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## FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE AS CULTURAL IDENTITY MARKER OF DAWAN COMMUNITY

### Abstrak

Budaya Dawan berfungsi sebagai penanda identitas dan simbol pembeda bagi kelompok etnis Dawan. Hal ini menonjolkan rasa memiliki masyarakat sekaligus membedakannya dari kelompok etnis lain. Perwujudan utama dari budaya ini terlihat dalam praktik perkawinan tradisional mereka, yang mencerminkan struktur sosial dan nilai-nilai masyarakat Dawan. Penelitian ini berfokus pada dua bentuk utama perkawinan tradisional: perkawinan endogami, khususnya perkawinan lintas sepupu dan perkawinan antar marga. Perkawinan silang sepupu, bertujuan untuk memelihara ikatan keluarga dan memastikan warisan tetap berada dalam keluarga, berupaya memulihkan hubungan yang sebelumnya terputus oleh perkawinan sebelumnya. Sebaliknya, perkawinan antar suku, yang banyak dilakukan di kalangan Dawan, menumbuhkan jaringan kekerabatan yang lebih luas dalam satu suku. Perbedaan kedua bentuk ini terletak pada proses dan mekanismenya masing-masing. Struktur perkawinan adat Dawan yang dikenal dengan nama tamam nasako atau tamam man toet bi fe mencerminkan keunikan budaya masyarakatnya. Proses perkawinan secara sistematis dibagi menjadi tiga bagian yang saling berhubungan: lamaran (perkenalan), hantaran (bagian inti), dan tahap akhir pergantian marga. Unsur-unsur tersebut tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai validasi budaya warisan Dawan, namun juga sebagai mekanisme memperkokoh ikatan sosial dan melestarikan adat istiadat leluhur. Perkawinan adat Dawan mempunyai makna yang beragam melalui simbol-simbol verbal dan nonverbal, meliputi aspek agama, sosiologis, ekonomi, politik, sejarah, dan hukum. Selain itu, mereka mewujudkan nilai-nilai inti seperti ketuhanan, kemanusiaan, persatuan, konsensus, dan keadilan. Secara keseluruhan, perkawinan adat dalam masyarakat Dawan berperan penting dalam menjaga struktur sosial, membina hubungan, dan melestarikan norma dan nilai budaya.

**Kata Kunci:** Perkawinan Adat, Identitas Budaya, Komunitas Dawan, Penanda Identitas, Ciri-Ciri Budaya

### Abstract

Dawan culture serves as both a marker of identity and a symbol of distinction for the Dawan ethnic group. It highlights the community's sense of belonging while distinguishing them from other ethnic groups. A key manifestation of this culture is observed in their traditional marriage practices, which reflect the social structure and values of the Dawan people. This research focuses on two primary forms of traditional marriage: endogamous marriages, specifically cross-cousin and inter-clan unions. Cross-cousin marriage, aimed at maintaining family ties and ensuring inheritance remains within the family, seeks to restore connections previously severed by earlier marriages. In contrast, inter-clan marriage, widely practiced among the Dawan, fosters broader kinship networks within the same tribe. The distinction between these two forms lies in their respective processes and mechanisms. The structure of traditional Dawan marriage, known as tamam nasako or tamam man toet bi fe, reflects the unique cultural features of the community. The marriage process is systematically divided into three interconnected parts: the proposal (introduction), hantaran (core part), and the final stage of changing clans. These elements function not only as a cultural validation of Dawan heritage but also as mechanisms for solidifying social bonds and preserving ancestral customs. Traditional Dawan marriages

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convey multiple meanings through verbal and nonverbal symbols, encompassing religious, sociological, economic, political, historical, and legal aspects. Furthermore, they embody core values such as divinity, humanity, unity, consensus, and justice. Overall, traditional marriage within the Dawan community plays a crucial role in maintaining social structure, fostering relationships, and perpetuating cultural norms and values.

**Keywords:** Traditional Marriage, Cultural Identity, Dawan Community, Identity Marker, Cultural Features

## INTRODUCTION

Plurality is one of the socio-cultural phenomena that is universal or applies universally to all nations or communities throughout the world as an impact of the dynamics of cross-ethnic and cross-cultural interactions. Based on the results of mapping the socio-cultural phenomena of plurality that characterize and color the order of life of nations that exist and are spread throughout the world, many plural nations were found to be included in the group of plural nations categorized as large. Based on the results of the comparative study conducted, the Indonesian nation was determined and mapped as the fourth largest plural nation in the world. One of the main indicators as the basis for mapping Indonesia as the fourth largest plural nation in the world is the composition of the Indonesian population which is formed from various ethnic groups numbering in the thousands and spread widely across the Indonesian archipelago. Because each ethnic group has its own local culture and language, the Indonesian nation is known as a large multi ethnic, multicultural, and multilingual nation in the world (Bustan et al., 2017).

