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AMPA CO'I NDAI

Local Understanding of *Kafā'a* in Marriage among Eastern Indonesian Muslims¹

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Abstract

This article draws on an ethnographic research that focuses on the cultural practice of female-paid matrimonial funding, ampa co'i ndai (ACN), among semi-urban Bimanese Muslims of Eastern Indonesia. The practice takes place when the bride, with the help of her parents and female relatives, pays her marriage payment (co'i, including mahr). It is used only when the prospective groom is a government employee, for it is assumed as a social status raiser. During the declaration of marriage, the payment is announced to have come from the groom. This article uses the practice as a site to examine the particularity of practising Islamic laws in everyday life of eastern Indonesian Muslims. The narratives of nineteen Muslim women who have been involved in ACN reveal what its functions as an equalising mechanism, through which gendered power-relations is minimised while perpetuating traditional position of wives and husbands as a complementary couple within their family as well as before society. I argue that ACN has been seen as a modified understanding of kafā'a in fiqh which means "equality" to "complementarity" However, this local understanding of kafā'a is a testament to the complexities of gender power relations.

¹ The earlier draft of this article was entitled, "Revisiting The Concept of Kafā'a (Equality or Suitability?) in the Marriage Payment Practice among Bimanese Muslims of Eastern Indonesia", presented at the 13th Annual International Conference on Islamic Studies (Mataram, 2013). It is also an extended analysis of a sub chapter of my thesis at Western Sydney University, 2016.

[Artikel ini adalah penelitian etnografi tentang praktik AMPA *co'i ndai* (ACN) di kalangan masyarakat semi-urban muslim Bima di kawasan timur Indonesia. Budaya ini dilaksanakan dengan cara pengantin perempuan, dengan bantuan orang tua dan saudara perempuannya, menyediakan biaya pernikahan (*co'i dan mahar*). Tradisi ini dipraktikkan hanya ketika calon pengantin pria adalah pegawai negeri, yang diasumsikan memiliki status sosial yang lebih. Namun, saat resepsi pernikahan, diumumkan bahwa biaya-biaya berasal dari pengantin pria. Narasi kehidupan dari sembilan belas perempuan yang terlibat mengungkapkan fungsi ACN sebagai mekanisme penyetaraan gender dengan meminimalkan relasi kuasa serta mendudukkan pasangan untuk saling melengkapi dalam keluarga maupun masyarakat. Praktik ACN dapat dilihat sebagai bentuk lokal pemahaman konsep *kafā'a*, yang berarti “kesetaraan” untuk “melengkapi”. Namun, pemahaman lokal *kafā'a* ini merupakan bukti kompleksitas relasi kuasa dalam masalah gender.]

Keywords: *kafā'a*, localized *kafā'a*, equalizing mechanism, *ampa co'i ndai*, bilateral kinship

A. Introduction: *Ampa co'i ndai* as an Ethnographic Case

After two years of courtship, Rangga and Dini agreed to get married. Rangga had just received formal confirmation (*SK/Surat Keputusan*) that he was now legally qualified as a government employee (*pegawai negeri*). His parents were not yet ready to hold the wedding as they did not have sufficient funds, but Dini and her family were worried Rangga might change his mind or there would be another girl with whom his parents would match him. Dini told Rangga to inform his parents that she and her family would cover what they needed as *co'i* (the Bimanese traditional matrimonial funding). Both parties agreed, and the wedding took place. However, during the *ijab qabul* (offer from Dini's father as her guardian, and acceptance by Rangga as her husband), it was mentioned that the *co'i* was from the groom. It was also written in the certificate of marriage as being so. The father stated: 'Rangga, I will marry you to my daughter, Dini, with the payment you have made in the form of 23 grams of gold jewellery', and right after that (without pause), Rangga said: 'I accept her marriage to me with the payment you just mentioned'. (Personal interview with Dini and Rangga, 14 April 2013)

The above scene illustrates how the female initiated marriage payment (*ampa co'i ndai*) is practised by Bimanese Muslims on Sumbawa Island, West Nusa Tenggara province, in eastern Indonesia. It shows the action Dini and her family took in actively negotiating the role of providing Dini's marriage payment for wed Rangga, a government employee. *Ampa co'i ndai* reveals women's capacity to negotiate marriage and accommodate the Islamic requirement of *mahr* which, legally, obligates a groom to provide payment for his wife. In this paper, I will use this cultural practice as a lens through which to examine local understanding and application of *kafā'a* in Bimanese families and marriage institution. I will show that *ampa co'i ndai* reveals how Bimanese Muslims function this practice as an "equalizing mechanism"² as a local understanding of *kafā'a* to ensure the complementarity of husbands and wives and to minimise gender power relations of their marriage institutions.

Ampa co'i ndai literally refers to elevating one's 'price', meaning the bride raises her perceived worth through releasing the groom from his obligation to provide a marriage payment by paying it herself and contributing financially to the wedding. The practice takes place when the bride and/or bride's family provides or contributes to the *co'i* (locally defined matrimonial funding), of which *mahr* (Islamic marriage payment)³ is a part, because the girl wants to marry a government employee (*pegawai negeri*).⁴ However, the actual provider of the marriage payment is disguised, in that during the *ijab kabul* (marriage offer and acceptance) in the *akad*

² This term was coined by Gamst, explaining the characteristics of a peasant community and how it tries to deal with a more complex world generated by modern civilization which, in many cases, renders a social divide between families and communities, as well as between them and outside influences. See Frederick C. Gamst, *Peasants in Complex Society* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977), p. 72.

³ In this article, I use the terms '*co'i*' and '*mahr*' to differentiate between the local tradition and the Islamic terms of marriage payment. *Co'i* (matrimonial funding) is more general and covers *mahr (co'i di pebe)*, wedding expenses (*piti ka'a*), and pre-existing property (*ju'u*), while *mahr* specifically refers to payment mentioned during the declaration of marriage and written on the marriage certificate.

