



Local Wisdom: The Bau Lolon Rite as A Policy Model for Making Village Regulations in Witiham District, East Flores Regency

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Received: April 24, 2025 Revised: July 28, 2025 Available online: July 31, 2025	This study aims to explore and analyze whether the village government can make and implement village regulations based on local knowledge as a basis for improving and enriching the quality of village regulations. So far, the process of making village regulations has focused more on the formal legal aspects and tends to ignore local values and aspirations of the wider community. As a result, the village regulation products stipulated in several villages in Witiham District do not have a solid basis of social legitimacy and broad support from the village community. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with in-depth interview (FGD) data collection techniques, observation and documentation to reveal the values contained in the Bau Lolon rite that can be integrated into the process of making village regulations. The results of the study show that the policy model for making village regulations through the Bau Lolon local wisdom approach can achieve successful implementation because it focuses more on community needs and receives social support. In conclusion, incorporating local wisdom such as the Bau Lolon ritual in policy processes is not merely symbolic but a strategic step towards more inclusive, culturally grounded, and sustainable village governance.
KEYWORDS	
Local Wisdom; Bau Lolon Rites; Village Regulations;	
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INTRODUCTION

Village regulations are a political and legal product in villages that are essential for regulating community life. Therefore, their creation and implementation are not solely based on the interests of implementers but also on local knowledge that has become part of community traditions (Antlov et al., 2016). A 2016 LIPI study demonstrated that knowledge is not limited to scientific studies, but rather local knowledge stories that need to be documented and generate data that can be used by policymakers and for effective implementation (Nugroho et al., 2018). Local traditions can enrich policymaking by providing context, strengthening target setting, and fostering new forms of knowledge for policymakers. There is growing recognition of the power of local knowledge, and efforts are being made to understand how it operates (Fallis, 2013; Pratiwi & Istina, 2022).

The 2023 student Thematic Community Service Program (KKN) report and interviews with stakeholders revealed that the problem faced by the majority of village governments in Witiham District is the village government's failure to utilize the Bau Lolon ritual as a basis for creating and implementing village regulations. In several cases of village regulation creation and enactment concerning the establishment and implementation of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) in 13 villages in Witiham District, none of them were processed and established based on local traditions. Consequently, BUMDes management has failed to contribute to the well-being of village communities.

Although a mechanism for collecting aspirations exists, this process is only formal and does not address substantive issues (Astomo, 2018; Finnemore & Jurkovich, 2020). Another reason is the low quality of village government officials, who act as policy implementers, which has hampered the interpretation of its goals and objectives (Yusran et al., 2021). The challenge facing current village policy implementation is whether village governments are

capable of integrating the local Bau Lolon tradition into the process of creating village regulations. Therefore, the main question in this research is how to incorporate the Bau Lolon ritual into the process of creating and implementing village regulations.

The issue raised in this study is that local traditions have not become an essential part of the process of making village regulations. Through this study, the author uses a local wisdom approach, namely a concept that emphasizes the importance of understanding the principles, values, and norms of customs because they are the result of the production of habits that live and grow together with the community (Lestari et al., 2024; Salim, 2016). Therefore, it is possible for the village government to integrate the values and traditions of Bau Lolon into the process of making village regulations, so that it can provide social legitimacy and responsibility for managers to implement them consistently and accountably. If the managers violate the Bau Lolon ritual that has been carried out, according to local community beliefs, there will be a curse experienced, either directly or indirectly (Bebe, 2012). Because the denial of the Bau Lolon ritual as a code or truth causes members or groups of society involved in the ritual to experience the disaster of young death (Renwarin, 2024). Therefore, efforts to strengthen village regulations by integrating scientific studies and local knowledge will be far more effective if it is recognized and accepted that the dimensions of knowledge are interconnected and influence policy.

A similar study, entitled "Transfer of Indigenous Knowledge: Preserving Local Knowledge in the Bundo Kandung Local Institution in Minangkabau" (Vitasari, 2023), focused more on the transfer of knowledge through family, tribal, community, and educational institutions, with the aim of preserving local knowledge amidst the onslaught of globalization. Other studies have revealed several variables that determine successful

implementation, including communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure (Edwards, 1980). The success of a policy is also influenced by the characteristics of the problem, the characteristics of the policy, and environmental variables (Mazmanian, 1983).

