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Interpreting the *Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono* Tradition in the Amasanan Tribe and Its Implications for the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the meaning of the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition within the Amasanan ethnic community and its implications for the Sacrament of Marriage in the Catholic Church. This tradition is a rite of passage that marks the transition of a woman's social status from her original clan to her husband's clan according to customary law. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. The findings indicate that this tradition is not merely symbolic but is also rich in spiritual and social meanings, such as the recognition of status, ancestral blessing, the unity of two extended families, and protection against spiritual disturbances. Traditional symbols such as kusambi leaves, betel nut, *tais* cloth, and *sopi* play an important role in strengthening the sacred dimension of this ritual. The tradition also reinforces values contained in the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage, including unity, fidelity, public recognition, and communal blessing. Therefore, the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition can be understood as a concrete expression of the inculturation of Catholic faith within local culture. The practice of this tradition serves as a bridge between customary heritage and the teachings of faith, allowing both to mutually enrich one another.

Keywords: Nono Tasaeb Nono T-Shirt; Amasanan Tribe; Rite of Transition; The Sacrament of Matrimony

Introduction

Indonesia is widely known as a country rich in cultural diversity and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation in the lives of its people. Every existing culture and tradition carries profound meanings and symbolic values. East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is one of the provinces that is particularly rich in such cultural and traditional heritage. These cultural expressions play an important role in shaping and enriching the identity of a region.

North Central Timor Regency (Timor Tengah Utara/TTU) is one of the regions on the island of Timor that still preserves a vast diversity of cultural wealth and ancestral traditions from ancient times to the present day. These traditions continue to be maintained by each tribe and community as an inheritance from their ancestors. The preservation of these traditions aims to ensure that today's younger generation remains familiar with the proper procedures of customary ceremonies, whether related to marriage or other traditional rituals.

The Catholic Church views marriage as a vocation for husband and wife to live in unity. The union of a man and a woman, who are called by God to live as a family, is filled with grace and blessings until old age, and only death can separate their lives. The Sacrament of Marriage is the initial step toward family life, centered on a valid marital covenant recognized by both religious and civil law (Ardhi, 1977: 10). Both the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition and the Sacrament of Marriage emphasize values such as unity, responsibility, and enduring love. Through the wise integration of customary elements, couples can transform their marriage into a sacred celebration that honors both faith and culture, while strengthening their identity as believers and members of the customary community.

The customary marriage tradition of Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono (meaning "removing a clan name and assigning a new clan name") is of great importance for every couple entering marriage. This tradition is considered essential because it grants identity to a woman who marries a man from a different tribe or clan. Moreover, it serves as an effort to unite the woman with her husband's tribe both physically and spiritually. The essence of this tradition lies in the act of assigning the husband's clan name to the woman who becomes his wife, thereby granting the husband full customary rights over his wife and their future children. This ritual may be performed after marriage, depending on the decision of the *Atoin Amaf* (customary elder or clan leader) from the woman's side, who determines the appropriate timing. However, if the groom is able to perform this tradition during the engagement process, he may consult with the *Atoin Amaf* to discuss the execution of the ritual.

The Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono marriage tradition of the Amasanan Tribe in Susulaku B Village, Insana District, reflects a unique cultural richness. This tribe is structured around five sibling groups, each assigned specific roles in customary ceremonies. *Amasanan Mol'a* plans deliberations, *Amasanan Kon'e* gathers community members, *Amasanan Meoba* ensures security,

Amasanan Makon'a safeguards ceremonial items, and *Amasanan Tloeja/Taknum* prepares food and conveys messages. This division of roles ensures the smooth execution of every aspect of the ceremony, including the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono marriage tradition.

Within the Amasanan Tribe, the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition is regarded as the initial step for a couple in establishing a household. However, in many cases, it is carried out after the couple has been married for a considerable period. This delay is often due to economic factors or because the couple is still given the opportunity to bear children until the woman is no longer biologically productive (*sinab bese tofa*), at which point the customary marriage ritual may be performed. During the Kaos Nono ceremony, deliberations are held with the *Atoin Amaf* from both families to determine the distribution of children according to the customary tradition known as *boa mat bait*. According to this tradition, the eldest son and the youngest child—regardless of gender—must follow the father's clan, while the eldest daughter, accompanied by a middle child (male or female), remains as a replacement for the mother and stays within the mother's clan. After marriage, the couple usually resides with the woman's family to prepare for their future needs with the assistance of both extended families.