⁴ The term 'government employees' in this article refers to civil servants and military personnel. However, in local terms, these are each referred to specifically – '*pegawai*' for civil servants, and '*polisi*' or '*tentara*' for military personnel. Throughout this article, I will use 'government employee' to cover both, unless there is a specific reason to do otherwise.

nikah (declaration of marriage contract) the groom is explicitly referred to as the (real) provider of the payment.

Ampa co'i ndai, therefore, can be seen as a distinctive marriage payment practice of local origin,⁵ which modifies the concept of *mahr* and accommodates the local concept of payment, *co'i*. While Islamic *mahr* exclusively assigns the role of provider of a marriage payment to men, local tradition allows for the actual provider to be negotiated. The payment may come from the groom's side, or it could come from the bride's side or from a contribution from both parties, taking into consideration their respective circumstances.

The payment of *co'i* consists of three components. First, there is *mahr (co'i di pebe)*, which is publicly mentioned during the declaration of marriage, as part of Islamic tradition as practised in Bima. Second, *piti ka'a* (spending money) is given as a financial contribution towards the wedding party and the traditional ritual process. Third, *fu'u* (capital), which includes land for a house, sarongs, and kitchen utensils, contributed by the bride, and a house (*uma ruka*) and furniture, provided by the groom, thereby establishing initial assets for the new family. While the first component of *co'i (mahr)* is universally applicable in all Muslim communities around

⁵ This is not to say that the practice where a bride contributes to the marriage payment takes place exclusively in Bima. For example, Geertz mentioned that there is a simple way of negotiating marriage among the Javanese. She quoted a story of a village official who married his only daughter to a man who brought no property to the wife. The groom came from a family background of low economic status but was respected in the village. After the wedding, the couple stayed with bride's family. The husband tilled the land given by his father-in-law. See Hildred Geertz, *The Javanese Family* (Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), pp. 63–4. Geertz, however, did not refer to the practice with a particular name, signifying it happens very rarely and is not traditionally recognised, while the practice of female initiated marriage payment in Bima is institutionalised with the popular name of *ampa co'i ndai*. Meanwhile, the tradition of *uang japuik* (money for securing the groom), provided by the bride before marriage, exists among the matrilineal societies of the Padang Pariaman people of West Sumatera, see Ririanty Yunita, Syaiful M. Syaiful M, and Muhammad Basri, "Uang Japuik dalam Adat Perkawinan Padang Pariaman di Bandar Lampung", *PESAGI (Jurnal Pendidikan dan Penelitian Sejarah)*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2013). *Uang japuik* is given to the groom because he is considered a guest in the bride's house, see Welhendri Azwar, *Matrilokal dan Status Perempuan dalam Tradisi Bajapuik: Studi kasus tentang Perempuan dalam Tradisi Bajapuik* (Yogyakarta: Galang Press, 2001). *Uang japuik* is different from *ampa co'i ndai* that takes place in bilateral Bimanese society and which becomes the bride's own property.

the world, and the second one (*piti ka'a*) is common among many ethnic groups in Indonesia, the third component, *fu'u*, is a distinctive component of payment exclusive to Bimanese Muslims.

Co'i can be divided into four types, according to who pays: (a) *ampa co'i ndai* (bride-paid marriage payment), (b) *wa'a coi* (groom-paid marriage payment), (c) *kantika dei rumi* (mutually provided spending money), and (d) *kacampo fu'u*, (mutually provided assets). Except of *ampa co'i ndai*, it is the groom who always provides the *mabr*. Interestingly, in all four types of payment, the amount and significance of *mabr* is dwarfed by two other components of *co'i* – spending money and capital. This research focuses on the first type of *co'i*, *ampa co'i ndai*, although it will also explain the other three types mentioned above, as they are all interrelated and help in understanding *ampa co'i ndai*.

It is important to examine *ampa co'i ndai* for at least two compelling reasons. First, it is a form of marriage payment that has not been previously documented, even though it is widely practised by Bimanese Muslims (who are, in general, overlooked in representations of Muslim women in Indonesia).⁶ Second, it helps provide a wider perspective on

⁶ Jeffrey D. Brewer, "Agricultural Knowledge and Cultural Practice in Two Indonesian Villages", Ph.D. Dissertation (Los Angeles: University of Chichago, 1979), pp. 2–3. Brewer has suggested that, as a subject of research, Bima has been overlooked because of its being peripheral to the dominant cultures of Indonesia and also "too tainted by Islam to be of interest to those engaged in Eastern Indonesia as a field of ethnological study". However, this claim is no longer applicable for later scholarly developments concerning Bima. Just in Peter Just, "Dou Donggo Social Organization: Ideology, Structure and Action in an Indonesian Society", Ph.D. Dissertation (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 1986). for example, listed five anthropological studies, including his own which had been undertaken on Sumbawa Island, including Bima, since World War II. None of these specifically studied this unusual marriage practice, although Just touched on how marriage payment has changed since Islam was embraced by a group of highlanders in Bima. Hitchcock stated that Bima and the Bimanese do show the continued significance of indigenous regional cultures and are exemplars of Indonesian Islam. See Michael Hitchcock, *Islam and Identity in Eastern Indonesia* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1996). A recent trend in research on Islam in Indonesia has placed a great deal of attention on Bima and eastern Indonesia. For example, the unpublished thesis by Muhammad Adlin Sila, "Being Muslims in Bima of Sumbawa, Indonesia: Practice, Politics and Cultural Diversity", Ph.D. Dissertation (Canberra: Australian National University, 2014). provides a relatively detailed discussion of marriage practice, including forms of payment. But the thesis does not mention *ampa co'i ndai* at all. Rahman and Nurmukminah published a book on *Nika Mbojo: Antara*