The province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is one of the miniatures of the diversity of the Indonesian nation as a multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual nation because the composition of its population is formed from 18 ethnic groups with their respective local cultural figures and local languages. One of the eighteen ethnic groups is the Dawan ethnic group known as Atoin Meto or the people who inhabit the dry land area. Dawan ethnic group inhabiting most of the western part of Timor Island with a distribution area covering the Kupang area, South Central Timor (TTS), North Central Timor (TTU), and the Ambenu area, one of the districts in the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste. The uniqueness as a special feature of Dawan culture as a marker of the identity of the Dawan people as members of the Dawan ethnic group is reflected in the social organization and social system as one of the main elements that form the content and characterize the figure of Dawan culture. As with several other elements, the elements of social organization and social system in Dawan culture are subordinate to a number of aspects as subordinate elements, including the kinship system. Observing the pattern of relationships and the background of formation, the kinship system that lives and develops in the order of life of the Dawan people is subordinate to the blood kinship system and the marriage kinship system. The blood kinship system-formed based on blood relations and the marriage kinship system is formed based on marriage relations or bonds.

This study examines the features of customary marriage known as or under the term *tool cabin* in the Dawan language as a marker of the cultural identity of the Dawan community which indicates their existence and difference as members of the Dawan ethnic group. Considering that there are several forms of marriage that apply in the order of life of the Dawan community so far, what is meant by customary marriage in this study is inter-clan marriage as one type of endogamous marriage that applies in the order of life of the Dawan community. Because the Dawan community is divided into two groups based on the language variations they use, namely Dawan L and Dawan R, what is meant by the Dawan community in this study refers specifically to the Dawan L community as members of the Dawan L cultural community or the Dawan L speech community, hereinafter referred to as the Dawan community. Considering the problem of customary marriage as a marker of the cultural identity of the Dawan community is very broad, the main target points that are the target of study in this research include several related aspects. The scope of aspects as the main point of interest which is the target of the study includes the form, structure, function, meaning and value of traditional marriage as a marker of the cultural identity of the Dawan community.

## METHOD

In accordance with the main problem as the object that is the focus and target of the study, this type of research is included in the category of descriptive-qualitative research that is based on the humanist-phenomenological paradigm as its philosophical basis (Muhadjir, 1995; Bustan, 2005; Afrizal, 2014). Categorized as descriptive-qualitative research because this research aims to examine the features of traditional marriage as a marker of the cultural identity of the Dawan community as members of the Dawan ethnic group, and what is according to the data found at the time this research was conducted. The data is studied and presented using words that are systematically and structured in the form of a written period in the form of an ethnographic period that is local-ideographic because it only applies specifically to the Dawan community regarding the features of traditional marriage in relation to its meaning as a marker of the cultural identity of the Dawan community. There are several types of data used as reference sources in answering problems and achieving the objectives of this research. Based on the delivery media, two types of data as reference sources are oral data and written data. Based on the acquisition process, two types of data that are reference sources are primary data and secondary data.

