

ORIGINAL

## Gender practices and roles in the implementation of the mangserbu tradition in the village of Siambo, Anggeraja district, Enrekang regency

## Prácticas y roles de género en la implementación de la tradición mangserbu en la aldea de Siambo, distrito de Anggeraja, regencia de Enrekang

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** the issue of gender equality is gaining increasing global attention, particularly in traditional societies that often have rigid gender roles. In the context of the *Mangserbu tradition* in Siambo Village, Anggeraja District, Enrekang Regency, gender roles are negotiated and redefined through cultural practices. This study examines how the *Mangserbu* tradition facilitates gender equality through the active participation of both men and women in tasks traditionally dominated by one gender.

**Method:** a qualitative approach using phenomenology was used to explore the subjective experiences of participants in the *Mangserbu tradition*. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using triangulation techniques to ensure data validity.

**Results:** this study found that in the *Mangserbu* tradition, gender roles are not limited to rigid traditional norms. Men and women collaborate on tasks typically associated with one gender, both in the domestic and public spheres. Women's participation in public activities and men's roles in domestic tasks reflect significant changes in the understanding of gender equality in the community of Siambo Village, Anggeraja District, Enrekang Regency.

**Conclusions:** the *Mangserbu tradition* in Siambo Village demonstrates that cultural practices can contribute to gender equality. The flexibility of gender roles in this tradition reflects a gradual social change, where men and women play equal roles in various tasks. This case demonstrates the potential of cultural practices to create a more inclusive and gender-equal society.

**Keywords:** Gender; Equality; *Mangserbu*; Role.

### RESUMEN

**Introducción:** la cuestión de la igualdad de género está cobrando cada vez más importancia a nivel mundial, especialmente en sociedades tradicionales que suelen tener roles de género rígidos. En el contexto de la tradición *Mangserbu* en la aldea de Siambo, distrito de Anggeraja, regencia de Enrekang, los roles de género se negocian y redefinen a través de prácticas culturales. Este estudio examina cómo la tradición *Mangserbu* facilita la igualdad de género mediante la participación activa de hombres y mujeres en tareas tradicionalmente dominadas por un solo género.

**Método:** se empleó un enfoque cualitativo basado en la fenomenología para explorar las experiencias subjetivas de los participantes en la tradición *Mangserbu*. Los datos se recopilaron mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas, observación participante y documentación. El análisis de datos se realizó mediante

técnicas de triangulación para garantizar la validez de los datos.

**Resultados:** este estudio reveló que, en la tradición *Mangserbu*, los roles de género no se limitan a las rígidas normas tradicionales. Hombres y mujeres colaboran en tareas sustancialmente asociadas a un género, tanto en el ámbito doméstico como en el público. La participación de las mujeres en actividades públicas y el rol de los hombres en las tareas domésticas reflejan cambios significativos en la comprensión de la igualdad de género en la comunidad de la aldea de Siambo, distrito de Anggeraja, regencia de Enrekang.

**Conclusiones:** la tradición *Mangserbu* en la aldea de Siambo demuestra que las prácticas culturales pueden contribuir a la igualdad de género. La flexibilidad de los roles de género en esta tradición refleja un cambio social gradual, donde hombres y mujeres desempeñan roles iguales en diversas tareas. Este caso demuestra el potencial de las prácticas culturales para crear una sociedad más inclusiva y con mayor igualdad de género.

**Palabras clave:** Género; Igualdad; *Mangserbu*; Rol.

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of gender equality has gained increasing global attention,<sup>(1)</sup> accompanied by growing awareness that the roles of women and men are shaped through everyday social interactions and cultural practices. Gender is not merely a position within a social structure but a social construct closely tied to the social context in which individuals act and interact.<sup>(2)</sup> Traditions—among the most enduring cultural forms—often function as spaces where gender roles are internalized, negotiated, or contested across generations.<sup>(3)</sup> In many communities, gender equality is reflected not only in political or economic systems but also in ritual practices and cultural expressions that have long structured social life.<sup>(4)</sup> Therefore, understanding how traditions influence and are shaped by gender roles is essential for examining how social norms may shift or remain stable within a broader societal context. Globally, studies on gender roles within local traditions are increasing, especially within cultural and gender studies.<sup>(5)</sup> Many traditions previously dominated by a single gender have begun to show greater participation from both men and women, indicating dynamic shifts in social structures.<sup>(6)</sup> However, much of the research remains focused on formal contexts such as politics and economics, while studies on gender roles in local cultural practices—particularly in traditional and rural communities—are still limited in Indonesia.<sup>(7)</sup>

