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Money and Social Transformation: The Reshaping of Duan and Lolat Traditions in an Indonesian Indigenous Society

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Abstract

This article examines the role of money in transforming the customary system of social relations known as Duan and Lolat in Larat, Tanimbar Islands, Indonesia. Duan and Lolat represent a kinship-based tradition that emphasizes solidarity, mutual respect, and non-economic forms of exchange between social groups. However, the growing influence of monetary logic has led to a shift in values and social practices within this indigenous system. Utilizing a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and participant observation among customary leaders and community members, this study reveals that money now functions beyond its role as a medium of exchange—it mediates power relations, alters the meaning of traditional gift-giving, and transforms collective labor into transactional interactions. These findings highlight a structural transformation in Tanimbar society, positioned at the crossroads of modern economic pressures and efforts to preserve cultural identity. The novelty of this study lies in its interpretation of money as an agent of social transformation within a localized indigenous context. It calls for sociological inquiry to pay closer attention to the interplay between economy and culture in indigenous communities, and to conceptualize money not only as an economic instrument but also as a social symbol capable of redefining community values and relationships.

Keywords: *Indigenous Communities, Social Transformation, Money and Culture, Duan and Lolat, Customary Relations.*

Introduction

In Indonesia's indigenous communities, systems of social relations play a crucial role in maintaining social balance and cohesion (Matakena & Watloly, 2024; Soselisa et al., 2024). In Larat, located in the Tanimbar Islands Regency, the *Duan* and *Lolat* tradition constitutes the core of the community's social structure. This tradition is not merely a series of rituals or cultural symbols; it is a relational system rooted in mutual respect, solidarity, and non-economic forms of exchange between social groups (Makaruku et al., 2025). However, recent developments have raised concerns within the community: the growing involvement of money in customary relations appears to be shifting the meaning and practice of the tradition. Acts of mutual cooperation (gotong royong), once grounded in sincerity, are increasingly taking on transactional characteristics. This raises a critical question: to what extent does the presence of money influence and alter the social structure and the embedded values of *Duan* and *Lolat*?

This phenomenon warrants serious investigation, particularly given the paucity of studies that explore the role of money in transforming customary social systems in Eastern Indonesia. Amid accelerating modernization and global economic integration, indigenous communities such as those in Tanimbar face formidable challenges in sustaining local values that have been passed

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down through generations. This study is driven by the concern that the cultural significance of tradition may be diminished as modern economic values begin to dominate traditional spaces of social interaction.

A number of previous studies have examined the relationship between money and social transformation. Ingham (2024) and Rosenswig (2024) argues that money functions not merely as a medium of exchange but also as a structuring force in social relations. Bandelj (2025) goes further, characterizing money as a socially meaningful object that is never entirely “neutral.” In the Indonesian context, Neilson (2022), Riyanto, (2025), and Toumbourou et al. (2022) explains how rural capitalism reshapes social relations within indigenous communities. Similarly, Afdhal (2024) observe that traditional systems of gifting in Indonesia have undergone commodification as money becomes the primary medium in social rituals.

Other relevant works include Alami & and Guermond (2023) and Mason (2021) exploration of moral economies in non-Western societies, and Urinboyev & and Eraliev (2022) study on the history of debt as a regulator of social relationships. In Eastern Indonesia, Litaay et al. (2025) and Weridity & Manuputty (2024) research on customary relations in the Maluku provides insights into the role of symbolic exchange in preserving social structures. Ahmad et al. (2024) and Utama et al. (2022) work on adat transformation in Sulawesi also highlights how tradition can adapt under external economic and political pressures.

Furthermore, Noviani et al. (2025) and Yusrijal et al. (2025) study in Toraja reveals how traditional practices are commercialized when they become part of the tourism industry and monetary economy. Arnedo-Gómez (2023) and Herrmann (2021) cautions against the “folklorization” of tradition—when cultural practices are reproduced as hollow symbols to serve external interests. In the broader local-global context, Buckingham & Hutchinson (2024) and Cutcher & Dale (2023) understanding how indigenous societies engage with change while striving to retain their identity.

