

LAND AND GENDER IN MATRILINEAL TIMOR-LESTE

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ABSTRACT

There are few groups' followers of the matrilineal system in the world but they are present in all continents, except in Europe. In Timor-Leste, the matrilineal organization social system is found among 3 ethno-linguistic groups and seems that, in spite of their resilience, some changes have been taken place in recent years due to some economic, socio and cultural changes.

Two different kinship/social systems coexist in Timor-Leste, one patrilineal in force in the majority of the territory and one matrilineal in the regions with dominance of Búnaque, Tetum-Terik and Galoli ethno-linguistic groups.

The idea behind this paper is to identify those features related to land that have been characterizing the matrilineal system of the Búnaque in Timor-Leste. To achieve its goals, this paper through, secondary and empirical data collected, analyses women's reality in the Bunaque communities, relating land tenure with the gender roles performed.

KEY WORDS

Timor-Leste, Bunaque, Matrilineal, Land, Gender

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TERRA E GÉNERO EM GRUPOS MATRILINEARES EM TIMOR-LESTE

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Resumo

Existem poucos grupos seguidores do sistema matrilinear no mundo, mas eles estão presentes em todos os continentes, exceto na Europa. Em Timor-Leste, o sistema de organização social matrilinear é encontrado entre 3 grupos etnolinguísticos e parece que, apesar de sua resiliência, algumas mudanças tem ocorrido nos últimos tempos devido a algumas mudanças económicas, sociais e culturais.

Em Timor-Leste coexistem dois sistemas parentesco e organização social, um patrilinear em vigor na maioria do território e um matrilinear nas regiões com predominância dos grupos etnolinguísticos, Búnaque, tétum-Terik e Galoli .

A ideia por trás deste trabalho é identificar os aspetos relacionados à terra que caracterizam o sistema matrilinear dos Búnaque em Timor-Leste. Para atingir os objetivos, este trabalho através de dados secundários e primários recolhidos no terreno, analisa a realidade das mulheres nas comunidades Búnaque, relacionando a posse da terra com os papéis de género realizados.

PALAVRAS CHAVE

Timor-Leste, Búnaque, Matrilinear, Terra, Género

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1. Introduction

The multidimensions of the services supplied by different land uses are essential resources for the majority of the population of the developing countries.

Kinship norms often define the pillars of social organization, namely in rural areas, among them with particular relevance, the customary land tenure system. The access, use and control over land, and associated rights and duties, within customary tenure system, the predominant one in Timor-Leste, are usually ruled and determined by norms and principles based on kinship status and position in lineage, age and gender. They also depend on the types of descent, residence, succession and inheritance systems practiced. In contrast with customary norms, the “modern” land tenure systems are usually based on the principle of “equal rights” for all, independent of age, sex, religion and so on.

A broad distinction is generally made among unilinear kinship/descent, double unilinear kinship/descent and bilateral or undifferentiated kinship/descent. The principle of unilinear kinship is in favour of only one line. The two basic forms of unilineal descent are matrilineal and patrilineal, depending on whether descent is traced through a female or through a male ancestor, respectively. In patrilineal cultures, children are members of their father’s kin group, in matrilineal cultures kin membership is traced through the uterine line, so that children belong to their mother’s kinship and not to their father’s and only female children can pass kin identity on to their descendents.

However, it should be noted that there is no unilinear pure system: all societies admit to some extent the kinship in two lines, but in a system of unilinear kinship/descent the emphasis is put on one line, however the other side relatives have also a role to perform. Due to that reason some authors use the terms “predominantly patrilineal” and “predominantly matrilineal” instead of patrilineal and matrilineal. The existence of these two regimes involves substantial differences in social organization as well as in the transmission of property.

The terms matrilineal and patrilineal can be applied to succession and/or to inheritance through the female or male line respectively. However, succession and inheritance should not be confused; succession refers to the transmission of functions and inheritance to the transmission of goods.

According to the inheritance rules customary land is inherited and passed on through the mother’s or father’s lineage. Strictly speaking, this rule must be applied only to inherited property and not to acquired property. But it is often difficult to distinguish between inherited and acquired property.

Regarding the patterns of post-marriage residence, the terms patrilocal or virilocal and matrilocal or uxoriocal are many times used as synonymous; the terms virilocal and uxoriocal were introduced by Adam (1948) as close to the latin roots than patrilocal and matrilocal, since these expressions are attempting to specify residence in reference to spouses rather than their children. Uxoriocal means “residing with the wife”, from Latin uxor – wife, with the woman and the woman’s lineage, in the woman’s village where she usually will have rights to land.

Matrilocal/uxoriocal means new families are established in proximity to the brides' extended family of origin, not that of the groom. It is worth to mention that change in descent commonly follows changes in residence amongst human societies.

When the rule of descent is similar to the rule of residence, respectively, patrilineal and patrilocal, matrilineal and matrilocal, they are called “harmonic regime” (Levi-Strauss as cited in Augé, 1975, p.44). The literature says that harmonic regimes of matrilineal kinship and matrilocal residence are rare (Augé, 1975). However, as we will see they exist in Timor-Leste.

In matrilineal societies women own the land and therefore, at least apparently, they are responsible for land decisions in their clans. It is common accepted that ownership of land gives to women a relatively higher status in their communities when compared to women in patrilineal societies. Land seems to give more legitimacy, bargain power and recognition to

claim other rights and other roles in other spheres of public life. It is recognized that decision-making regarding land is an important aspect of empowerment.

However a matrilineal society it is not *per se* a guarantee that women will have an active role in decisions about land use. The status, authority and power of women vary also across matrilineal area.

Women's positions appear to be stronger when postmarital residence is matrilineal, rather than patrilineal. On one hand because there women are better placed to influence decisions and practices, on the other hand because in this situations women can get and keep greater independence from their husbands (Huffer, 2008).

Unlike women in patrilineal societies, women in matrilineal societies do not have to leave the land they have always known. In this way they are able to build and pass a large heritage/knowledge about land and land-related issues to their children, special to their daughters.

It is worth to note that inside matrilineal communities, with inheritance patterns and residential rules and matrilineal kin relations, the existence of patriarchal structures and gender roles are not absent. Men are visible and play an important role in the well-being of the households and communities.

