



The Wurumana Institution in the Life of the Lio Ethnic Group

Samun¹, Mungsi Lampe¹, Safriadi Muis¹

¹Anthropology Study Program, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Sam'un

E-mail: samunantro@gmail.com



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Abstract

This study explores the Wurumana institution within the Lio ethnic community of Maurole Village, East Nusa Tenggara, using a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The research identifies three main functions of Wurumana: (1) fulfilling bridewealth obligations (belis), facilitating collective resource mobilization for marriage payments; (2) reinforcing kinship solidarity, strengthening communal bonds; and (3) providing a conflict resolution mechanism through customary mediation. The ritual unfolds in nine stages, beginning with family summons and ending with the presentation of rice, garments, and Lio woven textiles. The persistence of Wurumana is explained by three factors: the moral principle of jaga waka (preserving familial dignity), the authority of the Eda (traditional leaders), and the tau tei duna mea ethic (the cultural imperative of contribution, enforced through social sanctions). This study highlights the enduring relevance of Wurumana in contemporary Lio society and contributes to understanding the social organization of the Lio ethnic group.

Introduction

Social harmony within society is achieved through mutually supportive relationships among various social elements that foster a positive equilibrium (Muluk & Habibullah, 2023). This finding aligns with research by Hidayat & Wahyudi (2022), which affirms that societal concord is constructed through the reinforcement of local wisdom mechanisms as the foundation of the social order. Beyond a static condition, social harmony constitutes a dynamic process necessitating sustained collective effort, wherein social institutions and cultural values function as critical factors in maintaining stability (Sutarto & Kuswarno, 2021). The consistent implementation of local wisdom values has proven effective in preventing social disintegration while simultaneously strengthening community resilience against diverse forms of social disruption.

In the past, kinship institutions played a central role in realizing harmonious community life. According to Widiyanto & Mulder (2022), kinship institutions functioned to regulate individual rights and roles within the family and social environment, thereby strengthening solidarity and unity among community members. As demonstrated by Siregar & Simandjuntak (2023), these institutions enabled communities to collaborate in collective activities and mutually support one another in alleviating life's burdens, thus establishing sustainable social order.

In contemporary societal transformation, kinship institutions are experiencing dysfunction as the foundation of cohesive social relations (Mustofa & Azizah, 2023; Özkaya, 2022; O'Brien, 2017). Modernity, characterized by structural complexity as a consequence of technological advancement and accelerated urbanization, has led to a significant erosion of traditional values. Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2023) records a 40% decline in participation in traditional kinship

activities within Indonesian urban areas over the past decade. This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the emergence of digital ethnocentrism triggering social fragmentation (Prabowo & Wijayanti, 2023; Kossowska et al., 2023; Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez, 2021).

Nevertheless, kinship institutions persist in the societal life of certain communities, exemplified by *reng-rengan*: a kinship-based mutual assistance system (Mustofa & Wijaya, 2023) in Madurese society, and the Dalihan Na Tolu kinship system in Batak society (Sihaloho, 2023). Furthermore, the Wurumana kinship institution of the Lio tribe, recognized as a mechanism for social cohesion, is still maintained.

Within the Lio tribe, Wurumana is not formally categorized as a customary institution (*pranata adat*), yet in practice, it encompasses a set of procedures and values derived from traditional customs. Substantively, Wurumana constitutes a social practice enacted by families and relatives when organizing events. Dankwa et al. (2022) said that, the execution of Wurumana, since ancestral times to the present, has been practiced in connection with wedding ceremonies, wherein the bridal families invite relatives to celebrate the marriage.

Research on wurumana has been conducted by previous scholars, such as Muamalyah et al. (2022), who examined Wurumana as a Representation of Local Wisdom in the Lio Tribe's Wedding Ceremonies. Their findings indicate that wurumana constitutes a cultural heritage practice capable of enhancing appreciation for regional culture. It encompasses activities of mutual assistance (*gotong royong*) and cooperation that foster solidarity within the Lio tribe.

Nevertheless, no existing research has explored wurumana as a social institution possessing broader implications for Lio societal life. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the functions of the Wurumana institution within the kinship relations of the Lio tribe in Ende Regency, alongside examining its contemporary existence. Furthermore, this research expands upon prior studies of wurumana practice by introducing the novel dimension of its application in social conflict resolution.