Muslim marriage payment across Indonesia and in Muslim societies across the world. Furthermore, examining local understanding of *kafā'a* in this cultural practice further illuminates what Adeney-Risakotta indicates about the imaginary of Indonesian Muslim women and the triangle interaction of tradition, Islam and changing modern conditions.⁷

B. *Kafā'a*: Equality or Complementarity?

Abu Ishaka (64 years old) told me that five of his seven children had been involved in *ampa co'i ndai*, and Umi Rohana (46 years old) reported that her eldest daughter had taken part in the practice. It is interesting that both of them justified *ampa co'i ndai* by saying that the practice was followed because “*ndi loa kaina sekufu*” (it makes the couple *sekufu*). ‘*Sekufu*’ is a term derived from ‘*kafā'a*’ in the Islamic marriage legal structure (*fiqh perkaminan*), and means ‘equality’. Abu Ishaka contended that because a marriage with *ampa co'i ndai* is generally between a man who has a secure job and a woman who does not have such security, the couple are more likely to have unequal positions within the marriage, in which case the contribution made by the woman and her family serves is to balance their positions so that they become ‘*sekufu*’ (see about difference between *ampa co'i ndai* and *kafā'a* in *fiqh* in the following pages). In *ampa co'i ndai*, *kafā'a* is understood as a mechanism to put women and men at the complementary level or in Gams’t term as: “equalizing mechanism”

Basically, among Islamic jurists, *kafā'a* means a suitable groom – one who should be in a position equal to or higher than that of his bride,

Islam dan Tradisi (Bimanese Marriage, between Islam and Tradition) which discusses how Islam and local traditions are blended in the Bimanese marriage practice. This book also mentions the practice of marriage payment where women secretly provide the payment when they marry men of a higher social or educational status, but without specifying it as being *ampa co'i ndai*. I claim that within the existing discussions and literature about Bimanese marriage there is an exclusion of the role women play, and of their perspective, in the marriage payment negotiations, whether as receiver or provider. See M. Fachrir Rahman and Nurmukminah, *Nika Mbojo: Antara Islam dan Tradisi*, ed. by Mukhlis Muma Leon and Nurhilalati (Mataram: Alam Tara Learning Institute, 2011).

⁷ See Bernard Adeney-Risakotta, “Traditional, Islamic and National Law in the Experience of Indonesian Muslim Women”, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2016), pp. 303–18. rooted in a long history, support gender equality. However, there is tension between national law, traditional (adat

in order to raise her up to the higher level.⁸ The four Sunni schools of thought differ in their proposed requirements for being *kafā'a*,⁹ and it would seem that the only point on which they all agree is that the groom should be of the same religion and level of piety as the bride.¹⁰ This requirement has been adopted by KHI (the Compilation of Islamic Law in Indonesia): that being Muslim is the only determinant of whether a couple is *kafā'a*, or not, and failure to meet this requirement can justify the annulment of the marriage by those who choose to dissolve it.¹¹ It must be noted that being *kafā'a* in fiqh perspective is not something women can achieve, because women cannot be 'rescuers'. *Kafā'a* is therefore seen as

... a one-way street, in the sense that the requirement of suitability could only be applied to a groom; the jurists assumed that a woman's marriage to a man of lower status would lead to her degradation but her marriage to a man of higher status would raise her to his level.¹²

During my in-depth discussion with Umi Rohana, she explained

⁸ Judith E. Tucker, *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁹ Four popular Sunni schools of thought have proposed various degrees of requirements in order to qualify as *kafā'a*. The Hanafiah School lists the most requirements, while the Malikiyah School only requires 'piety' as a necessary condition. The Hanafiah school has determined that *kafā'a* should consist of: (a) equality in lineage (descent), especially in relation to being Arabic or non Arabic; (b) religion (i.e. Islam), and most of his family and relatives should also be Muslim; (c) profession (job); (d) freedom; (e) good character (piety); and (f) wealth. The Hanabilah School of thought includes all of the above except for one, linking 'religion' and 'piety' and specifying that those two criteria were only applicable to the groom, not his family or relatives. The Syafi'i School excluded 'wealth' as a criterion for *kafā'a*, see. Amir Syarifuddin, *Hukum Perkawinan Islam di Indonesia antara Fiqh Munakahat dan Undang-Undang Perkawinan* (Rawamangun, Jakarta: Kencana, 2006).

¹⁰ They are also in agreement that *kafā'a* is related to *ijbar* (force) rights of father and grandfather as *wali mujbir* (guardians who have right to force) toward their unmarried daughters, to force them to marry a person of their (*wali*'s) choice. In order to make sure that the person they choose will not do any harm to their daughters, *wali mujbir* have to comply with *kafā'a* requirements, see John L. Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1982); Tucker, *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law*; Syarifuddin, *Hukum Perkawinan Islam di Indonesia antara Fiqh Munakahat dan Undang-Undang Perkawinan*.

¹¹ *Kompilasi Hukum Islam* (KHI) Article 61.

¹² See Tucker, *Women, Family, and Gender in Islamic Law*, p. 45.

that what the Bimanese mean by '*sekeufu*' here is not the same as the concept of *kafā'a* (equality which means sameness) as outlined above. It has been modified to mean 'complementary'. She differentiated between the positions of men and women in society and the family, pointing out that a man may have a prestigious occupation as a government employee while a woman may not. The two sexes are different, with men apparently holding a higher social position, but these differences should not benefit men to the exclusion of women. While a man can raise a woman's social standing as a result of his own social position, a woman can strategize to elevate her position herself, by practising *ampa co'i ndai*. Thus the Bimanese expect to preserve the traditional values of *dou di uma* which place husband and wife as different but equal.

Examining the concept of *kafā'a* and how '*sekeufu*' is connected to it and used as a reason and justification for *ampa co'i ndai*, as related by Abu Karim and Umi Rohana above, illustrates not only similarities and differences between *kafā'a* in *fiqh* term and *kafā'a* in *ampa co'i ndai* but also the complexity of gender ideology embedded in the practice of *ampa co'i ndai*.