Women's roles in history and economic development have often been neglected. Regarding the use and management of land and natural resource, the role of women has been neglected until the present day. Despite the importance of women roles, the women's role in matrilineal communities has not received due attention and has not been well understood.

By focusing our work on matrilineal areas, where is assumed that women, potentially, play stronger roles and have greater influence in land affairs, a gender lens in land matters is promoted in order to improve the understanding of the current status of women in relation to land tenure in matrilineal areas.

Rural economy in Timor-Leste is highly dependent upon the natural resource base. Due their cosmology and heavy dependency on natural resources to their livelihoods, the people of Timor-Leste have established, for a long time, a very close relationship with land, which provides them with essential goods and services.

In Timor-Leste, according to various sources, ownership, use, management and control of land are governed primarily by traditional systems of management and ownership, based on the consuetudinary law. In present-day Timor-Leste, farmers still allocate land rights and interpret land claims using kinship-based norms and rules of descent, succession and inheritance. Therefore, traditional land use and management systems have an important role in the life and wellbeing of the rural population of Timor-Leste.

Some drivers of change, such as population growth, market pressure over land and the effect of economic growth, that are already on place, will result in changes on tenure systems and related issues with a likely increase of land use for commercial agriculture, an increase of land titling, privatization and commoditization of communal land (Henriques et al. 2011).

Land is the most important asset for rural people and a very special good for rural women, due to women's attachment to, and dependence on, land. In addition to their involvement in agricultural production, fuel wood and water collection are largely conducted by women. The land for women is much more than an economic asset; it is essential for social security and wellbeing and performs several roles.

There is quite a lot of research in a wide range of issues related to land in East Timor, but few of them are dedicated to traditional/local land systems and even fewer are focused on gender aspects.

After having studied and discussed land rights in Timor-Leste patrilineal communities, in this paper the authors will be focused on matrilineal areas (Narciso and Henriques 2010). This

study, through secondary and empirical data collected, examines the reality in two Bunaque communities in relation to the situation of women and land. The analysis is based mainly of a field survey done in two Bunaque communities of Bobonaro district and also resumes what is known about gender issues in access to, and use of, land in matrilineal zones of Timor-Leste.

2. Land and gender in matrilineal Timor-Leste

Most of Timor-Leste ethno linguistic groups are patrilineal. There are a minority of matrilineal communities like the Bunaq in Bobonaro and Cova Lima, Tetum-terik in Manufahi and Manatuto and the Galoli in Manatuto. In total the population belonging to these groups does not exceed 12,5% of the population, and not all of them follow matrilineal practices.

The Bunaq, our study group, occupy the central border area between East and West Timor, mainly in Bobonaro and Cova Lima districts of Timor-Leste and in a smaller number in Lameken region of West Timor. Bunak language is one of the few in Timor-Leste which is not an Austronesian language, but rather a Papuan language.

There is quite a lot of research in a wide range of issues related to land in East Timor, but few of them are dedicated to traditional/local land systems and even fewer are focused on gender aspects. It may therefore be relevant in this context to make a short reference to what other authors pointed out as specific characteristics of matrilineal groups in Timor-Leste.

Claudine Friedberg has been writing extensively since the 60's about the Bunaques; in spite of their focus be the Bunaques of Lamaknen in West Timor, she provides useful insights for whom studies the Bunaques of Timor-Leste.

Claudine Friedberg fieldwork among the Bunaq of central (West) Timor, Lameken in Indonesia, was conducted mainly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Among her works we highlight "La femme et le féminin chez les Bunaq du centre de Timor" (Friedberg, 1977). In this article she presents a portrait of a Bunaque community describing in detail the symbolic significance of feminine, female and house, gender roles, types of marriage, inheritance rules, gender division of tasks and so on.

Thu et al. (2007) in the article "Gendered access to customary land in East Timor" provides an interesting comparative analysis of land tenure systems in two patrilineal with one matrilineal community, in Ainaro and Manufahi; the matrilineal community of their study is a Tetum-Terik community located in Manufahi District.

The report "Género e Agricultura em Quatro Distritos de Timor-Leste", by Sofia Miranda (Miranda, 2011) cover matrilineal and patrilineal communities in 4 districts of Timor-Leste.

All the matrilineal communities studied in the works mentioned above appears to follow predominately: uxori-local residence system, in that a man who marries a woman from these communities leaves his place and moves into wife's place; matrilineal affiliation, in that cultures kin membership is traced through the uterine line and matrilineal inheritance, females are favoured for inheriting land.

Thu et al (2007) stresses the fact that these are not rigid features and suggest there are reasons that can justify virilocal residence, patrilineal affiliation and inheritance for men within matrilineal communities, highlighting the various exceptions and the negotiation process in this field. It is worth to note that Friedberg, (1977) mentioned two forms of marriage among Bunaques, the most common is the one with uxori-local residence and matrilineal affiliation designated as *TON TOREL* and the other, designated as *SUL SULIQ* with virilocal residence and patrilineal affiliation which is much less represented and appears to be an ancient costume not in use any more.

Miranda (2011) highlight the fact that in matrilineal communities' women heir land but still depend on men to take decisions regarding land.

Friedberg (1977) mentioned the importance of "bride wealth" but refer the efforts of the church to change this and other costumes. Many years have passed and Thu et al. (2007) found that

most families in the matrilineal community of her study no longer practiced the traditional ritual of *barlaque* because they had other beliefs, namely Catholicism.

According to Friedberg (1977) the position of men and women in marriage depends essentially on the personality of each individual shaped by his personal history and not gender. According to her, women take the floor as much as men, and in festive occasions women play an equally, if not more, important role than man. In private affairs, in opposition to the public sphere, women play a role as important as men, however public matters are treated by men. This does not prevent women from giving their opinions and try to influence the men around them, but they do not accompany the discussions.

Friedberg (1977) note that given the growing importance of external relationships man tends to take more initiative than women in modern political life, however she highlights that this is a trend due to the circumstances. In terms of traditional culture, Friedberg (1977) has never seen a woman acting as guardian of the myths and genealogies, however stress that women have some knowledge of these and can recite tales in prose. But she recognized that generally among Bunaq, speech is more a masculine attribute than feminine.

