

Unveiling the Cultural Meanings of *Aitali Watubao* Ritual for Marriage: An Ethnolinguistics Study

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Abstract. This research examines the cultural meaning of the *Aitali Watubao* Ritual for marriage in the indigenous people of the Wodon Tribe in Wolomotong Village, East Maumere. This research used a descriptive qualitative method with an ethnolinguistic approach. The data in this study consisted of verbal and nonverbal data. The verbal data is in the form of information in the ritual speech. Meanwhile, nonverbal data is in the form of symbols in the tools and materials. The tools used include *Luli*, *Wajak*, *Watu Mahang*, and *Watu Tubok*. Meanwhile, the materials always used are *Hoban Bura*, *Telo*, *Bako*, *Wawi I'ur Tilu Tema*, *Moke*, *I'an Kekor*, *Wua ta'a nora Apur*. The ritual speeches contain intentions, prayers, and requests tailored to the event's form. The ritual speeches were delivered in two places, at the *Watu Piong* location inside the house and the *Aitali Watubao* place under a large banyan tree in the middle of the forest. The strings of prayers and wishes inside the house are usually addressed to the male biological parents, while the strings of prayers in the centre of the forest are addressed to the ancestors.

Keywords: *Aitali Watubao* for marriage, cultural meaning, ritual terms

1 Introduction

Amid the times, every society or social group still faithfully preserves their respective cultures. Culture shapes character and identity closely related to behaviour or action, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, and customs in a particular society. According to [1]–[4] Culture is very complex, consisting of beliefs, customs, arts, manners, skills, and customs inherent in human society. A culture that grows and develops in society has one of the characteristics, namely the existence of local wisdom values that must be preserved. [5]–[7] states that culture is a system of communication and interaction rules that allow society to exist, survive, and be sustainable. Meanwhile, [8], [9] states that the society of Indonesia is a pluralistic society that has various cultures and customs that live in social unity with that plurality giving rise to many differences in ethnicity, race, social level, religion, and culture (habits). In this case, culture comes from the habits or speech acts of humans that occur continuously and are perpetuated by subsequent civilizations. Humans create culture and classify it in various forms and types. Then, culture again divides humans based on all their preexisting beliefs. Therefore, culture is a multifaceted concept encompassing beliefs, customs, arts, manners, skills, and rules of communication and interaction. It is a dynamic and complex system that shapes the character and identity of a

society, allowing it to exist, survive, and evolve. In this case, it is essential to preserve the values of local wisdom and the role of culture in fostering social unity amid diversity.

Ethnolinguistics studies how language and culture influence each other and how language variations around the world reflect cultural differences. According [10], ethnolinguistics is the branch of linguistics concerned with the role of language in social and cultural contexts in promoting and maintaining cultural practices and social structures. Meanwhile, according to Baehaqie in [5], Ethnolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that investigates language, either its structure or vocabulary, based on the perspective and culture of the speaking community, which is intended to uncover or reveal the culture of the community. In this respect, the primary goal of ethnolinguistics is to understand the complex relationship between language and culture and ways to maintain the diversity of languages and cultures worldwide.

Concerning language and culture, each region has its unique traditions. According to [6] [12], every region in Indonesia has different traditional ceremonies, traditions, local wisdom, culture and language that make it unique. Meanwhile, [7] state that cultural rituals can be a means of daily communication and betrothal or marriage, opening new land for farming activities, planting, harvesting, welcoming guests, feasting, conflict resolution and countless others. In the implementation process, culture always has values and forms of respect from humans to the highest form. This form of respect is an inseparable part of the daily life of a specific group of people. The essence of this worship is always focused on the role of ancestors, who are very important in the life of indigenous peoples, namely as intermediaries to help humans in their relationship with the highest entity being.