Kafā'a in *fiqh* term and in *ampa co'i ndai* are similar, in the sense that the man is the 'rescuer' of the woman, who frequently lags behind socially, but *ampa co'i ndai* goes one step further in controlling this 'rescuing' action to avoid any negative impact on the woman. In other words, the social standing a woman receives through her husband should also create substantial equality of relations within the family. In this regard, *ampa co'i ndai*, as an equalising mechanism, is not only aimed at putting men and women in a complementary position (while acknowledging men as the status makers), but also at anticipating the excessive power men may exert when they realise their role as rescuers. It seems that the end goal of *kafā'a* in *fiqh* is to put women and men in a position of equality, but with emphasis on men as the raisers of social status. Within the concept of *kafā'a* however, there is no practical approach regarding prevention of a possible aftermath to giving such a significant amount of power to men.

The differences between *kafā'a* and *ampa co'i ndai* are in the nuances of their meanings, and in who can actively participate in each

of them. *Kafā'a* is seen as 'equality' (*kesetaraan/kesamaan*),¹³ and thus is more idealistic, while *ampa co'i ndai* means 'complementarity' and is more realistic. At a glance, these two terms may seem similar, but in my opinion, differ in their practical implications.

Equality implies that the groom should strive to equalise his status and that of his bride. He should therefore actively make every effort to achieve the same or (higher) level of profession, wealth, lineage, and piety as his bride, or become her 'rescuer', raising her social status. The bride is thus the passive part of the union. In this way, *kafā'a* in the *fiqh* perspective is dissimilar to the concept of the equalising mechanism of *ampa co'i ndai*, because, in the latter practice, women are active players rather than being merely passive. Complementarity implies that both parties contribute from their own strengths, to satisfy the requirements for a 'suitable' union. For example, the bride's lineage may happen to be from a family of high social standing (for example, her father may be a government employee), but the groom can compensate for this, not by coming from such an ascribed (given) status, but by virtue of some other achievement higher than that of the bride, such as having a better profession (achieved status).

Thus, *kafā'a* is exclusively applied to men, whereas *ampa co'i ndai* is more flexible and open to women. It is not considered *kafā'a* if men do not meet the requirement of being of higher or equal status, relative to the prospective bride, in terms of lineage, religion, profession, freedom (not a slave), and piety (according to the Syafi'i's school's requirements, which the Bimanese adhere to). In the practice of *ampa co'i ndai*, men do not need to fulfil all the characteristics of *kafā'a* above, to increase the status of the women. Also, in some cases, a woman can have individual attainments which are higher than those of her future husband, such as being a government employee herself, and, in a situation where she is older than the man and this goes against her, she can practise *ampa co'i ndai*. A similar situation occurs when a female government employee wants to marry a non-government employee and needs to prove that she can cope with the refusal of her future husband's family. These are some examples of how *ampa co'i ndai* better facilitates women's capacity

¹³ See Esposito, *Women in Muslim Family Law*; Syarifuddin, *Hukum Perkawinan Islam di Indonesia antara Fiqh Munakahat dan Undang-Undang Perkawinan*.

to act than does the concept of *kafā'a*, in which women are still seen as subordinate to men, who have higher status and active roles as rescuers.

The practice of *ampa co'i ndai* allows a woman to actively look for a man, not just passively wait for the right man. The act of 'looking for' is embedded in the practice in that Bimanese women are willing to negotiate who provides the *mahr* (*co'i*) when they find a man with whom they can reciprocate the various requirements expected of the two parties. Nevertheless, women have a more limited time frame for marriage, as the older they become, the less likely it is that they will find their 'ideal man'. Furthermore, whether or not they are government employees – a job which gives them high social standing – women are not allowed to take on the 'rescuing' role assigned to men, and they still need a man to achieve the particular social status which comes from being married. In this regard, in both *kafā'a* and *ampa co'i ndai* the complexity of gender ideology is apparent: a woman must always rely on a man to be the 'rescuer', no matter whether the position the man holds is higher or lower than her own.

C. The Bimanese Marriage as a Joint-Investment: Bilateral Kinship and Complementarity of a Couple

The way Bimanese understand *kafā'a* as an equalising mechanism and the possibility to practice *ampa co'i ndai* are closely related to the local meaning of marriage as *kacampo fu'u* or a joint investment. The practice of *kacampo fu'u* (mutually provided assets/joint investment) in Bimanese marriage is possible due to their bilateral kinship and the degree of complementarity between wife and husband.

This session will first look at the factors which generated the perception of marriage as a joint investment: the bilateral system that the Bimanese adhere to which enables both men and women to inherit from both lines of family and receive gifts or bequests (*hibab*). In this way, women have economic resources from their family of origin and thus become less demanding regarding *mahr*. As a consequence, women and their families are willing to practise *ampa co'i ndai*, as they consider *mahr*, which is a one-time payment, as only a token of marital unity rather than as an actual property. Moreover, by marrying a government employee, women are more likely to have a secure economic future, so *ampa co'i*

ndai is used as compensation for this, rather than burdening the men by insisting that they pay their *mabr*.

On the other hand, the complementarity of husbands and wives can be seen in the local names for their partnership: ‘*dou di uma*’ (person at my home), and ‘*rabi ro we?*’ (husband and wife, which, literally, means ‘ask and give’). Both parties can not come to their marriage with empty handed as they both need to contribute their economic skills and pre-existing property.

The role of the family of origin is to facilitate the wellbeing of the bride and groom, who should nevertheless also have the personal skills to secure their own future, picking up where their parents and family of origin leave off. The attributes seen as necessary for the groom and bride are different, each bringing their own skills into the family – for example, *maloa nggala ro oka* (good skill in fishing and farming) for males, and *maloa muna ro medi* (good skill in weaving and sewing) for females, although, in practice, farm work is done by both men and women. Hitchcock¹⁴ pointed out that such a division of labour can also be observed all around Indonesia, with men’s work tending to be associated with metal and heavy tasks, while women’s work is related to weaving and lighter duties. In this way men and women can complement each other, jointly ensuring their future family’s wellbeing.

