

Symbolism in the Customary Law Lar Vul Nga Bal of the Kei Tribe in the Southeast of the Moluccas

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: November , 2022</p> <p>Accepted: February , 2023</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords : Symbolism, Customary Law, Lar Vul Nga Bal, Kei Tribe, The Moluccas</p> <p>DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.7641596</p>	<p><i>The majority of tribes around the world follow a set of oral or written traditional customary laws to manage their tribal lives. These laws have been followed by the tribes for a very long time—in some cases, since the beginning of time. In addition to abiding by national law now that many tribes are constituents of specific contemporary nations, these people continue to abide by their tribal laws in matters pertaining to tribal life. This is also true with the Kei tribe in the Southeast of the Moluccas with their customary law called Lar Vul Nga Bal. The Lar Vul Nga Bal law includes seven fundamental principles as opposed to the Pancasila, the national philosophy of Indonesia, which has five. This has certain symbols with both universal and tribal meanings. The questions to be answered in this article are 1) What do the symbols refer to?, and 2) Into what types of specific categories are these seven principles divided, and what are their functions? Categories and functions are discussed together. The symbols will be discussed using structural semiotic criticism, and the seven principles will be classified into categories based on the results of the signification. Additionally, concise explanations of each principle in each of the categories, including their purposes, are given.</i></p>

Introduction

1.1 A Brief Look at the Geographical Location

There are two major groups of islands: the Kei Besar islands and the Kei Kecil islands, and a minor in the Moluccas' southeast. Kei Besar is a long, hilly island that stretches from northeast to southwest. The hills range run the length of the island serving as a barrier between the island's east and west coasts. The village communities are all located along the coasts.

East coast villages are quite isolated, especially during the east monsoon. In this season, the open sea to the east is extremely rough and nearly unassailable. The western shore has substantially better inter-island shipping connections. The strait that connects Kei Besar and Kei Kecil is navigable virtually all year long. Elat, the second-largest town located in Kei Besar has the nicest harbor (Laksono, 2004).

In contrast, the islands of Kei Kecil are flat. The Kei Kecil group's main islands are Kei Kecil and Dulah. These two islands are separated only by a hundred-meter-wide strait called the Rosenberg Strait. A bridge known as Jembatan Rosenberg, which used to be called Jembatan USDEK, has connected these two islands since the 1960s. Almost all village settlements in Kei Kecil, like in Kei Besar, are located along the coastline. The majority of Kei Kecil's village settlements are already linked by a road system, far greater here than in Kei Besar. Ngur Bloat, a magnificent sandy beach with brilliant sand, the second-finest sand in the world, can be found in Kei Kecil. Almost everywhere on the island, clean water is in short supply. However, the national government has constructed the town's flowing water infrastructure (Laksono, 2004; Renyaan, 1989; Rahail, 1993).

1.2 A Short Look at Population, Agriculture, Language, and Religions

The population is scattered in 11 districts consisting of 192 villages. The total population of Kei in 2020 is 128,002 (<https://web.malukutenggarakab.go.id>).

In general, the only agricultural technique in the Kei islands is slash-and-burn agriculture, which is supplemented with a small plantation of cash crops such as copra. Meanwhile, practically everyone on the islands, with the exception of those who become government officials and traders, primarily in Tual and Langgur, rely on slash-and-burn agriculture for a living. This agricultural practice typically requires much more land than an intensive agricultural practice in rice field areas. As a result, despite the island's lower man/land ratio, there is no more arable land available on the island. As a result, every piece of land is claimed, and land has become the most valuable property which may bring about disputes (Laksono, 2004; Suwardi & Rustan, 2022).

Except for the Bandanese, the whole population of the Kei islands belongs to a single ethnic group in terms of language. In their household matters, the majority of them continue to utilize the local language, *Veve Evav*, an Austronesian language. However, the younger generation prefers to communicate in Indonesian now. The religion of the Kei islanders has altered since the end of the nineteenth century with the advent of Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism. As a result, the entire population of the Kei islands was made up of Moslems, Catholics, Protestants, and a minor group of Hindu believers (Renyaan, 1989; Rahail, 1993).

1.3 A Brief Look at the Origin of the Kei Tribe

The Kei tribe is thought to have originated in a variety of locations. From the western part of Nusantara came the Javanese, the Balinese, and so on; from the north of the Moluccas came the Ternate, the Tidore, and the Jailolo people; from the center of the Moluccas came the Ambonese, the Seramese, the Bandanese, and so on; and from other places came the Papuans, the Aru people, the Tanimbar people, and so on. From these various ethnic groups arose the concept of a cast system consisting of three casts (the *Mel-Mel* cast, the *Ren-Ren* cast, and the *Ir-Iri* cast, which is the lowest), which is still used in Kei society when it comes to issues such as marriage and leadership (Renyaan, 1989; Rahail, 1993).

