

Institutional-ideological reproduction of gender relations in the matrilineal community of the bunaq tribe on timor island

**Yoseph Andreas Gual¹; Sahid Teguh Widodo²;
Bani Sudardi³; Sri Kusumo Habsari⁴**

¹ Graduate Student in the Cultural Studies Program at Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia

²³⁴ Professor in the Cultural Studies Program at Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia

***Corresponding Author**

Email: yosephandreasgual@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

One interesting area of academic study to explore is the gender relations of indigenous peoples, especially matrilineal minority communities, which are often considered egalitarian where the distribution of power is formed through tough interactions between customary values, social structures and ideologies. However, various studies show that this view is not entirely acceptable because in reality gender relations in these communities are ambivalent, complex and sometimes lame. Such gaps make the study of gender relations in the matrilineal community of the Bunaq tribe on Timor Island important and relevant. Explaining the working pattern of the gender structure and the mechanism of matrilineal kinship of the Bunaq tribe in reproducing gender relations that are not fully matriarchal or patriarchal is the purpose of this research. This research uses ethnographic methods by interviewing 45 informants, group discussions and field observations by living with the local community for 90 days. This research found that gender relations in the Bunaq matrilineal community are asymmetrical. Women control ownership but are marginalized in the public sphere, while men, despite losing material wealth rights, have symbolic and spiritual power. In the individual dimension, embodiment is the initial foundation for Bunaq people to build and see gender relations. Based on this, the relational dimension of gender relations that is built is complementary but hides substantial inequality. In the macro dimension - custom, the Catholic church and the government play an ideological role in reproducing the morality of harmony as an unconscious mechanism to perpetuate the asymmetrical gender relations. In the end, the gender equality lived by the Bunaq matrilineal system is not as understood as the Western view. Their view of gender equality is unique. This relationship survives because it is supported by an ideological tripod, namely custom, religion and government.

Keywords: *asymmetrical gender relationship; gender ideology; gender structure; cultural narrative; matrilineal society; Bunaq; Timor*

INTRODUCTION

Various studies on matrilineal societies reveal that inheritance through women does not always lead to equality in the distribution of power between women and men (Blanchy, 2019; Kennett et al., 2017). Often, the reality of gender in matrilineal societies is ambivalent, giving rise to complexity because ownership rights and control of public spaces are in different hands. In matrilineal communities, ownership rights are more often in the hands of women, but public affairs, decision-making, politics, and social matters are in the hands of men (Robinson & Gottlieb, 2021; Ly et al., 2019; Chuzaifah, 2002; Battaglia, 1985). This complexity refutes the view that matrilineal societies are synonymous with matriarchal societies (Banerjee, 2015). On the contrary, gender relations in matrilineal societies are sometimes complementary (Gual et al., 2025) or even give rise to hidden imbalances (Nongbri, 2017). This logic is the reference point for researchers exploring the matrilineal Bunaq society on the Indonesian island of Timor, where women control material wealth but relinquish leadership and public roles, while men lose ownership rights but hold power in the public sphere as leaders.

It is relevant to examine the complexity of gender relations in the matrilineal Bunaq tribe using a structural approach. Gender as a social structure provides a comprehensive structural analysis tool because gender reality is always viewed through individual, relational, and macro/institutional dimensions (Risman, 2018; Risman, 2012). From this structural perspective, gender is not something that is given but rather the result of social practices involving various criteria (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014) and is present in the process of discursive relations and structures (Pullen & Simpson, 2009). If gender is a social practice, then gender can also be analyzed using an ideological approach, particularly through the perspective of Louis Althusser. For Althusser, ideology is not merely a system of beliefs but a mechanism of power carried out through practice by the Ideology State Apparatus (ISA) so that people voluntarily follow social structures because they are considered normal (Althusser, 1971). When this framework is used, gender is the result of the work of ISA such as family, community, customs, religion, and the state, so that gender actors accept and practice it voluntarily. In this study, the two theories are integrated into an analytical tool to examine how the gender relations of the matrilineal Bunaq tribe are internalized, practiced, and maintained in the customary sphere by the actors. Therefore, the reading of the gender relations of the matrilineal Bunaq tribe is carried out in two categories at once, namely structurally and ideologically.

