remember, the *Erlau-lau* tradition has never failed and rain will surely fall after the series of events are carried out. This tradition implies the harmony and thoughtfulness among community members, so that people who do not work as farmers would also care about the wellbeing of the farmers. This is evident in the way the tradition is carried out; all parties are involved and supportive of the event. This is a tradition that must be carried out in a group setting. From planning to implementation, people of the community help one another.

The process of putting this tradition into practice includes various stages. There are also various items that must be prepared (particularly water), which is difficult to obtain during the dry season and must be obtained from a river, which demands energy to do. As a result, effective intergenerational cooperation is required. During the event, a person should not react emotionally, especially when another person splashes water on them unexpectedly.

Another significance of this tradition is suggested in the kinship ties, which demonstrate the strength of *Rakut Sitelu* (*Daliken Sitelu*). *Rakut Sitelu* plays an essential part in determining who performs certain activities or tasks depending on their position and status according to *Rakut Sitelu* norms, especially during the beginning of the event. As a result, this tradition has a spiritual significance, as well as a sense of community and the strength of customary norms. This tradition serves as a means for the community to ask for generosity from The Authority of the universe in order to relieve the community from the problem of urgent water needs and extended droughts that threaten the community's agricultural necessities. This also has an impact on the stability of other community needs.

Furthermore, this custom aids in the communication with ancestral spirits. This teaches the community that even though their parents or ancestors are no longer alive, they must still be respected. After all, the ancestors have left valuable legacies to their descendants, and even though they are no longer around physically, people consider their souls to be alive, so they must be remembered and honored. Another goal of this tradition is to instill a constant attitude of preservation towards the nature. This attitude would raise awareness of the importance of maintaining harmonious human-environment relations. Finally, it aspires to preserve a caring, supporting, and cooperative communal relationship. This tradition includes men and women of all ages, including the elderly, young people, and toddlers.

All members of the village community must be involved and play a part in the planning and execution process. This is also to preserve cultural values, such as the *Rakut Sitelu*-based position (*Daliken Sitelu*). It's also crucial to retain the role and status that have been established. The norms and roles based on *Rakut Sitelu* (*Sukut*, *Kalimbubu*, and *Anak Beru*) must also be followed. This is something that must be taken into account when carrying out this practice.

This tradition is rarely carried out in the Karo regions nowadays, despite its wide range of use and benefit. Due to modernization, people are becoming more logical. The existence of weather forecasts becomes a solution. However, this tradition is still carried out in Tiga Binanga District. This tradition has undeniably positive social impacts. However, there are several aspects of its implementation that are incompatible to existing religious teachings. In this circumstance, the existence of "*Erlau-lau*" will be threatened as the existing religion develops, forcing existing traditions to adapt to the development of religion, including *Erlau-lau*.



5. ERLAU-LAU AND ITS ADJUSTMENT TO RELIGION

Religion has evolved with the times to become one of the things that cannot be separated from human life. Religion's massive development is thought to be particularly beneficial in aspects of living such as social life, where religion regulates and controls society, pushing them to become wise and prudent. However, the development of religion seems to have a negative impact on the development of culture and traditions possessed by ethnic groups in Indonesia, including the Karo Ethnic with its *Erlau-lau* tradition.

Looking back, tradition and culture came first, thus religion that arrived later in society should adapt to local traditions and culture in order to be accepted by the community. The truth, however, is quite the contrary. Traditions and cultures that have lasted for a long time in society must now adapt in order to survive.

The same thing happened to *Erlau-lau*. Today, there is a shift in the implementation of the tradition, particularly with regard to matters relating to religious aspects. The growth of religion has an impact on the implementation of this tradition. As a society that believes in and believes in religion, society must modify this tradition in order for it to survive.

Regarding this, religious leaders made persuasive efforts to ensure that this tradition would still be carried out. Several practices that were seen to be contradictory to religious principles were decided to be discontinued. Parts of the events, such as placing offerings and praying at the "*Nini Pagar*" tomb, are no longer performed. This is considered polytheistic and contrary to religion since it defies the Oneness of God.

This shift has an impact on the implementation of *Erlau-lau*, which seems to be no longer dominated by spiritual matters. The pilgrimage to *Nini Galuh* and *Nini Pagar's* tombs continues, but practices with the aim to honor the power of these spirits are diminishing. Another impact is the declining role of the *Guru Sibaso*.

The expanding influence of religion in society creates awareness that it is contradictory to combine the power of God and the power of spirits. Religious leaders play a significant influence in persuading people to refrain from polytheistic behaviors. The tradition survives, although the concept and implementation have changed. Furthermore, community members who are actively involved as religious leaders would be hesitant to take such attitudes.