1.4 The Early Thoughts on the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law

Members of the society were not safe in the Kei islands in the past when the law of the jungle was still in effect. The law was known as the *Dolo* law at the time. The Kei forefathers attempted to establish rules to manage the community's life. As a result, they established these guidelines, which are still followed today through wise words and songs. The ancestral philosophical guidance to the Kei people about living a virtuous life was then passed from generation to generation in the form of advice directly, generally at mealtime or through songs, prior to the introduction of the customary law of *Lar Vul Nga Bal*.

If a child misbehaves and people are angry with the child, a statement like this would be heard *Yanat fa'aba*, which means 'A child who is only fed with food.' This metaphorical expression conveys a harsh message. In the Kei tribal child education, a child is not supposed to be fed with food only but also with wise advice, which is considered the second food, about good manners in life by his or her parents. Before the development of the customary law *Lar Vul Nga Bal*, the Kei people were advised to live by seven insightful philosophical statements about life (Renyaan, 1989; Rahail, 1993). The following are the seven smart statements:

	The Wise Statements in Kei Language	English Equivalents
1	<i>It dok fo ohoi, it mian fo nuhu</i>	We inhabit the village and eat from its land
2	<i>It dok it did kuwat dokwain, it viv non it did mimiir</i>	We occupy our place and carry our parts
3	<i>It var non afa ohoi nuhu enhov ni hukum adat</i>	We bear all the interests of our village with its customary laws
4	<i>It vait teblo uban ruran</i>	We live honestly with our head upright
5	<i>Ikbo hukum adat enfangnan enbatang haraang</i>	Only then will the customary law love and protect us
6	<i>Nit yamad ubudtaran, nisid teod herhov herbatang fangnan</i>	So that the ancestors take care of and love us
7	<i>Duad enfangnan vuk</i>	and God loves us too

According to Rahail (1993), the essence of the seven philosophical statements is that because we live in a specific place/village and eat from its fruit, we are obligated to shoulder duties, and carry out and respect its rules and obligations obediently. We must live honestly in order to raise our heads high. Only in this manner can we hope to be protected by traditional rules, ancestors, and the Almighty. The seven statements remind people of the Malay proverb '*Di mana bumi dipijak, di situ langit dijunjung*' meaning 'in the place where you stand, you hold up the sky' or '*Di kandang kambing, mengembik; di kandang ayam, berkotek*' meaning 'in the goat barn, we bleat; in the chicken coop, we cackle', or their English equivalent 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do.' Tribal law or customary law is a system of rules of obligation and governance processes that spontaneously evolve from the bottom-up within a community (Benson, 2022) and since it has been proven to function in a society, it needs to be studied and made known to the society at large. Any aspects of the customary law that is not in line with the state law or vice versa, ways may be found to reconcile them (Pratiwi et al, 2020).

These philosophical statements gave birth to the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law, which is currently observed and followed by the Kei people wherever they are on the earth just like other tribal laws in other parts of the world (Kartika et al, 2020). The Kei tribe has had tribal law for a long time, and it has served the community well since "Indigenous legal systems revolve around group rights and group control" (<https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/>). This tribal code has been the subject of various local scholarly debates, as well as references in poetry and songs both old and new.

2. Literature Review

This section briefly discusses some symbolism theories and studies that have previously been conducted in relation to the issues raised in this article.

2.1 Symbolism

What exactly is symbolism? Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, a Hindu philosopher, defined symbolism as "the art of thinking in images," which has been lost to civilized man in particular over the last three hundred years, whereas Diel believes that the symbol is "a precise and crystallized means of expression," matching fundamentally to the inner existence (intensive and qualitative) as opposed to the outside world (extensive and quantitative) (Cirlot, p. xxix). "Symbols", writes Doering (in Jacobi, 2013), 'are metaphors for the eternal in the forms of the transient; in them, the two are 'thrown together,' fused into a unity of meaning". Symbols and metaphors are important in tribal meetings for their euphemistic significance. In tribal meetings, people use a lot of symbols and metaphors which can be seen in the language of the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* law (for metaphoric language in laws, see Del Mar, 2017).

Erich Fromm classifies symbols into three categories based on their significance: conventional, accidental, and universal. For the sake of this paper, we will focus on the third. Fromm defines the third category, which is still being explored, as the presence of an intrinsic relationship between the sign and what it stands for (Cirlot, 2001, p. xxx). In other words, the equation macrocosm=microcosm implies the possibility of explaining the former by the latter, or vice versa.