1. *Bilateral Kinship and Women’s Access to Family Property*

The Bimanese have a cognatic kinship in its bilateral form with an egalitarian gender relation. They recognise the kin group from both the mother’s and father’s side and bride and groom maintain their natal kinship after marriage. This way of organising family and social relations is widespread in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia.¹⁵ Robin Fox states that “the cognatic principle of tracing kinship can perhaps be best described as ignoring sex in tracing kinship links”.¹⁶ Belo people, for example, claim that their mothers kinship group is as close as their fathers kinship group

¹⁴ Hitchcock, *Islam and Identity in Eastern Indonesia*.

¹⁵ Shelly Errington, “Recasting Sex, Gender and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview”, in *Power and Difference: Gender in Island Southeast Asia*, ed. by Jane Monnig Atkinson and Shelly Errington (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

¹⁶ Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage: An Anthropological Perspective*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 49.

and that matters relating to love and care, and private matters such as giving birth, choosing a partner, and the decision to marry, are closely related to their mothers side. On the other hand, public issues, such as being represented in the marriage declaration, are closely linked to their fathers side, which they call 'usuba'.

Ward (1963)¹⁷ points out that the high social status of Southeast Asian women, compared to South Asian women (such as in India and Pakistan), is due to their familial structure, which is predominated by bilateral or cognatic kinship. Errington¹⁸ mentioned three characteristics of bilateral kinship: the equal relationship of children to both parents, kinship terminology which is similar to both paternal and maternal relatives, and a persons social status as determined by both parents relatives. My own observations confirmed that all of these were indeed characteristic of the kinship structure among the Bimanese.

At the birth of a child, there is no preference for a particular sex, as both are seen as bringing their own form of luck (*cua cua arujiki*); boys are believed to bring respect, and girls love, both qualities being fundamental and complementary for the parents' happiness. Another reason why parents response to the birth of a son or a daughter is similar is that in Indonesia daughters, usually, are not consider to be a burden as they are in societies (such as in South Asia) where the dowry tradition is practised. On the other hand, Errington¹⁹ noted that Southeast Asian societies practise the exchange of wealth, or marriage payment, in the form of bridewealth (whereby the groom renders service and payments to the bride's family), or, more commonly, in the form of reciprocity, in which the families of both the bride and the groom make a financial contribution to each other

In Indonesia, as observed by Blackburn,²⁰ the matrilineal system of

¹⁷ Barbara E. Ward, "Men, Women, and Change: An Essay in Understanding Social Roles in South and South-east Asia", in *Women in the New Asia: The Changing Social Roles of Men and Women in South and South-East Asia*, ed. by Barbara E. Ward (Paris: Unesco, 1963).

¹⁸ Errington, "Recasting Sex, Gender and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview".

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Susan Blackburn, *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Minangkabau (West Sumatera) and the patrilineality of Batak in North Sumatera, as well as the bilateral system of the Javanese, have resulted in a different tradition regarding gender roles which affect women's agency. Among the matrilineal Minangkabau, women own property but are typically excluded from decision-making, which is the prerogative of their brothers. Patrilineal Batak women are unable to inherit and are also precluded from decision-making, thereby increasing their dependence on men. The bilateral Javanese typically demonstrate more equality between men and women, with women playing visible and significant roles in commerce and agriculture, but not in public political life.²¹ Suffice to say, these important social, cultural differences, which result in either facilitating or impeding the agency of women, confirm that kinship structure strongly affects the individual autonomy and self-determination of women.

This kinship system not only categorises people into groups but also has the function of determining rights and obligations, including rights of inheritance. Because in bilateral kinship ancestry is determined from both males and females, daughters, as well as sons, inherit from the mother and father. In Bima, normatively, there is a strong influence of Islamic rules of inheritance in the different portions allotted to males and females (a ratio of 2:1). This gendered portioning is translated into local terms as '*salemba*' (a pair of package carried on the shoulder) for men and '*sancu'u*' (one package carried on the head) for women. However, the Bimanese commonly base the division of inheritance on the agreement of siblings and those who are entitled to a share. There is a unique tradition in Belo-Bima, the research site, that the land should always be inherited by the daughters, while the house is for the sons, except when they each release their own right to the land or house, or if the deceased only had sons or only daughters.

The property given to women, both through inheritance and bequests, becomes their personal property, which they then bring to marriage as *harta bawaan* (pre-existing property). A man cannot marry until he can provide a house with the furniture, while the woman should provide a place to build a house and all the kitchen utensils. Pre-existing property becomes the initial assets of *co'i* (Bimanese marriage payment),

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

and has to be shown to each party before marriage would go ahead, to prove the new couple will have it to live separately from their parents.

Women's ownership of pre-existing property makes them less demanding of *mabr* element of *co'i* (marriage payment), as *mabr* is thus not their only economic resource but, rather, an alternative. The *co'i* or *mabr* then becomes merely a token of marital unity, as *ai ndi ma diki* (a rope to tie the relationship). For this reason, it is typically arranged that the value of the house contributed by the groom is divided into two parts: first half is *fu'u* element of *co'i* and a pre-existing property of him, and the other half is *mabr*, the personal property of the bride. The Bimanese think that with this arrangement in place both parties will think twice before initiating a divorce. However, if a divorce does take place, first half of the *house* as groom's part can either be put in the wife's name, on behalf of the children (if any), or the wife may compensate the husband financially. In this way, the whole house becomes women's ownership. Therefore, in dealing with divorce, the people of Renda have two steps: *cengga* (divide), which refers to property division involving families and a religious leader, and *ncengga* (divorce), which means obtaining a formal divorce from a religious court.²²

Another feature of women's access to a family property is that of joint control of property by husband and wife, both regarding the shared property (*harta gono gini*) that is acquired during the marriage, and pre-existing property (*harta bawaan*). Husband and wife each need the other's permission to do anything regarding the property, although the *harta bawaan* forms part of their personal belongings, which they get back in the case of divorce. The *harta gono-gini* will be divided evenly between both parties, or they will put the property in their children's names.

