

GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN KASNONO TRADITIONAL RITUALS SPEECH IN BILOTO VILLAGE, SOUTH CENTRAL TIMOR DISTRICT

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Abstract: *The people of South Central Timor (SCT) -East Nusa Tenggara (ENT) are “archaic” people or traditional people who still maintain their lives with local wisdom from the legacy of their ancestors. In Biloto Village, there is a traditional ritual that is cultured for the bride. A bride from any clan and from any tribe married to one of the Timorese men is obliged to follow this ritual. This study examines the form, function, meaning, and gender perspective in Kasnono's traditional speech and ritual stages. The method used in analyzing the data is the descriptive qualitative method that used interviews and observation. The observation was carried out to obtain a complete picture of the data regarding real verbal and nonverbal behavior regarding the continuity of the ritual. Meanwhile, based on the results of observations and interviews, there are four stages in Kasnono ritual, those stages are Lusa Tae Nono, Nak Unin Nak Mutin, Kasnono and Tam Lopo. Then based on the analysis, there are three gender views in the implimentation of these traditional rituals, namely equality in the division of household duties in the family, freedom to make choices, and express opinions and freedom in decision making.*

Keywords: *gender perspectives; Kasnono traditional ritual; Biloto Village*

The people of the South Central Timor (SCT) district are “archaic” people or traditional people who still maintain their traditional lifestyle as a result of the legacy of their ancestors. *Atoinmeto* "the term for Timorese " views Timorese customs as a way of life that governs the pattern of community life in Timor. Banamtuan (2016) stated that the SCT community has various forms of cultural activities that are still being developed in modern times by several indigenous communities and several clans.

The customs of the SCT community can involve their views of life, habits, customary rituals, and daily interaction patterns. The strong belief of the SCT community in their customs can be proven by the *uim lopo* or traditional houses in several villages in the district. Benu and Agnes (2019) viewed some relics in the form of traditional rituals that are still carried out in various traditional activities. These rituals signify the importance of the sacred relationship between man and man, man



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and nature, and man and his creator. Based on Hadi's opinion (1999: 29-30), that ritual is a form of celebration correlated with several beliefs or religions marked with special characteristics.

In Biloto Village, South Mollo sub-district, there is a traditional ritual which is a ritual that is cultured for the bride, a bride from any clan or any tribe is obliged to follow this *Kasnono* ritual. If the bride does not perform the ritual, then everything that is believed to be bad will overflow the bride and her new family. The magical value that is highly trusted by the people of Biloto village, is certainly very interesting to be researched. The people of Biloto village adhere to the patrilineal principle. According to Kuntjaraningkrat, (in Komari 2015), the principle of patrilineal is a principle that calculates kinship through the male line only. As for Afandi (in Joesiaga 2008), the position of women in a culture that adheres to the principle that the inheritance rights of a community group continues from the male lineage (patrilineal) so that women sometimes are in a weaker position. The Timorese woman's position in Biloto village has been determined from the beginning of her marriage, namely by the implementation of *Kasnono* ritual. The married women are obliged to undergo the ritual procession naturally. The obligation of women to undergo *Kasnono* ritual after the completion of the wedding ceremony is because they feel afraid and anxious about the dangers belief that might happen to them if they do not undergo the ritual. On the other hand, the women may feel uneasy with all the consequences as well as the imbalances and differences with the men who are not bound by all kinds of similar traditional rituals. This could lead to a presumption in the bride's mind that there will be gender differences in the public zone (traditional ceremonies) and in the domestic zone during her married life.

The concept of gender in Indonesian society, in general, is still in a gray area. The concept of gender and gender equality is still debatable; this can happen because the word gender itself has no equivalent in Indonesian, or it can be said that the word gender is a borrowing word from English. The Indonesian dictionary does not differentiate the meaning of gender and sex. According to the Oxford Advanced



Learner's Dictionary, gender is: "the facts of being male or female especially when considered regarding social and cultural differences in biology (A.S Hornby, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2012: 622). Meanwhile, according to E.F and Montgomery (2000), gender is the behavior and social roles and other measures of men and women. In other words, a person's social and character aspects are aspects that determine men and women, not only based on gender.