One issue that is still rarely explored in gender anthropology studies is why matrilineal societies that are a minority in kinship systems, such as the Bunaq tribe, do not display gender patterns as often assumed by many people, namely that they are completely matriarchal or patriarchal. Instead, they display a unique situation in which women, despite having power over wealth, are marginalized in the public sphere and leadership. Meanwhile, men, despite being leaders in the spiritual, public, and ritual spheres, have lost their ownership rights. This paradoxical position between men and women shows that the gender reality in the matrilineal society of the Bunaq tribe is an asymmetrical gender structure.

This research attempts to offer a conceptual explanation through a conceptual dialogue between Risman's structural view and Althusser's ideological view of the asymmetrical gender reality that is considered normal and lived by the Bunaq community. This approach attempts to uncover the dynamics of gender power in Bunaq society, which operates through the ideological mechanisms of custom, religion, and the state by instilling the seeds of morality and harmony as the glue that holds life together.

This asymmetrical gender reality has never been examined using Barbara Risman's Gender as Social Structure theory and Louis Althusser's Ideology theory. Various literature on matrilineality is more focused on revealing the formal reality of matrilineality without touching on the ideological aspects of the matrilineal structure, which is adopted as a form of social harmony that ultimately perpetuates these asymmetrical gender relations. This gap in research is the point of analysis for this study.

Previous studies on gender relations in matrilineal societies have often focused on various factors causing shifts in gender relations (Pham & Hang, 2023; Elfira, 2023; Hartati; Minzab & Yuniarti, 2021). Gender research in matrilineal societies has also often raised various issues related to legal aspects (Laheij, 2021; Azzahra et al., 2021), politics (Brulé & Gaikwad, 2021; Robinson & Gottlieb, 2021; Damanik, 2021), economics (Lowes, 2022; Keeni et al., 2018), education (La Ferrara & Milazzo, 2017), agriculture (Gual et al., 2025), family (Smith-Greenaway et al., 2019), culture (Johnson, 2018), environment (Prasetyo et al., 2021; Bhutia & Liarakou, 2018), and religion (Kooria, 2023; Kooria, 2021). However, these studies did not utilize Risman's structural conceptual framework and Althusser's ideology. Therefore, by combining these two theories in analyzing the asymmetrical gender reality in the matrilineal Bunaq society, this study contributes new insights to the theoretical approach in viewing the complexity of gender relations in matrilineal societies. Moving from this, the objective of this study is to explore the reproduction of gender asymmetry in the matrilineal

society of the Bunaq tribe and to describe how this tribe perceives this asymmetrical gender relationship as a morality of harmony, thereby enabling its preservation.

A deep understanding of the asymmetrical gender reality that matrilineal societies are able to maintain through customary, religious, and state institutions is an important consideration when indigenous communities are confronted with the pressure for equality brought about by modernity. In practical terms, it is hoped that with the understanding that asymmetrical gender relations are closely related to the dynamics of power, various development breakthroughs will need to consider and respect the local cultural logic that prioritizes harmony in communal living. The results of this research also provide an opportunity for dialogue between the unique reality of matrilineal societies and global gender approaches in different moral spheres. These points constitute the contribution of this research.

RESEARCH METHOD

The Bunaq tribe lives on the island of Timor and spreads across the border between two countries, Indonesia and Timor Leste. In Indonesia, the Bunaq tribe is concentrated in two subdistricts, Lamaknen and South Lamaknen, and partly in the Malaka district. For the purposes of this study, the researcher collected data in Dirun Village, Lamaknen Subdistrict, Belu District, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Dirun Village, located 32 km from the district capital, was chosen because it is more developed but still adheres to traditional customs. Here, three important elements converge: Bunaq customs with the center of the Dirun kingdom and the Lamaknen clan, a parish or Catholic church center under the diocese, and the center of village and subdistrict administration. In other words, this village is a meeting point between tradition and modernity.