Several previous studies have also found that successful implementation depends on the implementer's commitment and sincerity in carrying out their responsibilities in fostering cooperation with the community (Ardian & Purba, 2021; Mazuda et al., 2023). However, these studies fail to explain how the crucial role of local knowledge systems influences the village policy process, and therefore, few norms generated in villages are derived from traditional traditions. Local wisdom, as local knowledge, often utilizes metaphors to construct meaning, making rituals charismatic, auspicious, and adhered to (Poedjosudarmo., 1980). Poor communication between elements within the community can also contribute to implementation failure (Rasman, 2015).

Studies on policy implementation have uncovered numerous variables influencing success and failure (Chan et al., 2018; Ibrahim & BaQutayan, 2023; Jankhotkaew et al., 2022; Khan & Puthussery, 2019; Ohene, 2023; Ruslimin et al., 2023; Selepe, 2023; Yanes et al., 2019). Furthermore, research related to the use of local knowledge to influence village policies and implementation also focuses on environmental (Andesfi & Prasetyawan, 2019; Wasongko et al., 2024), agricultural (Agrawal, 1995; Mulyana et al., 2023), education (Briggs & Sharp, 2004) and community participation aspects (Juliasih et al., 2023).

Then, the researchers also used the VOs Viewer analysis tool to identify research gaps. From the results of scraping data from 44 journals with the keywords "Village Regulation OR Traditional Knowledge AND Policy Implementation," it was found that there were many related terms, ranging from village, regulation, local wisdom, community, management, to rule and problem. Most of the research was conducted between 2021 and 2023.

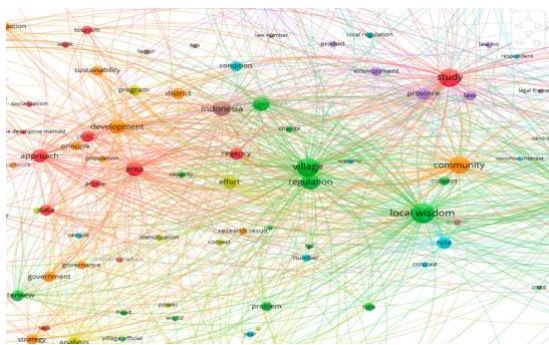


Figure 1. Results of Vos Viewer analysis
Source: Processed by researchers (2025)

However, no study has yet utilized local knowledge from Bau Lolon to influence village policy and implementation. This study aims to explore and analyze how village governments create and implement village regulations, considering local knowledge as a basis for improving and enriching the quality of village regulations and their targeting. Thus, the effort to synergize various scientific studies with local knowledge of Bau Lolon is a valuable step forward to influence the quality of the process of making village regulations and their implementation, so that it can provide benefits to the village government, practitioners and

all levels of society and can be developed by decision makers in other villages.

METHOD

This study selected a descriptive method with a qualitative data analysis approach. Therefore, the collected data consists of descriptive and detailed accounts according to the research subjects' perspectives, and is inductive. Essentially, the data analysis process began when the research focus and location were determined. This means that data analysis will be more meaningful and comprehensive while on-site. The number of informants will be determined using the snowball technique, a data collection mechanism through in-depth interviews (FGDs) from one informant to another, and so on, until no new data or information is found (Hamidi, 2008).

Using a qualitative approach based on in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation techniques is expected to uncover the values contained in the Bau Lolon ritual that can be integrated into the process of developing village regulations as a model for village policy. The research process actually began when the researcher identified the main problem and the research location, namely Lamablawa Village and Pledo Village, Witiham District, East Flores Regency. Therefore, the research period is estimated to last 12 months until the publication of the results. The research was conducted in the Lamablawa and Pledo villages because the majority of the residents in these two villages still adhere to their cultural traditions.

Primary data was gathered from informants/resource persons, specifically the Witiham Sub-district Head, the Pledo and Lamablawa village heads, four members of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), and two traditional and community leaders who truly understood the research problem. Furthermore, this study also utilized secondary sources, namely data on village regulations established and implemented several years previously by several village heads in Witiham District.

Qualitative data analysis begins once the research topic and focus are established and continues in the field. Qualitative data analysis involves working with data, organizing it, sorting it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for and discovering meaning and patterns, identifying what is important and what can be learned, and deciding what can be used for research purposes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Data obtained from the field will be analyzed using data analysis techniques that are carried out interactively and continuously through several steps, namely: a) data reduction focused on research objectives as final findings; b) data presentation while still paying attention to aspects of contact summary sheets, codes and coding, pattern coding, memoing, site analysis meetings and interim site summaries; c) data verification, testing the level of truth of conclusions or conclusions (Hamzah, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Meaning of the Bau Lolon Ritual in the Lamaholot Community Tradition

This study seeks to provide an overview of the essence of the Bau Lolon ritual and its benefits for the process of creating and implementing village regulations, as an effort to improve the quality of village regulation creation and implementation. The Bau Lolon ritual's local wisdom approach to policy creation and implementation is feasible in villages, as communities are considered to remain committed to their cultural traditions.