Betty and Nusarasriya (2020), in their previous research, noted that marriage among the Timorese people has distinctive characteristics, with the entire process conducted by each family. It begins with communication through letters exchanged between the families of the man and the woman involved, even after mutual consent has been reached. In the Amasanan tradition, marriage preparations begin with a meeting of the nuclear family to discuss the details of the ceremony. The presence of the bride and groom is not mandatory at this meeting. The outcomes are then conveyed to the extended families through messengers from both sides. Subsequently, each family prepares the necessary requirements for the agreed wedding day.

On the day designated for the ceremony, several preparatory steps must be completed before the groom's party proceeds to the bride's customary house for the Kaos Nono ritual. The groom and the customary elders first engage in deliberations to decide the necessary actions. These include inviting ancestral spirits by lighting candles and offering prayers, requesting them to take the sword (*suni*) and kusambi leaves from the customary house to be brought out. The *Atoin Amaf* recites a traditional invocation seeking permission: *"hai mi sina mam hoen hit ok oke, naot tapoen hit an feto noko in sonaf ma tola he tok na nem tatama neo ho balma ho tokom"*, which means, "We ask

permission to bring our daughter out of her customary house to be brought into this customary house." This ritual seeks the blessing of the ancestral spirits residing in the groom's customary house.

It is important to note that the term *Kaos Nono* is derived from two words: *kaos*, meaning to remove or release, and *nono*, meaning clan or lineage (Erlin Naisanu, Esu, 2012). This ceremony is performed to remove the woman's clan name prior to marriage. The ritual takes place while the bride is still in her customary house. A silver coin is placed on her head, lowered to her shoulders, and then thrown backward by the *Atoin Amaf*, to be received by the woman's family, while proclaiming: *"Kaos ain nono… niti (woman's clan name: Sulnesu) usaeb au nono teme"*, meaning, "Remove the clan name… (woman), and apply the man's clan name." This declaration signifies the removal of the woman's original clan name. Prior to this proclamation, customary elders from both families inquire about taboos (*pemali*) from each side to ensure the ritual is properly conducted. Following this, the groom's family places kusambi leaves on the woman's head, which she wears until arriving at the groom's customary house. Upon arrival, the leaves are removed, she is sprinkled with sacred water (*air pemali*), and the leaves are stored and inserted into a pillar of the groom's customary house.

The *Tasaeb Nono* ritual begins when the woman enters the groom's customary house. In the Amasanan tradition, the guardian of the customary house (*apao tola*) leads the procession while holding a sword (*suni*), followed by the groom's mother carrying a betel-nut container symbolizing ancestral spirits. The bride and groom then enter the house, followed by their children if they have any. The bride is sprinkled with sacred water, signifying her official acceptance into the Amasanan Tribe. After completing the ritual inside the customary house, the couple exits to report to the extended Amasanan family by performing a gong or *likurai* dance and greeting all present relatives. The couple then returns to the customary house to change clothes (*kasu bale*), marking the conclusion of the ceremony.

In contemporary times, many young people face significant challenges in understanding and performing customary marriage traditions, particularly within the Dawan cultural context. The main difficulties lie in mastering the Dawan language used in rituals and comprehending the correct sequence of ceremonial procedures. These challenges arise from insufficient transmission of knowledge from older generations and limited youth involvement in family customary ceremonies.

Consequently, understanding of traditions, rituals, and customary practices continues to decline, threatening the preservation of cultural heritage. Addressing this issue requires efforts to preserve local languages and increase youth participation in traditional cultural practices.

The author chose to examine the meaning of the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition and its implications for the Sacrament of Marriage due to widespread misunderstandings surrounding this marital tradition. Through this thesis, the author aims to explore its meaning, record and document its processes, and preserve the values embedded within this customary marriage tradition to ensure its continued existence.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the meanings and symbolic elements embedded in the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono customary tradition. This approach allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the tradition while also providing space for cultural practitioners to share their experiences and perspectives. The research was conducted from May to June 2025 in Susukau B Village, Insana District. The research subjects included customary leaders or elders, couples who had performed the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition, and family members involved in the ceremony.

Primary data were collected specifically to address the research questions in accordance with the objectives of the study, as data intended for specific research purposes (Herawati, Anita, & Oktaviannoor, 2022). Data collection involved interviews, observation, and documentation. The collected data were then organized according to key issues to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships among the data. Given the large volume of data obtained from the field, careful recording and systematic organization were required. As the research progressed, the data became increasingly complex, necessitating data reduction to focus on relevant information. The reduced data were then systematically verified, and conclusions were drawn continuously throughout the research process. These conclusions represent the core of the research findings.

