

Local Wisdom in Monogamous Marriage: Lessons on Gender Relations from the Baduy Tribe in Banten

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Abstract. This study confirms that the Baduy community's monogamous marriage system is an expression of profound local wisdom, where traditional values, spirituality, and morality are integrated into a harmonious social order. Monogamy in the Baduy context is not merely a form of marriage institution, but a manifestation of a way of life (*cara hirup*) that places loyalty, simplicity, and balance as the foundation of human relations. The prohibition of divorce and polygamy is not a form of restriction on individual freedom, but rather a symbol of social and spiritual stability that maintains the integrity of the community. Thus, gender relations within the Baduy monogamous system are complementary –not competitive– where women and men have moral authority and social responsibility in different spaces, but support each other ethically and spiritually.

1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the most fundamental and universal social institutions in human life (Karasu, 2007) . It functions not only as a mechanism for reproduction and preservation of offspring, but also as a symbol of values, morality, and social structure that reflects a society's worldview. In the context of anthropology, marriage becomes an arena where belief systems, customary norms, and cultural power relations converge in a complex unity. Each community has its own way of interpreting the meaning of marriage, making this institution a rich window for understanding the social and spiritual order of a group. In Indonesia, ethnic diversity presents a variety of marriage systems, ranging from polygamy in certain traditions to monogamy, which is part of local wisdom (Bidayati et al., 2020) .

One community that consistently maintains a monogamous marriage system with strong traditional values is the Baduy community in Banten. In this community, marriage is not understood merely as a bond between two individuals, but as a form of spiritual and social responsibility towards the community and the universe (Setiani, 2006) . This concept is based on *pikukuh* karuhun – the teachings of the ancestors which

emphasize the importance of living simply, faithfully, and in balance (Simamora et al., 2023). For the Baduy people, monogamy is not an individual moral choice, but rather a collective principle of life that governs human relationships with each other, nature, and the Creator. In this value system, violations of monogamy are considered a deviation from the cosmic balance maintained by custom (Karisman, n.d.).

This phenomenon becomes interesting when confronted with the context of modernity, which places marriage within the framework of rationality, individual rights, and equality based on freedom. Modern societies often understand marriage solely in legal and psychological terms, while indigenous communities such as the Baduy see it as part of social and spiritual morality. The tension between traditional and modern values raises profound questions: can gender equality and harmony only be achieved through a modern paradigm, or do traditional values hold a more sustainable model of harmony? These questions underlie the importance of examining the Baduy community's monogamous system as a form of local wisdom that contains social and ethical lessons.

Much research has been conducted on the Baduy community, particularly in the fields of ecology, belief systems, and environmental conservation. Permana (2006) highlights the connection between the Baduy community's way of life and its ecological system, which is supported by a ban on indiscriminate deforestation and a strong environmental ethic. (Suryani, 2024), (Hakiki, 2011), (Irawan & Lessy, 2021), examine the belief system or religion of *Sunda Wiwitan* as the moral basis of indigenous communities, while (Iskandar, 2017), (Senoaji, 2010), (Setyawati & Dyah Respati Suryo Sumunar, 2013) highlight the dimension of environmental preservation as an expression of spirituality. However, these studies have not touched much on the aspect of marriage as a social system that represents gender relations within the framework of customary values.

On the other hand, research on Baduy women, such as that conducted by (S. D. Maharani, 2016) and (Die & Isnendes, 2024), focuses more on the domestic roles and daily activities of women in the Baduy social structure. Although their findings show the strong role of women as guardians of traditional values and the household, the philosophical and symbolic dimensions of the Baduy monogamy system have not been studied in depth. Thus, there is still a significant *research gap*: there are no studies that place Baduy monogamy as a value structure that regulates gender relations and social balance. This gap is an important area of contribution for this study, to reveal monogamy as a representation of local wisdom that unites morality, spirituality, and social structure.