2. *Partner as Dou di Uma (Person at my home)*

In a more formal situation and as a polite expression, the Bimanese refer to their spouse as *dou di uma* (person in the house). According to local people, this term means 'the person who stays at the house and has responsibility for its affairs'. Abu Ishaka (64 years old),²³ a religious leader whom I interviewed, explained that this term also connotes "the

²² Personal information by AM, 39 years old, interview on July 23, 2013.

²³ Interview with a religious leader on July 24 and August 1, 2013.

person through whom one feels enjoyment in being in the house” and comes from the concept of *sakinah* (originating from the Arabic ‘*sakana*’, which means ‘comfortable to stay with’), referring to a happy marriage with the right partner.

In casual conversation, the husband is called ‘*rabi*’, and the wife is called ‘*wei*’. When I asked Umi Rohana (46 years old),²⁴ a Belonese woman who is a lecturer at a local private university, to confirm whether ‘*wei*’ comes from the word ‘*mbei*’ (to give) and ‘*rabi*’ comes from the word ‘*rabo*’ (to ask), as observed by Just among *dou Donggo*,²⁵ she agreed that this was indeed the case. However, she admitted that although she had learned that root word, it was not common knowledge. She further explained that this terminology shows how the relationship between the two sexes in the marriage should involve a reciprocal give and take, although, formally, it is the man’s family who proposes and is therefore seen as the wife-taker, while the woman’s family is seen as the wife-giver.

Both the terms ‘*dou di uma*’ and ‘*rabi ro wei*’ refer to a person’s partner, and throw light on the way the Bimanese see the relationship between sexes within the family. ‘*Dou di uma*’ refers to the parallel existence of wife and husband, highlighting their attachment to the house (family), while ‘*rabi ro wei*’ further explains the essence of their relationship with each other, as complementary partners.

The concept of *dou di uma* confirms that the Bimanese believe that the woman and the man should share domestic responsibilities, whether financial or about other matters. As previously mentioned, women are given economic responsibility for running the household, as *ma nenti piti* (who holds the household money), even though they are not the primary bread-winners or *ma ngupa piti* (who looks for the household money). Men are also attached to the house, although the wife is primarily in charge. Thus, wife and husband have different roles, but share responsibility in both economic and domestic activities. Ideally, the fact that the man works outside the home to make money does not diminish his connection to his home, while the woman, who is largely restricted to the confines of her home, also has access to the world outside. However, political and structural power are generally seen as about male interests, with women

²⁴ Interview with a local academic on July 29 and August 5, 2013.

²⁵ Just, “Dou Donggo Social Organization”.

ostensibly absent in the Sultanate, as well as in formal leadership such as government bureaucracy. It is expected that by coming to the family with their own material wealth, women have power and can control over a husband's negative behaviour which might harm family stability. In this way, both husband and wife, outside and within the household, can enjoy the essential power and authority.

The concept of *dou di uma* as above confirms the findings of Errington,²⁶ who identified the eastern region of Indonesia as the “exchange archipelago” – the region with the ideology of dualism, which sees men and women as being different but complementary. This is in contrast to the «centrist archipelago» identity of western Indonesia, including Sulawesi, where people are preoccupied with unity and consider men and women as unified in sameness. The exchange archipelago is characterised by the concept of origin, which can also be traced from common ancestry, but one which was divided a long time ago. People in this type of society consider themselves as being descended from the partition of that common ancestor. Consequently, they see social relationships from a dualist point of view, where men and women are regarded as different sorts of creatures, albeit complementary. They represent the relatedness of women and men as the pairing of husband and wife. Men and women are not in binary opposition, but, rather, are ‘linked couples, as a unity.’²⁷ The ideology of complementarity of the sexes has meant that there is a little economic differentiation between men and women.²⁸ Women and men both actively contribute to the family economically.

However, as I observed during my fieldwork, the different roles assigned to men and women within the family are often more theoretical than practical, with women responsible for household duties, including rearing children’ and also doing some ‘men’s work’. In fact, everyday activities show considerable crossover of roles. As illustrated in the following pictures, it is common to see men bargaining for kitchen utensils while holding a baby, or a woman helping her husband and son to make bricks.

²⁶ Errington, “Recasting Sex, Gender and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview”.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

3. *Fu'u* (Initial Assets) of Marriage: Property Rights and Economic Skills of Bride and Groom

As I mentioned above, marriage is regarded as *kacampo fu'u* (a joint investment) in Bimanese society, in which both the man and the woman indicate their readiness to get married by bringing property (*barta bavaan*) and demonstrating particular skills. Interestingly, both the property and skills are gender related. This arrangement shows that not only the men are expected to shoulder financial responsibilities but that the women should complement them in making a financial contribution to the family.

Since the spread of bureaucratization spread to Bima, the value of joining capital (property and skills) has been preserved by the Bimanese, although the forms of the property and the economic skills have changed for some people. For those who have greater access to education, their increased capability of earning money (*maloa ngupa*) is signalled by their jobs as professionals (*ma loa karawi*), or government employees (*mantau bora ro ngara* or *mantau patalo ro bedi*: one who has a reputable position and name, or who has pen and gun). Therefore, men, with their monthly salary, and helped by their wives, can collect the money, buy the land, and build the house they need. This is particularly true when the couple will not stay in Bima, or their parents do not have land or a house to give them. In this regard, women's families typically do not view *ampa co'i ndai* as a burden at all, especially since, according to tradition, the daughter, as the wife, has responsibility for holding the money in the family and authority in using it.