This study used an ethnographic approach, whereby the researcher lived with the community at the research site for more than three months. Previously, the researcher had lived in Dirun village for several weeks and visited occasionally. This enriched the researcher's understanding of the local culture. During the study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with forty-five people, both women and men: *loro*/emperor, *na'i*/king, tribal chiefs, ritual leaders, assistant 1 of Belu district, sub-district head, former sub-district head, village head, village officials, former village head, Catholic clergy, civil servants, bank employees, teachers, housewives, farmers, cultural figures, local police officers, political party branch heads, and young people. The researchers also held group discussions with women, police officers, village officials, and several traditional leaders. For the same purpose, the researchers also conducted

direct observations of the lives of residents by living with families and participating in activities with residents.

For the purposes of data analysis, the researcher used the ethnographic analysis technique proposed by Ann Grey (2013) in her book, “Research Practice for Cultural Studies.” The first thing the researcher did was to transcribe all the results of interviews, group discussions, and field observations. Second, the researcher coded the data using NVivo software to find important themes from the research issues. Third, the researcher connected various themes and interpreted them using Gender as Social Structure theory and Ideology theory to examine the structural and ideological mechanisms at work in Bunaq society. Fourth, the researcher presented the data in an article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Complexity of Gender in the Matrilineal Bunaq Society

The gender relations of the matrilineal Bunaq tribe, upon closer examination, are not as simple as initially imagined at the beginning of the study, namely that women dominate all aspects of life. The gender relations of the matrilineal Bunaq society are unique—full of complexity because they are ambiguous. On the one hand, women hold property rights, but on the other hand, they do not have the right to lead, make decisions, and fully utilize the property they control. Women's power lies in the domestic sphere, not the public sphere. Men, on the other hand, do not control or own property. Children do not follow their lineage, but men have the right to lead and make decisions both internally and externally, although within the tribe, their decisions must be known to and approved by women. Men dominate the public sphere. In the context of family and community, men give ‘*pana gitin*’ or expensive dowries, but they must live in their wife's family (matrilocal) as providers for the family and servants of their wife's tribe. Therefore, even though men have power without ownership in their tribe, after marriage, men have nothing, including the right to lead and make decisions in their wife's tribe. He is merely a ‘servant’.

In this cultural context, gender relations in the matrilineal Bunaq society are not based on classical patriarchy, where men are completely superior and dominate women in social, economic, and cultural aspects (Levy, 2022). Gender relations in the matrilineal Bunaq society are asymmetrical social structures. These structures are built through institutional and ideological processes. It is institutional because gender relations are manifested through various rules and doctrines that govern society (Risman, 2018). Individually, every actor, both male and female, has been educated since childhood by their family, community, peer group, tribe, and society to accept their gender identity. This socialization shapes

the individual's gender identity, which is used in every personal and group interaction. This creates clear boundaries of expectations and gender roles between men and women. This mechanism is understood as the reproduction of ideology, in which various representations, ideas, and rules dominate the minds of individuals and groups (Althusser, 1971). These various gender representations ultimately control and regulate the way individuals and groups think, behave, and act.

The gender structure formed from the matrilineal system of the Bunaq society is ambivalent; it is neither matriarchy nor pure patriarchy, but rather matrilineal with distinctive patriarchal influences. This matrilineal kinship structure of the Bunaq creates an imbalance in gender relations that limits both men and women under the pretext of complementing each other based on an essentialist binary gender mindset (Guenther et al., 2018). Therefore, gender relations in Bunaq society are symbolic and economic relations that limit each other in the shadow of complementarity for the sake of the good and survival of the community/tribe and customs.

Individual Dimension: Physicality as the Foundation of Gender in the Bunaq Tribe

The Bunaq people's view of gender originates from their view of the human body (*niwi*). Both male and female bodies are considered sacred (*por*). Therefore, the body must be personally cared for and maintained. Socially, the body is used for the benefit of all people and the environment. However, for the Bunaq people, male and female bodies are different not only physically but also philosophically and spiritually. The female body is seen as a queen (*liurai*) who is delicate or small (*lotu*). As a small and delicate queen who gives and brings life but is also vulnerable and weak, women need to be treated with special care. Women are literally the nurturers of life by providing food and moral education to children. Therefore, women receive special privileges by being given inheritance rights and ownership of all tribal and family wealth, staying at home, maintaining the continuity of the tribe, managing family life and rituals, doing light work, and being bought but not following their husbands. They also cannot lead.