From a theoretical perspective, symbolic anthropology as proposed by Clifford Geertz provides an important framework for interpreting culture as a system of meaning (Geertz, 1973). Through this approach, marriage practices, rituals, and traditional taboos can be interpreted as symbolic texts that contain social and spiritual values. Meanwhile, Gilligan's cultural feminism theory emphasizes that gender equality is not always synonymous with uniformity of roles, but rather with balance and empathy in social relations (Gilligan, 1982). This approach is relevant for interpreting the complementary relationship between Baduy men and women: different, yet complementary. Thus, the analysis of Baduy monogamy is not aimed at measuring equality quantitatively, but rather at understanding the quality of social harmony that results from local cultural values.

In addition, local ecofeminism theory is a highly relevant lens through which to view the Baduy community's monogamy system. Ecofeminism sees the relationship between the domination of women and the exploitation of nature as two sides of the same structure of inequality (Anjum, 2020). In the context of the Baduy, this relationship is reversed: the values of monogamy and gender harmony actually grow out of a deep ecological awareness. Fidelity to one's partner in domestic life is seen as equivalent to fidelity in maintaining the balance of nature and tradition. Both are rooted in the ethics of *silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh* – the spirit of mutual love and care for life in all its forms.

Based on this framework, this study combines three analytical approaches: symbolic anthropology, complementary gender theory, and local ecofeminism. This combined approach allows for a more comprehensive reading of Baduy cultural values, while avoiding modernity bias in understanding gender relations. By viewing monogamy as an expression of the ethics of life, this study seeks to reinterpret the concept of equality in a local context, where social harmony is not built on competition, but on balance and mutual respect.

From this conceptual framework, this study departs from the main question: how do local wisdom values in monogamous marriage among the Baduy people shape and reinforce harmonious gender relations? To answer this question, this study aims to: first, identify the cultural values that support the Baduy community's monogamous system; second, analyze how this system shapes balanced gender relations; and third, interpret the meaning of monogamy as social ethics in the context of traditional life. This study focuses on revealing the integration of spiritual, social, and ecological values that make Baduy monogamy a symbol of living and dynamic wisdom.

This research is expected to make three main contributions. First, scientifically, it enriches the study of gender anthropology and local wisdom in Indonesia by presenting a paradigm of equality based on harmony. Second, socially, this research provides an alternative understanding of male-female relations that are not hierarchical, but complementary and mutually respectful. Third, practically, the results of this study can inspire the development of socio-cultural policies that place local values as a source of ethics in modern life. Ultimately, this study not only seeks to understand Baduy monogamy as an ethnographic phenomenon, but also as a philosophical lesson on how humans can live in balance with each other, nature, and spirituality.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with anthropological ethnographic methods oriented towards understanding the cultural meaning behind the social practices of the Baduy community. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply capture the symbols, narratives, and actions that shape the monogamous marriage system as part of the local value and belief structure. In this context, ethnography functions not only as a data collection technique but also as an interpretive framework that connects empirical experiences with the symbolic meanings articulated by the community. Through the lens of symbolic anthropology, this study explores how monogamous norms are lived, internalized, and passed down as manifestations of *pikukuh karuhun*, or ancestral teachings that reinforce the balance between humans, nature, and spirituality.

The research was conducted in the Baduy Dalam and Baduy Luar communities in Lebak Regency, Banten Province. These two areas were chosen because they reflect two layers of culture that interact within the same social system but with different levels of openness to the outside world. The research subjects included traditional leaders (puun and jaro), Baduy married couples, and Baduy women who had experience and knowledge of traditional marriage practices. Informants were selected purposively, considering their depth of knowledge and involvement in the cultural practices that were the focus of the research. The research process was conducted through long-term observation, allowing the researcher to understand the values that exist in the daily lives of the community without intervening or changing their social dynamics.

