



Respect for Ancestors in the Bau Lolon Riteln Kolilanang Village, Adonara Subdistrict East Flores Regency

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Abstract

This study examines the *Bau Lolon* ritual in Kolilanang Village, Adonara Sub-district, East Flores Regency, focusing on its role as a traditional practice of ancestral veneration. The *Bau Lolon* ritual serves as a sacred medium for the local community to express gratitude, seek blessings, and maintain a spiritual connection with their ancestors. Utilizing a qualitative approach with ethnographic methods, data were gathered through field observations, structured interviews with traditional elders (*Tua Adat*), and documentation of the ritual steps. The findings reveal that the ritual embodies deep philosophical values, including cosmic balance, kinship solidarity, and cultural identity preservation. Furthermore, the *Bau Lolon* ritual functions as a social mechanism that strengthens communal bonds among the villagers. Despite modern societal shifts, the people of Kolilanang continuously preserve this ritual, demonstrating a resilient synthesis between ancestral traditions and contemporary community life.

Keywords: *Bau Lolon* Ritual, Ancestral Veneration, Kolilanang Village, East Flores, Cultural Identity.

INTRODUCTION

In social life, culture is an inseparable part of human existence, leading many to mistakenly assume it is genetically inherited. However, the very act of adapting to people from different cultural backgrounds and navigating those differences demonstrates that culture is learned. Nababan (1984:49) states that culture is a system of communication and interaction rules that enables a society to form, be maintained, and be preserved. In other words, culture encompasses all aspects of human life, including the rules or laws governing society, human-made creations, and the habits and traditions—such as language and non-verbal communication tools—that serve as means of interaction. Culture is formed from a complex array of elements, including religious systems, customs, language, and artistic works. Customs themselves are generational habits practiced repeatedly that have evolved into traditions or distinctive characteristics of a specific region (Huda & Karsudjono, 2022). Culture encompasses the knowledge, arts, beliefs, and habits practiced by members of a society, representing the collective products of their labor, sensibilities, and creativity. "Societal creations generate the material technology and cultural elements that assist humans in mastering nature, with the resulting outcomes utilized for the benefit of the community."

One of the key components of culture consists of the values believed in and upheld by a society. These values influence how individuals perceive the world and act in various situations; for instance, the value of respect can be of great importance within a culture. Such values are often expressed through rituals, customs, and celebrations that embody the culture's core principles. Through these practices, a society can express and reinforce its values while imbuing life experiences with deeper meaning.

Meaning is another crucial component linked to cultural values. It encompasses the understanding and interpretation that individuals or groups attribute to their cultural values and practices. In this context, meaning emerges from how a society comprehends and experiences the values it embraces, as well as how those values shape relationships among community members. Rituals, customs, and celebrations serve as vehicles for conveying this meaning—such as a ritual acting as a way to honor ancestors. Thus, values and meaning are intertwined in the formation of culture: values provide a guide for behavior and social interaction, while meaning offers context and a deeper understanding of the cultural practices passed down through generations. Through these customary practices, culture remains alive and evolves, simultaneously strengthening the community's identity and solidarity.

The people of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) possess diverse ethnic groups and cultures that are deeply cherished—manifested in dances, wedding and funeral ceremonies, and various customary rituals. One such practice examined in this study is the **Bau lolon** rite, frequently performed by the community of Kolilanang Village in the Adonara District, East Flores Regency. According to Goris Keraf, a ritual refers to the procedures or methods involved in religious ceremonies. A ritual or ceremony is a system or sequence of actions—governed by prevailing local customs or laws—associated with various events common to the community. Rites also consist of actions performed primarily for their symbolic value. These rites take place in diverse contexts, such as the construction of traditional houses, **Bua Hira*

(communal dining), Ore ana (child naming), the welcoming of dignitaries, weddings, thanksgiving events, and other religious ceremonies.