In relation to the data acquisition process in the form of primary data and secondary data, the research procedures applied in this research are field research and library research. Field research was conducted with the aim of exploring and collecting primary data related to the conceptualization of the features of traditional marriage as a marker of the cultural identity of the Dawan community according to the main problem as the object of focus of the study and the scope of aspects as the main target point that is the target of the description in this study. The location of the research is the distribution area of the Dawan community, with the main location being the city of Soe as the capital of the South Central Timor (TTS) district. The city of Soe was chosen as the main location for field research based on the following reasons as the basis for consideration: (1) the population of the city of Soe as the capital and center of government of the Dawan district is a mixture of Dawan community residents who come from all over the distribution area of the Dawan community; (2) several villages in several sub-districts in the city of Soe are centers of Dawan culture; (3) there are several documentation and information centers about the Dawan language and Dawan culture in the city of Soe; and (4) the researcher has built rapport with the Dawan community in Soe city in several previous research activities so that it is not so difficult for the research team to communicate and interact with them in relation to the interests of this research, especially in determining and selecting key informants who are the main data sources in answering the problems and achieving the objectives to be achieved through this research. The data source is the Dawan community in their social role capacity as members of the Dawan ethnic group, especially those living in Soe city as the main location of the field research. However, for the purposes of this research, they are represented by five people who play the role of key informants who are selected based on the views put forward by Faisal (1990), Spradley (1997), Duranti (1997), and Sukidan (2005). The data collection methods used in an effort to answer the problems and achieve the objectives of this research are interviews and focus group discussions (Bungin 2007). In line with the application of several methods above, several data collection techniques used in this study are recording, elicitation or baiting, and listening and taking notes. Literature research is conducted with the aim of obtaining secondary data that is considered relevant to the problem being studied and the goal to be achieved through this research concerns the conceptualization of Dawan cultural unity regarding the features of traditional marriage as a marker of the cultural identity of the Dawan people, as reflected through form, structure, function, meaning and value. To achieve this goal, the data collection method is a documentary study in the form of tracing data available in various documents available in printed and electronic form. Two types of documentation used as reference sources in the process of obtaining data are general references in the form of books and specific references in the form of research results, monographs, scientific articles, papers, and so on. The data collection technique applied is reading and note-taking, the process and implementation mechanism take place together.

The collected data was analyzed qualitatively using an inductive method because the analysis moves from data to abstraction and concepts / theories, and coding techniques with stages of activities carried out sequentially as follows: (1) obtaining as much data as possible in

various variations by following the following process: detailing, checking, conceptualizing, and categorizing data according to the research problem and objectives; (2) reorganizing data according to categories created to be applied towards propositions and analysis of existing category relationships; and (3) classification and examination of core categories through comparison of relationships with other categories to produce conclusions in the form of a general design concerning the features of traditional marriage as a marker of the cultural identity of the Dawan community, as reflected in form, structure, function, meaning, and value. The data analysis process took place from the initial data collection until the research report was completed. The results of the data analysis made by the researcher were negotiated and discussed continuously with key informants in order to obtain conformity with the conceptualization embedded and stated in their cognitive maps about the features of traditional marriage, as reflected through form, structure, function, meaning, and value (Sudikan, 2005).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

Dawan culture is a marker of the identity of the Dawan community as members of the Dawan ethnic group. Dawan is reflected in the elements of social organization and social systems whose manifestation in empirical form is evident in the features of traditional marriage. The features of traditional marriage as a marker of the identity of the Dawan community can be witnessed in several related aspects which include the form, structure, function, meaning, and value of traditional marriage.

### **Discussion**

In accordance with the scope of aspects as the main point of interest which is the target of description, below we discuss specifically and in depth the form, structure, function, meaning and value of traditional marriage as a marker of the cultural identity of the Dawan community.

#### **Forms**

According to the customs that have been traditionally applied since the ancestors, the form of customary marriage applied by the Dawan community is endogamous marriage in the form of cross-cousin and cross-clan marriage. The process and mechanism of implementing the form of cross-cousin marriage aims to reconnect the relationship that has been broken due to the previous marriage between the ego's daughter and the ego's sister's son. In addition to that purpose, the form of cross-cousin marriage is also implemented with the aim of preventing inheritance from circulating outside the family circle. The form of customary marriage that is widely applied is cross-clan marriage within the same tribe with the aim of expanding the network of marital kinship relationships. Therefore, the process and mechanism of implementation are different at certain levels from the form of cross-cousin marriage.

#### **Structure**

The uniqueness as a distinctive feature or distinguishing characteristic of the Dawan community's traditional marriage is known as *tamam nasako* or *tamam man toet bi fe* or *khitbah* in the Dawan language. The uniqueness as a distinctive feature of the Dawan community's traditional marriage structure can be seen in the systematic sequence of events. According to the customs that have been traditionally applied since their ancestors, in general, the Dawan community's traditional marriage structure consists of three parts: introduction (proposal), core (translation), and closing (changing clan).