Data collection techniques were carried out in three main ways: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Participant observation was conducted on marriage rituals, household practices, and daily social interactions to observe how monogamy is manifested practically and symbolically. In-depth interviews were conducted with traditional leaders and residents to explore narratives about the meaning of fidelity, gender roles, and the ethics of husband-wife relationships in the Baduy cultural system. In addition, the documentation study included an examination of traditional texts, local historical records, and relevant academic literature. The collected data was analyzed thematically and interpretively (Mahendra et al., 2023) by tracing recurring and contrasting patterns of meaning in traditional discourse. The validity of the research is maintained through triangulation of sources, time, and methods, as well as direct confirmation with traditional leaders (member checking) to ensure that the researchers' interpretations remain consistent with the meanings recognized by the community. Through this strategy, the research is expected to produce an in-depth, authentic, and reflective picture of the local wisdom of monogamy as the basis for harmonious gender relations in Baduy society.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Monogamy as a Social and Moral Pillar

From participant observation and in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, married couples, and Baduy women in Inner Baduy and Outer Baduy, monogamy consistently emerged as a normative principle that permeates the ritual, personal ethics, and social policies of the community. The practice of monogamy is substantiated through marriage rituals, taboo rules, and ancestral narratives (*pikukuh karuhun*) that associate marital fidelity with the sanctity of human relationships and the relationship between humans and nature. A puun (traditional leader) named Mursid stated: "*Marriage does not only unite two people; it unites two lines of duty – towards the family and towards the forest. If one line is broken due to infidelity or polygamy, the balance is shaken.*"

The prohibition against divorce and polygamy is codified not merely as a legal sanction, but as a moral-ritual sanction: violation of this norm is seen as damaging *pikukuh*, bringing social shame and the potential for ritual reactions (e.g., temporary exclusion or the obligation to restore adat) (Anwar & Muslih, 2021). A female Baduy informant explained: "*We are taught that fidelity is like tending the kitchen fire – if it goes out, not only is our house dark, but the whole village feels a loss.*"

A symbolic reading of empirical data shows that monogamy in Baduy society has a dual function: as *practical* ethics—regulating daily household behavior—and as a *sign system* that marks collective identity. The symbolic anthropological approach (Geertz) is useful here: marriage rituals, taboos, and ancestral narratives are cultural "texts" that communicate the meanings of loyalty, respect, and collective responsibility. Monogamy is not merely a technical rule about who can have relations with whom; it is a symbol of cosmic order—a miniature of a stable natural order—that is reproduced every time a couple performs an act that reflects their commitment.

The husband-wife relationship in Baduy is structured through a clear but non-hierarchical division of roles: ritual responsibilities, land maintenance, and child rearing are arranged in a complementary pattern (. From the perspective of *gender complementarity*, this structure appears as a model of relations in which differences do not automatically mean domination, but rather a division of functions that are considered essential for social balance. For example, women predominantly hold the keys to domestic rituals and food source management; men bear the roles of community mediators and guardians of public norms. A quote from a male informant illustrates this: "*The husband's job is to maintain the relationship between the village and nature, while the wife's job is to maintain relationships within the home; both are equally important—like two wings that keep a bird flying.*"

However, critical analysis warns against rejecting or reifying complementary readings without testing them; it is necessary to examine whether this complementarity provides space for autonomy and equal resources for women, or whether it obscures forms of inequality that are masked by rhetoric of harmony. Data shows that women hold strong moral authority, but access to customary decisions involving communal resources is often in the hands of male leaders—a point of tension that must be acknowledged in complementary interpretations.

Prohibitions on divorce and polygamy serve as mechanisms for social stabilization. Sanctions for violations are moral and communitarian in nature—traditional reprimands, restoration ceremonies, or temporary exclusion—which effectively maintain social cohesion without the need for formal legal mechanisms. This function is similar to ethnographic findings in other indigenous communities where marriage norms serve to regulate social redistribution and preserve social capital. In the Baduy context, ritual sanctions are also associated with spiritual consequences that are believed to interfere with crop yields or collective health—a link between personal morality and ecological well-being.

The faithful relationship between spouses is analogous to the relationship between humans and nature—both demand commitment, maintenance, and ethical boundaries against exploitation. Traditional narratives often link marital fidelity to prohibitions against environmentally destructive practices; violations of domestic ethics are considered to "shake" the natural system. This reading supports the argument that monogamy in Baduy is not merely a social rule, but part of a moral ecological cosmology that maintains mutual sustainability.