The above information is confirmed by Miranda (2011) who stated that the rituals in matrilineal communities are usually a man responsibility and women are in charge of apparently secondary, but indispensable roles as preparing the food to be offered to the spirits during the rituals, and that the association of domestic/private spheres to women and the public sphere to men is still very strong and this fact marks the division of roles including the agricultural work division.

According to the same author during meetings, very often, women are present but they do not speak, the only occasions women speak and are heard is about the so call “feminine issues” (food, children and so on). This confirms that the speech is a masculine attribute. In one matrilineal suco, the fact of the “chefe de suco” be a woman, has encouraged women to speak more freely. On the other hand Miranda (2011) draw our attention to the fact that older women (*ferik*) have a word to say on agricultural issues; this mean that other factors as age and statute should be taken in consideration when speak about gender roles, and call our attention to the fact that women is not a homogenous group.

Regarding the kind of settlement it is worth to mention that according to Friedberg (1977) there is a trend to change from the residence in the lineage House to a dispersed residence, which reflects the preference to settle closer to water points to enable them to grow a garden big enough around their homes.

Thu et al. (2007), in the matrilineal community studied, belongings to the Tetum-terilk group, found that males are the predominantly decision-makers, but that a considerably higher percentage of decision in matrilineal households are made by women when compared with patrilineal ones, beside that the household budget is a woman’s responsibility.

Miranda (2011) confirmed that the men are the mainly decision-makers and the fact that the household budget is managed by women, but highlighted that this fact does not mean that women control the money, since any purchase or investment, not related with the daily life expenses, needs to have the agreement of the husband. It is worth to mention also the fact that women contribution to the household income is not valorised either by men, neither by women themselves.

Regarding who is in charge of going to the markets to sell products and buy food for the household Thu et al. (2007) found that in the matrilineal community this is predominantly a shared responsibility between both sexes and that a small percentage of respondents stated that their children helped out in the market as well. Miranda (2011) in turn reports that this as a predominately a women activity.

In summary, Thu et al. (2007) found that even in a matrilineal communities women were less influential than men in household decision-making and suggests that there was not a strong correlation between patrilineal and matrilineal land tenure systems (or gendered inheritance practices) and gendered decision-making, however highlighted that in the matrilineal

community there was a correlation between a higher incidence of women inheriting land, and more equal decision-making than in the patrilineal communities.

Miranda (2011) mentioned the fact that there is a lack of adequate access to agricultural services and training in rural areas and that women are more penalized than men, due to their time and mobility constraints.

In our study we explore some of the aspects mentioned above in two Bunaque communities.

3. Research sites and methodology

The research in the Bobonaro district was conducted in two sub-districts, one suco in each, and within these in two hamlets of each suco. The two sucos, Tapo in Bobonaro sub-district and Tapo-Memo in Maliana sub-district, were purposely chosen because they are matrilineal bunak communities situated in 2 different agro-ecological zones: Tapo in the mountain and Tapo-Memo in a low land area.

Bobonaro is one of the 13 districts of Timor-Leste, located in the Central West region of Timor-Leste. The district has a heterogeneous population composed of different ethnic groups, cultures and languages and different agro-ecological zones from the coast to the mountains. The dominant ethnic linguistic groups are Kemak, Tetum Praça and Bunak.

Total population of Bobonaro district is around 91,199, the population with 10 years and over 63,907 and from these 31,328 are men and 32,579 are women. The rural population with 10 years and over is 81,7% (70% of the total population) and more than half (51.9%) are considered economically inactive. Total population working in agriculture is 20,526, around 74.5% of the employed population with ten years and over, number that increased to almost 80% in rural areas of Bobonaro district (Census 2010, Vol 3).

Like most districts in Timor-Leste, the economy of Bobonaro is based on agriculture. Most households own less than 3 hectare of land. Maize, coffee and rice are grown mainly as food crop and also as cash crop. Other main staple crops produced include cassava, sweet potatoes and vegetables. Poultry, pigs, cattle and goats are the most frequently raised livestock. Poultry is the most common livestock species followed by pigs.

As mentioned before, the two sucos are located in two different agro-ecological areas. The suco of Tapo-Memo is situated very close (3 Km) to the city of Maliana covering 73.62 square kilometres. This suco is made up of about 4238 residents (50.7% are men and 49,3 are women) distributed among 840 households, 156 (18.5%) of them headed by women. This suco was created in the middle of 20th century by the Portuguese to receive people from the mountains, and during the Indonesia occupation this movement was reinforced due to political reasons.

On the other hand, Tapo is situated on the east side of the Datoi mountain, about 1400 meters of altitude, about 23 Km from Maliana accessible by 4X4 vehicle through a mountain road in bad conditions, covering 13,1 square kilometres. This suco is made of about 610 residents (45% are men and 55% are women) distributed among 159 households, 58 (36.4%) of them headed by women. Mainly due to economic reasons there is a significant migration from Tapo to Maliana (the capital of district) and to the capital Dili.

The dominant ethno linguistic group in both sucos is Bunaque, most households are headed by men (81% in Tapo-Memo and 63% in Tapo) though the area is matrilineal and the economy is based on agriculture (DNE 2011).

Poultry is the most common livestock raised in Tapo followed by pigs and cattle. Maize is the most important food crop followed by cassava and vegetables, coconut and coffee are produced as cash crops and due to the mountain location there is no rice production. (DNEb 2011)

In Tapo-Memo poultry is the most common livestock raised followed by pigs and goats. Maize is grown mainly as food crop, and it is the most important followed by cassava and vegetables. Rice and coconut are cultivated as cash crops. (DNEc 2011)

Methodologically this study employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including a household survey. Among the constraints two are particularly relevant, in first place the number of interviews was more limited than originally planned, namely in Tapo-Memo and secondly there is an under-representation of women in the survey because the data gathered was not primarily aimed with a gender perspective.

The sample was select by convenience. A selected households list was provided by both Chefes de Sucos, from these list was possible to build a sample of 67 households (residential units). The respondents were those adults who were willing and able to be interviewed. The survey was conducted in a total of 4 locations, 2 in each suco, with 35 respondents in Tapo and 32 in Tapo-Memo.