Research Result

A. Community Understanding of the Kaos Nono and Tasaeb Nono Ceremony

The understanding of the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono ceremony as expressed by customary leaders during interviews reveals several key interpretations. The Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono

ceremony is understood as a process of transferring a person's clan affiliation into another clan or tribal group. Through interviews, a customary leader identified as ASE stated that Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono refers to the process in which a man comes to release a woman from her customary house so that she may join her husband's clan. A similar view was expressed by another customary leader, PS, who explained that this ceremony of clan transfer or release serves as a process through which an individual becomes part of another clan. Through this process, the individual gains a clear and legitimate status within the larger clan community that she enters.

The majority of the Amasanan community understands Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono as a customary rite that regulates the procedures of marriage proposals, mediates relationships between families, and establishes kinship bonds between two parties intending to marry. Interviews with customary leaders, couples who have undergone the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono process, and members of the general community indicate that most informants recognize this tradition as a crucial stage in the Amasanan customary marriage process. The tradition is also understood as a rite of identity transition, affirming that a woman has entered a new family in physical, social, and spiritual dimensions.

B. The Peak of Sacredness in the Ceremony

The Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition is regarded as a sacred customary ceremony that must strictly adhere to all applicable customary rules throughout its implementation. Based on interviews with customary leaders, the peak of sacredness in this ritual occurs during the sprinkling rite (hisik), performed by a customary elder to release and cleanse the woman from negative influences or harmful spiritual forces, enabling her to begin a better life. This sprinkling ritual also signifies the woman's formal acceptance into the new clan.

This understanding was expressed by customary leader YSS, who stated that the sacred climax occurs during the sprinkling (hisik) performed upon arrival in front of the Amasanan customary house. Similarly, customary leader PS emphasized that the sprinkling by the elder marks the moment when the woman's identity and social status officially change as she becomes a member of her husband's clan. The hisik ritual is thus understood as a form of purification and official acceptance by the ancestors of the husband's clan, allowing the woman to be fully recognized as part of the new customary house. Therefore, this procession is not merely a symbolic change of status, but also a rite that sustains the spiritual relationship among families, ancestors, and the customary order preserved across generations.

C. Differences Between Past and Present Practices and Their Symbolic Meanings

The Kaos Nono customary ceremony practiced by the Amasanan community represents a form of cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation. One of the strengths of this ceremony lies in the consistency of its ritual procedures, which have been preserved across generations without diminishing the core values embedded within them, despite the influence of modernization and changing times. This view was reinforced by customary leader AA, who stated that the tradition has remained unchanged over time because the community believes it was inherited from their ancestors and must be properly observed.

The changes that have occurred primarily relate to the ways in which the ceremony is celebrated, the language used during the ritual, and the diminishing understanding among younger generations regarding the full sequence and meaning of the customary procedures. Despite these changes, the essential symbolic meanings and sacred values of the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition continue to be maintained by the Amasanan community.

Comparison of the Implementation of the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono Tradition: Past and Present

In the Past	In the Present
The procession was more elaborate and comprehensive.	The core procession remains unchanged.
The Dawan language was used fully throughout the ceremony.	The Dawan language is still used, though not as fluently as before.
All traditional symbols were present and strictly observed.	Youth involvement has decreased.

Symbols Used in the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono Customary Ceremony

Symbol	Symbolic Meaning
Kusambi leaves	Protection against misfortune and ancestral protection
Silver coins	Legitimization of clan transfer
Betel nut (*sirih pinang*)	Unity of two families and serves as an opening gesture
Sword (*kelewang/suni*)	Guardian of custom and symbol of ancestral courage
Sprinkling water (*air pemercik*)	Purification and acceptance

D. The Impact of the Tradition on Couple and Family Relationships

Based on interview results and field observations, the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition not only affects the social status of women but also brings significant impacts on family relationship dynamics. This finding is supported by the statement of informant CA, who explained that by undergoing the customary ritual together, couples feel more deeply bound both physically and

spiritually, realizing that their relationship is not merely a union between two individuals but a bond between two extended families and their ancestors.