While monogamy fulfills a stabilizing function and fosters harmony, there are ambivalent nuances regarding its impact on substantive gender equality. Cultural complementarity provides a framework for role recognition, but without political intervention or structural resource changes, there is a risk of reproducing hidden

subordination – for example, women's limited access to public decision-making or land ownership. Furthermore, the pressures of modernity (economic shifts, education, outside contact) have the potential to challenge traditional monogamous practices; some younger informants acknowledge a shift in aspirations that could test the resilience of customary norms. Therefore, Baduy monogamy should be viewed as a dynamic phenomenon: a valuable source of wisdom but also an area that requires critical attention to gender justice and adaptation in the face of social change.

Monogamy in Baduy society functions as a social and moral pillar that binds gender relations within a framework of balance – symbolically, ritually, and practically (Maulfianti, 2016) . This model offers an important lesson: that equality can be understood not only as equality of roles, but also as the quality of harmonious and responsible relationships towards the community and the ecosystem. However, to be translated into a progressive social policy model, critical dialogue is needed that acknowledges the potential for internal tensions and opens up greater space for women's participation in the public sphere of adat.

3.2. Gender Relations in Customary Balance

Gender relations in Baduy society are conceptually linked by local moral and ethical principles summarized in the expression *silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh*. This principle represents the attitudes of teaching, loving, and caring for one another – – an interrelational ethic that forms the basis for the division of gender roles (Muttaqien, 2019) . In practice, gender division of labor is not interpreted as competition or rivalry for dominance, but rather as a functional division aimed at maintaining the social and ecological balance of the community. From a symbolic anthropology perspective, each role carries symbolic meaning: women's roles symbolize domestic continuity and cultural reproduction; men's roles symbolize socio-political connectivity and the management of external relations.

Participant observation reveals relatively consistent role patterns: women are responsible for the domestic sphere (housekeeping, food preparation, childcare, domestic rituals), while also functioning as guardians of traditional values through oral transmission and daily practices; while men more often appear as mediators between villages, performers of certain public rituals, and formal decision-makers in customary forums (Die & Isnendes, 2024) . As an illustration, a female informant stated: "*Children learn customs from their mothers in the kitchen; mothers weave ancestral stories while preparing food. That is how we pass on pikukuh.*" This quote emphasizes how the domestic sphere becomes a central arena for cultural education – not a passive space, but a center of social reproduction.

Women's position as guardians of traditional values implies substantial moral authority. Women often have the legitimacy to reprimand ethical violations within families and small communities, as well as to supervise domestic rituals that ensure the continuity of traditions (Muttaqien, 2019) . This shows that social authority is not always congruent with formal authority: although the formal structure of community management (such as decisions on communal resource management) is often controlled by male traditional leaders, moral legitimacy and the capacity to regulate cultural reproduction lie with women. A traditional leader (puun) summarized: "*Women who take care of the home, preserve ancestral stories – without that, adat loses its breath.*"

However, critical analysis reveals structural limitations on women's authority. Although they hold moral power in the private sphere, women's access to formal decision-making positions and control over communal resources remains limited. Strategic decisions – such as those related to land distribution, relations with outsiders, or collective policies – are usually discussed and decided in customary forums dominated by male leaders (Mursyid et al., 2024) . This phenomenon creates potential tension between women's symbolic authority and men's structural power, so that the complementarity of roles risks obscuring the inequality of access to decisions that determine material well-being.

This authority relationship is also revealed in the dynamics of intergenerational interactions. The older generation tends to emphasize traditional role divisions as a form of invaluable harmony; the younger generation, especially those with formal education or who frequently interact with outsiders, are beginning to question certain restrictions. Some young informants acknowledged respecting complementary values, but they also demanded space to be involved in public decisions and broader family economic management. This indicates that customary balance is not static – rather, it is an arena for negotiating values between the conservation of tradition and the demands of social change.