Nonetheless, most of these studies focus on regions more heavily exposed to global capitalism. Tanimbar, as an archipelagic region with unique geographical and historical characteristics, remains underexplored. Moreover, micro-level and ethnographic research on the influence of money within indigenous systems—particularly in areas such as Larat—is still scarce. This makes a re-reading of the *Duan* and *Lolat* tradition both relevant and urgent.

There remains an underexplored space: how money—as both a symbol and an instrument of economic power—operates within customary settings and transforms internal relations. The question is not merely how money is used, but how it mediates meaning and either enriches or obscures social bonds. This study positions itself at precisely this intersection—to examine how indigenous communities in Larat respond to and negotiate change through new interactions between traditional values and modern economic demands.

Rather than solely documenting the shifts occurring, this research illuminates how money is reshaping the narratives of solidarity and mutual cooperation embedded in *Duan* and *Lolat*. The distinctiveness of this study lies in its approach to money not as a “threat” to tradition, but as a complex social entity—full of ambiguities—that may serve as both a bridge and a boundary between the past and the present. As tradition becomes increasingly entangled with economic logic, new dynamics emerge that deserve close examination.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how money influences the transformation of meaning and practice in the relational system of *Duan* and *Lolat* in Larat. It also aims to

explore how indigenous communities navigate these changes within a continuously evolving social context. This research aspires to contribute to the development of sociological scholarship—particularly in the fields of economic sociology and cultural sociology—by offering new insights into the interplay between tradition and economy in a distinctive local context.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with an ethnographic case study design, aiming to explore the social dynamics embedded within the practice of *Duan* and *Lolat* amidst shifting values due to the growing influence of money. A qualitative method was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of meanings, symbols, and social practices from the perspective of the indigenous actors themselves. As Creswell & Creswell (2018) emphasizes, such an approach is particularly effective in uncovering layers of meaning that cannot be captured through quantitative methodologies, which tend to prioritize statistical generalizations. The focus of this research is not on how frequently changes occur, but rather on how these changes are interpreted, negotiated, and responded to symbolically and socially by the local community.

The research site is centered in Larat, a locality in the Tanimbar Islands Regency, Maluku, which remains an active hub for the practice of *Duan* and *Lolat*. Larat was selected due to its relatively intact customary structure, while simultaneously experiencing considerable pressures from modernization. As a key node of inter-clan and inter-group interactions, Larat represents a setting in which *Duan* and *Lolat* are not merely ceremonial acts, but constitute a living and dynamic social system. This unique configuration makes Larat an ideal “social laboratory” for observing how money, as an element of modern economy, infiltrates deeply rooted customary relations grounded in collectivist values.

Informants in this study were selected purposively, based on their involvement in and knowledge of *Duan* and *Lolat* practices. A total of 17 primary informants participated, comprising customary leaders, community elders, ritual practitioners, indigenous youth, and ordinary community members who are directly engaged in social practices related to *Duan* and *Lolat*. The selection followed the principle of knowledge representation, ensuring that each informant possessed relevant experiences, insights, or roles in the ongoing processes of change (Patton, 2015). Customary leaders were interviewed to capture normative and historical perspectives, while general community members offered views on how the tradition is lived and interpreted in everyday life.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were semi-structured to allow informants the freedom to articulate their narratives while remaining within the boundaries of relevant thematic concerns. This approach is essential because customary practices are not always expressed explicitly; rather, they often manifest through stories, symbols, or even gestures that must be interpreted contextually. Participant observation was carried out over a period of approximately two months, particularly during customary rituals, extended family gatherings, and other social activities. The researcher lived with a family from one of the active customary clans to gain firsthand understanding of the ongoing social dynamics and to access data not readily available through interviews alone.

Documentation included audio recordings of interviews (with consent), daily field notes, and

photographs of relevant customary activities to support the contextual interpretation of social phenomena. To ensure data validity, triangulation was conducted through three strategies: source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and temporal triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Source triangulation involved comparing narratives from different informants regarding the same events or practices. Methodological triangulation entailed cross-verifying interview results with observations and documentation. Temporal triangulation was implemented by conducting repeated observations of customary practices at different moments to assess the consistency or evolution of meanings over time.