The expected contribution of this work is to advocate for strengthening local institutions as unifying mechanisms within diverse societies. Thus, the wurumana institution may serve as an inclusive symbol for other ethnic groups through a deepened understanding of its cultural meaning and benefits.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore subjects' lived experiences in interpreting the practice of Wurumana. According to Wijaya & Pratiwi (2023), this methodology enables researchers to comprehend the essence of social phenomena through three layers of consciousness: (1) actors' subjective perceptions, (2) cultural meaning construction, and (3) critical reflection on lived experience. As explicated by Tjahyadi et al. (2020) and Pilarska (2021), phenomenological research aims to understand individuals' pure consciousness through lived experiences, depictions of reality, and self-reflection regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The research focus encompasses informants' experiences of wurumana within the Lio community, factual data about the tradition, and informants' interpretations of their experiences. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews using purposive sampling (Romero et al., 2019; Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025).

Furthermore, this study utilizes a literature review by examining scholarly sources such as books, journal articles, and reports to strengthen the theoretical framework concerning the functions of the Wurumana institution within the collective life of the Lio community in Ende. According to Giorgi (2009) and Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie (2015), literature synthesis in phenomenology aims to map how a phenomenon has been conceptualized by other researchers,

thereby enabling epistemological explanation of divergences or convergences with current findings. This analysis employs the Theory of Reciprocity proposed by Hénaff (2019), which posits that exchange in traditional societies transcends mere economic transactions, constituting instead a "total social fact" (fait social total) encompassing simultaneous moral, religious, legal, and political dimensions. The core of this theory lies in the three binding obligations (triple obligation) that constrain social actors: the obligation to give (to give), the obligation to receive (to receive), and the obligation to reciprocate (to reciprocate) (Kjørstad, 2017; Molm et al., 2007).

Results and Discussion

Pranata Wurumana Practice

The Pranata Wurumana has been a hereditary tradition within the Lio tribe community, particularly in marriage ceremonies (Naga et al., 2025; Labason et al., 2024; Haipon & Due, 2022). This practice involves the male's family inviting relatives to celebrate their son's marriage to a woman from the Lio tribe. The association of Wurumana with marriage underscores how deeply rooted this tradition is within the culture and shapes community perceptions. Collaborative data processing and presentation reveal similarities with the findings of Djou & Marselina (2020) regarding the stages of Wurumana, though differences exist in the terminology used for these stages. This variation is attributed to geographical location, which consequently leads to linguistic differences in terminology. The stages of Wurumana implementation in Lio tribe marriage ceremonies are as follows:

Tau Kobe (Family Invitation)

This stage involves specific invitations extended to close relatives, including parents, maternal aunts (saudara perempuan ibu), and maternal uncles (saudara laki-laki ibu). Both parties (the groom and the bride) conduct the Tau Kobe ceremony within their respective family residences. Discussions focus on preparations for the Wurumana event, encompassing familial obligations for mutual assistance and fulfilling the requirements for the wedding.

Sambu Unda (Inviting Relatives)

The family delivers oral invitations to extended relatives from both the paternal and maternal lineages, as well as to local community members. Invitations must be conveyed well in advance to allow relatives sufficient time for physical and financial preparation. Material contributions or obligations (such as livestock or money) are readied for presentation during the Wurumana ceremony.

Bou Tebo Lo Mondo (Family Consultation)

Following the determination of the belis (bridewealth) amount, all male relatives convene to discuss their respective contributions, such as livestock (eko) and money (doi). Concurrently, the bride's family also conducts Bou Tebo, albeit with a distinct context: they plan the reciprocal gifts (balasan) for the belis received from the groom's family, in accordance with customary stipulations.

Minu Ae Petu (Drinking Hot Water - Ceremonial Gathering)

During this stage, all relatives attend, bringing the Wurumana contributions agreed upon in the Bou Tebo. Invited local community members also participate by providing voluntary contributions, such as money (minimum Rp100,000 [approx. \$6.50 USD]). These contributions are non-obligatory, contrasting with the penu kesa which are bound by customary rules.

Gantung Baju (Determination of Time and Place)

Representatives from both families discuss to determine the date and venue for the wedding. Traditionally, the groom's family sets the date, while the bride's family selects the location. A mutual consensus on these arrangements is essential to ensure the smooth execution of the event.

Akad Nikah (Marriage Contract Ceremony)

This constitutes the core component of the entire wedding process, wherein the couple formally solemnizes their marriage bond. Both families attend as witnesses and bestow their blessings to affirm the union.