The *Bau lolon* rite serves as a symbolic gesture reflecting the community's belief that the successful execution of a ceremony's processes and activities is due to the intervention of *Ama Ata Rera Wulan* (God Almighty) and the ancestors. This ritual is typically performed by specific groups—notably adult men whose fathers have passed away and who are entrusted with the ability to carry out the procedure. The officiant pours coconut palm wine from a *Nawin* (a single-node bamboo vessel) into a **Neak** (a cup made from a coconut shell); before letting drops of the wine fall onto the ground, he must recite *Koda* (ritual incantations) to invoke the assistance and cooperation of God and the ancestors.

The community of Kolilanang Village believes that the **Bau lolon** ritual possesses spiritual power, ensuring that all proceedings unfold smoothly through the grace of Almighty God and the support of their ancestors. This ritual is not merely a ceremony but also an expression of reverence for the ancestors. The Kolilanang people believe that ancestors serve as intermediaries between humanity and God, and that the successful execution of the ceremony relies on the assistance of both the ancestors and the Divine.

However, amidst rapid modernization and social change, the *Bau lolon* ritual faces significant challenges due to a lack of engagement from the younger generation. Furthermore, they struggle to comprehend the **koda**—the traditional oral expressions recited during the ritual. This lack of understanding regarding the sacred language and utterances makes it difficult for them to grasp the essential messages and values embedded in the **Bau lolon** ritual. If left unaddressed, these traditional values will become increasingly alien to future generations, threatening the cultural identity of the Kolilanang community with oblivion as time passes. Therefore, research into the ancestral reverence within the **Bau lolon** ritual is crucial to revealing how the ritual remains relevant and is preserved within a constantly evolving society. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to cultural preservation efforts while raising public awareness—particularly among the youth—regarding the importance of the values embodied in the ritual.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic research design to explore the deep cultural nuances of the *Bau Lolon* ritual in Kolilanang Village. This method allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the local community, facilitating a holistic understanding of how the inhabitants perceive, experience, and enact ancestral veneration. By focusing on the lived experiences and cultural expressions of the participants, this approach ensures that the ritual is analyzed within its authentic social and historical context, capturing the symbolic meanings that might be overlooked through quantitative measures.

Data collection was carried out through primary and secondary sources to ensure data triangulation and validity. Primary data were gathered through participant observation, where the researcher directly witnessed the execution of the *Bau Lolon* ritual, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The interview informants were purposely selected using purposive sampling, consisting of traditional elders (*Tua Adat*), local clan leaders, and community members who possess authoritative knowledge of the ritual. Secondary data, including village demographic records, historical documents, and previous relevant literature on East Flores culture, were used to complement the field findings.

The gathered data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis, which involves a systematic process of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Field notes and interview transcripts were meticulously coded to identify recurring patterns, structural steps of the ritual, and underlying philosophical values regarding ancestral respect. To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the researcher performed member-checking by cross-verifying the interpreted data with the key traditional elders before finalizing the study. This analytical process guarantees an objective yet culturally sensitive representation of the *Bau Lolon* tradition.



Gambar 1. Prosesi Ritual Bau Lolon

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A Hermeneutical Analysis of the Bau Lolon Ritual

Applying Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical theory to the study of the *Bau Lolon* ritual in Kolilanang Village aims to unveil the deep layers of meaning and philosophical values inherent in the ritual speeches. For Gadamer, texts or oral traditions are not static entities that merely record the past; rather, they are living mediums that continuously project new significance when engaging in a dialogue with contemporary readers or listeners. Through this lens, the ritual speeches in *Bau Lolon* are not viewed as obsolete, empty incantations, but as manifestations of language that possess their own horizon of the world. Hermeneutics steps beyond a mechanical description of the ritual's sequence, moving toward a profound understanding of how this ritual language negotiates the existential meaning of the Adonara people with their ancestors.