Unlike Schneider's "common rhythm," Jung's "archetype" explains Man through reference to the world rather than the other way around. This makes sense because the archetype arises from pictures held deep within the human spirit, in the chaotic depths of the unconscious, rather than from forms, figures, or exterior beings. The root of the archetype is the epiphany, which is the expression of the latent through the obscure—a vision, dream, imagination, or myth. They are the byproducts of the inner life that are always gushing forth from the unconscious in a way that is akin to the gradual unfolding of creation. According to Jung, these spiritual expressions are not lifeless effigies or replacements for living things (in Cirlot, 2001; Fontana, 1994; Jung, 1988). Schneider and Jung both have fair points to make because they deal with the same things—nature and people.

2.2 Previous Studies

Wallace, the famous British naturalist, reported his visit to Kei Island in his famous book *The Malay Archipelago*; he was there in January 1857. (p.420). He seems to be referring to the island he visited, which is today known as Kei Besar. He stated that the island was inhabited by two types of people: true Papuans and a mixed race from Banda Island who had fled the island due to Europeans seeking the famous Banda nutmegs. Both the native Kei and the Banda people have coexisted and followed the customary law *Lar Vul Nga Bal*. This *Lar Vul Nga Bal* law appears to have existed for some time, as it is referenced in the Kei folktale book *Keieische Legenden* by Geurtjens (1923). This law is mentioned in several stories.

Laksono (2004) explores the importance of this law amid the horrific ethnic strife that erupted following the fall of the Indonesian New Order Regime in 1999. To some extent, this ethnic law helped to bring the Kei people together. He highlights the Kei ethnic motto, '*Manutain mehe tilur, vu'ut ain mehe muvun*,' which means 'the eggs of the one hen, the eggs of the one fish' to emphasize the significance of this law in the society.

Mahifal and Wahyudin (2012; see also Naumenko, Galkin, & Tkacheva, 2021). investigated the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* law in relation to the traditional hierarchy in the traditional government, beginning with the *rat* (king) and ending with the *marin* (the information deliverer) in the village. Looking at the language used, it appears that the concepts employed in the hierarchy are a mix of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and native Kei conceptions.

Rauf (2008) shows how effective this traditional law is in reconciling and averting conflict in society (Gutmann & Voigt, 2020). Back in 1999, he investigated how this ancient rule had a significant influence on the religious strife in the Kei islands and the province of Maluku in general. Local governments, provincial governments, and even the federal government were unable to assist. The old law was subsequently flipped on its head by the *rat* (king) of the two groups, and it proved effective without the need for outside interference. As Rauf's research reveals, customary rules are often more effective in dealing with community management and organization than modern legal processes, which must acknowledge the advantages of conventional laws in this context, as Astara's example shows (2019). According to Astara, a village-based customary law system is more effective than a governmental one in administering the community. The use of it by the Kuta-Bali Indigenous community demonstrates this. The traditional autonomy of Kuta's indigenous villages does not actually call for

the application of state law and a democratic model based on state law to conduct village leader elections. The significance of local knowledge, such as customary law, *Desadresta*, *Desamawacara*, and the State of Mawatata, determines local democracy, particularly in the selection of the Kuta-Bali traditional *Bendesa*.

About the application of tribal laws and their benefits and drawbacks, as well as their presence in modern legal practices, there are new issues that must be addressed. Diala (2017), for example, raised this issue in Southern Africa, claiming that the ongoing use of customary law by postcolonial nations necessitates two interconnected methods in order to be meaningfully critically engaged. The first is an interdisciplinary approach to law, and the second is a legal pluralism perspective, which is essential for the establishment of living customary law. The essay proposes that the best method to comprehend actual customary law is through people adapting their practices to socioeconomic changes, and it is suggested that this viewpoint is a vital first step toward building a comprehensive theory of African law.

In his *The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa*, Ranger (2012) states that while the concept of an Empire was important in the process of inventing tradition within Europe, African empires arrived so much later than European ones that they serve as examples of the outcomes of European-constructed tradition rather than its origins. When performed in Africa, however, the new practices had a peculiar aspect that distinguished them from their European and Asian Imperial equivalents. In contrast to India, white people colonized various areas in Africa. As a result, the settlers would have to establish themselves as legitimate rulers over a significant African populace. As a result, in Africa, the entire system of made-up regimental, professional, and educational traditions became much more openly a question of command and control than in Europe. This is interpreted to suggest that tribal rules involving African traditions may have encountered some difficulties.