Meanwhile, the male body is considered to be a spear (*sul*) and a machete (*suli*). These spears and machetes have dual meanings. Both are weapons of war used to protect oneself, one's family, and one's tribe, but they are also tools for hunting and farming. This is based on the assumption that men are strong. Thus, the male body symbolizes two important roles, namely as protector and breadwinner. The logical consequence of this view is that men become social and ritual leaders, decision makers, liaisons and intermediaries with external and transcendent parties, and breadwinners. Male independence is demonstrated

through service to the family and tribe through women by not owning material possessions.

For the Bunaq people, these different physical characteristics with different role implications are not a deviation. However, both need to direct themselves to achieve a holistic life together, namely the creation of harmony in life by complementing each other's differences. This harmony/balance in life is the goal of one of the mentalities of the Bunaq people, namely collectivity. To achieve this kind of social integration, the Bunaq community has developed another mentality that is strongly ingrained in each individual, namely obedience.

“Girls are prioritized in Bunaq families because women are considered to be the source of the next generation. Women are also seen as weak creatures who must be cared for and protected. This is where men come in as strong figures, breadwinners, protectors, and guardians. This is where gender equality lies in the Bunaq tribe. They complement each other,” said Marsi.

This view of gender equality differs from the Western view, which focuses on equal treatment before the law and equal benefits from public services (Okan, 2024) as well as distributive justice over resources (Villanueva, 2010). Western gender equality focuses on upholding individual rights with institutional support, whereas gender equality in Bunaq society is oriented toward creating harmony in communal life by sacrificing some individual rights. The personal rights that are sacrificed are compensated for by others. Here, collective life is prioritized over individual rights.

The reality of Bunaq society and its implications for the social roles of women and men, when examined from a gender perspective, is an ideological and hegemonic social structure. In Althusser's perspective, the internalization of ideological values by social actors, including the Bunaq community, is viewed as interpellation (Tarin, 2016). This interpellation is a kind of call from institutions to individuals to voluntarily follow the will of the institution. This interpellation is clearly seen during dinner with Bunaq families since long ago. The rules and history of each tribe shape community members to follow the collective will without protest. Various ritual practices that are routinely held from birth to death explicitly direct different gender roles. These institutions, in Althusser's language, act as Ideological State Apparatus to regulate and direct the way of thinking and behaving of each gender actor according to their needs.

From the reality of physicality to its manifestation in gender roles above, it can be seen that gender relations in Bunaq society are not dominated by hierarchical top-down relations, but rather complementary asymmetries or

mutual imbalances. This asymmetrical structure is related to women's ownership rights and morality as the bearers of life and modesty in the family and tribe, as well as men's symbolic rights to leadership/public life and responsibility. Women excel in ownership and morality but are limited in leadership/public life, while men excel in leadership/public life but are limited in ownership and emotional expression because men in certain positions must remain silent and accept their circumstances, for example as *manepou* or sons-in-law. They are equal but not balanced. Thus, this asymmetrical structural gender relationship among the Bunaq is the result of long-standing institutional and ideological complexities and is accepted as a symbolic social norm that brings harmony and balance to communal life. These norms ultimately limit the roles of both genders and the relationships built between them.

Interactional Dimension: Propositional and Nonpropositional Gender Practices

In the interactional dimension, Bunaq gender relations are based on the individual identities of actors, which then develop in daily interactions within the community under the control and reference of collective norms. Gender relations in Bunaq society can be observed in two forms, namely proportional and non-proportional. Proportional relations assume that both genders perform different roles but lead to the same goal. The gender actions of both complement each other. Meanwhile, non-proportional relations are gender relations that lead to gender discrimination, where one party benefits while the other is subordinated.

Proportionally in agriculture, women as land owners hand over the management of the land to their husbands to work on, while women are involved in lighter work (Gual et al., 2025). Women are in the position of owners, while men are in the position of cultivators who provide the labor to work the land. In agricultural management, the contributions of men and women are in different areas but complement each other. Men prepare the garden, women plant, men weed the land with the help of women, women and men harvest, and men transport the garden produce to the house. This division of labor appears to be balanced in order to meet the family's needs.