Monetary Transformation in Customary Practices: From Symbolic Exchange to Economic Transaction

The *Duan* and *Lolat* tradition in Larat, North Tanimbar—long recognized as a kinship-based symbolic social system—is undergoing a transformation marked by a shift in values. Historically characterized by mutual respect, reciprocity, and communal solidarity within the framework of customary law, this system has increasingly evolved into a more transactional form of relationship, following the penetration of monetary economy into the community’s cultural fabric. Participation in customary ceremonies—such as weddings, funerals, or the inauguration of village heads—was once governed by moral obligations and symbolic commitments. However, this study reveals that money now plays a determinative role in these relationships. The presence and involvement of *Duan* or *Lolat* in ritual events is no longer solely anchored in social bonds and customary symbols such as *bakan*, *lela*, or *sopi*, but is increasingly contingent upon one’s financial capacity to contribute or remunerate ritual participants.

This shift has not occurred without social legitimacy. Several informants noted that there has been a customary-level consensus to convert some traditional offerings into cash equivalents. The rationale is pragmatic—efficiency, practicality, and the increasing difficulty in obtaining traditional symbolic goods. Nevertheless, this also signals a commodification of the *Duan* and *Lolat* system, in which sacred and symbolic elements are increasingly assigned monetary value and traded (Ihemezie et al., 2023; Samson & Leichty, 2022). As a result, *Duan* and *Lolat* no longer function solely as sacred social relations, but have become arenas where economic capital determines status, participation, and even the meaning of customary rites.

This transformation has engendered noticeable social inequalities. Individuals with greater access to economic resources—such as civil servants, local entrepreneurs, or those with economic networks beyond Tanimbar—now hold increased bargaining power in customary forums. They can afford to finance rituals, make large financial contributions, and consequently shape perceptions of social dominance, even if they are not the traditional holders of customary authority. In contrast, those who are economically disadvantaged often lose their right to participate fully, as they are unable to “pay” for their presence—literally and symbolically. Customary leaders from the *Duan* side expressed concern that financial power is beginning to obscure customary authority, eroding the moral and genealogical legitimacy that once defined social roles. Conversely, economically weaker individuals are increasingly marginalized, excluded from full engagement in rituals and decision-making processes.

These findings illustrate how a once-egalitarian and inclusive customary mechanism is shifting toward a structure that reinforces emerging economic hierarchies. As Bourdieu (1986) notes, when economic capital begins to overshadow symbolic capital, social structures are reshaped by the logic of capital, which tends toward exclusivity. This logic is evident in ritual dynamics in Larat, where those with financial means become the center of attention and receive greater social

legitimacy, while those with fewer resources are gradually pushed to the margins.

Another consequence of this value shift is the emergence of intergenerational conflict. The older generation, who practiced *Duan* and *Lolat* in accordance with long-standing sacred values, often feel alienated and disillusioned by the newer patterns, which prioritize financial considerations. Values such as honor, devotion, and service are perceived to be increasingly displaced by efficiency, speed, and material orientation. Meanwhile, younger generations tend to view participation in customary practices as an economic burden to be rationalized, negotiated, or even avoided. In practice, this conflict manifests not only at the individual level, but also stirs tensions among social groups, including within clans (soa) or lineages (marga) that were previously stable.

To understand these tensions, Leiwakabessy (2024) identifies two types of conflict in the mapping of social disputes: relational conflict and value conflict. In Larat, relational conflict arises between *Duan* and *Lolat* parties, where *Duan* actors feel that their role as the symbolic counterpart and protector is being undermined by transactional logic. Value conflict, on the other hand, predominantly occurs between older and younger generations, marked by a struggle between upholding ancestral symbolic legacies and adapting to contemporary economic demands. One customary elder put it poignantly: “Money is important, but money should not buy position—position is inherited, not sold.” The contrasts and tensions arising from this transformation can be summarized in the following comparative table:

Aspect	Traditional (Before)	Transactional/Modern (After)
Meaning of Participation	Moral and symbolic obligation	Material compensation as condition of attendance
Basis of Relations	Solidarity and sacred kinship	Logic of transaction and efficiency
Determinants of Customary Status	Genealogy, respect, and service	Economic capacity and financial contribution
Social Dominance	Symbolic equality among groups	Dominance by those with greater economic access
Types of Conflict	Minimal, based on customary consensus	Intergenerational and inter-party (<i>Duan–Lolat</i>) conflict
Customary Symbols	Sacred objects (bakan, sopi, lela)	Cash as the new symbolic medium

Ultimately, these changes should not be viewed solely as a degradation of values, but also as a response to increasingly complex socio-economic pressures. As Giddens (2008) argues, modernity brings not only rationalization and efficiency but also dislocation of meaning and identity. In the context of Larat, communities are not rejecting change; rather, they are grappling with how to manage transformation while staying rooted in the values that have long sustained their social world.