Using the lens of complementary gender theory, Baduy gender relations can be interpreted as a system of division of labor that emphasizes functional interdependence (Rudberg, 1913) . This complementarity rejects a unilateral interpretation of subordination; instead, it asserts that differences in roles have moral and practical meanings that support each other. However, the theory also reminds researchers to examine the distribution of power and resources so that complementarity does not become a metaphor that obscures covert oppression. In the Baduy context, although complementarity produces social stability, there is a risk of reproducing structural inequality if women's symbolic authority is not accompanied by real access to decision-making spaces.

From a local ecofeminist perspective, the division of male-female roles is also understood as a function of ecological preservation. Women, as food processors and guardians of domestic rituals, play an important role in conservation practices – they preserve seed varieties, traditional processing techniques, and ritual calendars related to the natural cycle. Men, through their role as public mediators, maintain inter-community relationships that determine access to external resources. Here, complementarity is not only a matter of gender but also of human-nature harmony: the division of roles enables the maintenance of a sustainable production system.

Daily practices reveal mechanisms of negotiation and adaptation that maintain customary balance while opening opportunities for change. For example, in some Outer Baduy families involved in the market economy, women take on roles in marketing woven goods or food products – an expansion of roles that requires adjustments to norms. An interview with a female head of household noted: "*In the past, we didn't need to sell woven products; now the money helps our children go to school. We (women) are learning to bargain – but we still uphold our customs.*"

Critical evaluation shows that maintaining traditional balance while expanding women's participation requires a culturally sensitive policy approach: empowerment programs should not simply impose an urban model of 'equality', but must start from a

recognition of women's moral authority and seek ways to expand women's access to collective decision-making spaces. For example, capacity-building initiatives that combine resource management training with inclusive consultative forums can strengthen women's positions without eroding meaningful cultural practices.

Gender relations in Baduy society are designed as complementary practices that serve to maintain social and ecological balance. Women play a central role as guardians of domestic values and practices, while men facilitate public social relations and rituals. Both have moral authority in different spaces – a configuration that shows that equality can be articulated in the form of harmonious roles, not just formal equality of access. However, to make this complementarity substantively fair, there needs to be greater recognition of women's access to resources and public decision-making – as well as institutional mechanisms that allow women's voices to be heard in customary forums. These findings underscore the importance of an analytical approach that combines respect for local wisdom with critical scrutiny of the potential for reproducing inequality.

3.3. Symbolism and Ritual in Baduy Marriage

The rituals and material symbols in Baduy marriage – including traditional clothing, the *seba* ceremony, and a series of taboos during the marriage period – function as a semiotic apparatus that formulates, reproduces, and enforces core social meanings about commitment, purity, and ancestral continuity (Nadroh, 2018). From a symbolic anthropology perspective, ritual actions do not merely "illustrate" values but create social reality: ceremonies and symbols make abstractions like "loyalty" and "balance" tangible and measurable in social interactions.

Baduy traditional wedding attire holds a central position as a sign of status, ethics, and identity. The woven clothing worn (as well as how it is worn and dyed) is not merely aesthetic; it encodes information about the couple's origins, the legitimacy of the marriage, and their attachment to *pikukuh karuhun*. The production of woven fabric, which is mastered by many Baduy women, positions this material production as a practice of cultural transmission – women are not only craftswomen but also curators of symbols. One female informant described: "*The fabric does not just cover the body; it weaves the stories of mothers, the stories of ancestors. When the fabric is worn, we pin our promises to our ancestors.*" Her analysis: clothing functions as a medium of collective memory – when the fabric is worn in processions, the community reads and confirms the narratives of ancestors that affirm moral and social boundaries.