Due to the ambiguity of gender in Indonesian society, prejudices can arise about the implementation of several traditional activities involving men and women. The ambiguity occurs when many Indonesian people still think that gender is the same as sex, so since childhood, they differentiate between the roles of men and women based on gender. For example, most cultures in Indonesia still perceive that men must have the following characters such as masculine, assertive, and responsible. Therefore, men play roles as the head of the family, tribe, and village government. In customary activities, the men's speeches are more important than women's speeches. Hence the women are not involved in some traditional rituals; they would be the participants only. As for women who have feminine, gentle, loving, and stylish characters fit the roles as housewives, babysitters, other domestic jobs, secretaries, and treasurers. Herein lies the urgency because in the implementation of several customs in Indonesia, especially in East Nusa Tenggara, women do not have an essential role in traditional rituals. Therefore, this research was conducted to identify and describe the form, function and meaning of *Kasnono's* ritual speeches as well as examine the gender perspective in *Kasnono's* ritual.

Several previous researchers have widely studied the theme of a gender perspective in culture and customs, hence, three studies are taken into consideration in this study, namely Hartanto (2016) regarding "Gender Perspectives on *Lengger* Lanang Banyumas." *Lengger* is one of the local cultures with unique art, which contains cultural values, such as belief values, values of belief and obedience to ancestral spirits, values of struggle, human values, and honesty values. The art of *lengger* which is oriented towards student worship rituals, aims to carry out local cultural rituals. This



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study aims to examine the shift in the role of the original gender as male but female. The approach used in this research is qualitative, while the method used is a descriptive analysis research method. The results of his study explain that cross-gender phenomena appear in the needs of worldly life, namely the type of entertainment. The symptoms of crossing gender in traditional arts in Banyumas seem to be the symptom of crossing roles according to gender built by the community. Indonesian only has the word '*banci*' and the Banyumas language only has the word *wandu*. Like *Lengger Lanang Dariah* in Somakaton Village, Somagede Banyumas District. The word *wandu* is very rarely heard because the crossing of sex roles according to sex is indeed a 'special' symptom. The similarity between these two studies lies in the research problem which both examine the gender perspective in local culture. Furthermore, it relates to the differences between the two studies, the previous research investigated the roles of women in the arts played by men, the researcher conducted a study to reveal what female roles founded in that dance that were played by male dancers, whereas this new study has been conducted to reveal the gender's views, which is contained in a traditional ritual, performed after a wedding ceremony. That ritual must be performed by a bride before entering her husband's house. Hence, the two studies differ in the substance of the research substance.

The second research that becomes the reference in the implementation of this research is the study of "Sasak Women Photographing Gender Bias in the Socio-Cultural Context of Lombok Towards Socio-Spiritual Humanism" which was studied by Nasri (2018). In this study, Nasri (2018) aims to analyze whether gender inequality is directly against the principles of humanism in Sasak-Lombok society. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze sociological-cultural phenomena. The results of the study explain that there are two factors causing the obstruction of the gender struggle in Sasak-Lombok, they are (1) internal factors from within women themselves. For example, women in the Sasak-Lombok community always perceive their status below men's authority, so they do not have the courage and confidence to go forward; (2) the social and cultural conditions in the Sasak-Lombok community, which have been passed down from generation to generation. That culture shaped the



women to be the persons who must be obedient and loyal to men. The women have been considered as the persons who must get the mens' protections. These two studies have something in common, namely discussing gender, besides that the two types of research are qualitative descriptive studies. In comparison, the difference lies in the research subject and the problems.

Another study conducted by Rohmana (2016) regarding: "Women and Local Wisdom: Women's Performativity in Traditional Sundanese Rituals." This research examines the construction of gender identities in indigenous communities with their local wisdom. This study focuses on the issue of women's performativity in a welcoming ritual of Dewi Sri in the indigenous community of Kampung Banceuy in Subang Regency, West Java. The study was conducted with a feminist ethnographic approach using Butler's analysis of performativity. The results showed two prominent roles of women in terms of ritual structure and clothing and appearance attributes. Structurally, women played more roles from the ritual preparation ceremony to the post-ritual ceremony. In addition, the dimensions of attributes and appearance in rituals also play a significant role, such as in make-up and colorful clothes. The similarities between these two studies lie in the method used, namely, using qualitative descriptive methods. The difference is, in this second study, in the previous research, the researcher studied the construction of gender identity using a feminist ethnographic approach. In contrast, in this study, the researcher examined the gender perspective in *Kasnono's* ritual speech using the Linguistic anthropology approach or the approach between language and culture to see the magical value of traditional ritual speech and the community's views on the implementation of these traditional rituals.

