

The *Tungku* marriage as a bond between two families in Rai village, Ruteng district, Manggarai regency

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the philosophical significance of the *tungku* marriage tradition. A qualitative research method with a descriptive approach was employed. Data collection involved observation, interviews, and documentation, with traditional leaders, community members, and the younger generation serving as informants. Data analysis was conducted in three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the *tungku* marriage tradition holds profound philosophical meaning as a means of fostering kinship ties. This tradition serves as a vital mechanism for maintaining strong, enduring family bonds across generations between the *anak rona* (the bride-giving group) and the *anak wina* (the bride-receiving group). Through *tungku* marriage, the cultural values and social structures of the indigenous community are preserved and passed down from one generation to the next.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui makna filosofis tradisi perkawinan *tungku*. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi dengan melibatkan tokoh adat, masyarakat, serta generasi muda sebagai informan penelitian. Analisis data dalam penelitian ini dilakukan melalui tiga tahapan utama, yaitu reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi perkawinan *tungku* memiliki makna filosofis yang sangat mendalam sebagai bentuk penyambung hubungan kekerabatan. Tradisi ini menjadi sarana penting agar ikatan kekeluargaan antara kelompok *anak rona* (pihak pemberi gadis) dan *anak wina* (pihak penerima gadis) tetap terjalin dengan erat secara turun-temurun. Melalui perkawinan *tungku*, nilai-nilai kultural dan struktur sosial masyarakat adat dapat terus dipertahankan dari generasi ke generasi.

Keywords

philosophical significance Tungku marriage, anak Rona, and anak Wina

1. Introduction

Indonesia is known for its diversity of ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and customs. This diversity is reflected in various aspects of societal life, including kinship systems and marriage traditions. Each region possesses unique marriage patterns and practices that align with the cultural values upheld by its community (Koentjaraningrat, 2002). One marriage tradition that continues to be maintained and preserved by the community to this day is the *Tungku* marriage tradition found in Rai Village, Ruteng District, Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara.

Tungku marriage is a form of customary marriage practiced within a single lineage specifically between the son of a sister and the daughter of a brother, whether they share close blood ties or belong to more distant branches of the same lineage. In the Manggarai language, the term *tungku* means to connect or to reconnect, reflecting the tradition's purpose: to strengthen and sustain family ties between two parties who already share a kinship bond (Sembiring et al., 2026). This tradition is believed to be a means of ensuring the continuity of the tribe or clan and preventing the severance of social ties between extended families.

From an anthropological perspective, marriage is viewed not merely as a bond between two individuals but also as a form of social contract between two family groups. That marriage is a legitimate transaction and social contract between a man and a woman that establishes their respective rights and obligations socially, economically, and culturally (Pujileksono, 2015). Meanwhile, under the provisions of Law No. 1 of 1974, marriage is defined as an outward and inward commitment binding a man and a woman in the status of husband and wife, with the aim of building a harmonious and enduring household founded on the values of belief in the One and Only God (Rahmah et al., 2024). Kinship serves as a foundation for behaviors that are continuously passed down to subsequent generations, and its practice within the community is governed by norms of propriety. The values embodied in *perkawinan tungku* (a specific form of marriage alliance) center on family and kinship ties, fostering a deeper sense of closeness between the parties involved. In Manggarai culture, two kinship groups are of paramount importance: the *anak wina* (the groom's side) and the *anak rona* (the bride's side).

In their daily lives, the Manggarai people prioritize a spirit of kinship and communal solidarity. This is evident in their collective social lifestyle, where they derive meaning from being with others, viewing fellow community members as part of their own family. The primary objective of this cultural practice is to perpetuate family ties and prevent them from fading away. Among the Manggarai, *perkawinan tungku* is driven by the wishes of the parents on both the male (*anak wina*) and female (*anak rona*) sides (Doris & Hutagalung, 2024).

The *tungku* marriage system in Manggarai comprises three primary forms: *Tungku cu'u* (consanguineous marriage between the children of full siblings); *Tungku cangkang* (marriage outside the clan or one that establishes a new kinship bond between *Anak Wina* and *Anak Rona* groups); and *Tungku anak rona musu/canggot* (marriage to the daughter of a relative from a previous wife-giving lineage) (Balur, 2022).