Interviews revealed that the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition strengthens relationships between the two extended families, creates a sense of security for women due to their clearly recognized status within the husband's clan, reinforces the husband's responsibility to protect his wife, and serves as a source of family identity for children. This was further emphasized by informant PK, who stated that the tradition brings peace within the family and ensures ancestral blessings and spiritual protection.

Discussion

A. The Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono Tradition as a Rite of Identity Transition

Field findings indicate that the Kaos Nono (removal of the woman's clan name) and Tasaeb Nono (assignment of the husband's clan name) traditions represent a concrete form of customary transmission, consistent with the concept of tradere (tradition) discussed in the theoretical framework. Koentjaraningrat (2003) asserts that custom (adat) is a system of behavior passed down through generations, binding in nature, and possessing normative power. This is evident in the Amasanan context, where clan transfer is not merely symbolic but constitutes a customary obligation that determines a woman's social status.

The concepts of Kaos Nono—meaning "to remove or detach the woman's clan"—and Tasaeb Nono—meaning "to apply the husband's customary identity"—are consistent with the definition of ritual in the Uab Meto Dictionary by Andreas Tefa Sa'u (2020). This tradition functions as a rite of passage that releases an old identity and integrates the woman into the patrilineal structure of her husband's clan. This meaning aligns with Turner's (1969) concept of rites of passage, which involve phases of separation, transition, and integration.

Within the Amasanan Tribe, Kaos Nono represents the separation phase, during which the woman is formally released from her original clan. The customary procession and prayers led by the Atoin Amaf constitute the transitional phase, where the woman occupies a sacred position between two identities. Tasaeb Nono marks the integration phase, symbolized by the sprinkling of air pemali (hisik), signifying the legitimacy of her new identity.

Direct observation shows that the sprinkling of air pemali upon arrival in front of the Amasanan customary house is one of the most sacred moments in this rite. Customary leader YSS explained: "Hisik is the sign that the woman has changed. At that moment, the ancestors open the

path. From then on, she is no longer a child of her former clan, but a member of the Amasanan customary house." Observations further indicate that the sprinkling is performed by the Atoin Amaf while invoking the names of ancestors, symbolizing ancestral acceptance into the husband's clan. The air pemali functions as a medium of purification and customary legitimacy. Additionally, after the Tasaeb Nono ritual, the woman occupies a specific seating position within the customary house, symbolically reflecting her new status as a full member of the husband's clan. Family elders describe this change in seating as "a sign that the woman has entered the bloodline and responsibility of the clan."

According to patrilineal kinship theory (Koentjaraningrat, 2013), a child's identity is determined by the father's clan. Thus, this ceremony not only transfers the woman's status but also shapes future family relationships, including the distribution of children (boa mat bait) identified in this study.

B. The Symbolic and Sacred Dimensions of the Customary Tradition

The study finds that this tradition is regarded as highly sacred by the Amasanan community. Its sacredness is manifested through customary prayers to ancestors as requests for blessing and protection; the sprinkling of air pemali as a sign of acceptance into the husband's clan; and the kelewang (suni) as a guardian of custom and a symbol of ancestral courage.

Symbolic analysis (Geertz, 1973) demonstrates that these symbols are not merely attributes but serve as transcendent media connecting the human world with the ancestral realm. The findings show that the Amasanan community perceives this tradition as a ritual possessing strong spiritual power. Customary informants explained that the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono ceremony holds sacred significance because it involves a relationship between humans and ancestors. Customary leader PS stated: "Without customary prayers, the ancestors will not open the way. The clan will not accept the woman as a member."

This interpretation aligns with Hazairin's view that adat is not merely habitual behavior but a moral value recognized as truth by the community. Based on cultural symbol theory (Koentjaraningrat, 2003), all ritual elements represent cosmological values. This is evident in the procession, ritual language, and the obligation to follow customary rules. The prayers led by the Atoin Amaf confirm that custom possesses a religious dimension, reflecting the belief that ancestors serve as guardians of family life balance.

C. Changes and Challenges in the Implementation of the Tradition in the Modern Era

Field data indicate shifts in the implementation of the tradition: younger generations

increasingly lack proficiency in the Dawan language, threatening the preservation of ritual prayers and sacred formulas; economic factors and modernization influence ritual execution; and ceremonies are often conducted long after marriage, rather than prior to church blessing as practiced traditionally.