The practice of *Duan* and *Lolat* now stands at a crossroads—between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to contemporary realities. Money, once foreign to the customary sphere, has become a part of everyday decision-making in adat affairs. This transformation carries dual implications: on the one hand, it introduces adaptability and flexibility in customary practices; on the other hand, it risks undermining the kinship-based substance that forms the soul of *Duan* and *Lolat* themselves.

The Commodification of *Duan* and *Lolat* Social Relations in Larat, Tanimbar

The commodification of social relations within the *Duan* and *Lolat* system in Larat, North Tanimbar, represents a significant sociocultural shift in how communities interpret interpersonal and intergroup relationships within customary structures. Historically, *Duan* and *Lolat* embodied a symbolic and sacred system of relationality—serving as a medium for expressing solidarity, honor, and moral obligations among kinship groups. However, the growing influence of the cash economy and the entrenchment of transactional logic in everyday life have significantly altered this traditional system. Relations once governed by sincerity and cultural imperatives are increasingly measured and negotiated based on monetary value. This transition exemplifies the concept of commodification: the transformation of the sacred and invaluable into objects of exchange, subject to buying and selling (Ihemezie et al., 2023; Samson & Leichty, 2022).

In this study, commodification is defined as the shift from symbolically, spiritually, and kinship-based relationships toward materially compensable and quantifiable interactions. This transformation is evident in customary events such as weddings, funerals, and conflict resolutions. The presence of *Duan* or *Lolat* parties at ritual events is now often determined by the material compensation offered, rather than by ancestral ties or moral obligations. Interviews with customary leaders reveal a general acknowledgment that, while such practices deviate from traditional values, the prevailing socioeconomic conditions render the change unavoidable. One elder remarked, “We cannot escape it—money is everywhere now. Even the Latupati council has decided to replace traditional goods with cash because it is more practical.”

The Latupati’s decision to convert traditional items into cash represents a critical turning point in legitimizing this commodification process. Four major customary goods in Tanimbar culture—Wuhur, Wear, Suruk, and Ramat—have been converted to a fixed monetary value of IDR 4,800,000. Initially intended to simplify customary procedures, this conversion has given rise to complex social implications. Several informants argued that the assigned value is insufficient and fails to reflect the symbolic worth of women or familial dignity in Tanimbar culture. As a result, troubling phenomena have emerged, such as the rise in extramarital affairs and acts of infidelity. Men increasingly perceive that their moral transgressions can be “redeemed” through financial payment, circumventing traditional processes that previously involved public shame, moral accountability, and communal acknowledgment. As noted by Koritelu, (2021) and Zega et al., (2024), the cultural valuation of women has diminished, as they are now situated within a monetary logic rather than being embedded in an inviolable system of sacred values.

This value shift has also introduced new mechanisms for resolving customary disputes, increasingly relying on transactional negotiations between parties. In cases of *notu ngrihii* (serious transgressions such as adultery), customary forums like *dok lean* and *rdok temar-Lolat*—which were once deeply sacred—have also succumbed to economic logic. Although these forums are still held, their symbolic weight and ritualistic content have been reduced by bargaining processes that prioritize monetary compensation. *Rdok temar-Lolat*, which represents the apex of customary adjudication, is traditionally designed not only to resolve conflicts but to restore values, dignity, and social harmony through ritual and customary oaths. In recent practice, however, economically privileged actors can influence these processes, often minimizing the moral consequences of customary violations by simply paying a fine.