To be officially recognized in order for customary law to have binding power, these four points should be done: (1) Judges are required to examine, follow, and comprehend the community's legal values, sense of justice, and customary law. (2) The judge's ruling must not disregard customary law or the community's sense of justice. (3) The court verdict must include, in addition to the reasons and justification for the decision, specific provisions of the relevant law, as well as the sources of the information. (4) A case that has already been decided by a customary court judge cannot be retried by a state court judge (Jamin, 2020; Hamzah; Putra, & Zulkarnain, 2020; Manullang, 2021; Lamond, 2014).

The following are the two questions to be addressed in this study: 1) What do the symbols refer to? and 2) Into what types of specific categories are these seven principles divided and what further explanations are there given for the specific categories?

3. Method

3.1 Data

The main data of this article is the text of the customary law *Lar Vul Nga Bal* of the Kei people that governs the lives of the Kei people which is currently being re-optimized for its function in people's lives. This customary law text consists of 7 propositions or principles as seen in the Discussion section below, and is taken from the official speech of the Regent of Southeast of the Moluccas, Thaher Hanubun, on September 7, 2020, in the village of Semawi (Kai News, 2020).

The Seven Principles in the Customary Law *Lar Vul Nga Bal*

No.	The 7 Principles	Meanings in English
1	<i>Uud entauk vunad</i>	Our head rests on the nape of our neck
2	<i>Lelad ain fo mahiling</i>	Our neck is to be respected, exalted
3	<i>Ulnit envil atumud</i>	The skin wraps around our body
4	<i>Lar nakmut na'a ivud</i>	Blood is covered in the body
5	<i>Rek fo kelmutun</i>	Marriage should remain holy and pure
6	<i>Moryain fo mahiling</i>	A place for women is to be respected, exalted
7	<i>Hira ni fo ini, it did for it did</i>	One's property remains his/hers, ours remains ours

As delivered by regent Thaher Hanubun, in Semawi on 7 September 2020

3.2 Procedures

The following fundamental notions and presuppositions, as well as the origin and vitality of each symbol, according to Cirlot (1971, p. xxxvi), allow us to conceptualize "symbolism": (a) Nothing is meaningless or neutral: everything is significant. (b) Nothing is independent, everything is in some way related to something else. (c) The quantitative becomes qualitative in certain essentials which, in fact, precisely constitute the meaning of the quantity. (d) Everything is serial. (e) Series are related one to another as to position, and the components of each series are related to meaning. The physical world's variety of colors, sounds, textures, sceneries, etc., as well as the spiritual world all, share this fundamental phenomenon known as the serial feature (in its virtues, vices, humor, feelings, etc.). Limitation, the integration of discontinuity and continuity, proper order, graduation, numbering, the inner dynamic of the component pieces, polarity, symmetrical or asymmetrical equilibrium, and the notion as a whole are all factors that contribute to the serial arrangement. Using structural semiotic criticism, this article will elaborate on the symbols found in the tribal law be they conventional, accidental, or universal (Cirlot, 2001; Barry, 1995).

The context in which anything is found determines its meaning. According to Schlick (in Cooper, 1973), defining meaning entails defining what something signifies or defining the aim. In a similar vein, Lycan (2000) claims that the verification theory has been applied as a classificatory tool. Symbols might be regionally specific or they can be universally recognized as archetypes. Here, the technique of verification is used.

4. Results

4.1 Divisions of the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law

If the Pancasila is the Indonesian philosophical foundation, the tribal law *Lar Vul Nga Bal* has seven basic principles and is older than the Pancasila because the Kei tribal law was created before the Indonesian nation was even established. The tribal law *Lar Vul Nga Bal* was created by combining two separate laws, the *Lar Vul* and the *Nga Bal* laws. The seven principles of the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law are derived from four concepts that comprise the *Lar Vul* Law, namely principles 1 through 4, and three principles derived from the *Nga Bal* Law, namely principles 5 through 7. The three functions of the tribal law will be presented in the Discussion together with some examples in the Kei community life. (Renyaan, 1989; Rahail, 1993).