The numbers of households interviewed were not proportional to the size of the population in both Sucos, represented 3.8% of the population in Tapo-Memo and 22% of the population of Tapo, neither to the representative proportion between women and men ensured by random samples. The proportion of surveyed females was low when compared with the real proportion of women, introducing this, a bias towards male respondents in this study. In spite of the above constraints, it is expected that the data collected will provide key information to better understand the situation of women in these matrilineal communities.

The survey included questions that covered a wide range of issues, including household socio-economic characteristics, information about agricultural and animal production, cultural subjects and environmental issues.

The fieldwork was carried out during the summer 2011, the interviews were done by a group of students of UNTL who have Bunaque language as mother tongue with the supervision of a professor of UNTL.

The software SPSS v.18.0 was used for analysing the data using three main techniques: descriptive statistics, Chi-Square tests, Analysis of Variance tests (ANOVA). The techniques used were determined by the type of question and usefulness of the method in obtaining particular outcomes.

Additional information, mainly qualitative, was gathered through dialogues, conversations and observations in the field and was crucial for a better understanding of the situation and helped to analyse and interpret some of the results obtained.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Respondents portrait

The portrait of the respondents was made using some indicators that summarized some of these characteristics such as sex, age, marital status, education level, housing conditions and sources of food and income. In our study while 59.7% of the sample respondents were men, only 40.3% were women.

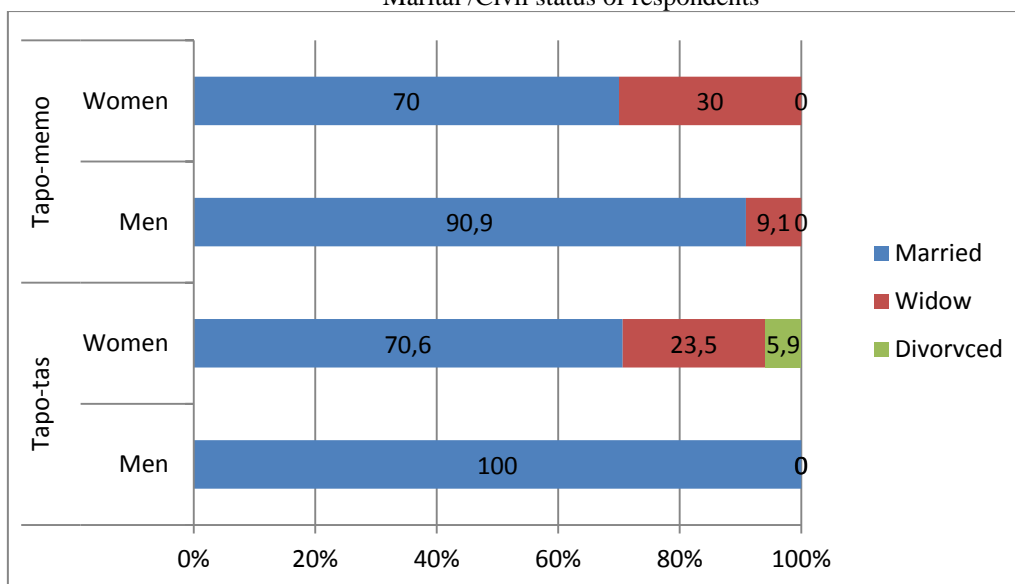
TABLE 1
Gender of respondents, frequencies and percentages

| | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|-------|------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|
| | N° | % | N° | % | N° | % |
| Men | 18 | 51.4 | 22 | 68.8 | 40 | 59.7 |
| Women | 17 | 48.6 | 10 | 31.3 | 27 | 40.3 |
| Total | 35 | 100 | 32 | 100 | 67 | 100 |

The average age is 43 years in Tapo and 52 in Tapo-Memo; in Tapo women are older than men (44 and 42) and in Tapo-Memo are the opposite, men are older than women (54 and 47). All respondents are Bunaques, the predominant ethnic-linguistic group in both sucos. To all of them agriculture (in lato sensu) is a key element of its livelihood strategy.

Most respondents, in the 2 sucos, are married, as show in Graphic 1. The household size tend to be large, ranging in size from one to twelve members, with an average and a mode of 5, in line with the average number of Bobonaro district and slightly lower than the national average. The average size of households is slightly higher in Tapo than in Tapo Memo.

GRAPHIC 1
Marital /Civil status of respondents



The school level of respondents is low in special among women. In both sucos the majority of women have no schooling whatsoever (70.4 % are illiterate). This is an important point since low educational levels of women usually impinge negatively upon other development issues as health and nutrition and reduce the opportunities of social participation and to benefit from non-agricultural income.

TABLE 2
Educational levels by gender of respondents (%)

| | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|-------------------|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Illiterate | 27.8 | 64.7 | 54.5 | 80.0 | 42.5 | 70.4 |
| Primary (4 years) | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 0.0 |
| Primary (6 years) | 22.2 | 17.6 | 13.6 | 0.0 | 17.5 | 11.1 |
| Presecondary | 11.1 | 11.8 | 13.6 | 0.0 | 12.5 | 7.4 |
| Secondary | 33.3 | 5.9 | 9.1 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 11.1 |
| University | 5.6 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 5.0 | 0.0 |

Regarding housing conditions we inquired about the main flooring, wall and roof materials used and also about electricity and type of cooking fuel. In Tapo 34.3 % of respondents live in “bamboo houses” and 14.3% in houses with “half walls and no improved floor”, however 31.4 % live in “house with walls made of concrete or brick and floors made from tiles or concrete” and 11.4% in houses of “good quality”; while in Tapo-Memo only 3.1 % live in “bamboo houses”, 28.1% live in houses with “half walls and no improved floor”, 43.8 % in “house with walls made of concrete or brick and no improved floor” and 15.6% in houses of “good quality”. These differences between the two 2 sucos reflect the fact that one suco is in a remote rural area in the mountain and the other in a peri-urban flat area.

