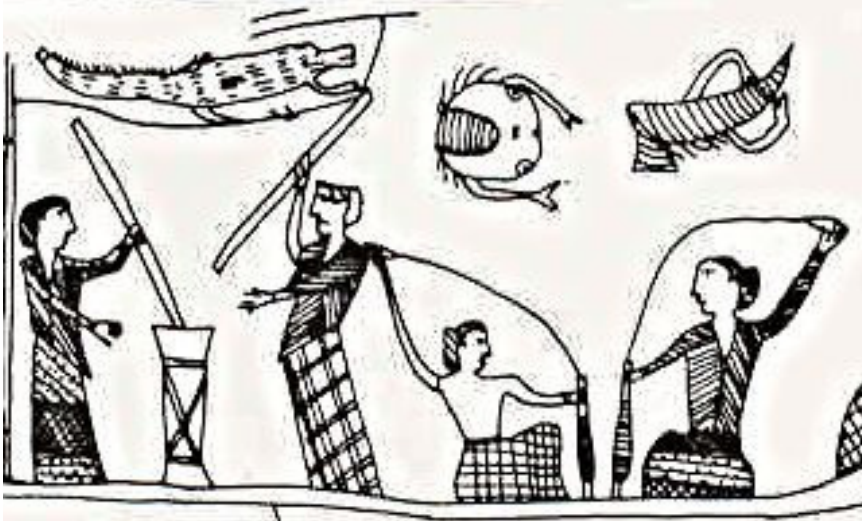


# 'Women's Business' in Timor-Leste— Anthropological Perspectives: Panel Discussion



**Three presentations addressing aspects of marriage and matriarchy in indigenous customary practice in contemporary Timor.**

‡ **Bridewealth or brideprice: moral regimes in dispute for marriage prestations among Timorese elites.**

The diverse moral regimes related to the payment/transfer/offering of marriage

prestations among Timorese elites based in the capital of Dili are explored along with the controversies surrounding them. These marriage exchanges are devices for social differentiation and the distinct configurations of marriage prestations reflect the way Dili inhabitants conflate attempts to make themselves modern people with commitments to indigenous institutions. Such phenomena are considered the products of long standing collective and individual negotiations which combine principles of sociality common amongst Timorese and others in Eastern Indonesia and the colonial and post-colonial State. **Kelly Silva** is lecturer in anthropology at the State University of Brasilia and a visiting fellow at the Australian National University.

‡ **How customary marriage practices are changing in Timor-Leste.** Since the 1960's indigenous customary marriage practices, called *barlake*, have been blamed for the subjugation of women and more recently as a cause of domestic violence. This is part of a wider debate about the role of women in post-conflict society and feminist criticisms of traditional marriage practices. Yet, *barlake* is a cornerstone of Timorese indigenous culture that has sustained life in the harsh environment of the island and its broader spiritual, cultural and pragmatic dimensions are not fully considered in these criticisms. **Dr. Sara Niner** is a researcher and lecturer with the School of Social and Political Inquiry at Monash University.

‡ **Matriarchal or matrilineal? Social organisation among the Bunak of Saburai.** Women's role is explored in the ritual and social life of a Bunak-speaking community near the border of Timor-Leste and Indonesian West Timor. Here clan houses affiliate via their mothers and all clan land is held maternally and inherited through mothers and daughters. Women play a key role in community ritual life as 'keepers' of the clan house. Yet the elevated status of 'the feminine' does not necessarily mean that women are afforded greater everyday decision-making power. **Susana Barnes** is a PhD candidate in the Anthropology Department at Monash University and has worked as a Research Associate with the Australian National University.

**Public Seminar Series ‡ Monash Asia Institute ‡ Friday 1 June ‡ 4-6pm**

**Caulfield Campus 900 Dandenong Rd, Building H Level 5(Room H.5.95) ‡**

Opposite Caulfield Train Station or take Tram No. 3 ‡ <http://www.monash.edu.au/campuses/caulfield/>



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