a. Symbolism in the phrasal name *lar vul ga bal*

There are two key symbols employed in the ritual process of constructing this legislation before finally proclaiming the law of *Lar Vul Nga Bal* (Renyaan, 1989; Rahail, 1993). A buffalo (*kerbau*, *banteng*) and a whale were the two coats of arms (*lor*). The buffalo represented the largest and strongest terrestrial mammal in the Kei islands, according to popular belief at the time. According to *The Secret Language of Symbols* (Fontana, 1994; Biedermann, 1994), the bull, ox, and buffalo all share similar symbolism that symbolizes maleness, strength, and procreative ability. The whale symbolizes death and rebirth or the darkness before the light (Bruce-Mitford, 1999); it also depicts the womb and regeneration, as Jonah in the Bible does (Dennis Bryan, et al, 2008). These two animals were slain for the ceremony of the establishment of this customary law. The rituals for creating these two customary rules took place in two locations: on the island of Kei Besar in the specific location of Ler Ohoilim and on the island of Kei Kecil in the specific location of Elaar. The whale (*lor*) was sacrificed in Kei Besar ceremonies, but the buffalo was sacrificed in Kei Kecil ceremonies. In Kei Kecil, this customary law was known as the law of 'Lar' (blood), whereas in Kei Besar, the declared customary law was known as the law of 'Nga' (spear). Because the sign used was crimson blood (*vul*), the term 'lar' is merged with the word 'vul' to form 'lar vul'. Because the color red is particularly stated, the blood color red is also important here.

While the term 'nga' is added to the word 'Bal' since the location of the customary law formulation ritual included a 'nga' (spear) imported from Bali (Bal). After all, when the phrases 'lar vul' and 'nga Bal' are combined, they sound lovely since they rhyme, even if just half-rhymed. These two emblems were employed to demonstrate the customary law's power, strength, and majesty for this historical element since any law may have historical sources from some other places (Damdynchap, 2020).

b. Symbols in Each Principle in the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law

'*Lar Vul Enturat, Nga Bal Enadung*' is a traditional legal expression that explains the important functions of this integrated legislation (Renyaan, 1989; Rahail, 1993). /*enturat*/ consists of the prefix /*en-*/ or /*in-*/ denoting third person singular referring to *Lar Vul* and the verb /*turat*/ meaning 'direct'. /*enturat*/ in the *Lar Vul* Law originates from the verb /*adung*/, which means 'to prohibit' or 'forbid'; the prefix /*en-*/ or /*in-*/ signifies third person singular, which refers to the law *Nga Bal*. In this situation, '*Lar Vul* controls the Kei people's lives to live a good life, whereas *Nga Bal* forbids them from doing bad in life.'

Because 'red' is the sole color designated in this law and not the others, it must also be included here. It represents the animal realm's life power; it is the color of the body's intrinsic vigor (Fontana, 1994). Asians, Africans, and Native Americans used to slaughter sheep, hogs, and bulls for their blood (as well as among the Europeans in prehistoric days). The Arabic proverb "Blood has flowed, the danger has passed" encapsulates the basic premise of every sacrifice: that the offering appeases the powers and avoids the grave punishments that might otherwise ensue. The mechanism of sacrifice is driven by the zodiac sign of Libra, which denotes divine validity and is the most identifiable of the blood-related emblems (Cirlot, 1971). The significance of this emblem in this traditional law can be found in these links.

Another essential symbol in this legislation is /*nga*/, the spear, in the term 'nga Bal'. The spear represents Haddad, the Phoenician storm deity, who drives a jagged spear into the ground to symbolize both lightning and the power to procreate males. Izanagi, Japan's creator god, stirs the primordial seas with a jeweled spear, which has a similar symbolic meaning. As he draws back the initial islands, rising drips appear (Tresidder, 2011). /*Bal*/ refers to the island of Bali and its gods and goddesses, which in this context also represents divine legality because the Kei tribe's forefathers are thought to have originated from Bali.

c. Symbols in the 7 Principles

The *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law was later adopted by the entire Kei people, and it is still in existence today. According to Rahail (1993; Renyaan, 1989), the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law for the indigenous Kei people is a bi-

singular system, with the *Lar Vul* Law primarily including criminal law aspects and the *Nga Bal* Law containing civil law parts.

Principle 1: *Uud entauk vunad* (Our head rests on the nape of our neck)

/uu/ means 'the head'. There is a symbol /uud/ in the first principle that comprises of /uu/, 'head,' and the suffix /d/, which indicates first person plural possessive adjective. As a result, /uud/ denotes 'our head'. The 'head,' or the highest region of our body, represents power. The head in art is a symbol of the mind and the spiritual life in the Middle Ages (in medieval art, it is a symbol of the mind and the spiritual life) (Cirlot,1971). In the past, beheading was used to demonstrate that one group was more powerful than others, and the heads were kept in caves. The more heads there are, the more power there is.

The brain and cognition are housed in the head. The person with power in this scenario is the ruler, that is, the ruler who is both in the sky and on Earth. In the sky, it is God (*Duad*); on earth, it is the parents (*Duad kabav*, literally 'lower god'), and the ruler on earth in relation to the life of society and statehood is the king in the traditional government that the Kei people are now resurrecting and re-functioning. The head can also represent somebody who is older and should be respected. In modern government, the 'head' is unquestionably a government official, ranging from the chairman of one's neighborhood to the president of the central government.