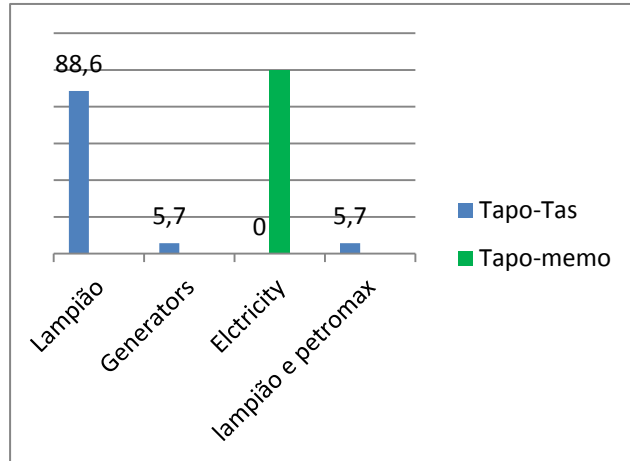
Almost all households (95.5%) used wood as source of energy to cook and most of them gather their own firewood for cooking. It is worth to mention that if wood is not collected in a sustainable way, has a bad impact on the environment. Regarding the source of lighting, there is

a huge difference between the two sucos due to the fact that Tapo has no public electricity at all and Tapo-Memo has some hours per day of public electricity. As a result in Tapo 88.6 % of the households use “lampião” (lantern) and 5.7% have private generators while in Tapo- Memo 100% use electricity.

GRAPHIC 2
Type of cooking fuel



GRAPHIC 3
Source of lighting %



Information on source of drinking water and waste treatment was also included in our survey. Water supply is from an improved source for almost half of the households in Tapo and for 65.6% in Tapo-Memo. Here 93.7% of households have houses with piped water in contrast with 40% in Tapo. Household waste is mostly abandoned on the soil surface in Tapo while in Tapo Memo is regularly burnt.

Monetary income is higher in Tapo-Memo (due to the rice production) where 53.1% of households have more than 1501 USD per year while in Tapo 57.1% have between 501 and 1000 USD.

It is worth to mention that these values put the majority of the households in Tapo below the poverty line and the majority of households in Tapo-Memo slightly above the poverty line, which is establish as 0.80 USD a day.

Regarding respondents' wealth, asking only about monetary income is not enough, among other reasons because the information is not totally accurate, and therefore questions were made about whether households owned a series of items, including vehicles, kitchen utensils and electrical equipment.

The ownership of durable goods is in overall terms modest for both sucos, however is greater in Tapo for personal means of transportation (car and motorbike) due to the very difficult access to it; and is greater in Tapo-Memo for all other items, for media access (radio, TV and parabolic antenna), for means of communication (mobile phone and computer) and kitchen utensils (stove and refrigerator) and agricultural machines and equipments (tractors and threshing machines). Regarding Tapo-Memo the advantages on electrical goods seems reflect mainly the fact that in Tapo-Memo there is public electricity, since such things need electricity to work and the existence of more agricultural machines and equipment is linked to the predominance of rice culture.

All households have multiple sources of income, based on various combinations of wage work, livestock, forestry, crops and small business as show in the Table 3.

TABLE 3
Combination of income sources

| | Tapo | Tapo-Memo |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| 1th source of income | Wage work (42.9%) Livestock (37.1%) | Small Business (53.1%) Wage work (21.9%) Crops (18.8%) |
| 2 th source of income | Small Business (37.5%) Livestock (28.1%) Forestry (18.8%) | Livestock (50.0%), Small Business (18.8%) Wage work (15.6%) |
| 31th source of income | Forestry (42.9%) Livestock (25.7%) Small Business (17.1%) | Livestock (25%), Wage work (25%), Small Business (15.6%) Crops (15.6%) |

The agricultural activities with higher contribution for monetary income are for Tapo with, coffee, sweet potatoes, pigs and chicken and for Tapo-Memo rice, corn cassava, pigs and sweet potatoes.

The majority of the population of both sucos (98.5%) eats three meals per day (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and considers the provision of food enough (86.6%). The months with major food scarcity are for Tapo January, February and March and for Tapo-Memo September and October while, for both sucos, April, May and June are the months with higher food abundance.

Livestock species are an important source of protein, however the majority of the population eat meat once a week (50.7%) and 40.3% twice a week, only. Tapo-Memo population has higher consumption of meat per week than Tapo. These modest results confirm some of the descriptions made during Portuguese colonial period and our previous research works, which showed that, is rare for Timor-Leste population to eat its own domestic animals.

Most respondents produce the majority of the foodstuffs they consume. In Tapo self-consumption is dominated by maize, sweet potatoes, coffee and cassava, chicken and pigs and in Tapo-Memo by maize, rice, cassava, chicken and pigs.

The top family problems/deprivations that have been identified are health care and payment of school children (94.0% and 88.1%), followed by house conditions and food purchases and (70.1% and 68.7%). In both sucos, male and female respondents have similar perceptions about deprivations.

4.2 Key features of Matrilinear communities

Regarding the main features commonly used to characterize the social organization systems we collect information about residence, inheritance and affiliation patterns.

In Tapo the majority of families (68.6%) live in matrilocal residences, in contrast with Tapo-Memo where the majority of families (71.9%) seem to choose a place for their residence in a totally new area living in a neolocal residence. This difference could be attributed to the fact that Tapo-Memo is a relative recent hamlet, founded during late Portuguese colonization period and this could make difficult to find a place to live near the family, on the other hand this is not a customary area.

More than half of men (55.6%) affirmed moved to the wife's area after marriage in Tapo, but only 27.3% in Tapo-Memo.

TABLE 4
Residence system by gender of respondents (%)

| | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|------------|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Matrilocal | 55.6 | 82.4 | 27.3 | 30.0 | 40.0 | 63.0 |
| Neolocal | 33.3 | 17.6 | 72.7 | 70.0 | 55.0 | 37.0 |

| | | | | | | |
|---------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Bilocal | 11.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.0 | 0.0 |
|---------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

The kinship and the affiliation system are perceived as matrilineal by all women in both sucos and also by all men with the exception of one man in Tapo who refer double affiliation. In 1949 George P. Murdock, in his book *Social Structure*, clearly argued that the forms of residence determine the forms of membership and not the opposite. This idea is now peacefully accepted by most anthropologists. So, when the residential organization pattern of a group changes the tendency is for, after sometime, the affiliation to change also in adaptation to new residential pattern. Usually this change process is done during few generations and there may be a mismatch between the patterns of residence and affiliation. It is worth to note the fact that the major residential rule in Tapo-Memo is neolocal (71.9%) but the kinship rule is by large still matrilineal/uxorilocal (with just one exception of double affiliation).