The tradition of honouring ancestors is also among indigenous people in Wolomotong village, Doreng sub-district, Sikka district, East Nusa Tenggara. Sikka language is one of the traditional languages used by people in the Sikka regency to communicate and share information. Sikka's local language is used as a means of daily communication and in various cultural ceremonies [13], [14]. In this case, the ceremony that only the people in East Maumere do is called "*Aitali Watubao*". In Wolomotong village, there is the Wodon tribe as the original tribe, and then there are several immigrant tribes, including the Keytimu tribe, Mana tribe, Utapara tribe and Lio tribe. Each tribe in East Maumere has its own "*Aitali*" place, either on a big rock (*watugete*) or under a big tree (*aigete*). The ceremony, which men only attend, is always an opening rite before a specific event, for example, before a wedding. Usually, one week before the wedding, all members of the family tribe are required to perform the "*Aitali Watubao*" rite. According to [15], traditionally, the household rituals within the nuclear family are performed in this place. Every house must have this cornerstone, not only in *Lepo Gete*. However, the placement of mokung is only at *watu mahang* in *Lepo Gete*. *Aitali* is located in the Heritage land of each tribe.

This site intends to ask for ancestors' support so that the wedding preparation process runs smoothly and successfully. The speech represents the intent. Marwati in [10]state that traditional marriage ceremony syair is one part of traditional folk culture with a range of values relevant to the community's life. In this case, the ceremony requires the family to ask the ancestors in respectful speech. This ceremony has a variety of schedules, where if there is

already preparation of tools and materials, the ceremony can be held the next day. The Wolomotong people believe that if they have not prepared everything correctly, it is advisable not to "say/express readiness in a hurry" because the ancestors always listen to what is said. If it has been said, it must be ensured that this ritual can occur as planned. If it is cancelled due to lack of preparation, the ancestors will feel offended and angry through the difficulties that will be received later.

Implementing the "*Aitali Watubao*" traditional ceremony before the Wodon Tribe in Wolomotong village presents symbols with profound meaning for the local indigenous people. This traditional ceremony has two symbols: verbal symbols in the form of prayers uttered by the *Lima Rawin Mata Molo* or traditional leaders, meaning worship, supplication, asking, and thanksgiving. Meanwhile, nonverbal symbols in the form of tools are ceremonial equipment that means offerings to the ancestors. Several studies also discussed it previously. First, the research is written by [16]. This study aims to determine the lexical and cultural meanings of the wedding bridal jewellery of Sundanese Priangan women. Second, the research is written by [12]. This research aimed to determine the lexical and cultural meanings of food names and utensils used in Toba Batak traditional ceremonies in Simangumban District, North Tapanuli Regency. Third, the research is written by [13]. This study aimed to look into describe the lexical (semantic) meaning of Uborampe's traditional marriage to Kemanten Malang Keputren and describe the meaning of the cultural (cultural) context of Uborampe's traditional marriage to Kemanten Malang Keputren. Fourth, the research is written by [14]. This study aimed to know the lexical and cultural meanings of verbal and non-verbal language of majalan sortana tradition. Fifth, the research is written by [15]. This research aimed to know the cultural view of the North Bali community towards Ngidih marriage. Sixth, the research is written by [17]. This research aimed to know the similarities between the *Toma Aitali* rite and the devotion to saints in the Catholic Church that helps the Wolomotong Catholics to live their faith. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the lexical and cultural meanings of the tools, materials, and ritual speech of *Aitali Watubao* Rituals.

Related to this kind of research, some previous studies have differences and similarities with this research. Both this research and previous studies above discuss lexical and cultural meanings. However, this research and previous studies have different objects of the study. The first research focuses on Sundanese Priangan bridal jewellery. The second research focuses on the names of food and utensils, such as Toba, used in traditional Batak ceremonies. The third research focuses on the Uborampe of the traditional wedding of Malang kemanten keputren. The fourth research focuses on Majalan Sortana Tradition in the Death Ceremony of the Aeng Tong-tong Madura Society. The fifth research focuses on Ngidih marriage in North Bali. The sixth research focuses on the Catholic Church's devotion to saints and the *Toma Aitali* rite, which helps Wolomotong Catholics to live their faith. In contrast, this research focuses on *Aitali Watubao* Rituals for marriage.