The brain is located in the head, and it is believed that the brain is responsible for the continuity of the entire body. The body is a symbol of society's members. As 'heads,' the king and the government are obligated to consider the survival of society's members. Because the head is stacked on the nape and supported by the entire body, it also needs the support of the people. In other words, for the governmental system to function correctly, the head must look after the community members, and the community members must support the head.

Principle 2: *Lelad ain fo mahiling* (Our neck is to be respected, exalted)

The neck is referred to as /lel/. The 'neck' is the most essential emblem in the second principle. Because our forefathers believed that the neck was the only area where food could be swallowed, the neck is crucial in determining a person's death. Furthermore, the flow of breath occurs at the neck. As a result, the neck is used as the most essential symbol in everyday life. Perhaps this is akin to the British custom of perceiving the neck as a sign of life, as expressed in words like 'save your neck'. Of course, if someone breaks certain regulations and is punished by beheading, including kings and queens, this is quite similar to beheading. Many phrases were employed in the past when the Kei language was still extremely prevalent, similar to the English term above. For example, there is a traditional prayer for a person's life called *Duang o, mu'an mas tom I for lelan*, which translates as 'God, take this yellow gold for saving his neck,' or when a shaman is asked to see one's fate, it is called *waang lelan*, 'counting his neck,' which means a shaman would estimate how long a person's life would last.

Because it is sometimes used symbolically, the meaning of the neck symbolism in principle 2 is closely related to the meanings found in the Bible. According to Romans 16:4, "laying down the neck" means putting one's life at risk. The prophets use bands around the necks of the public to symbolize warnings of impending judgments (Deuteronomy 28:48; Isaiah 10:27; Jeremiah 27:2). Conquerors place their feet on their foes' necks to demonstrate their foes' submission (Joshua 10:24; 2 Sam 22:41).

The ancestors of the Kei people believed the neck and the heart to be significant components of the body. These two words are frequently used in conjunction, for example, *lelan vuan*, 'the neck and heart,' to stress their significance. /ain/ denotes 'one' in Arabic. Because we only have one neck and it can be severed, we must respect it as sacrosanct. Sacred is the meaning of the term /mahiling/. Ancestors revered the neck. Another meaning of /lelad/ is a conduit, which in this context refers to tribal representatives in the customary institution between the leader (the monarch) and the members of the tribe (the people). This institution must function well in order to transmit messages from the king to the people for their well-being.

Principle 3: *Ulnit envil atumud* (The skin wraps around our body)

/ulnit/, 'the skin'. This regulation safeguards a person's reputation. When the law of the jungle was still in effect, one form of punishment was to burn someone alive. A person could be roasted with /tun/, 'roasting,' or /halai/, "burning just briefly by fire." In the Kei language, the expression "tun halai" is extensively used. There's also the word "tun avun," which means "to burn till exhausted like burning garbage." /tun/, /halai/, and /avun/ all affect the skin, whether they cause little wounds, big wounds, or total skin disintegration. As a result, /ulnit/, "the skin," is a metaphor for this principle. The prefix /en-/ or /in-/ is the double subject of a single third person referring to /ulnit/, 'the skin,' with /vil/ meaning "to wrap." "Our body" is pronounced /atumud/ or /arumud/. The components of this word are /at-/ or /ar-/, which indicates first person plural subject, and /rumu/, which means "body." The suffix /-d/ represents the possessive plural in the first person. The principle's basic concept, which literally means "the skin wraps around our body," is that anything that could endanger someone's reputation or

cause them suffering should be kept private and should never be published or leaked unless absolutely necessary. This is the principle's meaning.

Principle 4: *Lar nakmot na 'a ivud* (Blood is covered in the body)

/lar/ 'the blood'. As explained earlier 'blood' was believed to be accumulated */nakmot/* in 'our stomach' */ivud/*. */i-/* in */ivud/* is the prefix indicating third person plural possessive adjective and */vud/* is 'stomach'. The ancestors believed that the stomach was the place where all blood was collected and distributed to other parts of the body. One way of punishment in the past was through killing the perpetrator by stabbing the stomach. By stabbing the stomach, much blood would come out and this would kill the person. Because of this, principle 4 was created to prohibit anybody at all to shed blood – let alone much blood out from the stomach. The use of this symbol in this principle is different from that used in the title of the traditional law above.

A human being, therefore, must be glorified, and nobody was allowed to hurt others physically – let alone commit murder or persecution. Arbitrary treatment of anybody is prohibited, and shedding blood by hurting or injuring others or oneself is extremely forbidden.