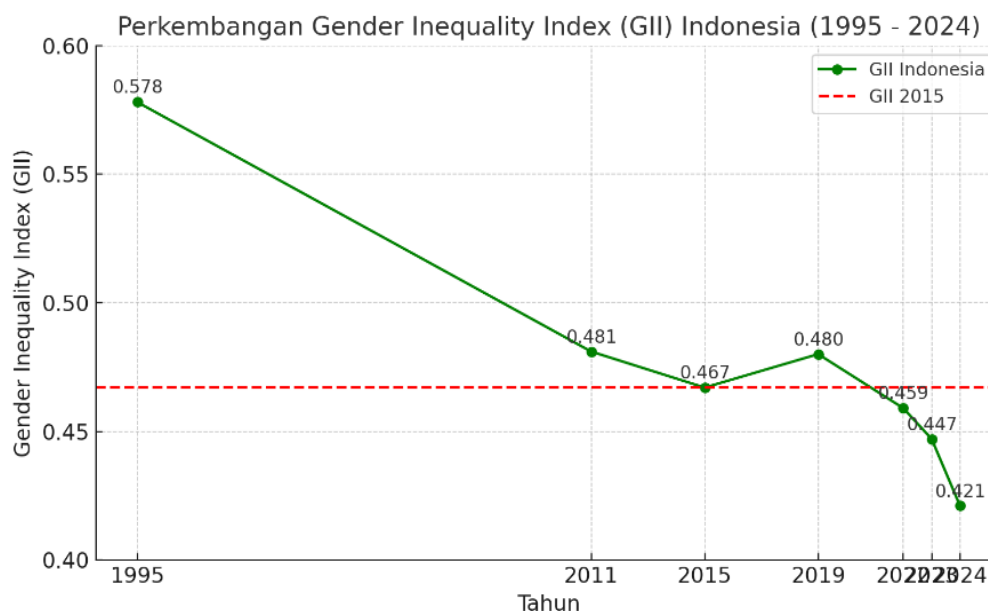


Figure 1. Gender inequality index data over time

Figure 1, which presents Indonesia's Gender Inequality Index (GII) from 1995 to 2024, illustrates this dynamic. Although the GII declined slightly from 1995 to 2015, the value in 2019 (0,480 %) is nearly identical to that in 2011 (0,481 %), showing a decade-long stagnation in gender equality. After 2022, there was a slight decline followed by a more significant drop in 2023 and 2024, with decreases of 0,012 % and 0,026 % points respectively. This stagnation highlights that national-level improvements do not automatically translate into shifts in gender relations at the local level, where enduring cultural norms often continue to influence everyday life.

One key factor that hinders gender equality is the persistence of patriarchal cultural values in some traditional societies, along with the limited visibility of gendered roles—particularly women’s—in these contexts. A central gap in existing research is the lack of studies that examine how gender roles within local cultural traditions—such as the *Mangserbu* tradition in Siambo Village—reflect, reproduce, or even reshape gender relations within the community. While many studies emphasize gender roles in domestic or political spheres, few explicitly explore how local values and cultural norms are negotiated by men and women within long-standing ritual practices.

To address this gap, this study adopts Anthony Giddens’ structuration theory as its analytical lens. Structuration theory suggests that social agents are shaped by social structures but also have the capacity to reproduce or transform these structures through their everyday practices. This framework is particularly relevant for analyzing how men and women in Siambo Village actively participate in *Mangserbu*—not only as followers of tradition but also as agents who may reinforce or modify gender norms through their actions. The *Mangserbu* tradition in Siambo Village is a communal ritual carried out as an expression of gratitude, celebration, or sympathy during major life events such as weddings, births, and death anniversaries. Preparations for *Mangserbu* involve several culturally significant activities, including:

- Mampendek: the customary process of proposing or arranging a marriage,
- Mandoangan: a ritual tahlilan accompanied by specific ceremonial movements,
- Mengakaju: gathering firewood for communal cooking,
- Manggira Lame: cutting tubers such as taro and sweet potatoes,
- Mannasu: preparing and cooking food for communal consumption.

Because these activities are traditionally associated with particular gendered responsibilities, *Mangserbu* provides a meaningful context to examine how gender roles are performed, negotiated, and potentially transformed. This study aims to identify and analyze gender roles in the implementation of the *Mangserbu* tradition in Siambo Village and to explore how this tradition contributes to the formation and negotiation of social norms related to gender equality within the local community. Through the lens of structuration theory, this research views *Mangserbu* not only as a venue for reproducing existing social values but also as a potential site for renegotiating more inclusive and equitable gender relations.