In the past, when a woman got married, she would show off her weaving skill by taking many sarongs to her new family, all of which were counted in front of the guests who attended the rituals of *leka* (opening the *uma ruka*, or new house) and *dende* (taking the couple into their new house). All those attending would witness what kind of furniture the new couple had, and even count how many sarongs the woman had brought into the family. The quality and quantity of things on show was a source of pride to both sets of parents and was talked about among the villagers. Praises were sung about how successful the parents were, and, in particular, about the skill of the bride, as it was she who had provided and, traditionally, made all of her sarongs herself, by hand. The sarongs were intended as start-up capital for the new family, who either sold them

during the ritual to the guests or later when they needed money to meet family expenses. It is obvious, then, that in addition to a clear division of family-supported properties allocated to men and women as a prerequisite for getting married, there was a strict rule that both men and women should invest their personal skills in their family of procreation.

Interestingly, this whole process demonstrates that a woman is not seen merely as a housewife, but also as contributing financially to the marriage, because the sarongs are intended primarily as productive goods and not consumable goods. Women should bring with them a kind of ‘family resource’, and come to the marriage empty-handed would stigmatise them as only *te’e* (asking) without *mbei* (contributing) anything. Women’s agency, particularly concerning the bargaining power within the family, could be influenced by individual income and ownership of assets. Thus, economic independency of women is a factor which enhances women’s agency within the household.²⁹

Errington in her article, ‘Recasting Sex, Gender, and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview’,³⁰ highlights that many Western scholars have identified Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, as an area where women enjoy greater status than they do in traditional Indian and Chinese societies. There are various reasons for this: Belo³¹ explained the complementarity of sexes among the Balinese as being ‘different but parallel’, a finding which Clifford Geertz³² supports, focusing on the playing down of sexual differences between women and men in Bali.

Another reason why Indonesian women enjoy a higher position in society than their Indian and Chinese counterparts is that they often control the household finances and are even free to earn money. It is true that gender division of labour exists, even in agricultural societies, but in

²⁹ Lawrence James Haddad, John Hoddinott, and Harold Alderman (eds.), *Intrahousehold Resource Allocation in Developing Countries: Models, Methods, and Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

³⁰ Errington, “Recasting Sex, Gender and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview”.

³¹ Jane Belo, *Bali: Rangda and Barong* (New York: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1949).

³² Clifford Geertz, “Thick description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”, in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3–30.

her comments on Soroako Sulawesi, Robinson³³ said: “[I]n the peasant economy it seemed a way of organising tasks, and did not entail a means of one group appropriating surplus from another.” Robinson further explains her observation of labour division among Soroako people:

This division of labour, then, neither buttressed the control of one group over another nor entailed relations of hierarchy. Indeed, it did not have the capacity to develop such relations. Rather, labour exchange fostered the reproduction of cooperative customary relationships.³⁴

The above accounts suggest that women and men worked side by side for the economic benefit of the family, in a parallel position, which contrasts to the division of labour in capitalist societies, which often serves as a basis for the control of one group over another. This account is relevant to how occupational changes introduced by the New Order era influenced the symmetrical position of sexes in agricultural societies in Bima.

More recent research, however, uncover different notions about gender ideology in Indonesia, which challenge previous accounts. For example, Wolf³⁵ and Brenner³⁶ confirm Sullivan’s³⁷ observation, that the economic autonomy of women within the family does not necessarily give them higher status than men in either family or social life. Brenner³⁸ highlights the fact that women’s role of managing money accords them lower status, as money is seen as a material thing and ‘*kasar*’ (coarse), while men are free to focus on spirituality, as a non-material thing, which is ‘*halus*’ (refined).

³³ Kathryn M. Robinson, “What Kind of Freedom is Cutting Your Hair? Class and Gender in a Peripheral Capitalist Economy”, in *Development and Displacement: Women in Southeast Asia*, ed. by Glen Chandler, Norma Sullivan, and Jan Branson (Clayton, Vic.: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1988), p. 71.

³⁴ Kathryn May Robinson, *Stepchildren of Progress: the Political Economy of Development in an Indonesian Mining Town* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 127.

³⁵ Diane L. Wolf, *Factory Daughters: Gender, Household Dynamics, and Rural Industrialization in Java* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

³⁶ Suzanne April Brenner, *The Domestication of Desire: Women, Wealth, and Modernity in Java* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

³⁷ Norma Sullivan, *Masters and Managers: A Study of Gender Relations in Urban Java*. (St. Leonerds, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1995).

³⁸ Errington, “Recasting Sex, Gender and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview”.

Given the above interpretation of new findings, Errington (1990: 5–6)³⁹ noted that it should not automatically be assumed that Indonesian women necessarily exercise more power than men, simply because of their favourable position to economic freedom and control of finances, arguing that the meaning of power could be different across cultures. For example, in the Euro-American concept, power is focused on economics, coercion, and direct activities, while in the Southeast Asian sense, power refers to indirect activities, spirituality, effective potency, and prestige.⁴⁰ Errington⁴¹ proposed that in examining gender relations in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, one should focus on an analysis of how the different sexes can acquire power and prestige in their social lives.

The concept of ‘matrifocality’ offered by Hildred Geertz has also as yet failed to explain whether equal opportunity in the economic sphere is a *cause* or a *consequence* of women’s agency, or whether women’s personal agency within the family is, in fact, extended to the social, cultural, and political levels. However, the findings by Hildred Geertz,⁴² Clifford Geertz⁴³ and Robinson⁴⁴ which contrast to that of Wolf,⁴⁵ Sullivan⁴⁶ and Brenner⁴⁷ above, shed light on two important points. First, having personal resources, such as economic independence, is a determinant factor influencing personal agency in family relations. Second, these

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

⁴⁰ Benedict Anderson in his article, ‘The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture’, sees that the notion of power among Javanese and that in Western culture is strikingly different: “[The] contemporary Western concept of power is an abstraction deduced from observed patters of social interaction; it is believed to derive from heterogeneous sources; it is in no way inherently self-limiting, and it is morally ambiguous” See Benedict Anderson, “The Ideas of Power in Javanese Culture”, in *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, ed. by Claire Holt (Jakarta [u.a.: Equinox Publ., 2007), p. 7. Meanwhile, “[t]he Javanese see power as something concrete, homogeneous, total in quantity and without inherent moral implications as such,” See *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴¹ Errington, “Recasting Sex, Gender and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview”.