Principle 5: *Rek fo kelmutun* (Marriage should remain sacred and pure)

/rek, 'boundary line, divide'. In the past, and to some extent also today, the dignity of a mother or sister was a major concern. This rule of law is an appreciation for other people's private lives. Because marriage is God's plan, the home must be respected, not contested, and there must be no third person. */rek/* 'partition' is derived from */fo/* 'to be' and */kelmutun/* 'whole'. Married brothers used to share a house with a number of rooms known as */riin/*. */rek/* is the room barrier that separates one from the others. These boundaries must be respected and not crossed. In this scenario, because marriage is sacred and pure, it should be maintained and protected from any disruptions to its sanctity. Harassment of a wife or her home is forbidden.

This idea is strongly related to ownership principle 7. This prohibition also applies to the rooms of young men and women. Mothers and sons' sisters are not permitted to visit their sons' chambers. Fathers and brothers of boys are not permitted to visit their daughters' chambers.

Principle 6: *Moryain fo mahiling* (A place for women to be respected)

/moryain/ means 'to be' */mahiling/* means 'pure and clean' and refers to the dignity of women, as mentioned in principle 5. Since antiquity, the Kei people have had a high regard for women, and it is also because of women's dignity that there are fights among the Kei people, in addition to borders between villages. Although there have never been any female Kei leaders, women have long held a particular role in Kei society. As discussed by Ndulo (2011) concerning women's rights in Africa, Kei women have been included in their traditional law. Nen Dit Sak Mas is a well-known female character in Kei society who became the impetus for principle 7 to become a reality. The title Nen Dit was juxtaposed with two aristocratic daughters from Bali, Sakmas, and Somar, who were also female pioneers who helped shape traditional law. Sakmas' contribution is focused on principle 7 and function (3) of the *Hawear Balwarin* law, which deals with ownership and is referenced in section 3.1 above. There is a long story regarding Nen Dit Sakmas' journey to meet her future husband. On the trip, she was robbed, which gave rise to the *Hawear Balwarin* law. Nen Dit Somar is also thought to have contributed to traditional law, but she is rarely mentioned, and her role in Kei history is still unknown and has to be explored more. Nen Dit Sakmas' fame has been reborn, and the regent has decreed September 7 to be Nen Dit Sakmas' Day.

Principle 7: *Hira ni fo ini, it did fo it did* (One's property remains his/hers, ours remains ours)

/hira/ 'an individual,' */ni/* 'possess,' */fo/* 'to be,' */ini/* 'his, hers,' */it/* 'we,' */did/* 'possess,' */fo/* 'to be,' */itdid/* 'ours'. This principle contains no elaborate symbolism; it is simply clear. To put it simply, the idea is as follows: yours is yours, mine is mine. I'm not taking yours, and you're not taking mine without permission or unlawfully. Historically, there were thefts, robberies, and other similar crimes that resulted in murder and slavery; this legal theory arose to address these crimes. This principle is required to handle the rights and obligations in communal life in order for the Kei people to constantly observe while dealing with ownership.

5. Discussion

When the Kei people, particularly those speaking the Kei language, listen to the name of the tribal law and its symbolism, and the seven principles with the symbols found in them, they know the strength and the power of the law. The law is separated into three categories for proper operation, each with seven functions (Renyaan, 1989; Rahail, 1993): (1) the *Nevnev* law, which deals with life, (2) the *Hanilit* law, which deals with morals, and (3) the *Hawear Balwarin* law, which deals with ownership. Each of the seven laws is as follows. Each law does not appear to have only seven points, but possibly the forefathers desired the points to be equal in the past.

5.1 The *Nevnev* Law (Criminal Law)

This law governs life concerning criminal issues. The content is in the form of further elaboration of principles 1 to 4 of the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law into seven offenses (*sasa sorfit*). This law prohibits the Kei people from committing the following illegal actions: (1). *Mu'ur nar suban med*(berating, gossiping, and swearing); (2). *Haung hebang*(evil consensus); (3). *Rasung smu rudang dad*(poisoning and making use of black magic); (4) *Kev bangil*(punching and hitting); (5). *Tev ahai, sung tavat*(throwing and stabbing); (6). *Fedan na, tetat vanga* (killing, cutting, and beheading); and (7). *Tivak, luduk fo vavain* (burying and drowning alive).