This research is significant as it is expected to enrich the repertoire of science, especially in language studies, where gender studies are carried out on the implementation of traditional rituals that have been carried out from generation to generation. Moreover, this research can enrich the literature on anthropological linguistic studies because this study also analyzes the form, the function, and the meaning of a customary speech. Furthermore, it can also add to the repertoire of



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knowledge related to gender issues in customary activities. Hopefully, this research can be a reference material for further investigation. In brief, it can be said that this cultural phenomenon of *Kasnono* ritual is very interesting to study, especially with the high number of domestic violence in the household, which is quite significant from year to year.

Moreover, one of the taboos after undergoing *Kasnono's* traditional rituals is that a woman cannot return to her parent's house with the status of "a child." This phenomenon probably can be the cause of the increasing number of domestic violence. From 2015 to 2019, there were 619 cases of violence against women and children (Pos Kupang, January 15, 2020), while based on data from the SCT District Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, there were 40 cases occurred in 3 months, from January to March 2019.

METHOD

A qualitative approach is used in this research to emphasize the meaning, reasoning, the definition of a particular situation (in a specific context), more research on matters related to everyday life, stated Moleong & Lexy, J. (2004). The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, using the observation method, namely recording and taking notes. The data obtained will be re-recorded and analyzed in more depth to find various concepts related to cultural-linguistic theory.

Following the character of the problem under study, this research is a descriptive study based on a phenomenological frame of mind as its philosophical foundation. Data collection techniques used in this study were observation and interviews. Data in the form of customary speeches and the interviews obtained will be recorded. Furthermore, the recorded data will be transcribed and analyzed to find the form, function, meaning, and gender perspective of that ritual. This research had been carried out in South Mollo Sub District, South Central Timor District, East Nusa Tenggara Province (\pm 175 km from Kupang City).



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. *Kasnono* Ritual

The word *Kasnono* comes from the language of *Uab Meto* (Dawan Language), namely *Kaus*, which means "to release," and *nono*, which means "to bond" in the translation as bound. *Kasnono* means "to untie the ties," while the free translation can be interpreted as "to release the family name." This traditional ritual is carried out after the wedding ceremony, preceded by a wedding blessing by religious leaders and a wedding party.

In the customs in Biloto village, the wedding ceremony is usually held at the bride's house, after a wedding party is over, then the bride will be brought to the groom's house. When the bride arrives at her husband's house - before the bride enters her husband's house - *Kasnono* traditional ritual must be performed.

The ritual to lower the woman's clan name and put the husband's surname behind her name is called "*Kasnono*." The chief of the tribe leads this ritual referred to as "*Mafefa*," which means "a spokesman." A *Mafefa* is not an ordinary person, a *Mafefais* one of the figures in the local community who has a gift or talent to tell *Kasnono*'s traditional utterances and lead the ritual. A *Mafefa* is an experienced person who is entrusted in a customary community as a regular speaker during *Kasnono* ritual. A *Mafefa* is a person with charisma and wisdom. Usually, the *Mafefa* must belong to a good family that all clans have respected in the tribe where he lives.

2. The *Kasnono* ritual stages

In implementing the *Kasnono* traditional ritual, there are four stages of the procession that the bride must carry out. The four stages can be described as follows:

a. *Lusa Tae Nono*

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The stage of accepting women into the man's family house. This is a metaphor that means a man brings a woman to be part of his life. At this stage, the bride who just arrived at the groom's house, she will be carried by the groom's sisters to enter the courtyard of the house.



Figure 1, Lusa Tae Nono

b. Nak Unin Nak Mutin

At this stage, the bride stands in front of her husband's house then one of the groom's relatives covers the bride's head with a long *sarung* (traditional woven cloth typical of Biloto village). Her head is covered with a long sarong (traditional cloth). At that moment, she is not allowed to turn left, right and backward. The bride is only allowed to look ahead while strolling toward the barn (food storage) in the groom's house. The meaning of this stage is a woman who has been official as the groom's wife should release her past lifestyle and her past attitudes. She is forbidden to look at her past. She must release everything that she feels and experiences; even the relationships with whom he has in the past must be forgotten. She must be able to cover her ears from everything she hears about her husband and her husband's family. The bride must be able to keep the secrets of their relationship as husband and wife.