The preliminary part is the proposal ceremony which is known as *sula tolo* in the Dawan language, marked by the arrival of the prospective groom's family group visiting the prospective bride's family's house. The aim and purpose of the arrival of the prospective groom's family group to the prospective bride's family's house is to formally propose or propose to the prospective bride. The conveying of aims and objectives is not only expressed in the form of traditional speech, but is also expressed through the presentation of several material symbols, including clothing such as shirts and sandals, jewelry such as gold and earrings, wine and traditional money. Clothes and jewelry stored in a betel-nut box (*okomama*) are placed in front of the bride-to-be, while wine and traditional money stored in a betel-nut box (*okomama*) are placed in front of the parents. While handing over the material symbols, the spokesperson (*naton adat*) from the family of the prospective groom conveys that the aim and purpose of their visit is to propose marriage or formally propose to the prospective bride. If the proposal is

accepted, then the family of the prospective bride, represented by the spokesperson ( customary ntoni ), responds by giving money, liquor, and a belt ( pilu ) to the family of the prospective groom as a sign of acceptance of the proposal. The exchange of these symbols signifies that the engagement relationship between the boy from the boy's family and the girl from the girl's family has been declared legally valid according to custom. After the exchange of symbols as a sign of the engagement of their two children was carried out, it was continued with a discussion regarding the dowry with the essence The content of the discussion includes the type of material for the dowry, the amount of the dowry, and the time of delivery. The type of material and the amount of the dowry requested by the woman's family from the man's family follow the customs that have been traditionally passed down from the ancestors of the Dawan community in the form of money, goods, and animals in certain quantities. The core part of the Dawan community's traditional marriage structure is bringing a dowry or dowry by the man's family to the girl's family according to the agreement made during the engagement ceremony. With the submission of all these gifts, the marriage relationship between the son from the man's family as the wife taker family and the daughter from the woman's family as the wife giver family is declared official or legitimate according to custom. The closing part is the bride being escorted to the house the groom's family as a sign that the bride officially becomes a member of the groom's family. This closing event signifies the transfer of the bride's clan as a wife to the groom's clan as her husband.

### **Functions**

The traditional marriage of the Dawan community carries out a number of interrelated functions in one whole. Some of the functions that emerge from the tradition are as a means of validating the Dawan culture, glue for social relations in society, maintaining ancestral rules and norms, and (a means of maintaining social structures. Traditional marriage functions as one of the means of validating the Dawan culture because traditional marriage is one aspect of social organization and social system as one of the elements that form the content and characterize the figure of Dawan culture. Related to that, the feature of traditional marriage in social organization and social system as one of the elements that form the content and characterize the figure of Dawan culture, in addition to functioning as a sense of identity that indicates the existence of the Dawan community as members of the Dawan ethnic group, also functions as a symbol of identity that indicates the difference between the Dawan community as members of the Dawan ethnic group and members of other ethnic groups. Therefore, the feature of traditional marriage is one of the reflections of Dawan culture as a marker of their identity as members of the Dawan ethnic group.

According to the conceptualization embedded and stated in the cognitive map of the Dawan community, customary marriage functions as a means of cementing social relations in society. Through customary marriage, social relations in society are in the form of kinship relations between the woman's family as the wife-giving family and the man's family as the wife-giving family as two family groups that carry out roles as participants or main participants. The matter of customary marriage is not a social matter that is part of the responsibility of the extended family or extended family or relations between clans that are established due to kinship ties in marriage. Customary marriage functions as a manifestation of maintaining the rules and norms inherited from ancestors because the rules and norms that apply in the series of processes and customary marriages refer to the provisions and customary rules inherited from ancestors. Even if there are changes at a certain level as an impact of their dynamics, the phenomenon of change does not change the substance of the message and mandate of the ancestors because customary marriage functions as a means of maintaining the social structure.

### **Meanings**

Observing the essence of the message content that is written and implied through various symbols in the form of verbal symbols and nonverbal symbols, a number of meanings are found that are interrelated in one whole. Some of the lines of meaning that are written and implied in and through the traditional marriage of the Dawan community are religious, sociological, economic, political, historical, and legal meanings.

Some explicit and implicit sociological meanings through traditional marriage in the Dawan community are marked by the following phenomena: (a) people gather with their respective roles, including the male family group as the wife-giving family and the female family as the

wife-taking family as the main participants in the traditional marriage affairs; (b) residents of the same village and related family grass as invitees; (c) eating together as a means of reconciliation; (d) drinking together as a means of reconciliation; (e) singing together as a depiction of the festive and togetherness atmosphere; and (f) dancing together in a circle and holding hands as a depiction of the festive and togetherness atmosphere.

Religious meaning is marked by the following phenomena: (a) the indirect participation of ancestral spirits as the first source of the applicable customary marriage rules and norms; (b) the existence of sanctions from ancestral spirits if they transgress the customary rules and norms inherited from the ancestors as the first originator of the customary rules and norms; and (c) the existence of certain rituals that are carried out before, during, and after the marriage is carried out.