Included in the criminal law or law of decency is incest. In the past anybody committing incest, both the man and the woman, if they were nephew and aunt, were expelled from the village through a certain ritual. They were accompanied by the villagers to the outskirts of the village and then let them go, usually on a raft or boat, to some other place on some other island to live there. This still happened in the 1960s and since the islands were still scarcely populated, they could easily move to some other island. The punishment could be deadly if they were son and mother or father and daughter. Heavy rocks could be tied to their legs and drowned alive. A person with ordinary but heavy crimes could also be drowned but if there was a deal to save him or her, the punishment could be made lighter (cf. Silambi et al, 2022).

5.2 The Hanilit Law (Law of Decency)

The content is an elaboration of principles 5 through 6 of the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law into seven levels of violations (another *sasa sorfit*). This law forbids the Kei tribe from committing the following deeds: (1). *Sis af, sivar usbuk*(hissing, squealing, and whistling); (2). *Kifuk mat ko*(eye-playing, winking); (3). *Kis kafir, temar u mur*(pinching and poking, twisting with the front end and back end of the arc); (4). *Lebak, humak, voan*(hugging and kissing); (5). *Val siran baraun, kom lavur ngutun tenan* (unveiling loincloths and tearing cloth apart); (6). *Vel ev yan*(pregnant out of wedlock); (7). *Manu'u marai*(eloping with a girl or somebody else's wife).

In the past, if a girl was already engaged, she would wear a certain bracelet or earrings to show her engagement. If a boy or a man winked, whistled, or the like at the girl, there could be a big problem if her father, uncles, brothers, or relatives had knowledge of the situation. If the boy or the man was from a different village, that whole village could be burned down.

5.3 The Hawear Balwarin Law (Civil Law)

This law is intended to restore the rights of ownership violated by others. It contains the elaboration of principle 7 of the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law into seven offenses (another *sasa sor fit*). This law which deals with ownership also has seven points to guide the life of the Kei people not to be violated: (1). *Faryatad sa*, (eyeing people's goods); (2). *Itkulik fanaub* (storing stolen goods); (3). *Itbor*(stealing); (4). *Tef'en itna-il tomat ni afa it li'ik ken te ifanaub*(reluctant to return a person's found or stolen belongings); (5). *Ta'an rorom*(eating from the proceeds of stealing); (6). *Itlavur kom hira ni afa*(damaging people's goods); (7). *Itna ded vut-raut fo enfasus tomat lian*(afflicting other people in a variety of ways).

The study done by Angga et al (2020) is a case example. One application of the Hawear Belwarin law is for the protection of the ecological system. When the natural production of any natural resources, for example fish, coconuts, molluscs, become scarce, the elders would meet and formulate the legal norms of the law symbolised by the Hawear i.e. young and yellow coconut leaves to be erected in the middle of the village for all villagers to see. From the day the Hawear is erected, nobody is allowed to take any of the natural resources for commercial purposes except for daily use only. When the resource is abundant again, the Hawear can be taken down and the villagers can harvest that resource (cf. Asteria et al, 2022; Yulia, 2022; McElwee, 2022).

With the reinstatement of customary laws, it can be ensured that the *sasa sor fit* that exists in these three categories of laws could be elaborated as more detailed rules with consideration in connection to the state law (Diala, 2017; Osman, 2019; Nurdin, 2022) so that they are available and can be used more practically in dealing with life problems in the Kei people tribal life (Himonga & Diallo, 2017; Minei & Kaipu, (2022)

6. Concluding Remarks

The *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law united and reconciled Kei society hundreds of years ago from all forms of division and war. For the Kei people, their religions can be different but they are still united by this one customary law. As evidenced by the religious conflict in 1999, no less than 200 people died, hundreds more suffered serious or minor injuries, and dozens of villages were almost razed to the ground, but with a pattern of reconciliation that put forward this customary law, the conflict soon ended. At this time, the atmosphere is very conducive, different from other areas, and for many years there is still the news of conflicts that have not been resolved. Kei society was freed from all types of division and conflict hundreds of years ago by the *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law. They believe that while religions can disagree, they can nonetheless be unified by this single customary law.

Important symbols in the law are: a buffalo (*kerbau*) and a whale (*lor*) representing the might of the land and the ocean. 'lar vul' (red blood) and 'nga Bal' (spear from Bali) are combined to name the customary law to represent the divine legitimacy of this tribal law.

Symbols in the seven principles are: /uu/, 'the head' (principle 1); /lel/, 'the neck' (principle 2); /ulnit/, 'the skin' (principle 3); /lar/ 'the blood' (principle 4); /rek/, 'partition, border line' (principle 5); /moryain/ a 'room for women' (principle 6). These are all the symbolic essences of each principle in the tribal law.

The *Lar Vul Nga Bal* Law with its 3 categories and 7 offenses reminds one of the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Heavenly Virtues.

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