The *seba* ceremony and other marriage rituals serve as moments of socio-political and cosmological consolidation. *Seba* – in its local variations – includes elements of offering gifts, reciting traditional prayers, and public recognition of the couple by traditional leaders. This process unites social (community recognition), economic (symbolic exchange), and spiritual (affirmation by ancestors) dimensions. *Pu'un's* quote illustrates this function: "*When we receive seba, it is not just food; it is a promise that tomorrow's descendants will continue to live according to rules that balance humans and the forest.*" From a theoretical perspective, *seba* is a ritual mechanism that brings together micro-morality (family) and macro-morality (community and nature), so that monogamy is affirmed not only personally but also by the traditional cosmos.

Taboos during the marriage period—in the form of prohibitions on certain physical contact, eating rules, or prohibitions on entering certain locations—have multiple functions: they mark the boundaries of transition (liminality), maintain the sanctity of the period of entering a new status, and at the same time serve as a social technology for controlling behavior. These taboos are often explained in spiritual terms (avoiding the wrath of ancestors, maintaining the blessings of the harvest) (Wahid, 2011), so that compliance is religious-moral in nature. This study found that violations of taboos are understood as a potential disturbance to the relationship between humans and nature; therefore, compliance with taboos is an indicator of collective responsibility.

The relationship between marital fidelity and loyalty to ancestors appears repeatedly in the informants' narratives. Spousal fidelity is seen as a reflection of the ability to maintain the customary order inherited from ancestors; in other words, a faithful individual not only maintains the household but also maintains the spiritual continuity of the community (Muslih, 2020). These findings show how personal morality (loyalty) is articulated into collective morality (obedience to customs), forming a network of mutually reinforcing responsibilities. Within the framework of local ecofeminism, this loyalty extends to caring for the environment—loyalty to one's partner parallels loyalty to the forest and fields as entities that give life.

The performativity of rituals also plays a role in reproducing complementary gender relations. For example, the positions and actions of each gender in the procession—women weaving, preparing offerings, arranging the house; men reciting public oaths, negotiating inter-village relations—mark a symbolic division of space. However, it is important to note that this symbolism is not always synonymous with subordination: the moral legitimacy that women possess in the domestic ritual sphere demonstrates a form of real symbolic power (Kartika & Edison, 2020). Critical analysis demands the question of whether this symbolism expands women's capacity or actually packages them in exhausting reproductive tasks without structural compensation. Field data records the intense ritual workload on post-marital women—an aspect often hidden behind the rhetoric of harmony.

These rituals also serve as a means of socializing values to the younger generation. Initiation processes, traditional teachings, and ancestral stories sung while sewing cloth are informal educational techniques that instill the norms of monogamous marriage. The effectiveness of this socialization is evident in the high level of internalization of values among the middle and older generations. However, the younger generation, exposed to formal education and the market, shows a pattern of negotiation; some young respondents stated that they "respect customs, but want flexibility"—an indication that the symbolism of rituals will be tested by ongoing social change.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings confirm the role of rituals as a "moral architecture" (Geertz) that constructs social reality (Sigdel, 2018). Rituals and symbols are not merely passive reproductions but practices of agency that affirm collective identity. At the same time, the application of complementary gender theory and local ecofeminism helps to understand how the symbolism of marriage binds gender relations into a network of ecological ethics—clothing, offerings, and taboos become the meeting point between interpersonal ethics and environmental ethics.

Criticisms and limitations arise in two areas. First, symbolism and rituals can become tools of exclusion: they set standards of compliance that, when enforced, can alienate individuals who are different—e.g., couples experiencing domestic problems, victims of violence, or residents seeking economic alternatives. Second, the intense burden of rituals on women has the potential to reproduce reproductive labor injustices. Therefore, the practical recommendations that emerge from these findings are: the preservation of rituals must be accompanied by reflection on the distribution of burdens and efforts to create remedial spaces for those who experience the social consequences of failing to comply with taboos (e.g., restorative and non-stigmatizing recovery mechanisms).

Traditional clothing, *seba* ceremonies, and taboos in Baduy weddings have complex symbolic and practical functions—crystallizing monogamous commitments, connecting couples to their ancestors, and reproducing complementary gender relations closely linked to ecological ethics (Amaliyah, 2018). These rituals are effective in maintaining social cohesion and cultural continuity, but they also require critical reading of the implications of unequal tasks and the possibility of social exclusion. The lesson to be learned is that local wisdom holds valuable practices for constructing harmonious relationships, but when adapted to public policy or empowerment programs, such adaptations must consider substantive gender justice and the context of contemporary social dynamics.