2 Method

This research focuses on the lexical meaning and cultural meaning of the traditional ceremony of *Aitali Watubao*, especially for marriage in East Maumere. This research was conducted in April 2023 with the data sources obtained from four selected informants, namely Mr. Damianus Degu (57 years old) as a customary leader of the Wodon tribe, Mr. Martinus Wodon (61 years old) as a customary leader of the Keytimu tribe, Mr. Eliseus Ribak (64 years old) as a customary leader of the Mana tribe and Mr. Thadeus Mang Ipir Wodon (84 years old) as a customary leader of the Wodon tribe and former village head of Wolomotong. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative with an ethnolinguistic approach. *The qualitative method* is a method that produces descriptive information both orally and in writing in the community Djajasudarma [18]. The data for this study were collected using note-taking techniques. According to [10], the listening method uses basic techniques, which include tapping, active listening, free observation according to professional instructions, recording, and notes. This research is divided into three stages: the data collection stage, the data classification stage and the data analysis stage. Data collection for this study consists of verbal and nonverbal data. The source of verbal data collection is information provided in linguistic units of words, phrases, sentences, and sentences contained in the traditional language of the *Aitali Watubao* ceremony. Sentence is a form of speaking activity in words, phrases, clauses and sentences [19]. Meanwhile, nonverbal data in the form of symbols in the form of tools and materials is included in the *Aitali Watubao* ceremony. The researcher used purposive sampling to determine the informants to be selected. The purposive sampling technique is a technique in which sources of information are sampled from a certain point of view [20], for example traditional leaders or people who know best about all the information the researcher expects.

3 Results and Discussion

Aitali Watubao consists of four words: *Ai*, meaning tree; *tali*, meaning rope; *watu*, meaning stone; and *bao*, meaning big tree. Realistically, *Aitali Watubao* is a rite of the encounter between the living (*nitu moret*) and the dead (*nitu maten*) in a tree generally filled with natural ropes wrapped around and hanging from the tree. This encounter takes place under a large tree, such as a banyan tree, which the tribe itself has specially prepared. According to the beliefs of the Wolomotong people, the banyan tree is a tree that contains sacred nuances because it can provide coolness and comfort. The banyan tree is recognised as a sanctuary for everyone who wants to need comfort. The ceremony, which the indigenous people of East Maumere only perform, has different *Aitali* locations. The location of *Aitali Watubao* for the indigenous people of the Wodon tribe in Wolomotong village is in the middle of the garden, which is believed to be the centre of togetherness and life balance.

In the encounter, the indigenous people of the Wodon tribe make sacrificial offerings to the ancestors and simultaneously express supplication and gratitude as a form of hope for salvation. The procession of this rite presents various types of preparation of tools, materials,

and a series of prayer expressions. Those who do not know about this rite must not understand the terms always used in the *Aitali Watubao* rite. This study aims to analyse the linguistic and cultural meanings of the tools, materials, and ritual speech of *Aitali Watubao rituals* as follows.

Symbolism of Tools in Aitali Watubao Rituals

In the *Aitali Watubao* traditional ceremony, especially before the wedding, several things must be prepared correctly and adequately, including tools and materials. The tools and materials for approaching weddings or other events are always the same in these traditional ceremonies. Below are examples of tools used to process *Aitali Watubao* rituals.

Table 1. Tool in *Aitali Watubao* Rituals

N	Word	The Lexical Meaning
1.	<i>Luli</i>	A bowl made of coconut shells that has been cleaned
2.	<i>Wajak</i>	Plates made of palm leaves
3.	<i>Watu Mahang</i>	Flat-shaped boulders
4.	<i>Watu Tubok</i>	Perpendicularly shaped stone

Table 1 shows that several tools are used in the *Aitali Watubao rituals for marriage*.

First, *Luli*. 1) *Luli* comes from the Sikka language, which means a bowl made from coconut shells. *Luli* will usually be filled with rice, chicken eggs and fish tails. In a cultural sense, *Luli* gives the meaning of a shell of life called Earth, where this shell contains many things about life.