When conducting traditional rituals, women provide various traditional necessities while men lead the rituals. The two are interdependent. When one party does not function, the ritual cannot be carried out. In traditional decision-making, men make decisions after listening to women's opinions. Decisions can only be made if both parties agree because women hold the assets while men lead.

From these two examples, it is clear that Bunaq gender relations have a proportional aspect, whereby each gender has a different role in achieving common goals. These relations form a harmony between different roles. This relationship appears to be equal in terms of roles, but is substantially unbalanced or asymmetrical because, in essence, women own the land while men are farmers. Women are responsible for all ritual needs, while men only lead. In internal decisions, men also need to ask for women's opinions. Women also experience discrimination because they do not have the right to lead and appear in public.

Table 1. Gender Proportionality Patterns among the Bunaq Tribe

Field	Description	Analysis	Effects in Gender Interaction
Access to harvests for traditional needs	Women own the land, while men (husbands/sons-in-law) help cultivate it and the proceeds are used jointly for customary obligations.	There is a division of labor even though formal ownership is in the hands of women.	In household interactions, decisions on how to use the harvest tend to be agreed upon jointly.
Role in traditional rituals	Women take care of providing resources (rice, pigs, betel leaves), while men take care of ritual processes.	The tasks are different but interdependent, making participation relatively balanced in the traditional arena.	Both genders are recognized for their contributions to the continuity of tradition.
Daily economic contribution	Women from the land produce food, while men provide labor or cash from outside work.	The value of their contributions differs in form but is relatively balanced in terms of household needs.	There is mutual respect for each other's roles, even though the forms of contribution are not identical.
Decision making	Men lead and make decisions, but they must listen to women's opinions.	There is a balance of roles—men take the lead in making decisions, but women provide advice that must also be considered.	Without agreement, there is no decision. Men and women have different roles, but they converge on a single goal.

However, not all gender relations in Bunaq society are proportional. In other aspects, the relationship between Bunaq women and men appears to be unbalanced, or asymmetrical. For example, land ownership in the name of women results in men having very little bargaining power in the home and in their wives' clans. This causes men to become apathetic and view themselves as 'servants' or 'burden bearers' in their families and clans. Men have no voice in their wife's clan because their status as *manepou* is mainly related to their own children's marriages and issues concerning their wife's clan, even though men contribute greatly to their wife's clan. Conversely, men dominate access to external networks, while women, despite holding rights to all assets, are confined to the domestic sphere. This has led to a dichotomy in the division of roles in the public sphere for men and the domestic sphere for women. This interaction has given rise to asymmetrical relations in Bunaq gender relations. They appear to complement each other but are actually imbalanced.

Table 2. Non-proportional Gender Relations Patterns among the Bunaq Tribe

Field	Description	Analysis	Effects in Gender Interaction
Ownership of land and productive assets	Women own and inherit land; men-in-law/sons-in-law are only cultivators without ownership rights.	Inequality in ownership affects men's bargaining position in their wives' homes.	Men are more passive in land decision-making, reinforcing the stereotype of the "beast of burden."
Voting rights in traditional houses	Men who enter their wife's clan often have no voting rights, even though they contribute resources.	There is a disproportion between contribution and formal authority.	Men are not encouraged to be fully involved in their wife's tribal affairs.
Access to external networks	Negotiations outside the village are more often conducted by men.	Women are rarely involved in external networks, even though they hold the main assets.	This limits women's roles in the public sphere and reinforces the division between the domestic and public spheres.

From a gender perspective as a social structure, this pattern of role division is a gender structure formed by the Bunaq community itself. There is nothing wrong with this structure because they themselves live it from time to time and

make their lives run as expected. This naturally occurring gender structure is, in Althusser's view, ideologically charged because, although it is unequal/asymmetrical, they see it as normal. This routine gender repetition creates ideological gender reproduction, namely the persistence of gender values from one generation to another, because it is carried out as part of communal life and is considered normal. In Bunaq society, the performance and ideological reproduction of gender is an ideological institutional mechanism played out by custom. This occurs in order to ensure that the division of gender roles and spaces proceeds in an orderly and peaceful manner, even though it is substantially unequal and asymmetrical.