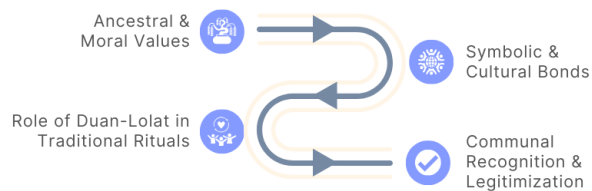
A notable finding in this study is the emergence of unwritten “tariffs” within various customary practices. Though unofficial, these expectations have become part of communal knowledge. For

instance, inviting the *Duan* group to a wedding now typically requires a financial contribution deemed “appropriate,” without which the ritual is considered incomplete. Similarly, in funeral rites, the participation of the *Lolat* group is now often contingent upon the host family’s financial capacity to offer monetary “respect”—a role once fulfilled by symbolic offerings such as *sopi* or *bakan*. These changes illustrate how social values and moral duties—formerly foundational to customary participation—have been reduced to commodified services subject to market logic.

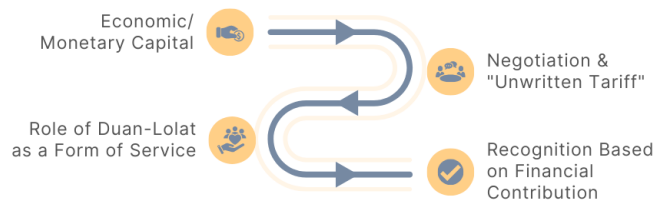
This phenomenon not only alters the meaning of social relationships but also produces a new social structure: the dominance of economic capital within the cultural sphere. Those with greater economic means can now more easily position themselves strategically within customary hierarchies, not solely through cultural merit but by leveraging control over ritual processes. This dynamic affirms Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of capital conversion, where economic capital is transformed into symbolic capital—enabling individuals to purchase social positions that were once attainable only through symbolic labor, service, and legitimate recognition within the customary order.

To illustrate this transformation, the following figure contrasts the traditional structure of *Duan* and *Lolat* relations with their commodified form:

Before Commodification:



After Commodification:



This structural transformation signifies that *Duan* and *Lolat* no longer function solely as spaces for reproducing ancestral values; they have become arenas for the distribution of power determined by capital. In the traditional system, *Duan* and *Lolat* were integral to communal identity, inherited and practiced as a social responsibility. Today, however, they have also become social commodities—subject to negotiation, exchange, and purchase. This reflects a profound transformation in Tanimbar’s social order, wherein communities are simultaneously striving to adapt to the exigencies of a modern economic reality while grappling with the imperative to preserve ancestral meanings, identities, and customary values handed down through generations.

Pawned Relations: Money, Power, and Social Conflict in the *Duan* and *Lolat* System

The penetration of market economic logic into the traditional social structures of North Tanimbar society—particularly in Larat—has brought about profound transformations in the social relations between *Duan* and *Lolat*. These two customary entities, once the pillars of social and cultural harmony within the indigenous system, are now under increasing pressure from a monetized economy. Money, which initially served as a practical tool in limited contexts, has gradually supplanted symbolic functions in many aspects of social life. Inter-soa (kinship group) relations, once grounded in mutual respect, moral responsibility, and devotion to ancestral values, are now often recalibrated in economic terms. Participation in customary rituals is increasingly perceived as a service requiring financial compensation, rather than a cultural calling rooted in spiritual bonds or collective obligations.

This transformation does not occur in a vacuum. It emerges alongside growing economic pressures, outward migration that exposes communities to new lifestyles, the inflow of state financial assistance, and the rise of consumerist practices. In such a context, the community begins to adapt its social system to remain relevant within the new economic landscape—most notably through the revaluation of customary roles in monetary terms. This shift was widely acknowledged by informants, including customary leaders who admitted, “Money has changed everything, and we can no longer resist—we can only go along with it.” This statement illustrates the community’s acquiescence to the dominance of money as a new social actor within the local cultural system (Lupova-Henry et al., 2021; Nurdin et al., 2022).

The most visible consequence of this shift is the emergence of new social inequalities. Access to symbolic power, once determined by lineage and customary legitimacy, is increasingly displaced by access to economic capital. Individuals with stable income, external kinship ties, or positions in government bureaucracy now possess the means to finance customary rites and, in some cases, direct their implementation. In several instances, individuals lacking genealogical legitimacy have assumed dominant roles in customary forums due to their financial capacity. This phenomenon reflects the formation of a new hierarchy—one rooted not in tradition, but in capital.