Second, *Wajak*. 2) *Wajak* comes from the Sikka regional language, a woven plate made from palm leaves. *Wajak* is usually filled with betel nut, tobacco, and lime. In a cultural sense, *wajak* means the place where life takes place. If *Luli* means the shell of life called Earth, *Wajak* means the course of human life.

Third, *Watu Mahang*. 3) *Watu Mahang* comes from the Sikka regional language, which means a large, flat-shaped stone. This stone is usually placed horizontally, symbolising a banquet table or offering place. In a cultural sense, *Watu Mahang* is often called "Ina Nian Tanah Wawa," meaning Mother Earth. On the other hand, this stone means a relationship between fellow humans in everyday life.

Fourth, *Watu Tubok*. 4) *Watu Tubok* comes from the Sikka regional language, which means a large stone in an upright shape. This stone is usually placed vertically. In a cultural sense, *Watu Tubok* is meaningful as a relationship between those on Earth and those in heaven. A special relationship between humans and the highest entity called "Ama Lero Wulan Reta" means Father on high. Its upright position symbolises the human heart that remains directed upwards to receive blessings from the Supreme Being.

In the *Sikka Krowe* language, *watu* means stone. *Watu* is used to place offerings or offerings to the ancestors.

Symbolism of Materials in Aitali Watubao Rituals

Below are examples of material used to process *Aitali Watubao* rituals.

Table 2. Material in *Aitali Watubao* Rituals

N	Word	The Lexical Meaning
1.	<i>Hoban Bura</i>	The rice will be placed on a large, flat stone
2.	<i>Telo</i>	A round free-range chicken egg in one piece
3.	<i>Wawi I'ur Tilu Tema</i>	A small-sized pig that will later be offered to the ancestors
4.	<i>Bako</i>	Tobacco is the opening thing that will be given to the ancestors
5.	<i>Moke</i>	Water that comes out of the distillation of palm trees
6.	<i>I'an Kekor</i>	Fishtail to be offered to ancestors
7.	<i>Wua, ta'a nora Apur</i>	Areca nut, betel nut and lime are the opening items to be given to the ancestors, along with tobacco.

Table 2 shows that several materials are used in the *Aitali Watubao* ritual for marriage. First, *Hoban Bura*. 1) *Hoban Bura* comes from the *Sikka* local language, meaning rice that will later be placed on a large, flat-shaped stone. Culturally, rice is the food that sustains humans. This rice will later be placed on a flat stone and placed up to seven times. The calculation of seven times symbolizes perfection because seven, according to the East Maumere community, is a sacred number. On the other hand, the calculation of seven times is considered a form of respect to the highest Being who feels the seven upper layers of the earth called "*Ama Lero Wulan Reta*" and the seven lower layers called "*Ina Nian Tanah*".

Second, *Telo*. 2) *Telo* comes from the *Sikka* local language, a free-range chicken egg still round in one piece. In cultural terms, eggs are one of the staple ingredients in offerings. Chicken eggs symbolize sacred offerings because they are food that humans have not tainted. Eggs are food that has not been contaminated with worldly things. According to the belief of the Wolomotong indigenous people, eggs are the food of spirits. Therefore, the selection of eggs as one of the main ingredients of the offerings is related to giving pure and intact to the ancestors. With this, the egg symbolizes a pure gift from a sincere heart. Eggs represent the complete and pure unity of those who make the offerings.

Third, *Wawi I'ur Tilu Tema*. 3.) *Wawi I'ur Tilu Tema* comes from the *Sikka* regional language, which means a small pig that has not been slaughtered and will later be offered to the ancestors. In cultural terms, it is a sacrificial animal commonly used in rites as an offering.

Another term is *niu bura wauk kumak pikang waten lok* (white teeth, mouth odour, foot branch, heart square). The pig that is prepared must be small due to the belief that if it is small, the ancestors will see it as an extensive offering in the other world. The pig must also be carried by four people, even if it is only tiny. This sacrificial animal has a significant meaning. According to the beliefs of the Wolomotong people, pigs are the most appropriate sacrificial animals because they are considered cold-blooded animals. Usually, if tied in the garden, the soil will be fertile because pigs often dredge it. That's why pigs are called cold-blooded animals because they give life.