Mbana Tu Pengantin (Sending the Bride)

Four days after the akad nikah (marriage contract), the bride is formally entrusted to the groom's family. This ritual signifies the transfer of responsibility for the bride from her family to the groom's family.

Tu Regu No'o Pata (Reciprocity Exchange)

Groom's Side: Provides rice, clothing, and traditional Lio sarung (woven cloth) to the bride's paternal relatives as reciprocation for their contributions to the belis (bride price/dowry).
Bride's Side: Reciprocates the belis (which may include gold, livestock, and money) by giving rice (regu), sarung (ragi/lawo), clothing (lambu), and sashes (luka). The value of these reciprocal gifts is commensurate with the value of the belis received.

The Function of the Wurumana Institution within the Lio Kinship System

The findings of this study indicate that the Wurumana institution functions as a reciprocal system binding Lio tribal kinship groups through mechanisms of material and symbolic exchange. The research reveals four core functions of this institution, which are interrelated and contribute to the reinforcement of kinship ties. First, within the context of the Bridal Endowment (Belis) Resource Reciprocal Mechanism, the Wurumana institution exhibits structured reciprocity, wherein contribution obligations are hierarchical and gender-based. Female relatives are obligated to contribute eko (cattle, buffalo, or pigs) and doi (money, ranging from IDR 500,000 to IDR 1,000,000 / approx. USD 33-66), while male relatives contribute regu (rice) and pata (woven sarung cloth). Refusal to fulfill these contributions can undermine social and moral equilibrium within the community. Furthermore, two distinct types of reciprocity operate: Immediate reciprocity, wherein recipients of contributions, such as the bridal couple, are obliged to reciprocate contributions from core relatives during the ceremony itself. Delayed reciprocal obligation, wherein contributions among kin are voluntary and reciprocated when the contributor hosts a future event. Thus, the Wurumana ensures the fulfillment of the bridal endowment (belis) through collective contributions, establishing a reciprocal equilibrium that preserves the dignity of both parties and constitutes a collective responsibility of the kin group. This mechanism also functions as a form of economic redistribution and social security, alleviating individual burdens and strengthening inclusive exchange networks.

Second, the Wurumana institution functions as a Multidimensional Symbol of Esteem. The contribution of eko ne doi (livestock and money) by female relatives to the Eda (maternal uncle) constitutes recognition of his spiritual authority. Conversely, the contribution of regu no pata (rice and woven sarungs) by male relatives to female relatives signifies appreciation for women's cultural roles. These material contributions possess not only economic value but also embody profound spiritual and cosmological significance, such as securing blessings from the

Eda and averting misfortune (pire). The semantic transformation of belis from "Geti weli Weki" (commodification of women) to "Weli" (symbolic appreciation of the bride's intrinsic worth and her family's status) reflects an evolving consciousness regarding female dignity. Furthermore, a symbolic reciprocal cycle manifests wherein the groom's family offers belis as a gesture of respect, subsequently reciprocated by the bride's family through regu no pata and kue filu (traditional cakes), expressing gratitude and acknowledging the groom's family's efforts.

Third, the Wurumana institution plays a role in Strengthening Kinship Solidarity. The extended family council, known as Bou Tebo Lo Mondo, convenes all bilateral relatives to distribute contribution obligations (penu kesa) based on the philosophy "pe ndate kita sama-sama, pa fe'a kita sama-sama" (shared burdens, shared relief). This internalizes collective empathy and proportional responsibility among group members. Culinary symbolism, such as the filu cake in the tu ngawu procession, functions as a symbol of hospitality and a medium for cultural value transmission. This transforms instrumental relationships into communal bonds through intimate feasting. The Tu Pengantin process, where the bride is formally presented to the male lineage's family, also serves as a "social glue" cementing the two kinship units.

Fourth, the Wurumana institution functions as a Mechanism for Social Problem Resolution. This study finds that Wurumana resolves three categories of issues. First, violations against the symbolic order, such as the erosion in the use of honorific titles (Eda, Ka'e, Ame), are considered disruptive to spiritual balance. Second, land disputes possessing both economic and sacred dimensions where land is regarded as ancestral heritage are resolved through Mosalaki mediation. Third, the transformation of transgressions into social obligations occurs through the Wale mechanism (customary fine). This involves the offending party offering eko as acknowledgment of the harm caused, followed by the reciprocation of regu no pata by the victim to restore dignity and close the conflict cycle.