However, stakeholders must identify relevant cultural values embedded in the Bau Lolon ritual to strengthen the substance of the regulation creation and implementation process. Through a deliberation mechanism between the village government, the Village Consultative Body (BPD), traditional leaders, and the community, it is hoped that village regulations will be more responsive to the needs and socio-cultural conditions of the community. Because village regulations are established through a synergy between the interests of village elites and the accommodation of traditional values, they will provide benefits and social support for the village government in carrying out its leadership duties and functions.

Therefore, integrating local Bau Lolon cultural values into the process of creating and implementing village policies is an appropriate and strategic step to ensure the sustainability and acceptability of policies at the village level. Through intense interaction and dialogue with the informants, it was discovered that the Bau Lolon ritual is an important part of the indigenous belief that is the center of all cultural rituals of the community to "Rera Wulan Tana Ekan" (the highest being), the ancestors, the social environment, and the universe of the Lamaholot ethnic group in Witiham District. Bau lolon in the etymological sense comes from two words, namely Bau or Baun, which means to pour, pour, or spill. While Lolon means above or surface, in this case, it is the surface of the ground. Thus, etymologically, Bau Lolon means to spill something on the surface of the ground.

In the context of the Lamaholot ethnic group's indigenous beliefs, the word Bau Lolon signifies a ritual or prayer performed by someone while pouring or spilling a few drops of palm wine using a neak (a glass made from a split coconut shell) onto the ground. The dripping of palm wine onto the ground symbolizes respect, gratitude, and blessings to Rera Wulan Tana Ekan and her ancestors, who are encouraged to taste the palm wine first. Holding the neck filled with palm wine, the person prays while gradually pouring the palm wine onto the ground as a symbol of gratitude to Rera Wulan Tana Ekan, before drinking the palm wine. Communities that adhere to tradition always express gratitude for all the good things they receive and believe in the intervention of Rera Wulan Tana Ekan through the Bau Lolon ritual as the source of all life. One classic expression to describe the existence of the highest being is "teti nabe sera soron, lali nabe neten nein" (far above / God pours out blessings, down there / the earth extends abundant love).

That is why village communities that adhere to tradition share the same belief and faith that before carrying out any activity or event, it must precede and conclude with the Bau Lolon ritual. This is intended so that all good intentions or endeavors of an individual or group of people will receive the blessings of Rera Wulan Tana Ekan, the ancestors, and the natural environment. The Bau Lolon ritual also serves as a sign of human limitations and fragility, expressed through prayer, asking for worship and gratitude to Rera Wulan Tana Ekan, as well as paying respect to the ancestral spirits and the natural environment for support in all intentions and endeavors to be carried out.

Social Structure and the Role of Traditional Figures in the Implementation of Rites

Based on the results of interviews with a number of sources and the author's observations in the field, several important things were found in the Bau Lolon ritual, namely: (1) The Bau Lolon ritual may only be carried out by a figure or leader who is

specifically chosen to play this important role as a representative of the family, community or society. Because according to the views of the local community, the Bau Lolon ritual is a very sacred ritual, so that not everyone can do it; (2) Rera Wulan (Sun-Moon) in the perspective of the Lamaholot ethnic group, (a community that inhabits Witiham District and East Flores Regency in general), is the most obvious meaning as a symbol to refer to the highest being who always pours rain, heat and the power to give and process life for all living creatures and the universe in a sustainable manner.

Therefore, according to several sources, he must be worshipped and given the highest respect first, before and after carrying out an important activity. According to Stefanus (1968) one of the expressions of prayer that are usually conveyed in the Bau Lolon ritual is as follows:

"Nuba Rera Wulan, Nara Tanaekan. Gon pe, menu pe, ake maan kame susa brara, Tulun tali kame. Ola ehin, here wain. (Gon molo, menu molo)".

"Mekan maan gelekat lewo, menu maan gewain tana. Wato modo raran tukan, Tale nuleken ewa wakon, Pana todo hala, gawe bale hala. (Pana maan raran hipuk)".