In recent years, religious leaders (Christian, Catholic, and Muslim), as well as local government and community officials, have gathered to begin the *Erlau-lau* tradition by praying to God together, asking for rain and a plentiful harvest. After that, the participants would start splashing and sprinkling water on each other. Furthermore, the role of *Anak Beru* in preparing a meal together before the occasion begins to fade. Currently, food preparation is carried out by local food vendors along with other local businesses that contribute to provide food and drinks. This is also built on the belief that if the drought causes agricultural failure, everyone in the Tiga Binanga area will be affected. This subsequently has an effect on the community's economy, resulting in a loss in ability to make purchases, which might threaten the stability of these businesses.

Another noticeable difference is the involvement of local government (Rifqi et al., 2020). The utilization of firetrucks to provide water supplies for the splashing ceremony demonstrates this involvement. However, there is also an impact on the lack of togetherness of young people as it was in the past, where the water was transported collaboratively from the river.

The utilization of a firetruck allows for more practical water supply, resulting in more water being used during the event. As a result, the soil will become moist more quickly. The idea is that the moister the soil, the faster the rain will fall. This idea is closely related to the evaporation process, which should cause the rain to come faster.

In addition to religious factors, educational factors also influence these changes. People who have received an education tend to prefer rational things. Furthermore, there is a reluctance to perform activities that are considered irrational or mystical. Another difference is apparent during the water splashing event, which is often carried out by young people. During this event, there is a decrease in comprehension of who can and cannot be splashed with water. For example, one may



not splash water on their “*turang*” (sisters or brothers of the opposite sex). The people involved no longer view each other in the context of brothers and sisters, but rather than as friends to play with, so that people who are immersed in the excitement of the event might unknowingly violate these customary rules. The implementation of the *Erlau-lau* nowadays has shifted into a fun holiday momentum for the community.

When we compare the implementation of this tradition in the past to the present, it is apparent that major changes have occurred. Some parts, such as those related with magic, have decreased. Other practices, such as singing “*Dogal-dogal*” are also becoming uncommon. Furthermore, the role of *Sangkep Nggeluh* (based on the concept of *Daliken Sitelu*) in the implementation of *Erlau-lau* seems to be diminishing. The provision of equipments needed is now more commonly thought of as a form of collaboration among fellow community members so that the rain will fall soon, as God's grace. As a result, the modern *Erlau-lau* concept is more focused on splashing each other and the surrounding with water.

With the adaptation of the *Erlau-lau* tradition based on the development of existing religions, this tradition should continue to survive, but in a far different form than it was initially practiced. As a result, the development of religion can impact and even modify the concept of an already existing culture in society.

4. CONCLUSION

Erlau-lau is a tradition with a goal to call for a rain. This tradition is also known as *Ndilo Wari Udan*. However, people in the Tiga Binanga District are more familiar with the term *Erlau-lau*. This tradition is done as the people are worried about the prolonged dry season, causing drought. It is considered to threaten the agriculture, which is essentially the main source of income for the farmers. However, not only the farmers, it also greatly affects all aspects of the people's overall wellbeing.

The implementation of *Erlau-lau* in Tiga Binanga District has its own distinct characteristic, which distinguishes it from other areas in the Karo Regency. In general, this tradition does have spiritual value, but in the Tiga Binanga District it is very significant. This is present since the beginning of the event, which shows the emotional bond between the community and the ruler of the universe, the spirits and ancestors' spirits.

Erlau-lau also has various values of local wisdom, including aspects of religion, cooperation, cultural inheritance, and respect for nature and the environment. It is also related to the value of cooperation. This tradition's implementation cannot be done alone; community members must work together to make it a success. As a result, community members' relationships must be nurtured; they need one other, and there is a power of togetherness. Furthermore, this tradition directs community members to uphold norms and customs.

This tradition has significant positive impacts on social life. However, at various phases of implementation, some activities are deemed incompatible with the principles of existing religions. In this regard, the development of the existing religion might threaten the existence of the *Erlau-lau* tradition, while in fact, culture existed prior to the emergence and development of religion. According to the Historical Timeline, religion would be the one that must adapt to culture and traditions in order to be recognized by the community. On the other hand, when religion is accepted and developed in society, the culture that has been attached for a long time is forced to adapt to the religion that has developed. To preserve these cultures and traditions, some changes must be made so that the *Erlau-lau* tradition could continue to exist.

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