3.4. Dialogue with Theory: Reading Baduy Monogamy through the Lens of Cultural Feminism and Local Ecofeminism

The empirical findings of this study show that the values of Baduy wisdom in marriage practices—particularly the emphasis on fidelity, collective responsibility, and respect for ancestors—are in line with the principles put forward by cultural feminism as developed by Carol Gilligan. Gilligan positions the ethics of care as an alternative to the dominant moral discourse oriented towards universal rules (ethics of justice) (Gilligan, 1982). In the context of Baduy, monogamy and daily practices that emphasize *mutual respect, mutual love, and mutual care* represent the ethics of care: interpersonal relationships are maintained through attention, responsibility, and the maintenance of social networks—not solely through the logic of individual rights. In other words, marital fidelity is practiced not merely as a legal obligation but as a continuous expression of collective care—a realization of the ethics of care that Gilligan identifies as an alternative moral capital.

This reading is reinforced by field evidence showing how Baduy women internalize and reproduce these values through domestic and ritual practices—weaving cloth, preparing offerings, educating children through ancestral stories (Untari, 2019). These activities are not only reproductive but also normative: they are practices of care that shape social cohesion (D). A female informant summarized this succinctly: "*Mothers who teach customs are mothers who protect the village—not just biologically, but morally.*" From a cultural feminist perspective, women's moral authority in the domestic sphere is a legitimate source of ethics and plays a central role in the formation of a sustainable social order.

However, dialogue with Gilligan's theory requires analytical caution. Cultural feminism elevates the ethics of care as a positive value, but other feminist critics warn of the potential romanticization of women's roles, which can reproduce social

structural limitations. Field findings indicate a duality: women hold strong moral legitimacy, but access to formal decision-making and control over resources often remains monopolized by male traditional leaders. Therefore, while the ethics of care appears to be a valid framework for interpreting Baduy marriage morality, this interpretation must be combined with an analysis of power structures so as not to reinforce restrictive divisions of labor.

Shifting to the lens of local ecofeminism, field data shows a clear correlation between marriage ethics and ecological ethics: marital fidelity is understood as parallel to the obligation to protect the forests, fields, and natural order that are the source of life for the community. Ecofeminism highlights the link between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature in capitalist patriarchal relations; in Baduy, the findings are reversed – values that affirm gender harmony also constitute conservation rules. Indigenous narratives link individual moral transgressions to ecological consequences (e.g., crop failure), so that monogamous commitment and ritual compliance function as environmental protection mechanisms. A quote from an indigenous leader confirms this approach: *"Fidelity to one's wife is fidelity to the forest; both provide food and a future."*

This ecofeminist interpretation enriches our understanding of how monogamy is not only an interpersonal relationship but also an ecological regulation embedded in traditional cosmology. In other words, marriage practices in Baduy can be read as a socio-ecological technology: it mediates access, use, and reproduction of resources through ethical norms that demand maintenance and restriction of exploitation. This shows that Western feminist theories need to be localized; the terms "care" and "harmony" take on special meanings when practiced in the specific configuration between humans, ancestors, and the environment.

Nevertheless, theoretical dialogue also demands the affirmation of boundaries: local ecofeminism reveals the superiority of traditional wisdom in facilitating sustainability, but it does not automatically resolve substantive gender inequality issues. This study finds that the high ritual and reproductive workload imposed on women – which accompanies their moral legitimacy – can also be a form of structurally unrecognized exploitation. Thus, the adoption of Baduy values into the policy realm must consider the redistribution of burdens and the empowerment of access to public decision-making so that the ethics of care do not become an alibi for the conservation of women's workload.