All the respondents with exception of one man and one woman, one in each suco, said that inheritance follows the matrilineal rule.

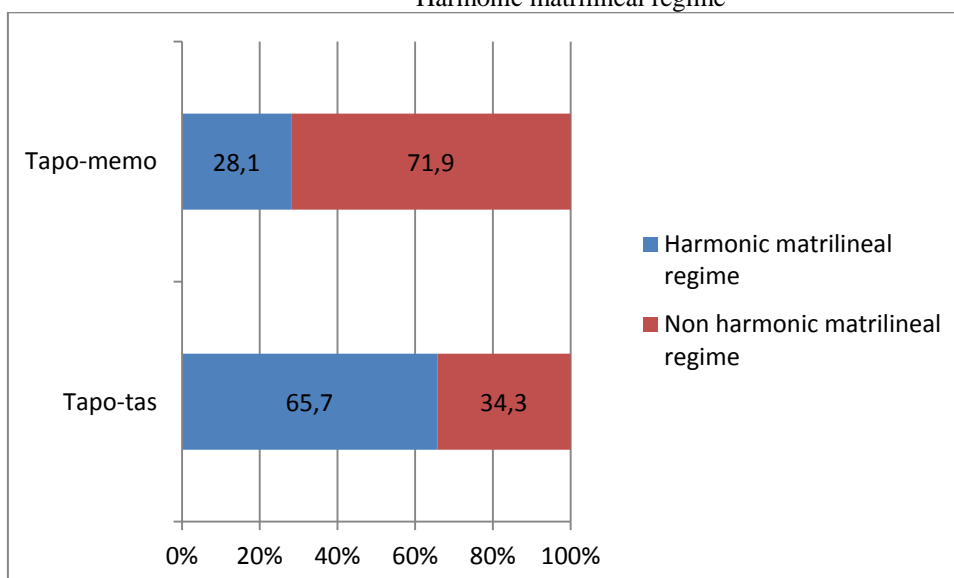
TABLE 5
Inheritance system by gender of respondents (%)

| | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|-------------|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Matrilineal | 100 | 94.1 | 95.5 | 100 | 97.5 | 3.7 |
| Patrilineal | 0 | 5.9 | 4.5 | 0 | 2.5 | 96.3 |

However in a more specific question regarding who will inherit land in the future a somewhat different picture emerges, the answers are not so homogeneous. Take in consideration the above data, if we considered as matrilineal household a household which fulfilled at least 2 out of the 3 features (matrilineal inheritance, matrilocal residence and matrilineal kinship) all respondents, except one –who is neolocal and with double affiliation- are matrilineal.

Respondents fulfilling matrilocal residence and matrilineal kinship could be considered as homogenic matrilineal regime according to the Lévi-Strauss classification. In Tapo 65.7% of the respondents are harmonic matrilineal and in Tapo-Memo only 23.7%, the key factor is the neolocal residence that dominates in Tapo-Memo due to the reason already pointed out.

GRAPHIC 4
Harmonic matrilineal regime



In both Sucos the majority of the households (74.6%) recognize the existence of “bride price”. According to our informants the value of the bride price in these matrilineal communities is much lower than the value commonly accepted in patrilineal communities, one of the reasons is that a big bride price “would give the father control over the children of the marriage”.

As demonstrated above the results of the survey confirm the main features normally associated with matrilineal communities.

4.3 Production activities

The distribution of land size used in agriculture is different in Tapo and Tapo-Memo. In Tapo-Memo household land size is higher, 3.1 hectares in average versus 2.4 hectares in Tapo, or farms between 2-4 hectares versus farms ≤ 2 hectares, respectively. In Tapo land is used for crop gardens and forestry and in Tapo-Memo for crop gardens and irrigated crops. The differences in the use are due to the topography of the two areas, Tapo is in the mountain and Tapo-Memo in a low land area suitable to irrigation.

The main garden crops for both sucos are maize, cassava and pumpkin and for Tapo add further beans, sweet potatoes and chayote. The irrigation crop is rice for Tapo-Memo and plantation crops are coffee in Tapo and Coconuts in Tapo-Memo. Fruits are dominated by mangos, bananas and papaya in both sucos which adds oranges for Tapo.

More than 93% of households in both sucos are involved in rearing livestock. The main livestock reared species are chickens, pigs and cows, to which adds goats for Tapo-Memo, all of these species are reared by more than 50% of the households; while households with dogs, buffalos and sheep are residual in both sucos. Beside the domestic use, all livestock species are sold by households with exception of buffalos in Tapo-Memo. The percentage of households who own livestock and sell it is higher in Tapo-Memo than in Tapo, exception for cows and goats. The self-consumption of livestock species per order of importance is chicken, goats, pigs, buffalos and cows, and is much higher, for all species, in Tapo-Memo than in Tapo. Livestock used in festivities are pigs, chicken, goats and cows, Tapo-Memo showing higher percentage of households with livestock used for this purpose.

Agricultural production is mainly sold in markets, though in Tapo production is also sold to neighbors (31.4%) and in Tapo-Memo to cooperative (34.4%). In Tapo the production is sold in the markets of sub-district (88.6%) and for Tapo-Memo in the markets of District (62.5%) and sub district (43.8%) but it is worth to mention that in Tapo-Memo the sub-district coincide with the district.

Note that more than 10% of households also refer that sell in the neighbor country, Indonesia, what is easy to understand taken in consideration that this is an area with a large border with Indonesia.

The means of transport used by household to go to the market are public transport and on foot for Tapo and public transport in Tapo-Memo. Selling agricultural products in the market are mainly a women task in Tapo, while in Tapo-Memo though dominated by a woman, selling is also shared with men.