## METHOD

### Study Design

This research employed a qualitative phenomenological design (1) and was conducted in Siambo Village, Anggeraja District, Enrekang Regency, from June to August 2024. The phenomenological approach was selected because the study aimed to explore how community members experience, interpret, and negotiate gender roles within the *Mangserbu* tradition. Since gender in this context is embedded in subjective meanings and lived practices, phenomenology provided a suitable framework for capturing the depth and complexity of these experiences.

### Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of adult residents of Siambo Village who have participated in *Mangserbu*. A total of 15 informants were selected using purposive sampling (2), chosen specifically for their extensive experience and active involvement in the tradition. The sampling process sought diversity in gender, age, and community roles to ensure a broad representation of perspectives. Participants were included if they were at least 18 years old, had engaged in more than ten *Mangserbu* events, and had lived in the village for at least five years. Those unable to provide informed consent or whose participation experience was below the required threshold were excluded. Participants who withdrew during the research process or refused recording after initial consent were categorized under exit criteria.

### Variables Analyzed

The study analyzed several conceptual variables related to gender roles in *Mangserbu*, including the types of tasks performed by men and women, the meanings attributed to these roles, perceptions of equality or inequality within ritual activities, and the broader cultural norms shaping gender expectations.

### Instruments and Procedures Used

Data collection relied on three primary instruments: a semi-structured interview guide, an observation sheet, and a documentation checklist. The interviews were designed to elicit detailed accounts of participants’ experiences and reflections on gender roles, while the observation sheet captured real-time interactions and task distributions during *Mangserbu*. The documentation checklist was used to examine written cultural materials available in the community. These instruments were supported by established qualitative techniques,

including triangulation and member-checking, which helped strengthen the credibility and reliability of the research process.

### Data Collection Process

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation analysis. Interviews were conducted face-to-face at the homes of informants or in community spaces, lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, and were audio-recorded with consent before being transcribed verbatim. Observations were carried out across three Mangserbu events to capture the dynamics of gendered participation, division of labor, and ritual performance. Documentation involved reviewing village cultural records, personal archives from families, notes related to rituals, and photographs relevant to Mangserbu practices. Triangulation was used by comparing insights from interviews, observations, and documentation, while member-checking was conducted to verify the accuracy of researchers' interpretations.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (3) following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, which included familiarization with the data, generating codes, identifying themes, refining the themes, defining them, and producing the analytical narrative. Coding was performed manually, allowing themes to emerge inductively from the dataset. In line with phenomenological principles, the analysis incorporated horizontalization, in which all participant statements were treated as equally significant during the initial stage.

## RESULT

Mangserbu in Siambo Village is a communal ritual held during major life-cycle events such as births, weddings, home construction, and death commemorations. Beyond being a customary gathering, Mangserbu represents a social arena where gender roles become flexible, negotiated, and adapted according to communal needs. Field data consistently show that the community does not strictly separate tasks into men's and women's responsibilities. This flexibility is reflected in the words of informant I, who stated that in Mangserbu, "*edda iyana dikua kah jamanna muane jamanna tongan... kela jaman baine raka jaman muane raka turun nassang*"—meaning that there is no rigid distinction between men's and women's work, and both genders may perform tasks traditionally associated with the other. This view represents a widely shared norm in Siambo Village: tasks are assigned based on capability, not gender.

### Role Flexibility in Preparatory Stages

One of the earliest stages, Mekaju (collecting firewood), is typically dominated by men because of its physical demands. However, according to informant AG, while men take the lead due to strength, women still accompany them and "*sipasadia kande to ladi kande*", meaning they prepare the food items that will be cooked. AG emphasized that women's roles are not absent; instead, they appear in different forms, such as organizing ingredients, providing instructions, and initiating subsequent stages of Mangserbu. In Manggira Lame, women dominate because of their expertise in seasoning and preparing ingredients. Yet, this does not exclude men. AG explained that men often wait for instructions from the women, and when supplies run low, "*sis mangatajan bangriki pesua... mang soso kaluku*", men help by cutting coconuts, preparing the kitchen, or lifting heavy cooking tools. This reveals a dynamic division of tasks characterized by cooperation rather than hierarchical or gendered separation.