Figure 2, Nak Unin Nak Mutin

c. *Kasnono*

This stage lowers the woman's family name and raises the husband's family name. At this stage, a *mafefa* will use a silver coin (a muti or a traditional necklace can also replace it) directed from the top of the bride's head towards her ankles, while at the same time a *mafefa* will utter the ritual words.

- (1) *Skajam Tasekeb nako no hae benam sae neu benam hanum*
The Tasekeb rises from feet rights to shoulders the head
"The Tasekeb clan is officially pinned from toe to head"
- (2) *Nae fufun boton henati nai k amnahak*
There is no trial for food
"Have the right to take the household to avoid all trials"
- (3) *Nok mainikin ma skajam Tasekeb*
No power because clan Tasekeb
"Tasekeb clan has a power in protecting his family"
- (4) *Oe teng tetus ma ao mina*
Already have right to be his wife
"And have the right to become a wife in the family."

The meaning of the *Kasnono* traditional ritual speech can be described as follows:
(1) the first line of *Skajam Tasekeb nako no hae benam sae neu benam hanum** has a meaning that the family name Tasekeb (* one of the family name in Biloto and owned by several family clans in the village) begins to be pinned from the head of the bride to the toe, therefore the family name now becomes the woman's family name. When the family name attaches to the woman's head, she must uphold the family names through polite and wise behavior. Hence she will not embrace her new family name. The meaning of the family name has been pinned from the woman's shoulder to her toe, is she take care of her children from generation to generation.

The meaning of the second line *Nae fufun boton henati naik amnahak*, namely that the bride has full rights to take care of her household. She was given the absolute

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trust of her husband's extended family to manage everything in her household. In Timorese culture the *lumbung** (a granary) has a deep meaning; the Timorese people respect and appreciate the existence of a granary. The granary or food storage area is the center of life in a household. From the granary, food sources will be served and mixed. In Biloto's culture, the mother or a wife is the only one who can take the food from the granary to be cooked. If the wife goes for a while somewhere else, she should be responsible for taking the food sources from the granary to her daughter or other relatives who live in that family. If she does not delegate the duties to someone else, no one can take any food from the family's granary.

The meaning of the third line *Nok mainikin ma skajam Tasekeb* is a form of local wisdom of residents who believe in the power of certain clans (for example, the Tasekeb clan) in protecting the new family. The local community believes that a family name or a surname has magical powers because a family name is a person's identity. A family name can only be inherited from blood relations and marital relations.

The last line is *Oe teng tetus ma ao mina* means that the bride has officially became part of the groom's extended family; therefore she has her rights as a wife and her right as a mother of the unborn children.



Figure 3, Kasnono Ritual

d. *Tam Lopo*

At this stage, the woman will be accompanied by her husband and her husband's sister to the family granary. The granary or kitchen is the core room in Biloto. The granary is a roundhouse with a roof made of *alang-alang* (kind of grass) that covers it

to the ground. The door is small, so anyone who goes inside it has to bow down. This granary does not have any window and only has one entrance as well as an exit.

Biloto has a cold temperature; therefore, this granary is a warm part of the house because it doesn't have an opening. The kitchen divides into two parts. The first part is the base with a fireplace with a neatly arranged firewood for winter preparation. The second part is the attic, where food is stored, such as corn, rice, sweet potato, beans, kitchen spices, and various other food ingredients.

At the stage of entering the granary, the bride will be accompanied by her husband and sister. Arriving in the granary, the bride will go up to the attic. In the attic, the groom's mother has already waiting for her to give a basket of food. It symbolizes the woman has legally become the new caretaker of his household.

In the belief of the Timorese tribe in Biloto, the granary is the core part of the house. From the granary, the food is managed and prepared. Therefore, Biloto people would not entrust the management of the granary to strangers. Only a wife who has undergone the *Kasnono* traditional ritual has the full right to take care of it. Biloto people have a lot of taboos or what is known as "*pemali-pemali*." One of the taboos associated with the *Kasnono* ritual is someone goes to the granary without having *Kasnono* ritual before, then the family will get various difficulties or illnesses in the future. Only a legal wife has to go up to the granary to get food and later she can hand over the food to other family members to be processed into food. After the bride receives the basket from her mother-in-law, the traditional ritual has ended.