To illustrate this transformation, the table below contrasts key aspects of the *Duan–Lolat* relationship before and after the dominance of monetary logic:

Aspect	Before Monetary Dominance	After Monetary Dominance
Basis of Relations	Symbolic, spiritual, moral	Economic, transactional
Determinants of Social Power	Customary legitimacy, lineage	Financial capacity, external connections
Participation in Rituals	Based on cultural responsibility	Based on compensation or incentives
Social Honor	Earned through customary devotion	Purchased through financial contributions
Social Conflict	Rare, resolved through customary consensus	Increasing, marked by suspicion of financial motives

The resulting inequality manifests not only as vertical class stratification but also as horizontal tension among soa or fam (clans). Communities have grown increasingly suspicious of the motives behind participation in customary events. When one party contributes more financially,

it often expects greater influence, contradicting the egalitarian ethos of *Duan* and *Lolat*, which emphasizes complementarity rather than domination. Even in conflict resolution processes such as *notu ngrihii* (serious disputes, including adultery), procedures that were once sacred can now be expedited or “simplified” when one party is able to afford immediate settlement. This shift reflects a redefinition of justice—from a moral-redemptive process to a financial transaction.

Furthermore, intergenerational tensions have intensified, driven by differing perceptions of money and custom. Elders lament the erosion of values such as respect, loyalty, and social responsibility, while younger generations regard monetary contributions as a more efficient substitute for symbolic and spiritual involvement. This value divergence contributes to disharmony in ritual practices and threatens the continuity of a social system passed down through generations.

Another impact of this monetization of custom is the rising economic burden on financially marginalized groups. As the cost of customary events—such as weddings and funerals—increases due to unwritten financial “standards,” poorer families are often forced into debt. These debts are not merely economic but social, generating feelings of shame when families are unable to “pay” for the proper involvement of *Duan* or *Lolat* groups. Such pressures create long-term social debts that may lead to intergroup conflict and weaken communal solidarity.

Money has thus transformed from a mere medium of exchange into a powerful social actor, actively reshaping human relationships in Tanimbar society. It now determines who may participate in custom, who holds symbolic authority, and who deserves respect. This process demonstrates that modernization—when detached from cultural awareness—can erode traditional social structures, diminish collective values, and reinforce social inequalities that ultimately breed conflict. This transformation is not a mere technical adjustment but a paradigmatic shift in the value system of Tanimbar society.

Preserving Tradition Amid the Tide of Money: Forms of Resistance and Adaptation in *Duan* and *Lolat* Relations

The transformation of social relations between *Duan* and *Lolat* in Larat, North Tanimbar, as a consequence of the penetration of monetary economy, has not been uniformly accepted across all layers of society. Instead, within this complex social reality, communities have demonstrated diverse responses that reflect simultaneous processes of resistance and adaptation. This dynamic illustrates that Tanimbar society is not passive in the face of change; rather, it retains cultural agency to negotiate and reconfigure social relations in accordance with shifting historical and economic contexts.

Groups that express resistance are typically comprised of customary elders, cultural custodians, and tradition-bearers who maintain strong emotional and historical ties to the *Duan* and *Lolat* system. From their perspective, monetized transformation represents a profanation of the sacred customary order. *Duan* and *Lolat*, in this view, are not entities to be “purchased” or financially compensated, but rather moral and spiritual systems inherited through generations—systems whose purity must be preserved. These actors reject the offering of money as a prerequisite for participation in ritual practices and continue to advocate for the reinforcement of customary deliberation, role distribution based on genealogical legitimacy, and symbolic valuation of ritual objects such as woven cloth, ceremonial blades, or betel nut offerings. Oral traditions such as *tutur adat*, *misaik*, and *mangniat* are actively maintained as forms of cultural resistance against the incursion of modern economic logic that is perceived to erode sacred values.