Fourth, *Bako* 4.) *Bako* comes from the Sikka language, which means tobacco. The tobacco is not a modern but a traditional cigarette made from finely sliced tobacco leaves, which are then dried in the sun. Usually, the drying process lasts up to one week or seven days, depending on the sun's heat. In the belief of the people of the Wodon tribe, these seven days symbolize how the highest, highly respected entity is being. The outer layer is young palm leaves from the lontar tree, which is believed to be the giver of life as it naturally produces the water of life called *moke*. Tobacco is the opening item to be given to the ancestors. Culturally, this material symbolizes a welcome to the ancestors to be present, listen and approve of the traditional ceremony before the wedding. Seven pieces of tobacco should also be given to the ancestors as a sign of human respect for the highest entity.

Fifth, *Moke*. 5) *Moke* comes from the Sikka language, which means water. *Moke* comes from the Sikka regional language, which means water from the distillation of palm trees. In a cultural sense, *moke* is the water of life always present at every family event in *Maumere*. People who drink *moke* often get drunk as a form of respect to the host who has provided the food. *Moke* water naturally contains different alcohol levels: low, medium and high/hard. The three types of *moke* water levels symbolize human life, which often experiences various problems with different difficulty levels. Behind every difficulty experienced, humans are required to accept it and continue living as given by the highest Being.

Sixth, *I'an Kekor*. 6) *I'an Kekor* comes from the Sikka regional language, which means fishtail. In a cultural sense, the fishtail is a symbol of simplicity. For some families who may not be able to give a pig, it is permitted to give fish tails to the ancestors. Offerings should be fishtails because, on the one hand, they symbolize simplicity; on the other, they are a form of deep surrender.

Seventh, *Wua, ta'a nora Apur* 7) *Wua, ta'a nora Apur* comes from the Sikka regional language, meaning areca nut, betel nut and lime. In a cultural sense, these are the opening items to be given to the ancestors along with tobacco. Areca nut, betel nut and lime are three essential parts that cannot be separated. They show that human life always has elements of God, Nature, and Spirit.

The seven materials above symbolize perfection for the highest entity of the Wodon Tribe. When performing rituals at *Aitali*, the customary leader must place *Hoban Bura, Bako, Moke, I'an Kekor, Wua, Ta'a nora apur* on the *Watu Mahang*/offering stone seven times.

The indigenous people of Womotong village believe that the highest Being is in the seven layers above the earth called "*Ama Lero Wulan reta*"/ the high Father and in the seven layers

below the earth called "*Ina nian Tanah Wawa*"/ *Mother Earth*. Reta means above the earth, while Wawa means below the earth. The seven layers above the earth include. The first layer is *Reta Bliro Horang Anin*, which is the flying bird area. *Reta Kowa Lolo Lanan* is the second layer, which is the cloud fog area. The third layer is *Reta Uran Klu Blutuk*, the water point area. The fourth layer is called *Reta Reing Rego Reong*, which means the area of the chiefs or the angels who worship the highest form. The Fifth Layer is called *Reta Ratu Bitu*, often known as the queen, which means the ancestor of the female ruler. The Sixth Layer is called *Reta Rae Raja* of ten, called the king, which means the ancestor of the male ruler. The Seventh Layer is called *Naha Da'a Reta Deot Ama Pu*, which means the residence of the ruler of Nature, the highest Being.

The seven layers under the earth include The first layer, *Wawa Luju Buju Nian*, which is the area connecting the earth. The second layer is *Wawa Lelo Bekong Tana*, which means the connecting area of the land. The third layer is *Wawa Mita Daket*, which is the black soil area. The fourth layer is called *Wawa Mera Dalet*, which means clay area. The fifth layer is *Wawa Watu Wura*, which is the pumice area. The sixth layer is *Wawa Olo Telon*, which means the round stone area is like a turtle's egg. The seventh layer is called *Naha Da'a Wawa Nogo Tana Erit*, which means the area of the Mother of the Earth ruler in the deep land.