TABLE 8
Who sells the products

| | Tapo | | Tapo-Memo | | Total | |
|----------|------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|
| | Nº | % | Nº | % | Nº | % |
| Woman | 31 | 88.6 | 26 | 81.3 | 57 | 85.1 |
| Man | 6 | 17.1 | 20 | 62.5 | 26 | 38.8 |
| Children | 5 | 14.3 | 4 | 12.5 | 9 | 13.4 |
| Others | 9 | 25.7 | 3 | 9.4 | 12 | 17.9 |

Regarding agricultural tasks, there is a high participation of women in agricultural activities (79.2%), although in 53.7% of households they are a shared responsibility between both sexes. Both men and women performed agricultural activities, but usually working in separate tasks, there is a distinct division of labour.

4.4 Features of land and land-related issues

Almost all respondents when asked who owns the land indicate that the land is their own, only one respondent says “own and family” and surprisingly for us any of them identified the Community and/or the State as owners of land.

The most common way to get land in both sucos is by far inheritance; however it is worth noting that other sources of acquisition were mentioned.

Regarding the ownership of land by gender, the table below shows that there is a considerably higher proportion of women than men holding land in Tapo and Tapo-Memo.

TABLE 10
Land issues by gender of respondents (%)

| | | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Type of Land ownership | Own | 100.0 | 94.1 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 96.3 |
| | Own and family | 0.0 | 5.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 3.7 |
| | Community and/or State | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Who owns land within the family | Men | 5.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 2.5 | 0 |
| | Women | 88.9 | 76.6 | 81.8 | 80 | 85 | 74.1 |
| | Both | 0.0 | 5.9 | 4.5 | 0 | 2.5 | 3.7 |
| | Family | 5.6 | 23.5 | 13.6 | 20 | 10 | 22.2 |
| Source of acquisition | Inheritance | 88.9 | 94.1 | 86.4 | 80 | 87.5 | 88.9 |
| | Community | 5.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 0.0 |
| | Family | 5.6 | 5.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 3.7 |
| | Inheritance and sales | 0.0 | 0.0 | 13.6 | 20.0 | 7.5 | 7.4 |

Regarding the variables, type of land ownership, who owns the land and source of acquisition, there is no significant difference between the gender of the respondents while source of acquisition is significant different between sucos.

In the matrilineal families of Tapo-Memo and Tapo, the rights over property pass through the female line to daughters. However mix practices are taking over in many areas and the rights over property are not 100% rigid, this right seems start to accommodate members of the other line as shown by the answers to the question “who will inherit land they use in future transmissions?”

TABLE 11
Land inheritance in future transmissions by gender of respondents (%)

| | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|-------------------|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Daughters | 83.3 | 88.2 | 86.4 | 90 | 85.0 | 88.9 |
| Daughters and son | 11.1 | 11.8 | 13.5 | 10.0 | 12.5 | 11.1 |
| Husband family | 5.6 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 0.0 |

Most respondents said that their children should inherit the land the household was cultivating at present. They indicated a clear preference for daughters’ inheritance, but sons were also considered eligible to inherit family land. Crossing the land inheritance in future generations with rule of inheritance, the system is not rigid, 12.5% say that daughters and sons will inherit land in future transmissions. Land inheritance in future transmissions is not significant different between gender and suco of respondents.

These replies may be interpreted as indications of a situation where elements of matrilineal principles are losing importance and may also be interpreted as an indication of an increasing importance of the nuclear family relative to the lineage.

In Tapo and Tapo-Memo we find a very high proportion of respondents, almost 100%, whom think that land sales are not allowed/permitted either to people from the same suco or to unknown people from other suco or sub-districts. It is worth to note that this not means that there are no transactions of land at all, according to our informants in very special situations,

when a family face a very important challenge/demand land can be exchange or sell and preference is given to members of the same lineage.

Regarding the attribution of land titles in both communities the great majority of respondents agreed with it. However the issue of land certification was not an emergent issue to respondents and they seemed unaware of conceptions and plans to have land titles issued and do not fully understand what mean titling the land and all the impact of this process.

TABLE 12
Positive attitude regarding to land sales and titling by gender of respondents (%)

| | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|---|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Land sales to people of suco or subdistrict | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 2.5 | 0.0 |
| Land sales to others | 0.0 | 0.0 | 9.1 | 0.0 | 5 | 0.0 |
| Land titling | 94.4 | 88.2 | 100 | 100 | 97.5 | 92.6 |

Attitude to land sales is not significant different between gender and suco of respondents. However it is worth noting, that in Tapo-Memo some men are in favor of selling the land which could be due to Tapo-Memo be a peri-urban where the pressure/opportunities for selling land are becoming higher.

4.5. Decision making process

Data analysis indicates that in relation to money spend, decisions are very often made by the couple jointly (73.1%) and the 2nd place belongs to women only (25.4%). There are significant differences by gender and suco of respondents. Men referring couple decision and women couple and women decision, while in Tapo couple and women decisions and in Tapo-Memo couple decision are the preferred answers.

In both sucos the money is mainly used for the acquisition of agricultural tools, payment of school of children, and purchase of clothes and food. Women’s cash expenditure preferences were different from those of men.

Data analysis indicates that in relation to land use, decisions made by the couple jointly increase to 85.1%, followed by the women alone with 10.4%. Differences by gender and suco of respondents are not significant different.

Data analysis indicates that in relation to feed the family, the responsibility rely mainly on both members, 73.1%, followed by the women alone with 17.9%. No significant differences by gender of respondents were found while significant differences were found by suco. In Tapo couple and women decisions and in Tapo-Memo couple decisions are the preferred answers.

However, from our field observations women are seen as responsible for producing food crops for household consumption and for cooking it. The mother typically cooks and decides the daily meals. Based on observations men were not involved in cooking and preparing food, and even get the wood to cook was mainly a women task. Man cook only on special occasions.