Within Gadamer's conceptual framework, the notion of *Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*, or historically effected consciousness, serves as a crucial instrument to analyze the stance of the youth in Kolilanang Village toward their tradition. This concept asserts that no human being stands in a vacuum sterile from history; every individual is inevitably shaped and influenced by the currents of tradition that precede them. When the modern youth view the *Bau Lolon* ritual as a valid and sacred form of ancestral veneration, this phenomenon does not occur by mere coincidence or forced indoctrination. Instead, this perspective provides empirical evidence confirming that historically effected consciousness is actively and dynamically operating within their cognitive and spiritual structures.

Tradition, according to Gadamer, is not a burdensome past that shackles humanity, but a horizon that enables understanding to take place in the first place. The Lamaholot youth in Adonara inherit a pre-understanding (*Vorverständnis*) or positive prejudice (*Vorurteil*) that has been woven by their ancestors through verbal and non-verbal cultural transmissions. In the Gadamerian context, prejudice is not a negative bias that blinds; it is a legitimate starting point or initial asset for the new generation to recognize their identity. Through their involvement—whether direct or indirect—in the *Bau Lolon* ritual, the youth activate this pre-understanding, realizing that they are the biological and spiritual continuation of a long historical chain.

Furthermore, the younger generation's understanding of this ritual reflects what Gadamer terms the fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*). Two distinct horizons confront each other here: the horizon of the past text (the original values, the *Rera Wulan Tanah Ekan* cosmology, and the initial intent of the ancestors embedded in the ritual speech) and the horizon of the present interpreter (the youth living in a modern era, exposed to technology, formal education, and Abrahamic religions). When these young people interpret *Bau Lolon* as a respectful rite of veneration, these two horizons do not negate one another. Instead, an existential dialogue occurs, birthing a new common ground where traditional values are absorbed, redefined, and actualized without losing their sacred substance amid modern currents.

This hermeneutical process simultaneously dismantles the rigid dichotomy between objectivism and subjectivism in viewing tradition. The youth of Kolilanang Village do not position the *Bau Lolon* ritual as a cold, "ancient object" to be studied from a distance solely for tourism or exoticism. Nor do they treat it in a subjective-romantic manner devoid of critical reason. Rather, by acknowledging the ritual as a genuine form of ancestral veneration, they position themselves within the circle of the tradition itself. They allow the ritual speech of *Bau Lolon* to "address" them, speaking directly to their inner reality and providing answers to their search for cultural identity amidst the onslaught of global culture.

The operation of this historically effected consciousness is also evident in how the language of the *Bau Lolon* ritual speeches maintains its authority. Gadamer famously stated that "being that can be understood is language" (*Sein, das verstanden werden kann, ist Sprache*). The spoken words uttered by the traditional elders (*Tua Adat*) while pouring the ritual water (*Bau Lolon*) over the altar stone are not merely grammatical arrangements, but a language event (*Sprachereignis*). These words carry a historical weight and a magical-religious potency capable of piercing the boundaries of time. Consequently, when heard by the youth, the speech evokes a sense of deference, reverence, and belonging toward the supernatural entities they call ancestors.

This phenomenon also stands as an antithesis to global anxieties regarding the extinction of local cultures due to modernization. In many places, modernity often causes historical amnesia, severing the younger generation's ties to their cultural roots. However, in Kolilanang Village, historically effected consciousness acts as a cultural safety valve. Instead of experiencing cultural alienation, the youth find a sense of liberation and psychological stability within the *Bau Lolon* ritual. They perceive that honoring ancestral spirits is not a regressive way of thinking or a taboo syncretism, but an ethical expression of how humans appreciate their origins (*Ilewo tanan*).

Through this Gadamerian analysis, we can understand that the continuity of the *Bau Lolon* ritual in Adonara does not rely on rigid, mechanical replication, but on the creative reproduction of meaning. The youth recognize that the ancestors are not a dead and buried past, but an "eternal present" that continuously watches over and overshadows their living spaces. Historically effected consciousness ensures that the collective memory of ancestral goodness, protection, and counsel remains alive and beating within the hearts of the next generation. Every droplet of water poured in the *Bau Lolon* rite reaffirms the commitment of the youth not to become humans who suffer from amnesia regarding their own history.