In implementing the *Aitali Watubao rite*, the highest respect must be paid to the fourteen layers of the earth, which are believed to be the ancestors' residences. Each ancestral area is believed to help the family in the process and implementation of the event in its way.

Symbolism of Ritual Speech

In this ceremony, the customary language constantly changes and is adjusted to the type of request for the event to be carried out, for example, for a wedding. The traditional language is usually spoken in the place of *Watu Piong* and *Aitali*.

Ritual Speech at *Watu Piong*

In the Sikka Krowe language, the word *Watu* means stone and the word *piong* means offerings to the ancestors. *Watu piong* is a special stone used to place offerings or offerings to the ancestors. In this case, before carrying out the *Aitali Watubao* ritual, the traditional leader will invite all close family members to gather near *Watu Piong*. The customary language is as follows.

Table 3. Ritual Speech at *Watu Piong*

No	Sentence	The Lexical Meaning
1.	<i>Ina du'a ama mo'a mai gea daha du'en minu linuk derin.</i>	Mother and father, let us eat and drink.

<p><i>Loning me miun, pu miun, hober miun, lu'at gai kawit. Dadi ami meten jaga plamang ami hele le'u e naruk gahun blara.</i></p>	<p>Because your children, nephews, and grandsons are getting married tomorrow. So we ask you to care for us and prevent us from illness and danger.</p>
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Table 3 above shows that several ritual of speech are used in the processes of *Aitali Watubao rituals for marriage*.

This prayer expression is delivered by the traditional ceremony leader only when inside the house. *Ina Du'a Ama Mo'at* is only said when at the *Tung Piong* location. This sentence is expressed as a form of respect for the biological parents of the man already in another world. The traditional language expression pattern above contains an opening, a body and a closing. The opening prayer is the first sentence in the string of prayers that says *Ina du'a ama mo'a mai gea daha du'en minu linuk derin*. The cultural meaning of the first sentence above is Ancestors; let us all gather here. Come, *let us eat and drink together*. This sentence is a greeting as well as an invitation to parents to be present to listen to the requests of children and grandchildren. The tone of speech should also start low and be expressed slowly. The low tone and slow voice show the child's helplessness without the parents' help.

The second sentence in the prayer string above, which reads *Loning me miun, pu miun, hober miun, lu'at gai kawit*, is part of the content. In a cultural sense, the second strand of traditional language above means that tomorrow is an important and happy day for this big family, not only for us who are still on earth but also for you in the universe. Your children, nephews, and grandchildren are getting married. When the core part is spoken, the tone of speech should also be more emphasized and clear but not seem pushy so that parents can listen and understand the requests of children and grandson well.

The closing prayer is the third sentence in the series of prayers above, which reads *Dadi ami meten jaga plamang ami hele le'u e naruk gahun blara*. In cultural terms, the sentence above means, *"So mother and father, we hope that everything can run smoothly and always be kept away from illness and danger"*. The tone was originally relatively firm but straightforward; now, in this section, the tone is lower, slow, and soft. Therefore, the parents know that the family's wishes have been conveyed, and this section is a closing greeting.

When the traditional leader says a prayer to the parents, the people around the *Watu Piong* place must be calm as a form of respect for the parents. The language function in the prayer strands above expresses distress and the need for help and requests. Because the goal is to get help from parents already in another world, the series of language and prayers must be one goal, one concise and clear request.