Conversely, another segment of the community demonstrates an adaptive orientation. This group—primarily consisting of younger generations, educated individuals, and economically active citizens—does not categorically reject the essence of *Duan* and *Lolat* but seeks to reinterpret its practices in light of the new socioeconomic reality. They do not view monetary contributions as commercial transactions but as logistical support to ensure the smooth execution of ritual events. For them, flexibility is essential so that customary practices do not become economically exclusive burdens but remain inclusive mechanisms of social cohesion. Some communities have even established new customary agreements, such as limits on ritual monetary contributions, collective family-based pooling systems, and rotational participation in rituals based on each family’s economic capacity. These adaptive strategies allow traditional values to endure, albeit in more contextual and pragmatic forms (Williams et al., 2022).

To further illustrate the contrast in orientation and approaches between resistance and adaptation strategies, the following comparative table is presented:

Strategic Dimension	Resistance	Adaptation
Primary Actors	Customary elders, traditional leaders, older generation	Younger generation, educated individuals, economically active groups
Interpretation of <i>Duan-Lolat</i>	Sacred heritage, ancestral legacy, non-economic in value	Flexible sociocultural system, responsive to contemporary context
Attitude toward Money	Rejection of monetary use in rituals	Acceptance of money as a form of contribution, not commodification
Ritual Practice	Maintenance of traditional structure and order	Modification of ritual structure to fit current social conditions
Primary Objective	Preservation of traditional purity and sacredness	Contextual sustainability of customary social functions
Examples of Action	Prohibition of monetary exchange, symbolic reinforcement, pure communal labor	New customary agreements, contribution limits, rotational participation

Both resistance and adaptation represent cultural resilience among the Tanimbar people. In this context, the community is not merely defending against external value systems but is actively responding with strategies that reflect its capacity to negotiate identity and social relations. As expressed by several informants in this study, there is a shared belief that “custom is not merely heritage, but a way of life that must be continually renewed without losing its roots.” This aligns with Hall’s (2024) view that societies possess the capacity to reproduce meaning through culturally selective processes in response to new values.

Nevertheless, the interplay between resistance and adaptation is not without friction. In several cases, tensions arise between these groups—particularly within customary forums tasked with organizing collective rituals. The older generation often criticizes what they perceive as the younger generation’s tendency to “simplify” tradition, whereas the youth argue that the elder approach is insufficiently responsive to contemporary economic realities. Such tensions reveal internal value struggles within the society itself, a dynamic often encountered in contexts of

cultural change (Bourdieu, 1986).

Thus, the community's response to the dominance of monetary logic within the *Duan* and *Lolat* system cannot be simplistically characterized as acceptance or rejection. Rather, it is a dynamic process of cultural negotiation, replete with compromises and contestations over social identity. Through both resistance and adaptation, the Tanimbar people demonstrate that they have not relinquished control over their cultural system; on the contrary, they are actively reshaping its meaning in accordance with their temporal context—a process imbued with both hope and complexity.

Conclusion

This study concludes that money, within the context of the Tanimbar indigenous community—particularly in the *Duan* and *Lolat* relational system in Larat—is not merely a neutral medium of exchange, but has evolved into a potent agent of social transformation with significant capacity to intervene in the structure and meaning of social relations. The initial aim of this research was to understand how money contributes to the reshaping of customary relationships, and the findings reveal that such transformations are not linear but occur dialectically, through the tensions between the preservation of traditional values and the imperatives of modern economic adaptation.

Money has reconfigured power relations, enabling the emergence of new social actors whose authority is no longer grounded in lineage or customary roles, but in access to economic resources. Simultaneously, money has blurred the boundaries between moral obligations and material transactions, thereby weakening the foundational principles of solidarity and mutual cooperation that underpin the *Duan* and *Lolat* system.

Nonetheless, the community does not passively submit to this economic logic; rather, it demonstrates a remarkable adaptive capacity through both symbolic resistance and social innovation—efforts that reflect an ongoing negotiation to maintain cultural identity within a shifting sociocultural landscape. Therefore, the significance of this study lies not in determining whether money is accepted or rejected in customary practice, but in revealing how indigenous communities engage in a complex process of renegotiating the meanings of identity, relationship, and social value amid currents of change.

This research affirms that money should not be understood solely as an economic instrument, but as a social symbol endowed with the capacity to shape, reorganize, and potentially disrupt value systems within society. In this context, *Duan* and *Lolat* are not being abandoned; rather, they are undergoing reinterpretation—an unfolding process marked by its inherent complexities and paradoxes.

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