Figure 4, Tam Lopo

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2. Gender Perspective Contained in *Kasnono's* Traditional Speech and Rituals

Based on the results of interviews with respondents, there are some gender views contained in these traditional rituals, which can be explained as follows:

1. The Wife as the Core of the Household

Kasnono traditional ritual has been practiced from time to time, from generation to generation. When viewed at a glance, this customary ritual seems to be a burden to women in married life. The women-only have the roles in domestic matters, such as taking care of the household. In the daily life of Biloto people, both in the social, economic, and political fields, the territory of women and men is divided into two, there are inside the house and outside the house. In Biloto village, the political system is regulated by the male side because the men occupy the central position to bring balance and prosperity. While the area where the leader lives is symbolically called the center of all ritual activities is an area in the category of women. Therefore, by carrying out the *Kasnono* customary ritual, the women are given progressive rights to control their domestic activities' central location.

Since childhood, a girl in Biloto has been trained by her mother to weave. Weaving is a skill that requires mathematical skills in calculating the exact thread according to the pattern or motif that will be woven. A woman who is proficient in mastering the weaving skill will be considered a mature woman. It means that she is ready to take care of the family property, including food supplies, corn seeds, beans, and rice.

Furthermore, a woman becomes the determinant and guardian of food supplies and plant seed supplies to be grown in the next planting season. She must be able to measure the life stock precisely whether the food stored in the barn can feed the family needs until the next harvest season or not. According to the belief in Biloto, the men are not allowed to climb into the rice barn. This is because the local culture considers that the rice barn is outside the men's area



The tasks division between the men and women in Biloto are clear enough with the roles among the men and women. A Timorese man is a person in charge of the family because of his function as breadwinner. The duties of men are hunting and gathering the food supplies for the family, while the roles of women are to manage and take care of the food gathered by the men. This division can be seen as follows. When the men clean the gardens, then the women plant the seeds; the men bring the crops to the house, then the women manage the crops; the men go hunting the animals, then the women ensure that the men's work is sufficient for the needs of the family until the next harvest season. Therefore, by implementing the *Kasnono* traditional ritual, a woman has been given equal rights and equal responsibilities to take care of the household.

There is a skeptical view from the other people who do not understand the meaning of this ritual. By implementing this ritual, women's roles will be limited only to taking care of kitchen matters. By conducting this research, it is proved that women are the core of the household; their position is equal to men. Their roles and existence are highly respected.

2. Freedom to Make Choice and Express Opinion

One of the *Kasnono* traditional ritual stages is the embedding of the male clan behind the wife's clan. When the man's family name attaches to the woman's name, she must uphold the name through polite and wise behavior. After the family name has been given to the woman, she has the right to own the men's next generation (children) born of her. She will continue and multiply the family clans that have the same family name as hers. Furthermore, the woman is also given the right to express her opinion freely, provide the important contribution to men's family, and determine their children's future lives.

3. Freedom in Making the Decision

In the belief of the Timorese tribe in Biloto, the kitchen is the core part of a house. Therefore, those will not entrust the management of the kitchen to strangers. Only a



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wife who has undergone the *Kasnono* traditional ritual has the full right to take care of the core part of the household, namely the kitchen. Only wives who have experienced this traditional ritual have the right to take food ingredients from the attic or food storage barn. This implies that a wife is allowed to make various decisions in her domestic life. When a woman is given the power to hold the key to the barn, she plays an essential role in caring for her family's health. Therefore, by applying the final stage in the *Kasnono* ritual, namely *Tam Lopo*, a woman has been given the equal opportunity as men to make a big decision for the health and welfare of their family.

CONCLUSION

Kasnono customary rituals are customary rites passed down from generation to generation. This ritual is respected by most of the Timorese people in Biloto. Based on the observations and interviews, the women are the core of their household, whose position is equal to men. The data showed three gender perspectives found in this research: the wife as the core of the family; freedom to choose and express an opinion; and freedom in making the decision.

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