Ritual Speech at *Aitali Watubao*

Table 4. Ritual Speech at *Aitali Watubao*

No	Sentence	The Lexical Meaning
1.	<p><i>Ina Nian Tana Wawa, Ama Lero Wulan Reta, mai ea oti wua ta'a tena mera wiwir guk Ita tutur naruk.</i></p> <p><i>Mai Ita musung oti bako, gahu ahang guk Ita harang lalan.</i></p> <p><i>Dadi ina du'a ama mo'a mai diri du kiling kolok plina du blikon' lion. Ena te'i ami mai regang mora ina du'a ama mo'a loning me miun, pu miun, hober miun, lu'at gai kawit.</i></p> <p><i>Dadi ami meten mora ina du'a ama moa naha mai lakang ami, witi kikir lema epak, u'a naha ngebega, blawir dadi ro'on, berat dadi heak, kurang dadi gawan loning ami dopo dete nain wue wari, lu'ur dolor, imung deung du gawan, dadi ami meten ina du'a ama moa mai Ita mogat u'a hama hama tena api pola bi'an wi Ita topotete na ia.</i></p> <p><i>Dadi ina du'a ama moa ami meten mogat u'a tena hama-hama e orin da'a newar ina du'a ama moa walong.</i></p>	<p>Mother Earth, in the deep, Father Sun, moon and stars, let us eat areca and betel nuts to brighten our lips and talk.</p> <p>Let us smoke a cigarette, heating our gums to tell stories.</p> <p>Mother and Father, please listen to us. We came to see you today because your children, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren are getting married tomorrow.</p> <p>We hope you can help us work together, from far to near, from heavy to light, and from petite to much because we invite many siblings, friends, acquaintances and family, so we ask for your presence to welcome the guests.</p> <p>So, Mother and Father, we hope we can work together at home until the event is over, and then you can go home.</p>

Table 4 above shows that several ritual of speech are used in the processes of *Aitali Watubao rituals for marriage*.

This expression of prayer is delivered by the traditional ceremony leader only at the *Aitali* site. Mentions of *Ina Nian Tana Wawa Ama Lero Wulan Reta* are only said when at the *Aitali* location. The *Aitali* place is a gathering house for the extended family of the Wodon tribe, who are already in another world. Hence, the strands of traditional language and the prayer above are a form of respect for children and grandsons to the ancestors.

Here, the strands of prayer are longer and more complex because the indigenous people of the Wodon Tribe believe that this request will be conveyed and listened to by everyone, both by Father, Mother, Brothers, Sister, Uncle, Aunt, Grandfather, and Grandmother who come from the same tribal descent. The above prayer expression is divided into three parts: the opening, content and closing.

The first paragraph sentence, *Ina Nian Tana Wawa, Ama Lero Wulan Reta, mai ea oti wua ta'a tena mera wiwir guk Ita tutur naruk*, is part of the opening. In a cultural sense, the strands of traditional language above mean Ancestors; please come with us here. Let us first redden our lips with betel nut to speak beautifully. Let us heat our mouths with cigarettes so that we can tell stories. The poetic language is included in the initial greeting and invitation of the children and grandchildren to the ancestors to come together and be present around the ceremony site to listen to sincere requests. The tone of speech should also start low and slow as a sign of the inability of the children and grandchildren to carry out the event without the help of the ancestors.

The second paragraph sentence reads.

Dadi ina du'a ama mo'a mai diri du kiling kolok plina du blikon'lon. We have a mora ina du'a ama mo'a loning me miun, pu miun, hober miun, lu'at gai kawit. So, ami meten mora ina du'a ama moa naha mai lakang ami, witi kikir lema epak, u'a naha ngebega, blawir dadi ro'on, berat dadi heak, kurang dadi gawan loning ami dopo dete nain wue wari, lu'ur dolor, imung deung du gawan, dadi ami meten ina du'a ama moa mai Ita mogat u'a hama hama tena api pola bi'an wi Ita topotete na

It is included in the content section. In a cultural sense, the above prayer means Let the ancestors be here to hear and observe that we have come from afar to tell you that your dear children, nephews, and grandson are getting married tomorrow. Big things will happen in this family; we sincerely request that the ancestors help and cooperate so everything goes smoothly and successfully. Ancestors, we will invite many friends, acquaintances, relatives and friends. The prayer above is the core part that must be delivered by the leader of the traditional ceremony firmly and clearly and spoken without stammering. If it is delivered stammeringly, the ancestors will be angry and consider their presence a joke to us.

The third paragraph sentence, *Dadi Ina du'a ama moa ami meten mogat u'a tena hama-hama e orin da'a newar Ina du'a ama moa walong*, is included in the final or closing part of the prayer. Culturally, this means that we expect the intervention of the ancestors so that what is far becomes near, what is heavy becomes light, and what is little becomes much so that we can entertain all our invitations. We invite the ancestors to be together in the house until the event ends, and then the ancestors can return. The traditional language above is the concluding part of the prayers and requests the ancestors hear. The tone returns to the original low and slow tone as a sign that the ancestors also feel happiness and distress together, as in the prayer above.