These findings support Hobsbawm's (1983) view that traditions may undergo "re-invention" to adapt to new social contexts. Koentjaraningrat (2003) notes that cultural transmission weakens when local languages are no longer passed down, youth participation declines, and social structures change. Such conditions were observed in the Amasanan community, where many young people lack knowledge of Dawan language and customary prayers. Additionally, the high cost of ceremonies often delays the performance of Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono, reducing its understanding as an essential part of marriage preparation. Nevertheless, the community continues to preserve the core essence of the tradition, viewing it as a moral obligation and a marker of cultural identity.

D. The Role of the Tradition in Maintaining Family Harmony

The findings indicate that the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition serves significant social functions: strengthening bonds between extended families through collective involvement; affirming the husband's responsibility to protect and lead his wife within the new clan; preventing family conflict by ensuring clarity of the woman's status; and providing a foundational identity for children within a patrilineal system. These findings align with Radcliffe-Brown's structural functionalist theory, which emphasizes that family rituals reinforce social structure.

Socially, the tradition functions as a mechanism for uniting extended families, consistent with Koentjaraningrat's view that adat sustains social order. Values identified in this study—deliberation, mutual cooperation, responsibility, solidarity, and respect—correspond with the theoretical framework. The process of family deliberation reflects the Indonesian cultural principle of consensus-building, while communal cooperation in ritual preparation underscores marriage as a collective, rather than individual, affair. Consequently, the social function of this tradition strengthens kinship networks, solidarity, and family resilience.

E. Implications for the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage

The relationship between customary tradition and the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage is found to be strong. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1601) and Canon Law 1055, marriage is a covenant of life oriented toward the good of the spouses and the upbringing of children. Catholic informants, including married couples, stated that tradition and sacrament are not contradictory. Informant PK remarked: "Custom concerns the clan, but it does not interfere with the

church blessing. In fact, it makes us more prepared as husband and wife."

This aligns with Church teaching: CCC 1601 emphasizes the indissoluble unity of marriage; Canon 1055 defines marriage as a partnership of life and love; and the Church's principle of inculturation affirms cultural expressions that do not contradict faith. This relationship is evident in several aspects:

- Fidelity and Unity. The value of fidelity in customary tradition aligns with the monogamous and indissoluble nature of Catholic marriage. The woman's union with the husband's clan reflects the biblical concept of becoming "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).
- Public and Communal Recognition. Just as the Sacrament of Marriage requires public witness (Canon 1119), the customary tradition requires the participation of extended families and customary leaders.
- Inculturation of Faith. The Catholic Church values local culture insofar as it does not contradict faith. This tradition, based on research findings, does not conflict with Church teachings; rather, it enriches the meaning of Catholic family life, reflecting the Church's inculturation spirit and recognition that God's grace operates through culture.
- Protection and Salvation. Ancestral protection in custom is understood as a search for well-being and safety. In Catholic theology, family salvation is realized through sacramental grace. Both perspectives can complement each other in the lived faith experience of local communities.

Thus, the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition and the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage are not contradictory but mutually reinforcing, strengthening the identity of Amasanan Catholic families.

Conclusion

This study aims to interpret and explore the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition within the Amasanan Tribe and its implications for the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage in Susulaku B Village, Insana District. The research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Based on the discussion above, several conclusions can be drawn.

First, the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition constitutes a highly significant rite of passage within the Amasanan community. This tradition marks the transition of a woman's social status from her family clan to her husband's clan. The ritual incorporates various cultural symbols, such as

kusambi leaves, betel nut, *tais* cloth, *sopi*, and customary prayers, all of which carry profound spiritual and social meanings.

Second, the implementation of this tradition provides social recognition for couples entering marriage. Without performing the Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono ritual, a couple's status is considered incomplete according to customary law. This ceremony strengthens the bond between two extended families, clarifies individual identity within the customary structure, and is believed to bring peace, blessings, and harmony to married life.

Third, the implications of this tradition for the Catholic Sacrament of Marriage are highly relevant. The Kaos Nono Tasaeb Nono tradition reflects core values of the Sacrament of Marriage, such as unity, fidelity, public recognition, and family blessing. The performance of this ritual can be understood as a form of inculturation of the Catholic faith into local culture, in accordance with the teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Familiaris Consortio*, and *Amoris Laetitia*.

Fourth, family involvement plays a dominant role in both the preparation and execution of the ceremony. This reflects the understanding that marriage is not merely a personal matter but a shared vocation in forming a holy community of life. This perspective aligns with Church documents that describe the family as the "domestic Church" (*Ecclesia domestica*).

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