The Existence of the Wurumana Institution

Factors supporting the existence of the Wurumana institution include the sacred authority of the Eda, who functions as the guardian of norms and traditions, and the jaga waka morality, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining dignity and honor. Furthermore, the tau tei duna mea ethical system creates a cultural defense mechanism that prevents the individualization of social relations. However, constraining factors also exist, such as economic pressures burdening families, particularly those working as fishermen and farmers with unstable incomes. The obligation to contribute Eko Ne Doi can create tension, where financially constrained families are forced to sacrifice their basic needs (Wulandari et al., 2025). Temporal challenges in the execution of Wurumana also warrant attention, where prolonged negotiation processes and constraints on ritual enactment periods may impact its effectiveness. However, these challenges are not viewed as weaknesses but rather as a cultural defense mechanism safeguarding the tradition's authenticity.

The Wurumana institution within Lio matrimonial customs exemplifies the intricate web of social relationships that exist between families and kin groups, encompassing relatives from the Ine ame (mother and father), Tuka bela Aji ka'e (siblings), and ana embu (in-laws). This institution is characterized by bilateral kinship groups that engage in mutual cooperation, known as gotong-royong, which involves reciprocal giving and receiving, as well as collective assistance throughout the wedding ceremonies. The Wurumana institution serves several critical functions that are essential to the social fabric of the community.

Firstly, it acts as a resource redistribution mechanism, where kin groups bear the obligation to fulfill the requirements of Belis (bridewealth). This is achieved through contributions of eko

ne doi (livestock and money), regu ne pata (rice and woven textiles), and labor support, all of which ensure the ceremonial efficacy of the wedding. Secondly, Wurumana functions as a symbolic valuation system that honors various aspects of familial relationships, including the value of women, the hierarchy of male lineage, and the integrity of the family unit.

Moreover, the institution plays a vital role in kinship solidification by fostering solidarity through various rituals. These include Bou tebo lo modo (kin assembly), Tu ngawu (bridewealth presentation), and Mbana tu pengantin (bridal procession), all of which reinforce the bonds among kin. Additionally, Wurumana provides a conflict resolution framework where disputes are mediated through repa ghare lo'o (family deliberation) and symbolic exchanges, such as livestock or textiles, which serve as Wale (restorative sanctions) to restore social harmony.

As a value exchange process, Wurumana represents an interactive dynamic between male and female lineages. The male lineage invests socially by providing Belis, which is reciprocated by the female lineage through offerings of pare isi (ceremonial meals), pata (textiles), lawo (traditional garments), and lambu (household items). This reciprocal exchange not only strengthens individual relationships but also involves extended kin, thereby establishing broad support networks and collaborative systems that sustain harmonious kinship relations.

The structured ceremonial progression of Wurumana includes several key rituals, such as Tau Kobe (kin summons), Sambu unda (formal invitations), Musyawarah Bou Tebo Lo mondo (deliberative kin council), Minu ae petu (ritual hot water drinking), Tu ngawu (bridewealth transfer), the Islamic marriage contract (Akad Nikah), Mbana tu pengantin (bridal conveyance to residence), and Tu regu pata (rice and textile presentation). This sequence illustrates how cultural values and social norms shape interpersonal dynamics within the community, guiding the interactions and expectations of all participants (Mulia et al., 2024; Yasin et al., 2024; Yakin, 2023; Febrian et al., 2025).

The persistence of the Wurumana institution among the Lio people of Maurole can be attributed to deeply internalized cultural values that guide conduct, particularly the principles of Jaga waka (upholding personal and familial dignity) and Tau tei duna mea ("that which is brought"). Participation in Wurumana signifies a commitment to familial honor, while the social imperative of reciprocal giving helps individuals avoid shame (malu). These guiding principles motivate individuals, families, and the broader community to perpetuate the Wurumana institution, ensuring its vitality as an integral component of socio-cultural life in Maurole. Through these practices, Wurumana not only reinforces kinship ties but also embodies the values and traditions that define the identity of the Lio people.