⁴² Geertz, *The Javanese Family*.

⁴³ Geertz, “Thick description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”.

⁴⁴ Robinson, “What Kind of Freedom is Cutting Your Hair? Class and Gender in a Peripheral Capitalist Economy”.

⁴⁵ Wolf, *Factory daughters*.

⁴⁶ Sullivan, *Masters and Managers*.

⁴⁷ Brenner, *The Domestication of Desire: Women, Wealth, and Modernity in Java*.

personal resources should, however, always be consistent with existing gender roles (the script of power and prestige, as Errington puts it),⁴⁸ which frequently legitimise authority for men, allowing them more personal agency and leading to their acquiring power and than women. *Ampa co'i ndai* is an example of how womens agency is both a cause and an effect of having symmetrical gender relations within families since through it women position themselves as asset owners brought into the new family. However, about acquiring power and prestige, a more complex explanation is needed, as this practice (*ampa co'i ndai*) reveals a lack of social recognition of the independence of women.

4. *Ampa Co'i Ndai* as An Equalising Mechanism

The above discussion has shown how *ampa co'i ndai*, a local Bimanese practice, helps people deal with tensions that have arisen between traditional values and the pressures of modern social life. Bimanese use *ampa co'i ndai* to preserve their sense of the complementarity of husband and wife, the value of togetherness, and to ensure that a husband is a responsible person. *Ampa co'i ndai* thus acts as “an equalising mechanism” in the face of pressures towards the increased privileging of men over women.

Modernization has indeed had enormous influences on the lives of women, both positive and negative. Although it was initially promoted by the New Order government to improve welfare and raise the dignity of the Indonesian people, the state itself is caught in a snare of uniformity, seemingly unaware that modernization can benefit the community unequally, with women, particularly, being disadvantaged. The imposed uniformity has in many ways been detrimental to women who traditionally, in local cultures, have enjoyed roles that, in many respects, gave them equality with men. Through the practice of *ampa co'i ndai*, women have, in effect, reasserted their equality, evidencing their unique response to the disadvantages modernization has brought, and minimising its negative consequences.

Modernization and the development of a more complex society have led to interventions aimed at equalising the status of the bride

⁴⁸ Errington, “Recasting Sex, Gender and Power: A Theoretical and Regional Overview”.

and the groom (who no longer share the same occupation as farmers). Frederick C. Gamst⁴⁹ refers to this “corrective action” as a “levelling (equalising) mechanism”, the aim of which is to maintain the equality of peasant communities and social balance among families. The practice of *ampa co’i ndai* could be seen to serve as ‘corrective action’ used to maintain social solidarity and the spousal reciprocity of bilateral families while responding to the new social class resulting from modernization. Gamst explains it thus:

Each peasant family balances its self-interest against the interests of other families and of its community, for example, with attempts to drive a hard bargain in a marketplace or to evade taxes payable to the elite. However, inside the community, family interests must be served carefully or else ‘corrective action’ will be taken by community members. This action is called a levelling or equalising, mechanism, which acts to diminish differences in wealth and power.⁵⁰

Gamst’s statement explains the characteristics of a peasant community and how its members try to deal with a more complex world generated by modern civilisation, which in many cases causes social divides between families and communities, as well as between the community and outside influences. The practice of *ampa co’i ndai* is a response to the enforced separation of economic matters from home, which makes women more dependent than men. It thus serves as a levelling (equalising) mechanism which aims to maintain a position of equality, as implied by the concepts of *dou di uma* (person in the house) and *rabi ro wei* (askers and givers), between women and men in their families.

Furthermore, it is interesting to look at the meaning of the following two terminologies: *wa’a co’i* and *ampa co’i ndai*. The event of the groom giving the payment is expressed as ‘*wa’a*’ (bring), which implies moving something in a horizontal or parallel direction. On the other hand, when the woman provides the payment, it is referred to as ‘*ampa*’ (elevate) signifying moving something from a lower place to a higher one, in a vertical direction. The use of the local expression ‘*ampa*’ highlights the actual meaning of *ampa co’i ndai* as an ‘equalizing mechanism’, in that a bride who brings payment and makes a contribution to the marriage

⁴⁹ Gamst, *Peasants in Complex Society*, p. 72.

⁵⁰ Gamst, *Peasants in Complex Society*.

is attempting to raise her own status to equal that of the groom. When the man gives the contribution back to the woman, declaring it as her *co'i*, during *ijab qabul* (offering and acceptance) ritual, they are then on an equal footing to start a family together.

Certainly, however, not everyone has sought to use *ampa co'i ndai* in this way, even though Bimanese are bound together in a culture-sharing group with similar cultural values. Their various responses to the opportunities and challenges of modernization, and their different levels of interest in *ampa co'i ndai*, are attributable to individual particularities, such as a person's job or geographical location.

The historical origins of *ampa co'i ndai* and its uses today show clearly that it is both a symbol of and an influential factor in enhancing women's agency. *Ampa co'i ndai* builds on women's perception of the position society has placed them in with respect to men. At the same time, by practising *ampa co'i ndai*, women can expect that their coordinated exercise of agency can be sustained in the face of new, more unequal forms of gender relations brought about by modernization. Further, *ampa co'i ndai* illustrates that although modernization involves social structural changes that favour men, women have the capacity to direct the influence those changes have on them.

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