Author's translation:

"Father, owner of the sun, moon, and human inhabitants of the earth, eat and drink this offering, do not make it difficult for us, increase our sustenance so that our efforts will be abundant. (Eat and drink first)."

"Eating to build a hometown, drinking to fertilize the earth. Stones in the middle of the road, ropes that get in the way, the road does not get bumped, and steps forward are taken continuously. (Walk or fight to reach the goal)."

Furthermore, (3) "*Tana ekan*" (Earth and the environment) as the place or destination for pouring palm wine, is believed by the community to be a symbol or part of the highest being that is one with Rera Wulan. The earth and the environment are places that provide living space in all its aspects for humans. Because according to the sources in Tana Ekan, humans will build commitment and wholeness of life through intimate reciprocal relationships to maintain balance and sustainability with the surrounding nature. Thus, the palm wine that is poured onto the surface of the ground and the utterance of prayers are actually a form of worship and respect for humans to the highest being. That is why before carrying out an activity, especially things related to the interests of the community, one must first ask for the blessing and support of Rera Wulan Tana Ekan and the ancestors so that all work carried out can run smoothly and successfully;

(4) "*Air Tuak*" (a type of drink tapped from the palm tree) poured onto the surface of the tana ekan (land of palms), accompanied by prayer, is a religious practice of the traditional Lamaholot ethnic group, fostering intense communication with the Supreme Being and their ancestors.

Interviews also revealed that the village government rarely involves the community and considers its cultural values in the process of drafting village regulations. However, if the involvement of all elements of society is carried out in accordance with proper procedures through deliberation forums at the neighborhood, hamlet, and village levels, a participatory and responsive planning model can be designed. Such a planning model will produce draft village regulations that will certainly better address community needs. Through village deliberations

attended by the majority of the community, all aspirations are heard, absorbed, and discussed through an open forum to ensure the urgency of any needs or issues in the process of drafting and implementing the regulations. This means that the involvement of traditional leaders, religious leaders, and local institutions in the process of drafting village regulations is essential because everyone involved can provide valuable perspectives and suggestions for improving the quality and substance of village regulations.

Other findings also confirm that draft village regulations (*ranperdes*) have mainly been created by the village government, with the Village Consultative Body (BPD) only participating in the deliberations. Consequently, these draft regulations primarily accommodate the interests of village elites and are rarely disseminated through community outreach activities. Consequently, public understanding of the values and objectives contained in each policy or village regulation to be enacted is also minimal. This will undoubtedly have a broad impact on low public support for their implementation. Therefore, important aspects of village policies or regulations that could impact community life and any inconsistencies with local values must be avoided and given serious attention in the village regulation-making process.

The Relationship between the Bau Lolon Ritual and Village Governance

Field studies also found that, in general, the people of Witiham District, East Flores Regency, remain deeply committed to the cultural values inherited from their ancestors. According to Mr. Saiful Rianghepat, a traditional leader, the Witiham community, as adherents of the Lamaholot culture, naturally find it difficult to abandon their traditions, as these have been practiced across generations and are deeply woven into their collective identity. Building upon this cultural context, the study's findings confirm that the exclusion of local practices such as the Bau Lolon ritual from the village regulation-making process has contributed to weak community engagement and diminished legitimacy of policies. This observation aligns with (Mazmanian, 1983) theory of policy implementation, which emphasizes that successful implementation depends heavily on social acceptance and the local relevance of policy content.

Social acceptance is particularly crucial in rural and traditional settings, where policies must resonate with local identity and norms. For example, in the European Union, a lack of social acceptance for renewable energy plants has been shown to hinder policy effectiveness due to community resistance (Bragolusi & Righettini, 2022). Similarly, in the case of Witiham, the ineffective implementation of BUMDes regulations can be attributed to a lack of cultural alignment, particularly the neglect of ritualistic and participatory elements embedded in local tradition. This pattern reflects the broader principle that policies must be contextually embedded. In Indonesia, the repeated non-implementation of the West Sumatra Provincial Regulation underscores how policies that overlook local customs and traditional governance structures are likely to encounter resistance and fail to deliver their intended outcomes (Yulivestra et al., 2025). As (Lazdinis et al., 2007) argue, disconnects between formal institutions and community-based legitimacy mechanisms present critical barriers to successful governance.