### Shared Responsibilities and Gender Flexibility

During Mannasu, the large-scale cooking stage, gender collaboration becomes even more evident. Women dominate during the day due to their culinary expertise, but at night, men take over the kitchen. AG explained that at night, "*iyate bongimi karena dikua toda dikka kah marojai jadi kitamo to maune turun tangan*"—meaning that women need rest for the peak day, so men take over night duties because they can stay awake longer. This arrangement shows an adaptive strategy shaped by practical needs, not rigid norms. On the peak day of Mangserbu, men often take on tasks that elsewhere are considered feminine. Informant S explained that men in Siambo frequently welcome guests and serve food, saying, "*inde buda muane ri iya*," meaning men often dominate roles typically associated with women in other communities. This suggests an internal community logic where gendered expectations are secondary to efficiency and communal responsibility.

A similar perspective was shared by participant N, who stated that when there is a shortage of manpower, "*muane bisa tok iya mang base piring*," meaning men willingly help wash dishes when needed. Although dishwashing is commonly viewed as a women's task, its performance by men indicates an openness to cross-gender responsibilities. Women in Siambo Village play crucial roles not only in domestic spheres but also in the organizational and public dimensions of Mangserbu. They guide men during food preparation, coordinate event logistics, and oversee the distribution of tasks. Their authority is recognized by the community, particularly



in decision-making related to ingredients, cooking sequences, and ritual procedures.

Women also carry cultural knowledge essential for the proper execution of Mangserbu, reinforcing their position as key actors in maintaining the community's traditions. Their involvement goes beyond supporting roles; they shape the flow of the event and direct collaborative work between men and women. Across interviews, community members expressed that Mangserbu prioritizes shared contribution over gender boundaries. Many informants described Mangserbu as an activity “where everyone helps each other,” reinforcing the idea that cooperation prevails over traditional gendered labor divisions. The participation of men in domestic tasks and women in public or organizational tasks indicates that the community's attitudes toward gender are gradually shifting toward flexibility and equality.



Figure 2. Men's involvement in domestic activities in preparation for Mangserbu

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that gender roles within the Mangserbu tradition are characterized by flexibility and situational negotiation rather than strict adherence to traditional gender divisions. Although certain tasks have historically been associated with men or women, community members in Siambo Village perform these tasks based on individual abilities and the practical needs of the event. This suggests that change in gender dynamics does not occur abruptly but evolves through continuous social interaction and collective participation. Community leaders view gender equality as integral to Mangserbu, emphasizing that the values of cooperation and togetherness embedded in the tradition help strengthen women's positions in both domestic and social spheres. These values allow gender norms to develop gradually without direct confrontation with established customs, creating space for more egalitarian practices over time.<sup>(7)</sup>

A comparison between Mangserbu and the Sibaliparri culture of the Mandar community further highlights this point. While Sibaliparri emphasizes mutual cooperation between spouses, the Mandar context still reflects strong patriarchal structures in many public and social roles, with men maintaining dominance despite shared responsibility in livelihoods.<sup>(4)</sup> In contrast, Mangserbu shows a more fluid and collaborative model in which men and women participate interchangeably across domestic and public activities. Meanwhile, the study in Mattiro Ade Village shows similar tendencies toward flexible gender collaboration within family household divisions.<sup>(8)</sup> The key distinction is that Mangserbu offers a broader communal context—beyond the household—where gender equality is enacted and reinforced. This positions the Mangserbu tradition as a unique illustration of how cooperation-based cultural practices can reduce rigid gender boundaries. Taken together, these comparisons highlight that the case of Siambo Village represents a distinctive form of gender role flexibility embedded in a traditional cultural framework. Unlike contexts where gender equality is limited to domestic cooperation, Mangserbu demonstrates that shared responsibilities can cut across both the public and domestic domains, indicating the potential for broader social transformation.<sup>(9)</sup>

### Applying Giddens' Structuration Theory to Mangserbu

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory provides a useful lens for understanding how gender roles in Mangserbu are simultaneously shaped by and reshape existing social structures. Giddens argues that social structures are not static but are continuously produced and reproduced through human action.<sup>(10)</sup> This duality of structure—where structures both shape and are shaped by actors' practices—helps explain how Mangserbu becomes a site

for gradual gender role transformation.<sup>(11,12)</sup>

### *Agency*

Agency is reflected clearly in the way participants take on roles that challenge traditional expectations. Men willingly engage in domestic tasks such as cooking or washing dishes during peak Mangserbu events, actions that would traditionally be assigned to women. Women, meanwhile, take on leadership responsibilities in organizing preparation stages, directing men, and managing large-scale food processes. These actions show that actors are not bound mechanically by custom but actively choose roles that respond to situational demands.<sup>(13)</sup> Through such practices, men and women exercise their agency to expand or reinterpret what is considered acceptable gender behavior within their community.