Macro Dimensions: Custom, Church, and Government as ISA

To understand the gender structure of Bunaq society, an explanation through the matrilineal kinship system they adhere to is not sufficient. The explanation needs to be broadened by connecting the institutional and ideological mechanisms that function simultaneously in the social interactions of Bunaq society. The Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) proposed by Louis Althusser (1971) operates in Bunaq society in Dirun Village through three institutions, namely custom, religion, and government. These institutions are tasked with disseminating various values, norms, and rules of life to individuals so that these values become their own without feeling imposed. For Althusser, the process of internalizing institutional values as personal values by an actor is viewed as interpellation (Tarin, 2016). In the context of the Bunaq community living in Dirun Village, the ideologies of "harmony," "politeness," and "family integrity" form the moral foundation that is continuously and constantly reproduced by customary institutions, churches, and the government. These three institutions work together in a complementary and supportive relationship system rather than a hierarchical one. These three institutions present a layered ideological structure that perpetuates Bunaq gender asymmetry.

In the matrilineal kinship system of the Bunaq tribe in Dirun, adat is the oldest, most important, and strongest ideological institution. All dimensions of life are always directed and viewed through the lens of adat. Adat functions as a guide, regulator, and guarantor of social and spiritual stability. This continues to be regenerated because everything, including gender positions and actions originating from ancestors, is considered sacred and taboo to violate. In the perspective of the Bunaq community, women are the source of life and therefore become the guardians of the home who inherit all the wealth of the tribe and family. Meanwhile, men are seen as the ones with power, so they act as leaders, moral protectors, breadwinners, connectors with the spiritual and external

worlds, and guardians of family and tribal honor. For the Bunaq people, the allocation of such positions and roles is a “natural harmony” rather than a form of social imbalance.

“The rules of the Bunaq people are found in customary law. Customary law governs individuals and groups within the community. All Bunaq people obey these rules,” said Robson.

This acknowledgment represents the majority of informants interviewed by the researcher. Adherence to the five other mentalities of the Bunaq community (religious; *nopil*, *nawas*, *nezel*, *nimil*; collectivity; hospitality; and materialism) forms the foundation of a morality of harmony that allows them to accept asymmetrical material and symbolic situations as natural and normal.

Therefore, social control over gender roles is not exercised through violence but through self-esteem and shame if one does not obey customary rules. This sense of shame and self-esteem is an effective ideological tool for shaping the ideology of harmony. Custom internalizes that violations of segregated gender roles are not merely social violations but violations of moral laws inherited from ancestors.

"People here have high self-esteem and strictly adhere to all traditional rules. For example, when they hold an event, they feel great if they kill a cow. This is because one of the cow's hind legs will be given to the loro. It is a source of pride for them to be able to give to the nobility. The same applies to pigs," said Samson.

While in other places, social control and social sanctions originate from external parties, in Bunaq society, control over gender behavior occurs internally through pride. Obedience to customary rules was initially seen as respect for the ancestors, but over time, the community saw obedience as an integral part of the individual, so that disobedience would disrupt one's existence. This is the ideological mechanism that the Bunaq customs impose on actors. Something that comes from outside becomes personal property and shapes one's identity (Beck, 2022).

This pattern makes custom an ideological institution that creates, reinforces, and maintains the Bunaq gender asymmetry system. Bunaq women inherit and control wealth, while men bear symbolic authority as leaders and protectors of their families and tribes. The morality of harmony constructed by custom and accepted and internalized by actors enables the perpetuation of this

Bunaq gender asymmetry. In Althusser's terms, the task of ideology is to maintain social cohesion (Romadona, 2020) and protect the interests of the group (Larrain, 1996).