In the community's view, these cultural values are the foundation of social ethics and morals. Therefore, any violation of

these norms is believed to result in curses and social sanctions for the violator. Therefore, adherence by every member of the community to the cultural values embraced by the community is crucial to avoid various forms of curses and customary sanctions. However, every curse and social or customary sanction received is always accompanied by a restoration and reconciliation ritual (the *hodi limaka* rite or *mela sera* rite) for the violators. This is intended to maintain social harmony and prevent the curse from spreading to other family members.

In this context, a participatory village regulation-making process that is responsive to local values is truly key to success and can also mitigate social resistance to any policies implemented by the village government. Studies in other regions, such as Gumanano Village show that local wisdom is particularly effective in environmental conservation. Local practices such as mutual cooperation, customary prohibitions against environmentally destructive behaviors, and rituals honoring the sea have been instrumental in maintaining beach cleanliness and ecological balance (Kaswandi et al., 2025). Similarly, integrating cultural norms into irrigation governance in West Sumatra has strengthened the performance of modern systems (Utami & Oue, 2023). These cases reinforce the idea that local values can significantly enhance regulatory quality, effectiveness, and public support (Utama & Ariefiani, 2025).

In light of these examples, the village government should also regularly hold local cultural or traditional festivals as part of strengthening and developing local knowledge in general within the village. Observing the meaning of the Bau Lolon ritual as part of local wisdom, it is actually very essential and reasonable if the Bau Lolon ritual is integrated into the process of making village regulations, as well as in the implementation stage, namely by including the Bau Lolon ritual activities at the opening stage of the discussion of the draft village regulations and at the stage of determination and implementation of village regulations. The primary purpose of the process of integrating local values into the process of making village regulations, is basically to ensure that everyone involved in the process of making and implementing village policies will undoubtedly be responsible for having performed the Bau Lolon ritual in front of the community, Rera Wulan Tana Ekan and the ancestors as witnesses. This is certainly intended so that the village regulations that have been established have strong supporting and binding power, and their accountability can be guaranteed because the makers and implementers of policies will not arbitrarily act outside of what has been determined.

Furthermore, by ritualizing the policy process, the village government effectively builds cultural safeguards against power abuse while reinforcing the continuity of ancestral knowledge systems. This resonates with Gaventa (2006) concept of "spaces of engagement" and Chandler's (2018) vernacular governance framework, where local epistemologies are not just symbolic, but active components of democratic governance (Adianto et al., 2021; Guttman, 2015).

Nevertheless, if the Bau Lolon ritual can be integrated into creating and implementing village policies, it will not be implemented immediately. Instead, preparations must first be made to establish a village customary institution. This customary institution will consist of all stakeholders in the village as community representatives, and one of its functions will be to regulate the system and mechanisms for implementing the Bau Lolon ritual.

However, before proceeding further, the village government and the Village Consultative Body (BPD) need to provide the community with a good understanding of the importance of integrating local values into creating village regulations and their impact on daily life. This means socializing the idea through meetings and group discussions with various community elements to raise critical awareness and convince the community of the urgency of integrating local values into creating and implementing village regulations. By involving all levels of society and accommodating more interests in creating and implementing village regulations, the village policy products or regulations will undoubtedly be more effectively accepted and followed by all village resident.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of Bau Lolon tradition (Lamaholot ritual) into the formulation and implementation of village regulations significantly enhances policy legitimacy, community engagement, and moral accountability within local governance. The ritual serves not only as a symbolic act but as a binding ethical framework that reinforces collective responsibility among stakeholders, especially when included at critical stages such as policy deliberation and ratification. Empirical data from Witiham District show that current policy-making processes tend to marginalize cultural values and local institutions, leading to low public support and weak implementation outcomes. Integrating local wisdom provides a culturally resonant alternative model for participatory and accountable village governance. This study contributes to the broader discourse on indigenous governance models by offering a case-based example of how local traditions can be formalized into regulatory structures, thereby bridging the gap between formal legalism and communal norms. It also underscores the role of cultural legitimacy as a critical success factor in policy implementation at the grassroots level.

This study is limited in scope by its focus on only two villages within the Witiham District, which may not fully represent the diversity of practices and interpretations of Bau Lolon across the Lamaholot region. Future research should consider a comparative analysis across multiple districts or cultural regions to examine variations in the integration of local rituals into governance. Moreover, employing mixed methods, including surveys or participatory action research, can further validate the findings and expand their applicability to broader policy contexts. Exploring the role of customary institutions in institutionalizing local traditions into formal governance mechanisms is also a promising direction for further inquiry.

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