Conclusion

Based on an in-depth analysis of the Wurumana institution within the Lio community of Maurole Village, this study concludes that Wurumana constitutes a living total prestation that both confirms and revises Mauss' theory. This exchange system encompasses more than just material elements such as belis, eko ne doi, and regu ne pata; it also incorporates sacred authority, with Eda serving as the bestower of spiritual blessings, and cosmological dimensions that include supernatural sanctions and the hau—the ancestral spirit embedded in objects. Furthermore, Wurumana fosters clan solidarity, which is embodied in the principle of Pe Ndate Kita Sama-Sama. In contrast to Mauss' egalitarian model, Wurumana exhibits asymmetrical-sacred reciprocity. In this context, contributions from the female lineage, represented by eko ne doi, do not receive equivalent economic reciprocity in the male counter-gifts, or regu ne pata. Additionally, Eda receives material goods without any obligation to reciprocate materially, instead providing ritual legitimacy in return. This observation leads to a significant

theoretical implication: the theory of Maussian reciprocity requires augmentation to include considerations of power hierarchies and sacred asymmetry. The study also highlights the adaptive tensions that Wurumana faces in modernity. There are notable threats, such as the erosion of the sacred significance of *belis* due to rising individualism and materialism, as well as economic burdens that can reach Rp8–12 million for cattle, which trigger cycles of debt and social exclusion. Despite these challenges, the community demonstrates resilience through the persistence of values like *jaga waka* (dignity preservation) and *tau tei duna mea* (the obligation to give to avoid shame), which function as cultural immune systems. Moreover, the creative adaptation of integrating *aqiqah* within the Muslim Wurumana illustrates the community's ability to evolve while maintaining its core traditions. For the sustainability of Wurumana, it is essential to implement reforms that alleviate economic burdens without compromising its cosmological core, which includes the authority of *Eda* and the significance of *hau*. Additionally, it is crucial to prevent the reduction of Wurumana to a zombie culture, where rituals are performed devoid of meaningful engagement. However, this study reveals a significant divergence from prior research (Umryah et al., 2022), which asserted that Wurumana applies to various life celebrations, including graduations and house foundation stone ceremonies. This study's findings demonstrate that graduation ceremonies and house foundation stone events cannot be classified as Wurumana enactments. This exclusion stems from the absence of the specific value exchange characteristic, namely the provision of *eko ne doi* (livestock and money) from the female lineage and *regu ne pata* (rice and cloth) from the male lineage. Consequently, not all forms of kinship gift-giving qualify as Wurumana; rather, only those fulfilling these specific exchange criteria constitute the institution. The findings regarding the existence of the Wurumana institution in Lio society align with research by Umbu Riri and Wula (2023) on the resilience of traditional kinship systems in Flores, yet introduce a novel dimension through the concept of *tau tei duna mea* as a moral control mechanism previously underexplored in prior studies. The findings concerning *jaga waka* (upholding dignity) further complement research by Sitorus et al. (2022) on the function of reputation in the Batak kinship system. Conversely, this contrasts with Mustofa's (2022) assertion that modernization has eroded traditional institutions. Field data demonstrates that Wurumana instead exhibits functional adaptation through the moral mechanisms of *jaga waka* and *tau tei duna mea*.

Suggestion

To address these challenges, several strategic recommendations are proposed. For the Lio community and customary leaders, it is advised to implement sliding-scale contributions for *eko ne doi* through customary deliberation (*musyawarah adat*) that aligns with the economic capacity of each household. Furthermore, systematically documenting the oral philosophies of *tau tei duna mea* and *jaga waka* will serve as valuable intergenerational guides. For the Ende regional government, integrating Wurumana into cultural preservation policies is vital. This can be achieved through economic assistance programs aimed at vulnerable households, such as fishers and farmers, as well as establishing platforms for intergenerational dialogue regarding the adaptive significance of *belis*. Future research should focus on investigating the impact of capitalism on symbolic exchanges, such as *pata* and *lawo*, and conducting comparative studies of asymmetrical reciprocity systems across other Austronesian societies. Additionally, mapping the modes of youth participation in rituals, whether through digital transfers or physical attendance, will provide further insights into the evolving nature of Wurumana. In conclusion, Wurumana transcends static heritage, functioning as a dynamic system that continuously negotiates with modernity. Its survival hinges on the ability to balance core sacrality, represented by the authority of *Eda* and the significance of *hau*, with necessary structural reforms aimed at alleviating economic burdens and enhancing inclusivity. The

proposed revision of Mauss, which incorporates considerations of power hierarchies and capitalist pressures, offers a novel analytical framework for the study of global reciprocity.

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