Every strand of prayer always begins with a greeting to the Mother and then the Father. This is a form of respect for the Wodon tribe to the sacred womb of *Ina Nian Tana wawa*. The traditional language that contains prayers in the style of the Wodon tribe to the ancestors who are in *Watu Piong* and *Aitali Watubao* only serves as a form of expression of inability, happiness and requests. Whether the prayer will be answered or not is a later matter. However, here, the Wodon people believe that the ancestors' existence is a bridge so that their prayers are delivered and delivered to the highest entity called *Ama Lero Wulan Reta*.

These speech rituals are delivered entirely in a monologue by the *Lima Rawin Mata Molo* or the traditional ritual leader. In order to organise the ceremony, all the preparations are done by selected people in the family. However, when the ceremony occurs, the ritual speeches are organised and delivered by the traditional leader. All the uttered words are an invitation, request and sincere begging from the family, which must be delivered in a low tone and full of respect to the ancestors.

The expression must be delivered in Sikka's native language, where every word and sentence must be clear, precise and not convoluted. The ancestors are expected to be aware of the family's sincere request. However, the ancestors await the family's invitation concerning their presence in the event as part of the extended family ready to support and assist the event.

The location of *Aitali* for the Wodon tribe is located about 3 Kilometres from the main house, where in its implementation, the ceremony is followed by men who carry tools and materials that are quite large and heavy, must wear *Lipa* or a special sarong for men, must not talk to each other, look back or say harsh words that disturb the ancestors during the journey to the location because it is a taboo.

4 Conclusion

The Aitali Watubao ritual, specifically for marriage in the Wodon Tribe in East Maumere, has tools, materials, and a series of ritual languages rich in cultural meanings. . This research focuses on the cultural meaning contained in the ritual speeches, tools, and materials of the *Aitali Watubao* ritual, which can also be studied in terms of other fields of linguistic studies. The ritual is believed to be prayers and hopes from the Wodon Tribe community to the highest entity through the mediation of ancestors. For the implementation, the tools and materials used are always the same, but what is different is only the intent of the request contained in the traditional language. Some tools include *Luli, Wajak, Watu Mahang, and Watu Tubok*. On the other hand, several materials are always used, including *Hoban Bura, Telo, Bako, Wawi I'ur Tilu Tema, Moke, I'an Kekor Wua, ta'a nora Apur*. The seven ingredients above symbolize the perfection of the highest entity in the seventh layer above the earth and the seventh layer below the earth. A ritual speech also contains intentions, prayers and requests tailored to the event's form. The customary language is usually expressed in two places, namely at the *Watu Piong* location inside the house and the *Aitali Watubao* place under a large banyan tree in the middle of the forest. The prayer strands inside the house are usually addressed to the biological parents of men. In contrast, the prayer strands in the garden are addressed to the ancestors, Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, Uncle, Aunt, Grandfather, and Grandmother, who come from the same family. The selection of banyan trees in the middle of the forest symbolizes the balance of life for the indigenous people of the Wodon Tribe. This sacred ceremony has been present for a long time as a form of respect for ancestors. Even though they differ from their children and grandchildren, there is always family communication through ceremonies. The last place the prayers expressed are always believed to stop and be heard by *Ama Lero Wulan Reta* through the intercession of the ancestors. This research explores the traditional *Aitali Watubao* ritual for marriage among

the Wodon Tribe, which has not been previously studied or published. The ritual is considered sacred and cannot be substituted with other rites. In its implementation, the men of the Wodon tribe and their ancestors respected the women in the tribe. Therefore, women were responsible for preparing heavy labor tasks such as carrying rice, pigs, tools, and other materials, which men then carried out. For future researchers, the results of this study can be used as a reference and comparison in the following studies. The results of this study will be beneficial for the following researchers.

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