TABLE 13
Decision Making process by gender of respondents (%)

| | | Tapo | | | Tapo-memo | | | Total | | |
|-------------|-------|------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | Men | Women | Total | Men | Women | Total | Men | Women | Total |
| Money spend | Men | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 4.5 | 0.0 | 3.1 | 2.5 | 0.0 | 1.5 |
| | Women | 33.3 | 52.9 | 42.9 | 0.0 | 20.0 | 6.3 | 15.0 | 40.7 | 25.4 |
| | Both | 66.7 | 47.1 | 57.1 | 95.6 | 80.0 | 90.6 | 82.5 | 59.3 | 73.1 |
| Land use | Men | 5.6 | 0 | 2.9 | 0.0 | 20.0 | 6.3 | 2.5 | 7.4 | 4.5 |
| | Women | 0.0 | 17.6 | 8.6 | 9.1 | 20.0 | 12.5 | 5.0 | 18.5 | 10.4 |
| | Both | 94.4 | 82.4 | 88.6 | 90.9 | 60.0 | 81.3 | 92.5 | 74.1 | 85.1 |
| Feed family | Men | 5.6 | 11.8 | 8.6 | 13.6 | 0.0 | 9.4 | 10.0 | 7.4 | 9.0 |
| | Women | 27.8 | 29.4 | 28.6 | 0.0 | 20 | 6.3 | 12.5 | 25.9 | 17.9 |
| | Both | 66.7 | 58.8 | 62.9 | 86.4 | 80 | 84.4 | 77.5 | 66.7 | 73.1 |

4.6. Other land related issues

More than half of the women respondents (55.6%) said that they are supported by the rural extensions services, although this number is lower than the number of men supported (62.6%); among the women supported 80% are satisfied, number that increased to 96% among the men. However based on our observations and knowledge the rural extensions services are mainly aimed to men, as evidence by the fact that there are much more men than women in the groups organized by the extension services, and also much more men acting as extensions workers.

TABLE 15
Rural extension services

| | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|--|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Aid from rural extension services | 16.7 | 29.4 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 62.6 | 55.6 |
| Satisfaction with rural extension services | 66.7 | 80.0 | 100.0 | 80.0 | 96.0 | 80.0 |

Many locals rely on traditional medicine involving specific herbal treatments for their health care needs, therefore the majority of respondents collect plants for medicinal purposes. It is worth to highlighting also that in Tapo the majority of women respondents said that they do not collect plants for medicinal use, and so, in Tapo more men than women collect medicinal plants (77.8 % against 47.1%).

TABLE 16
Collecting of plants for medicinal use by gender of respondent (%)

| | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Collection of medicinal plants | 77.8 | 47.1 | 90.9 | 90.0 | 85.0 | 63.0 |
| Bark of tree | 100.0 | 87.5 | 90.0 | 80.0 | 94.1 | 83.3 |
| Leaf of tree | 57.1 | 62.5 | 60.0 | 55.6 | 58.8 | 58.8 |
| Root of tree | 92.9 | 87.5 | 90.0 | 88.9 | 91.2 | 88.2 |
| Grasses | 28.6 | 25 | 35.0 | 22.2 | 32.4 | 23.5 |

Regarding land functions, most respondents recognize that land performs other function rather than agricultural production, with more men than women have the previous idea. The functions referred are cultural identity, connection to ancestors and conveying traditions to youngsters.

TABLE 17
Land functions by gender of respondent (%)

| | Tapo | | Tapo-memo | | Total | |
|----------------------------|------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Land functions | 83.3 | 58.8 | 57.1 | 60.0 | 69.2 | 59.3 |
| Cultural identity | 93.8 | 90.9 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 96.7 | 94.1 |
| Connection to ancestors | 68.8 | 81.8 | 14.3 | 16.7 | 43.3 | 58.8 |
| Convey traditions to young | 50.0 | 63.6 | 14.3 | 16.7 | 33.3 | 47.1 |

5. Conclusions

Despite interaction with other peoples, cultures and ideologies, matrilineality and matrilocality still exist in Timor-Leste.

It is important to remember that for over centuries, the male-headed (patriarchal) household has been promoted directly and indirectly by Portuguese colonial government, the Indonesia government, the Church and other institutions. Moreover there is no many studies about matrilineal system in Timor-Leste, for instance we have not come across any reference to matrilineal communities in documents written during Portuguese colonial time. These facts could help to explain the fact that outside matrilineal communities there is a huge lack of knowledge about the existence of matrilineal communities in Timor-Leste, even among the East Timorese.

We used elements of anthropological kinship theory to examine the complex land tenure situations and challenges in this matrilineal region dominated by Bunaque. We stress relations

around land because land is a key element of the livelihood strategies of rural population in Timor-Leste, beside that we believe that these relations are crucial to understanding matrilineal communities. Furthermore women's access, control and ownership of land are still relevant questions, particularly at this time in Timor-Leste when the land law is under discussion and contestation.

The Bunaque ethnic group is by tradition matrilineal, and the matrilineal structure persists in a large number of communities, especially in rural areas. Thus, today the people in the area are organized according to matrilineal principles, including matrilineal descent and inheritance and uxori-local marriage.

Some conclusion can be drawn from the findings. In general, the married couple's residence, seem to have been uxori-local in Tapo and neolocal in Tapo-Memo. Matrilineal kinship affiliation is the norm and matrilineal inheritance rule is predominantly. While female children can inherit land, male children in principle have only user rights, the few cases when married sons are given land are those where there is no daughter to inherit or where the family has a great deal of land. Most of land is held by individuals (women) or family groups and inheritance is the most common way to acquire land. Not to exclude sons as potential heirs to matrilineal family land in the future may be interpreted as one example of how families and individuals make some flexible adaptation of matrilineal principles.

The data analysis suggests that the money spend decisions and land use decisions are mainly a couple joint decisions and only in 25.4% and 10.4 %, respectively, are a women only decision. So it is not clear the degree of empowerment given by the matrilineal inheritance and ownership of land.

The work of cultivating land is a share responsibility and women have a high participation in agricultural tasks. Often they may also be helped by few casual workers with whom they do reciprocal working groups. In spite of women high participation in agricultural activities, rural extension and other support services, continued to be mainly directed to male farmers.

Although most of the land is held under "customary tenure", according to our informants there are still large areas of uncultivated land, however if we think on the small size of the island, the even smaller are of arable land and the increasing population, the shortage of land will be soon felt. However from our field experience land is not yet locally perceived as the major scarce resource.

Today, as in the past, the livelihood of the majority of households depends on land and the access to this key resource is in the communities studied principally determined through wife's matrilineal matrix of relationships.

The findings of this study might contribute towards a better understanding of land relations in the matrilineal Bunaque communities in Timor-Leste and a questioning of some assumptions common made about matrilineal communities.

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