The Catholic Church existed as an ideological institution in Bunaq society even before Indonesia's independence. The influence of the Catholic Church is so strong in Bunaq society that two subdistricts inhabited by a majority of the Bunaq tribe have no other places of worship besides Catholic churches. As an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), the Catholic Church plays a role in instilling four important values that influence the lives of the Bunaq people. 1) Love and forgiveness. This value is the basis of the Catholic faith, which ultimately ties in with the traditional values of the Bunaq community, where all conflicts are resolved amicably rather than through the law. This is in line with the *inloka* mechanism, whereby all conflicts, including gender conflicts within the household, are resolved amicably to achieve reconciliation. This value of love ultimately reinforces the value of harmony in Bunaq culture. 2) Obedience and family unity. Catholic teachings on indissoluble marriage support Bunaq matrilineality, which maintains indissoluble marriage because divorce has a negative impact on the family, especially on men, as they will return to their clan without bringing anything. This is in line with other studies related to religion, especially Islam, in the Indian Ocean Coast (Kooria, 2023) and Minangkabau (Kusnadi et al., 2024; Hendrianto, 2017), which are in line with matrilineal values. This study also reveals that, in certain aspects, Catholic values are in line with and support the matrilineal customs of the Bunaq.

3) Equality. This is a new value introduced by the Catholic Church to the Bunaq community, especially in relation to education for all. Previously, the Bunaq community prioritized boys to receive higher education because sending girls out of the village posed a threat to the girls themselves and also to the tribe. It was a threat to girls because they had to be protected from contamination. Leaving the village meant exposing girls to danger. The departure of girls was also a threat to the tribe's existence because the tribe's survival was in the hands of women. The Catholic Church's significant contribution to educational equality in the Bunaq community is in line with other studies in various regions which state that the Catholic Church consistently strives for educational equality (Grana, 2021; Loughlin, 2022).

4) Patriarchy. This is an old value that exists in Bunaq society but has been given new meaning by the Catholic Church. Patriarchy in Bunaq society is understood as a symbolic representation of the public and spiritual without ownership but must be responsible to the family, tribe, and wife's tribe. This affects men's fighting spirit. The church adds to the value of patriarchy by giving

meaning to independence for men in family and tribal life without abandoning traditional values.

With the power of its inculturation approach, the Catholic Church does not completely reject traditional values (Flinn, 2013; Mundine & Mundine, 2014) as found in Bunaq society. Instead, it transforms existing local values in the light of Catholic teachings. The value of harmony in Bunaq society gains religious moral legitimacy through the value of love brought by the church. The value of traditional obedience takes on new meaning so that families are not torn apart. The symbolic patriarchy of Bunaq men is reinforced so that it is more visible in terms of independence. Meanwhile, the new value brought by the Catholic Church to Bunaq society is equal opportunity in education.

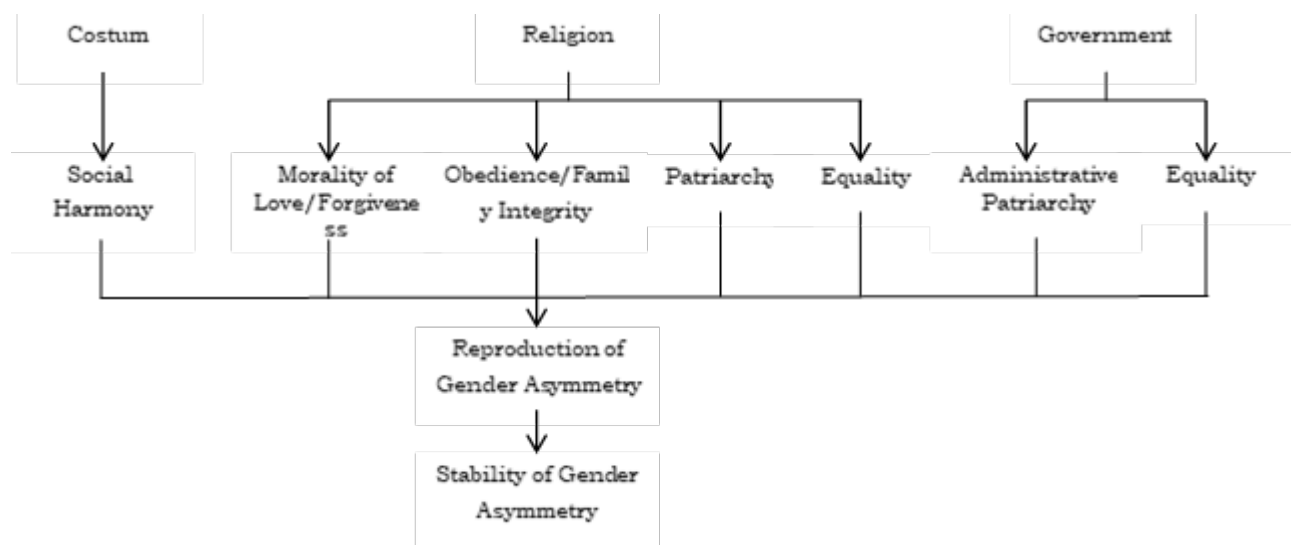
Here we see that the Catholic Church performs a spiritually transformative ISA function. Local traditional values are given religious meaning but maintain the existing gender status in Bunaq society. Women remain in their place as owners of wealth, while men gain legitimacy as more independent and responsible leaders. The values of equality brought by the church do not change the existing traditional gender roles. Based on the acknowledgment of Catholic church leaders serving in Lamaknen, the church does not want to change Bunaq culture but rather simplify the heavy burden of tradition while maintaining the existing structure. Women are still subject to tradition as owners of wealth and are also subject to the teachings of love and family unity. Men are still subject to Bunaq customs as symbolic leaders while hoping to gain independence. Thus, the presence of the Catholic Church does not change the asymmetrical gender structure of Bunaq but refines the existing structure with religious values without changing the existing substance.