The persistence of this tradition is rooted in the noble values it embodies, such as preserving family identity, strengthening kinship ties, and ensuring the continuity of the clan or lineage. Manggarai culture recognizes two key kinship terms: *Anak Wina* (the male/wife-taking side) and *Anak Rona* (the female/wife-giving side). The relationship between these two groups forms the foundation for determining the direction and structure of customary marriages.

However, modernization and globalization present distinct challenges to the preservation of this tradition. Younger

generations are increasingly moving away from customary practices like *tungku* marriage, influenced by factors such as education, religion, urbanization, and a shift toward more individualistic worldviews (Lastaria & Fajeri, 2023). This trend is a matter of serious concern for the community and cultural observers, as it raises fears regarding the potential loss of cultural identity and family values that have been cultivated over centuries. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct an in-depth academic study of the *tungku* marriage tradition in Rai Village, Manggarai. This research aims to document the various forms of the tradition, understand the values embedded within it, and identify the challenges facing its preservation amidst the currents of social change.

2. Research Method

Etymologically, the term *qualitative* derives from the Latin *qualitas*, meaning the nature or characteristic of something. In a research context, a qualitative approach refers to methods that focus on understanding phenomena based on the inherent traits, features, or qualities they possess (Ahmadin, 2013). Terminologically, qualitative research is defined as a scientific approach aimed at understanding social meaning from the participants' perspectives, utilizing data collection methods such as in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Rahman, 2022).

The choice of research method must align with the study's objectives, the type of data required, and the specific research context. According to Sumilih (2025), opting for a qualitative approach focuses not only on data collection and analysis but also on how the researcher deeply understands and interprets social reality. Due to its exploratory and interpretive nature, qualitative research is employed across various disciplines to uncover meanings hidden within individual or group experiences (Sumilih et al., 2025).

This research was conducted in Rai Village, Ruteng District, Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). The location was selected to examine the *Perkawinan Tungku* (Hearth Marriage) tradition which serves to forge strong bonds between two families among the community of Rai Village. While the *Perkawinan Tungku* tradition is still actively preserved by the local people, it has begun to gradually fade as times change. Consequently, the researcher aims to explore in depth the symbolic and philosophical meanings of this tradition, its role in strengthening social and economic ties, and community perceptions of the tradition amidst modernization.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. General Overview of the Research Site

Geographically, Rai Village is located in Ruteng District, Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. Ruteng District is a highland area on Flores Island, with its administrative center in the town of Ruteng (Statistics Indonesia of Manggarai Regency, 2023). The district covers an area of approximately 112.2 km², with an average elevation of about 978 meters above sea level and geographical coordinates of 8.588° South Latitude and 120.390° East Longitude (Rai Village Profile, 2025). Rai Village comprises several hamlets serving as administrative units and has a population of approximately 2,300 people. The village is accessible via connecting roads leading from Ruteng town to the surrounding villages (Rai Village Profile, 2025).

Topographically, Rai Village is dominated by hills and highlands, with settlements distributed across several hamlets. Land in the area is primarily used for agriculture and plantations, cultivating crops such as rice, corn, vegetables, and coffee. The region features springs and small streams that support the community's agricultural activities. Land slopes vary from gentle to steep, influencing settlement patterns and agricultural practices within the village (Rai Village Profile, 2025).

The population of Rai Village is 153 people, consisting of 70 males and 83 females, with a total of 43 households. These data indicate that the residents of Rai Village live in a relatively small community, resulting in very close social and familial ties among the residents. Rai Village is organized into several Neighborhood Units (RT), each led by a Neighborhood Unit Head. This neighborhood unit (RT) serves as a hub for residential living, social interaction, and community economic activities (Rai Village Profile, 2025).

Rai Village is situated in a tropical highland climate zone, with average temperatures ranging from 18°C to 25°C. Annual rainfall ranges between 1,500 mm and 2,000 mm; the rainy season occurs from November to April, while the dry season lasts from May to October. These climatic conditions are highly favorable for the village's agricultural and plantation activities (Rai Village Profile, 2025).