The theoretical contribution of this research is twofold. First, the research shows how cultural feminism is relevant to interpreting the morality of marriage in indigenous societies – offering a conceptualization of equality that focuses on relational quality rather than merely the distribution of rights. Second, the research proposes an expansion of ecofeminism by emphasizing that ecological ethics in some indigenous societies are not merely a reaction to domination, but rather a normative basis that produces gender practices and social institutions (such as monogamy) as strategies for sustainability. Thus, Baduy monogamy functions as a theoretical node connecting the ethics of care and ecological ethics.

From a methodological and analytical perspective, the dialogue between data and theory underscores the importance of a multidimensional approach: symbolic anthropology maps the meaning of rituals, cultural feminism elaborates on the

dimensions of relational ethics, while local ecofeminism links these findings to conservation practices. This combined approach helps avoid reductionism—both that which views monogamy solely as patriarchal conservatism and that which glorifies it without examining the distribution of power and access. By reading Baduy monogamy through theoretical triangulation, this research offers a nuanced narrative: monogamy is a local wisdom that has the potential to support harmony and sustainability, but it also requires institutional improvements to overcome structural asymmetries.

The practical implications of this theoretical dialogue are quite clear. Cultural empowerment and preservation programs that refer to the Baduy model must adopt an approach that respects the ethics of care while strengthening women's participatory capacity in decision-making. For example, community-based resource management training initiatives can be combined with the facilitation of inclusive consultative forums that recognize women's legitimacy as guardians of norms while giving them a voice in resource allocation. Such an approach serves two purposes: preserving cultural values that support sustainability while reducing the risk of reproducing inequality.

The dialogue between field findings and cultural feminism and local ecofeminism theories positions Baduy monogamy as a rich theoretical and practical phenomenon—it is a form of localized ethics of care and, at the same time, an ecological strategy that regulates human-to-human and human-to-nature relations. However, this reading must be balanced with structural analysis and pro-inclusive policies so that local wisdom functions as a source of fair socio-ecological solutions, not merely an aesthetic ideal of traditional harmony.

4. Conclusion

This study confirms that the Baduy community's monogamous marriage system is an expression of profound local wisdom, where traditional values, spirituality, and morality are integrated into a harmonious social order. Monogamy in the Baduy context is not merely a form of marriage institution, but a manifestation of a way of life (*cara hirup*) that places loyalty, simplicity, and balance as the foundation of human relations. The prohibition of divorce and polygamy is not a form of restriction on individual freedom, but rather a symbol of social and spiritual stability that maintains the integrity of the community. Thus, gender relations within the Baduy monogamous system are complementary—not competitive—where women and men have moral authority and social responsibility in different spaces, but support each other ethically and spiritually.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of a "harmony-based equality" paradigm in Indonesian gender studies, which differs from Western feminist models that often depart from the dichotomy of domination versus subordination. Baduy traditional values are in line with cultural feminism as proposed by Carol Gilligan, where the ethics of care, balance, and mutual respect are at the core of gender relations. In social practice, the Baduy monogamous system also reflects the principles of local ecofeminism: rejecting the exploitation of women just as they reject the exploitation of nature. Therefore, preserving Baduy traditional values is not merely about safeguarding cultural heritage, but also about preserving a source of social and ecological ethics that is relevant to contemporary challenges such as environmental crisis and social disintegration. The values of monogamy, loyalty, and equal

relationships can be a model of social ethics that inspires modern life, which tends to be pragmatic and individualistic.

To enrich the discourse on gender anthropology and the study of Nusantara culture, further research is recommended to conduct comparative studies between indigenous communities such as the Baduy, Dayak, and Toraja in order to explore variations in gender relations systems based on harmony. In addition, an in-depth study is needed on the transformation of Baduy monogamy values amid the increasingly intense currents of digitalization and cultural tourism. This phenomenon has the potential to shift traditional relationship patterns to be more open to outside influences, while also giving rise to negotiations of indigenous identity in a global context. Thus, future research is expected to not only highlight cultural changes, but also test the resilience of local wisdom values as the moral and social foundation of indigenous communities in the modern era.

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