

“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.