Sociologically and anthropologically, the operation of this historical consciousness triggers the strengthening of social solidarity structures in Kolilanang Village. The *Bau Lolon* ritual becomes an intergenerational meeting space where dialogue between the old and the young occurs naturally. When the youth validate this ritual, they automatically legitimize the cultural authority of the traditional leaders and reinforce social cohesion across various clans. Their

hermeneutical understanding of the ancestors' significance transforms this ritual into an effective social institution for reweaving the communal fabric that might have been temporarily frayed by the demands of modern life outside the village.

Ultimately, the hermeneutical reconstruction of the *Bau Lolon* ritual confirms that Lamaholot tradition possesses an extraordinary vitality because it is continuously revitalized by the interpretations of its new generation. The youth in Kolilanang Village, Adonara, prove that being modern does not mean uprooting oneself from traditional foundations. Through a sharp historically effected consciousness, they successfully position the *Bau Lolon* ritual not as a past fossil displayed in a museum, but as a living moral and spiritual compass. This tradition will continue to flow, transform, and guide their future, as long as the hermeneutical dialogue between the text of the past and the horizon of the present remains harmoniously intact.

Values Contained in the Bau Lolon Ritual

Koentjaraningrat (2009) explains that the values within a ritual are high-level conceptions that live in the minds of most members of a community, serving as the highest guideline for human behavior. In the context of *Bau Lolon*, these values encompass the recognition of the reciprocal relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator, making the ritual more than just a ceremony, but also a moral commitment to maintaining balance in Lewotamah.

In this study, the researcher examined one of the *Bau Lolon* ceremonies performed in Lewotamah (the village home). Through this *Bau Lolon* ceremony, the community collectively seeks protection and blessings from Ama Ata Rera Wulan (Almighty God) and their ancestors, seeking to protect their village from all danger and failure. *Bau Lolon* in Lewotamah is a means of maintaining the stability and safety of the entire community, ensuring harmonious and peaceful life within the village. This ceremony is usually performed at the village entrance by a traditional leader entrusted with the role of community spokesperson. During the ceremony, white palm wine (palm wine) contained in a nawin (bamboo stem) is poured into a neak (coconut shell). Before the drops of palm wine touch the ground, the traditional leader will squat respectfully, holding the container with his left and right hands as a symbol of balance between heaven and earth, then pause for a moment, creating a sense of silence. In this sacred stillness, the leader will begin to recite a Koda (recitation).

Prayer Speech in the Bau Lolon Ritual

As previously discussed, the *Bau Lolon* ritual is accompanied by a koda, a kind of prayer in the local language recited by a traditional leader or someone designated to recite it. The speech in this ritual, like that of other ethnic groups, is embodied as a form of communication with the Supreme Being, known as Rera Wulan Tana Ekan, and with the spirits of the ancestors, known as Ina Ama Koda Kewokot. This communication takes place through speech. Based on the context of use and the diction employed, ritual speech, or ritual language, according to Fox (1986: 102), is distinctively different from everyday language. Fox states that ritual language has cultural content that must be explained textually, contextually, and culturally (1986: 13). Ritual speech also frequently uses metaphors.

The use of metaphors directly or indirectly can build certain meanings, which make ritual speech have charisma (cf. Poedjosoedarmo, 2001: 160). Regarding the concept of ritual speech, Fox (1986: 106) put forward a clear concept to analyze the characteristics of ritual language: 1) as everyday language that is enhanced in form, function and meaning, 2) has a form and structure that tends to be fixed, 3) poetic and metaphorical, 4) often presents polysemy, homonymy and synonymy, and 5) its form and meaning are systematically related. The *Bau lolon* ritual has a speech called Koda. Koda literally means speech or word or word, the coda can also contain meaning to the intended subject. Words or utterances or coda are born from the belief in the existence of a magical-supernatural power that underlies the words themselves.