The economic meaning is marked by the following phenomena: (a) the handover of customary money in a certain amount as material for dowry from the man's family as the wife-giving family to the woman's family as the wife-taking family; (b) the handover of animals in the form of cows (bia), horses ( bikase), and goats ( bib) as material for dowry from the man's family as the wife-giving family to the woman's family as the wife-taking family; (c) the handover of clothing in the form of shirts ( nose ), sarongs ( lip ), and sandals and jewelry in the form of earrings ( fall ), necklaces ( hake ), and rings ( Kline ) as material for dowry from the man's family as the wife-giving family to the woman's family as the wife-taking family; (d) the handover of rice ( manes ) as material for dowry from the man's family as the wife-giving family to the woman's family as the wife-taking family; and (e) the handing over of household furniture from the women's family to their daughters, consisting of plates ( pica ), spoons ( sunup ), glasses ( kolas ), and pots ( nay ).

Political meaning is marked by the existence of an asymmetrical power relationship between the woman's family as the wife-giving family and the man's family as the wife-taking family, both in verbal behavior patterns and in nonverbal behavior patterns that they display when they communicate or interact face to face, especially during the customary marriage procession from the preliminary stage to the closing stage. The manifestation of an asymmetrical power relationship is clearly evident in the verbal and nonverbal behavior patterns displayed when the spokesperson ( customary natoni ) of the woman's family as the wife-giving family and the spokesperson ( customary natoni ) of the man's family as the wife-taking family communicate and interact. In addition to the choice of words, the way the spokesperson ( customary natoni ) of the man's family as the wife-taking family expresses language must also show a dimension of politeness and respect for the spokesperson ( customary natoni ) of the woman's family as the wife-giving family, which implies an asymmetrical power relationship. According to the conceptualization embedded and stated in the cognitive map of the Dawan community, customary marriage matters are not only related to the matter of giving and taking wives, but also related to the giving of life from the woman's family as the wife-giving family to the man's family as the wife-taking family. Giving a wife from the woman's family means giving life to the man's family because through the marriage relationship, children will be born as the successors or successors of their next lineage.

Historical meaning is marked by the process and mechanism of implementing the entire series of traditional marriage ceremonies as part of the products and cultural practices of past historical drops inherited from their ancestors. The traditional marriage event is not an ordinary social and cultural event, but is a historical event that becomes one of the nodes of their subsequent kinship history. Another general parameter that implies historical meaning is the time and place of the implementation of the traditional marriage ceremony because time and place are two general parameters of history.

The legal meaning is marked by the following phenomena: (a) in the engagement ceremony, there is a prohibition for the prospective groom to directly hand over the sula tolo to the prospective bride and, if he violates this prohibition, he will be subject to a fine or sanction in the form of payment of a certain amount of money according to the customs that have been traditionally applied since his ancestors; (b) there is advice and guidance from the parents of the groom's family which contains prohibitions that must be obeyed and complied with by both the prospective groom and bride in the framework of maintaining the harmony of their love relationship because the marriage relationship is not temporary and contractual; and (c) there is

a sanction if they violate the advice and guidance from the parents of the bride's family according to the applicable customary provisions and according to the customs that have been traditionally applied since their ancestors.

### **Values**

In relation to several meanings that are presented and explained above, traditional marriage in the Dawan community implies a set of values that include: (1) divine values; (2) humanitarian values; (3) values of unity and oneness; and (4) values of deliberation and consensus; and (5) values of justice.

According to the conceptualization embedded and stated in the cognitive map of the Dawan community, customary marriage matters imply divine values concerning the existence of men and women in marriage bonds in order to continue the lineage. The woman's family as the wife-giving family is viewed as God as the Creator and Great Architect who is visible to the naked eye on earth. This view is based on the understanding that giving a daughter to the man's family as the wife-taking family means giving life through the birth of a child who will become their successor or descendant. In other words, if the woman's family does not give their daughter to the man's family as the wife-taking family, then there is no life in the form of the birth of a child as a successor or descendant on the man's side. The manifestation of divine values is also reflected through the meaningful role of the ancestral spirits as intermediaries for prayers and requests that they convey to God as God as the Creator and Great Architect.