Although according to Althusser, the government and state administration are institutions of the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) rather than the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) (Althusser, 1971) because the government can use instruments of violence to enforce its will, in this study, the researcher observes that the state, through its administration, for example, in population registration, defines the family as male. This indirectly legitimizes the symbolic role of Bunaq men in public and formal forums. However, in other areas, the state promotes egalitarianism through education policies for all, regardless of gender. In village governance, the state also promotes equality in leadership by providing ample opportunity for everyone to participate in village leadership through village laws. This encourages Bunaq women to become involved in practical politics and village leadership. However, in practical terms, the government has not changed the matrilineal system in which women control

wealth and the home. Men still have to buy and live in the environment of the woman's tribe. Men still have to 'serve' their wife's tribe.

So the government through its administration and policies introduces gender dualism, namely patriarchy through the administration of civil registration where the head of the family is male but through education, leadership and politics, the state introduces gender equality. This dualism of gender values brought by the state does not replace Bunaq's asymmetrical gender ideology. On the contrary, it strengthens this asymmetrical gender ideology because through state administration, men get formal legality as the head of the family which smells of patriarchy that already exists in Bunaq society. Meanwhile, through egalitarian policies in education, leadership and politics, the state strengthens and expands matrilineal influence in Bunaq society. So the Bunaq asymmetrical gender system is actually reproduced in the two legal systems that apply in Bunaq society, namely costum and the state.

Chart 1. The Role of ISA in Bunaq Asymmetrical Gender Relations



This finding emphasizes that the survival of asymmetrical gender relations in Bunaq society is an ideological dialectic of three institutions in Bunaq society. The three do not negate each other but reinforce each other in their respective ways. The church and the state through the local government representing modernity do not completely change the customary values of the community. There are new values brought but by the community these values are absorbed



and adapted to their culture. The new values are able to change but not eliminate the traditional values they embrace.

CONCLUSION

The gender structure of the matrilineal society of the Bunaq tribe in Timor is not as simple as the initial assumption that matrilineal will lead to matriarchy. On the contrary, when traced, the gender relations lived by people living on the border of two countries are dualistic, paradoxical and complex. Women have property but no power in the public sphere, while men lead and rule in the public sphere but languish materially. The gender relations created by the Bunaq matrilineal system are asymmetrical gender relations that are perpetuated by the morality of social harmony. This gender relation is full of power dynamics formed by structural and ideological mechanisms both in individual, relational and macro dimensions.

The gender structure of the Bunaq community is the deposition of collective values over a long period of time that are inherent and preserved by adat. Modernity, represented by the Catholic church and the state, refines this structure with a wealth of new values. Through the marriage of Risman's structural theory and Althusser's ideology, the paradoxical, complex and ambiguous yet enduring reality of Bunaq gender is revealed. This revelation provides referential benefits about gender anthropology in indigenous communities, especially those who adhere to the matrilineal kinship system, as well as providing new horizons for policy makers on how to carry out social interventions for change but in line with the customary logic of the local community.

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