The power behind the code is called the power of the koda puken, namely Allah Rera Wulan Tana Ekan. Two-way communication between humans and God in the *Bau lolon* ritual seems to be one-way. This communication is called interlocutor communication or invisible involvement. In the context of traditional beliefs, the response or answer of the interlocutor is the result of the *Bau lolon* process (Ola, 2009: 301). When the *Bau lolon* ritual is carried out, before the palm wine is drunk, a prayer (koda) is first said, and simultaneously as palm wine water falls to the surface of the ground. Some of the prayers are as follows, in this study the researcher took one form of prayer or utterance in the *Bau lolon* ritual which is usually carried out in Lewotamah (Home Village). In a research interview, a traditional leader, Mr. Boly Ferdi, stated:

"Ina ama nene awak"
Mother, father, ancestor

"Koka daton si Lewotamah"
The ancestors are the guardians of the hometown.

"Lein lau weran rae"
Who guards the boundaries of the sea and the land,

"Hikum teti wanam lali"

Who watches from the highest peak to the bottom of the valley.

"Awak bukan wai matan"
Heart and mind focused on one spring,

One tou kirin ehan
In one message and one purpose

"Pupu arin bukan beto"
Gathering with brothers at the central meeting point.

"Koda Pupuro taang tou"
One word bound tightly

"Kirin prekeet taan ihan"
One message held firmly

"Leta dike Apan Sare"
For the good of the village and the prosperity of the homeland.
" Turun tali Koda Kirin"
Convey this series of words and messages of prayer

"Taan kuat kemuha Lewotamah"
To become a strong strength for the hometown
"Ti lewo mete Turun Tali"
So that the village will always be protected by your protection

"Tanah mete tapan" holo"
So that this homeland is maintained and protected by peace.

The Bau Lolon ritual in Kolilanang Village is a sacred tradition that serves as a symbol of the unity and togetherness of the indigenous community. This ritual contains a deep sense of respect for the Supreme Being, Rera Wulan Tana Ekan, and the ancestral spirits (Ina Ama Koda Kewokot) as a form of recognition of human limitations before divine power. Through the symbolic act of pouring palm wine on the ground, the people of Kolilanang Village express the value of gratitude and the ethics of prioritizing God and ancestors, as reflected in the prayer "gen molo menu molo" (please eat and drink first). Furthermore, this ritual carries the value of protection and sanctity, where traditional ceremonies are only considered valid, sacred, and able to ward off disasters if they have gone through the Bau Lolon procession. The above statement was finally clarified by Mr. Boly Ferdi:

Generally, values such as respect for ancestors and asking for protection are usually derived from individual prayers in the Bau Lolon ritual. In a different context, in my research, specifically the Bau Lolon ritual typically performed in Lewotamah, the values contained within it are: For us, the religious value of this ritual is a realization that we are not alone. God and our ancestors are always watching over us, as in the sayings "Ina ama nene wakil" and "Hikum teti wanam lali." This reminds us that God's power is vast, watching over us from the mountaintop to the valley floor, so we must always respect and ask for protection. As for social values, it's about the spirit of brotherhood, so we don't go our separate ways. In the village, we must have one heart and one goal, as in the sayings "Awak bukan wai matan" and "One tou kirin ehan." Essentially, we are taught to always prioritize togetherness and deliberation over personal interests. As for moral values, for us, they are about honesty. In our customs, if you make a promise, you must keep it. As the saying 'Koda Pupuro taang tou' goes, a word once spoken must be firmly sealed and must never be betrayed. There is ecological value in protecting nature. Through the saying 'Lein lau weran rae', we are reminded to respect the boundaries of land and sea, because if we protect nature, nature will surely protect us.