### *Duality of Structure*

The duality of structure is visible in the way the Mangserbu tradition simultaneously enables and constrains gender actions. The tradition contains implicit rules about cooperation, respect, and shared responsibility, which create opportunities for flexible participation. At the same time, certain cultural expectations—such as women’s culinary expertise or men’s capacity for overnight work—guide the ways in which tasks are distributed. As participants act within these structures, they also reshape them. For example, men taking over night-time cooking or welcoming guests challenges the implicit assumption that these tasks belong to women. Over time, these repeated practices contribute to the gradual redefinition of gender norms in the community.<sup>(12)</sup>

### *Rules and Resources*

Giddens’ notion of “rules and resources” further clarifies how Mangserbu operates. The “rules” are unwritten norms emphasizing mutual cooperation, respect for elders, and the importance of communal harmony. The “resources” include gendered knowledge (women’s mastery of food preparation), physical capacity (men’s stamina for overnight work), and social networks that influence coordination. Men and women draw upon these resources to negotiate their tasks, demonstrating that gender roles emerge from shared understandings rather than rigid prescriptions. These dynamics show that gender roles in Mangserbu are continually renegotiated through social action, reinforcing Giddens’ proposition that structures exist only insofar as they are enacted and reproduced by individuals.<sup>(14)</sup> The Mangserbu tradition thus serves as a cultural arena in which gender norms evolve through everyday participation rather than formal policy or external intervention.

### **Conceptual Contributions**

This study contributes conceptually to discussions on gender, tradition, and social change by showing that traditional rituals are not inherently conservative but can serve as spaces for reinterpreting gender relations. Mangserbu illustrates that communal cooperation can open pathways toward gender equality without abandoning cultural identity. It also expands theoretical accounts of structuration by demonstrating how gender norms in rural communities are transformed not through overt resistance but through micro-level interactions embedded in cultural practices.

### **Implications**

The findings have several implications. For gender equality programs in Indonesia, Mangserbu shows that cultural traditions can become effective entry points for promoting more equitable gender roles. Rather than imposing external norms, interventions can align with existing communal values of cooperation and mutual support. For policymakers, the case of Siambo Village suggests that strengthening community-based rituals may encourage broader social acceptance of flexible gender roles. For sociology, the findings provide empirical support for Giddens’ argument that social transformation often occurs through everyday practices rather than formal structural reforms.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations. The sample size—15 informants from a single village—limits the generalizability of the findings. Because the data rely on self-reported interviews, there is also a possibility of social desirability bias, where participants present their community as more egalitarian than it may be in practice. Observation was limited to three Mangserbu events, which may not fully represent variations across different family contexts or ceremonial scales.

### **Future Research**

Future studies could expand this research by conducting comparative analyses across multiple villages with different cultural traditions to identify factors that enable or constrain gender role flexibility. Longitudinal research would also be valuable for examining how gender roles in Mangserbu evolve over time, especially as younger generations become more exposed to modern gender norms. Finally, further work could explore

traditions where gender flexibility does not occur, helping to identify structural barriers that prevent cooperative gender practices.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings and discussion of this study demonstrate that the *Mangserbu* tradition in Siambo Village serves as a social space where gender roles are practiced with flexibility and negotiated through everyday interactions. Although rooted in a traditional cultural setting, the community does not assign tasks strictly based on gender but instead on individual abilities and situational needs. Men and women collaborate across all stages of the ritual—from preparation to large-scale cooking and guest reception—thereby challenging conventional boundaries of gendered labor. Viewed through Giddens' structuration theory, these practices illustrate the reciprocal relationship between structure and agency: while the tradition provides shared norms of cooperation, the actions of men and women in stepping beyond conventional roles actively reshape and expand the gender structure itself. Compared with findings from other contexts, such as the *Sibaliparri* culture or Mattiro Ade Village, *Mangserbu* reflects a more fluid and collaborative model that operates across both domestic and public spheres. Thus, *Mangserbu* functions not only as a cultural ritual but also as an arena of ongoing social transformation, supporting the emergence of more equitable and adaptable gender relations within the community.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## **AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION**

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