The majority of Rai Village residents work in the agricultural and trade sectors, cultivating crops such as rice, corn, vegetables, and coffee. Additionally, residents engage in livestock farming (cattle, pigs, and chickens), small-scale trading, civil service, and other service-sector jobs (Rai Village Profile, 2025). Car Free Day (CFD) is an activity concept which historically originated in France on September 22, 1998. The idea was sparked by the French Minister of the Environment through the theme In My City Without Cars, which was later confirmed as Car Free Day or Car Free Day. Data from the 2025 Rai Village Profile reveals a diverse range of occupations among the residents, although the majority work in the agricultural sector. The table indicates that farming is the most dominant occupation, engaging 100 individuals. This demonstrates that agriculture remains the primary livelihood for the village community. Beyond farming, there are several other occupations, albeit with smaller numbers of practitioners: one soldier, one midwife, and two teachers. Meanwhile, two residents work as drivers or motorcycle taxi (ojek) operators, and three work as traders. Additionally, four individuals are university students, indicating that a portion of the population is pursuing higher education. Overall, the data shows that the livelihood structure of the Rai Village community remains dominated by the agricultural sector, while other occupations are held by only a small fraction of the population.

Social conditions refer to the state or situation characterizing community life regarding interpersonal and inter-group relationships; this encompasses aspects such as social interaction, kinship ties, solidarity, norms, values, and patterns of life within the community environment. Social conditions also reflect how the community lives, cooperates, adapts, and maintains social relationships in daily life. The majority of Rai Village residents are Catholic. Religious life in the village is dominated by Catholic activities and celebrations, such as Christmas, Easter, Good Friday, and the annual celebration honoring the village's patron saint. The community of Duawutun Village is highly enthusiastic in preparing for religious events, ensuring that every celebration proceeds smoothly (Rai Village Profile 2025)

The community of Rai Village maintains a social life deeply rooted in values of mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), kinship, and customary traditions. Fundamentally, the majority of Rai Village residents work as farmers. This is evident from the prevalence of plantations, confirming that farming is the primary livelihood for the population undertaken to meet daily needs even though some residents pursue other professions.

The people of Rai Village belong to the Manggarai indigenous community and steadfastly uphold ancestral customs and cultural values. Kinship systems play a vital role in social life, particularly regarding family ties formed through lineage and customary marriage. Values such as togetherness, mutual cooperation, and consensus-based deliberation (*musyawarah*) are highly cherished. Social and customary activities typically involve the extended family and are led by customary elders. One tradition still practiced today is the *tungku* (hearth) tradition, which serves as a symbol of unity and a bond between two families. The *tungku* tradition is viewed not merely as a ceremonial act but as a means to strengthen family ties, instill

a sense of responsibility, and maintain social harmony within the Rai Village community. (Rai Village Profile 2025)

3.2. The *Tungku* Marriage Tradition in Manggarai

The word *perkawinan* (marriage) derives from *kawin*, meaning to form a family with a member of the opposite sex to become a husband or a wife (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, 2016). From this definition, we understand that marriage involves two individuals of different sexes forming a family and becoming husband and wife. The religious teachings embraced by a community are closely linked to its cultural customs. This is because customary laws regarding marriage must be observed and practiced by all members of the indigenous community; adherence to marriage customs is also considered an act of obedience to one's ancestors. Among the Manggarai people of Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, there exists a form of marriage distinct from those in other regions of Indonesia: *perkawinan tungku*, or in the local dialect, *kawing tungku*. Here, *kawing* means marriage, and *tungku* means to connect or continue (Nggoro, 2006). *Kawing tungku* is a marriage between the child of a brother and the child of a sister—whether the parents are full siblings or cousins. Essentially, *kawing tungku* is defined by the blood relationship between the two parties entering the marriage (Qadri, 2022).