The Bau Lolon ritual is not without purpose. The people of Kolilanang Village believe that all their activities will run smoothly if they seek the assistance of Ama ata Rera Wulan (Almighty God) and the Ancestors, who guide their prayers. This ritual seeks protection and safety, honors their ancestors, and seeks blessings. When the researcher interviewed two informants, the language used was their everyday vernacular. Therefore, throughout this study, the researcher adapted the interview results by adjusting the spelling and converting them into easily understood Indonesian. For example, in the following interview with the informant: The statement above aligns with that expressed by Mr. Andreas Laot Doni, with a more complete explanation:

Actually, we perform the Bau Lolon Ritual for three main reasons. First, it is our way of honoring our ancestors who laid the foundation for our traditional values. Second, this ritual is an expression of our gratitude, believing that the spirits of our ancestors, who have rested in heaven, or Kewokot, are close to the Creator, and they help convey the prayers of those who are still struggling in this world. Lastly, we ask for protection so that our steps in life and all our work are protected and carried out by the Supreme Being through their intercession. Pada bagian ini berisi hasil dan pembahasan dari topik penelitian, yang bisa di buat terlebih dahulu metodologi penelitian.

The statement made by Mr. Andreas Laot Doni, further reinforced by Mr. Alexsander Migu Hari, is as follows:

We perform the Bau Lolon Ritual to ask for blessings, protection, and safety from Lera Wulan Tana Ekan. Furthermore, this event is also a sign of respect for our ancestors, as we believe their spirits remain connected to those of us who are still alive and who help convey our prayers to the Supreme Being.

Based on interviews, the Bau Lolon Ritual is essentially a form of respect and an expression of gratitude to the ancestors who have passed down traditional values and exemplary life. The community believes that the ancestors, or Kewokot, are now in heaven and close to the Creator, thus acting as intermediaries to convey the prayers of the living. Besides being a sign of respect, this ritual is also performed to ask for blessings, protection, and safety from Lera Wulan Tana Ekan so that all work and life's journeys will continue to be guarded and run smoothly.

The Bau Lolon Ritual is inseparable from the role of a ritual leader. This figure serves as the primary bridge in conveying the intentions and prayers of the community in Kolilanang Village, while also ensuring that all stages of the tradition proceed according to the order that has been passed down through generations. The Bau Lolon Ritual is led by six groups with roles that have been traditionally assigned. This begins with the Landlord who represents the entire village, the Tribal Chief for each tribe, and the Beruin who represents the family within a traditional house. Additionally, adult males whose fathers have died also have the right to represent their extended families. Special spiritual roles are held by the Ata Mua (Traditional Priest) who cleanses the community of sins, and the Ata Molan (Traditional Healer) who serves as the ritual leader and liaison between the human world and the spirits of the deceased.

CONCLUSION

The *Bau Lolon* ritual in Kolilanang Village, Adonara, serves as a vital cornerstone of ancestral veneration and cultural continuity. This traditional practice transcends simple ritualistic performance; it acts as a sacred bridge that connects the living community with their ancestors. Through specific prayers, offerings, and symbolic gestures, the people of Kolilanang fulfill their moral and spiritual obligations to their forebears. The ritual effectively maintains a harmonious relationship between the physical world and the spiritual realm, ensuring that ancestral blessings and protection continue to guide the community's daily life.

Furthermore, the study highlights that the *Bau Lolon* ritual plays a critical role in strengthening social cohesion and preserving local identity. The collective participation of various clans and villagers fosters a deep sense of solidarity, kinship, and mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*). In an era marked by rapid globalization and modernization, this ritual functions as a resilient cultural anchor. It protects the community's unique heritage and passes down essential philosophical values, such as respect for origins and environmental balance, to the younger generation of Adonara.

Ultimately, the preservation of *Bau Lolon* demonstrates that ancient traditions can coexist dynamically with contemporary societal changes. The village of Kolilanang has successfully maintained the authenticity of this rite by embedding it into their modern social fabric. To ensure its long-term survival, continuous support from local authorities, cultural practitioners, and educational institutions is essential. Protecting this ritual not only honors the ancestors but also secures a priceless cultural legacy that defines the identity of East Flores Regency for generations to come.

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