According to the conceptualization embedded and stated in the cognitive map of the Dawan community, customary marriage affairs always prioritize the humanitarian dimension because they maintain the rights and obligations of both parties in a balanced manner. These humanitarian values are implied through the dowry which is not only understood as an economic transaction process, but also interpreted as a form of special appreciation for the woman's family as the wife-giving family because giving a daughter to the man's family as the wife-taking family means giving life through the birth of a child as a successor or descendant. This form of appreciation is marked, among other things, by giving a sum of money as 'mother's milk' as a form of appreciation and gratitude to the bride's mother who has struggled to give birth, care for, and raise her.

The value of unity and oneness is expressed and implied through the aims and objectives of the traditional marriage, namely establishing unity and oneness in kinship relationships based on marriage ties, as stated by the spokesman for the man's family during the proposal ceremony. Marriage is a knot that strengthens the sense of unity and oneness between the woman's family as the wife-giving family and the man's family as the wife-taking family, which is marked by the giving of a *belis* or dowry which functions and is meaningful as a means of bonding and binding the bonds of marital kinship relations. Therefore, *belis* or dowry is not seen and seen as transactional material but also as a symbol or symbol of appreciation in knitting a sense of unity and family unity within a single bond of marital kinship.

Customary marriage implies the value of deliberation and consensus because the process and mechanism of implementation are always carried out through deliberation in order to reach consensus. The basis of the argument that inspires the value of deliberation and consensus is that the common interests of the members of one clan are above personal or individual interests. Therefore, customary marriage matters are seen as a common affair of the members of one clan whose process and mechanism of implementation must be based on the results of deliberation and consensus.

The value of justice is characterized by the existence of behavioral patterns that uphold applicable norms based on equality and equality of rights and obligations between the two families, both the woman's family as the wife-giving family and the man's family as the wife-taking family. In relation to the provision of *belis* or dowry, for example, the woman's family is obliged to provide their daughters with property in the form of cows ( *bia* ), horses ( *bikase* ), goats ( *bibi* ), plates ( *pika* ), spoons ( *sunu* ), glasses ( *klas* ), and pots ( *nai* ) so that they can start their family life with a sense of security and comfort.

### **CONCLUSION**

Dawan culture is a marker of the identity of the Dawan community as members of the Dawan ethnic group with a dual dimension because, in addition to being a sense of identity that

indicates the existence of the Dawan community as members of the Dawan ethnic group, Dawan culture is also a symbol of identity that indicates the difference between the Dawan community and members of other ethnic groups. The manifestation of Dawan culture is reflected in the elements of social organization and social systems whose embodiment is evident in the features of traditional marriage, as witnessed in the following aspects: forms of traditional marriage; structures of traditional marriage; functions of traditional marriage; meaning of traditional marriage; and values of traditional marriage. In accordance with the customs that have been traditionally applied since their ancestors, the form of traditional marriage applied by the Dawan community is endogamous marriage in the form of cross-cousin and cross-clan marriage. The process and mechanism for implementing the form of cross-cousin marriage aims to reconnect relationships that have been broken off due to previous marriages between ego's daughters and ego's sister's sons. The form of cross-cousin marriage is also carried out with the aim that inheritance does not circulate outside the family circle. The form of traditional marriage that is widely applied by the Dawan community is inter-clan marriage within the same tribe with the aim of expanding the network of marital kinship relationships. Therefore, the process and mechanism of implementing the form of inter-clan marriage differs at certain levels from the form of inter-cousin marriage. Inter-clan marriage is the form of marriage that is the focus of the study in this research. The uniqueness as a distinctive feature of traditional marriage in the Dawan community is reflected in the structure of traditional marriage known as or the term *tamam nasako* or *tamam man toet bi fe* or *khitbah* in the Dawan language. The uniqueness as a distinctive feature or distinguishing feature of the structure of traditional marriage can be witnessed in the pattern of the sequence of events that are systematically arranged. According to the customs that have been traditionally applied since their ancestors, in general, the structure of traditional marriage in the Dawan community includes three interrelated parts in one unit, namely the introduction (proposal), the core part (*hantaran*), and the closing part (changing clans). Traditional marriage in the Dawan community has several functions as a means of validating Dawan culture, a means of cementing social relations in society, a manifestation of maintaining ancestral rules and norms, and a means of maintaining social structures. Observing the essence of the contents of the explicit and implicit messages through various symbols in the form of verbal and nonverbal symbols in the context of traditional marriage in the Dawan community, a number of meanings are found, including religious, sociological, economic, political, historical, and legal meanings. Related to these meanings, traditional marriage in the Dawan community implies the values of divinity, humanity, unity, deliberation and consensus, and justice.

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