Kinship serves as a vehicle for the formation of behaviors passed down continuously to subsequent generations; its practice within the community is governed by norms of propriety and etiquette (Saebani, 2022). The values embodied in *kawing tungku* are those of family and kinship, fostering a closer bond between the parties involved. In Manggarai terminology, there are two crucial kinship groups: *Anak Wina* (the male side) and *Anak Rona* (the female side). In their daily lives, the Manggarai people consistently prioritize a spirit of kinship and communal solidarity. This is evident in their collective social lifestyle, where individuals find meaning in their existence through their interactions with others; indeed, others are invariably viewed as family. The primary objective of this cultural practice is to perpetuate family ties and prevent them from fading away. The *tungku* marriage practice among the Manggarai is driven by the wishes of the parents specifically the parents of the groom, known as *anak wina*, and the parents of the bride, known as *ana rona* (Dimun & Natajaya, 2022).

Tungku marriage takes three forms. First, *tungku cu'u* is a marriage between close blood relatives specifically between the children of siblings who share the same parents and grandparents. Second, *tungku cangkang* is a marriage outside the clan or one that establishes a new kinship relationship between the *anak wina* and *ana rona* groups. Third, *tungku anak rona musu* is a marriage involving blood ties with the family of the wife-givers (the in-laws) (Murni & Saly, 2022).

The philosophical significance of the *tungku* marriage tradition, literally, *tungku* means to reconnect or to join. The term is commonly used in the context of mending relationships that have suffered conflict or rupture. In the context of matrimony, *tungku* marriage is a ceremonial practice aimed at strengthening pre-existing kinship ties (Lapak et al., 2021).

Tungku marriage takes place between clans. The purpose of this union is to mend severed relationships and to renew and reinforce marital bonds that previously existed. This type of marriage aims to re-establish a previously severed relationship; nevertheless, the *belis* (customary bride price) is still presented to the woman's side as a gesture of appreciation toward her parents and family.

Belis is a cultural tradition passed down through generations that must be respected. Furthermore, it serves as a token of appreciation from the groom's side to the bride's parents for having raised, cared for, and educated their daughter until she was ready for marriage. Following the wedding, the bride moves to the groom's home, and her parents receive no further compensation. Thus, *belis* stands as an expression of gratitude and appreciation toward the bride's family, as well as a mark of respect for the dignity of women (Maria Yosefina Septiani, 2024).

3.3. Philosophical Significance of the *Tungku* Marriage Tradition in the Kinship Relations

The *tungku* marriage tradition (*kawing tungku*) in Manggarai including in Rai Village holds profound philosophical significance regarding the social structure and the relationship between the two families involved in the community's kinship system. This tradition is not merely understood as a marriage process but as a cultural mechanism that functions to strengthen and maintain the continuity of relationships between families—specifically between the *anak rona* (wife-givers) and the *anak wina* (wife-takers). Furthermore, this tradition aims to preserve inherited assets within the clan and prevent the transfer of ownership outside the lineage (Lon, 2020).

It also serves as a social strategy to expand and strengthen the family membership, thereby ensuring the clan's continued existence across generations (Gagang, 2023). In the context of Manggarai custom, *tungku* marriage is viewed as an ideal form that binds two extended families through the symbolic connection of the *tungku* (hearth) which represents the center of warmth, togetherness, and family survival. Thus, the hearth serves not only as a symbol of the household but also as a representation of social solidarity and the balance of kinship relations within the community (Gunawan, 2022).

Various studies indicate that *tungku* marriage in Manggarai is regarded as an ideal form of marriage that strengthens the *anak rona*–*anak wina* relationship (Sedia et al., 2024) and preserves the continuity of the clan (Lon, 2020), while simultaneously serving as an arena for the negotiation of local custom (Gunawan, 2022; Hadun, 2018). *Kawing tungku* serves to continuously foster family ties established over many years; the *tungku* represents the best way to preserve these bonds, as without this tradition, family connections could fade and vanish. *Tungku* signifies connecting, while *salang* means path thus, *tungku salang* refers to reconnecting a path that had been severed. *Tungku salang* represents a third form of discourse constructed by the Manggarai community based on the very purpose of the *kawing tungku* tradition itself (Mahardika et al., 2022). Mr. Adrianis Marselus Nggoro, a lecturer and Manggarai cultural expert, emphasizes this philosophical aspect:

The meaning of *tungku* goes beyond mere ritual. *Tungku* signifies connection; in the context of the *tungku* marriage tradition, it serves to reconnect families that were previously linked. This marriage practice was established out of a fear that the family connection might otherwise be lost. It embodies a life philosophy teaching that family ties must be maintained and never severed. Every such marriage stands as a symbol of social responsibility and the continuity of family life (Interview with Adrianis Marselus Nggoro, Unika Campus Canteen, December 17, 2025, at 11:20 AM).

The statement above illustrates the philosophy of the *tungku* (hearth) as a means of sustaining family ties; it explains that this type of marriage strengthens and revitalizes the marital relationship between the *anak rona* (wife-giving family) and the *anak wina* (wife-receiving family) (Lon, 2020; Jegaut, 2020). The concept of the *tungku* representing moral-social bonds, the strengthening of kinship networks, and the prevention of severed fraternal ties is strongly supported by studies on the values of harmony and moral obligation found in Manggarai rituals, such as the *Penti* ceremony (Itu & Pradoko, 2020). Furthermore, *tungku* marriage is considered an ideal model under Manggarai custom because it tightens the relationship between the *anak rona* and the *anak wina*. The *tungku* philosophy symbolizes the center of family warmth, through this marriage, existing relationships are renewed and expanded, ensuring the social structure remains robust. The dowry, or *belis*, is transferred to one's own family, thereby keeping assets within the kinship circle. Through *tungku* marriage, the dowry (*belis*) remains within the family network and contributes to increasing the number of family members fostering growth on both the brother's and sister's sides which is directly linked to the existential purpose of marriage: the preservation and expansion of the clan (Lon, 2020). As explained by one of the informants, Mr. Florianus Syukura traditional elder in Rai Village regarding the social relevance of this tradition:

The *perkawinan tungku* (hearth marriage) exists out of a fear that family ties might fray. Through this marriage, family bonds remain tight, solidarity is preserved, and conflict can be minimized. It is not merely a custom but also a social strategy to ensure the community stays connected and that family heritage is neither lost nor falls into the hands of outsiders (Interview with Florianus Syukur, Rumah Gendang, December 28, 2025, at 17:00).

This statement underscores that the *perkawinan tungku* tradition is not merely symbolic; it serves a tangible social function by maintaining solidarity, strengthening kinship networks, and fostering social integration among families. From the perspective of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism (1969), this tradition can be understood as a system of social exchange that creates reciprocal relationships between families, thereby establishing social equilibrium within the community. When analyzed in tandem, the philosophical and social dimensions of the *perkawinan tungku* tradition are revealed to be interconnected.

Philosophical values such as social responsibility, continuity, and solidarity underpin the tradition's social functions: integration, the strengthening of kinship networks, and social stability. In other words, the tradition acts as a medium for transmitting moral values while simultaneously reinforcing social structures, ensuring the continuity of Manggarai society even amidst the changing times. Thus, philosophical and social analyses demonstrate that the *perkawinan tungku* tradition holds universal value: beyond serving as a cultural heritage, it teaches the importance of harmonious relationships, social responsibility, and solidarity in community life. Efforts to preserve this tradition are crucial not only for safeguarding cultural identity but also for maintaining a healthy and sustainable social structure.

5. Conclusion

The *tungku* marriage tradition in Rai Village holds profound philosophical, social, and cultural significance within Manggarai society. Philosophically, this tradition is understood as a means of reconnecting kinship ties between the *anak rona* (the bride-giving group) and the *anak wina* (the bride-receiving group), ensuring the relationship endures across generations. The *tungku* tradition is regarded as an ideal form of marriage because it fosters harmony, solidarity, and the continuity of familial and customary bonds. Viewed through the lens of Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, *tungku* marriage represents a form of social alliance and kinship exchange that serves to maintain social balance and integration within the community. Consequently, this tradition not only constitutes a local cultural heritage but also reflects universal values regarding the importance of social relationships and togetherness.

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