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Kinship Systems and Land Titling Dynamics: Gendered Land Governance in West and North Sumatra, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The gender imbalance in land ownership remains a major problem in agricultural governance, even in nations that have historically been regarded as more equitable towards women. Studies on matrilineal and patrilineal kinship systems focus on inheritance patterns. Still, they are inadequate in understanding the link between legal ownership, substantive control,

and agricultural transition due to urbanisation and the land market. This article attempts to evaluate the role of kinship systems in determining the distribution of land ownership depending on gender and its consequences for land governance in West Sumatra and North Sumatra. The research employs a mixed-methods comparative study design with a qualitative ethnographic approach through an examination of land administration data, interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. Data collection was conducted in November 2025 through a 22-day field study in West Sumatra and North Sumatra. The article's innovation is the application of a comparative agrarian-gender paradigm to understand the distinctions between symbolic ownership and substantive control in pluralistic kinship systems. The results suggest that matrilineal systems afford women greater administrative legitimacy, but not necessarily equal economic power, whereas patrilineal systems indicate stronger male dominance in agricultural management. These findings emphasise the necessity of more gender-responsive land governance through administrative reforms, the collection of gender-disaggregated agricultural data, and the enhancement of women's participation in agrarian decision-making.

Keywords: gender, land ownership, matrilineal, patrilineal, land governance.

A. Introduction

Land is a strategic resource that carries not only economic value but also social power, family identity, and the viability of agrarian communities. Yet worldwide, access to this resource continues to be characterized by stark gender disparity. Women hold fewer than 15 percent of worldwide land ownership rights, even though they play a major role in the agricultural sector and the family economy, the (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2018) points out. The scenario demonstrates that land law reforms in different developing countries have not automatically brought about agrarian justice, as policy implementation is constrained by deep-rooted

social norms and patriarchal institutions (Ranjan et al., 2022; Slavchevska et al., 2025).

In Indonesia, this imbalance persists despite the 1960 Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA) normatively guaranteeing gender equality. According to the Komnas Perempuan (2021), only 15.88% of the registered plots of land (44 million) are registered in women's names, and joint ownership practices are only at 24.2% (Solidaritas Perempuan, 2020). These results indicate that formal legal recognition has not been able to generate real equality in access to, management of, and profits from agricultural resources. The problem with gender-neutral land legalization not mirroring social on-the-ground realities is that it perpetuates existing inequities (Salim et al., 2026).

This problem is compounded by diverse customary systems and kinship patterns that determine asset allocation across regions. In matrilineal communities such as the Minangkabau of West Sumatra, women are the main beneficiaries of inherited land. However, this legal ownership does not mean absolute control over economic decision-making (Miswardi et al., 2024; Natasya & Matsuoka, 2025). On the other hand, patrilineal societies, such as the Batak people in North Sumatra, control land in the hands of men as the heirs of the clan, while women's access is relatively limited (Fitriyanti et al., 2025). The comparison shows that in both matrilineal and patrilineal systems, women's control over land is nevertheless limited by local power structures and patriarchal dynamics, which persist in various forms (Damanik, 2021).

The normative features of inheritance and customary law have been addressed to a large extent in prior work. However, empirical research that combines kinship systems with official land administration data remains scarce. Most studies use land titles as the sole indicator of ownership and do not explore the link between legal status, substantive control, and economic advantages. There is also a research vacuum on the interaction between state land legalization measures and

customary institutions in shaping women's negotiating positions.

This sense of urgency serves as the starting point for this research, which is framed through the lens of feminist land governance and legal pluralism, emphasizing the connections of land ownership that arise from the interaction of state law, customary law, power relations, and social structures (Ho et al., 2023). From this perspective, legal ownership does not always entail *de facto* control over the economic use, decision-making, and distribution of agricultural benefits. The research, therefore, distinguishes between formal ownership, the official acknowledgment of land, and substantive control, the real authority to govern its use, administration, and economic exploitation.

A comparative study of matrilineal societies in West Sumatra and patrilineal societies in North Sumatra is conducted to analyze the gender distribution of land ownership. The study employs a mixed-methods comparative approach with a qualitative ethnographic design. This research uses an explanatory mixed-methods design in which quantitative data are collected first, followed by qualitative data collection. The research method employed includes the study of land administration data, field interviews, and documentation studies in the Tanah Datar Regency, Padang City, Samosir Regency, and Deli Serdang Regency.

This research is novel in its comparative analysis of the relationship between family structures, formal land administration, and substantive control over land in the context of rural and suburban agricultural transformation. This study also conceptually divides symbolic ownership from real control in gendered land governance. Therefore, this research is anticipated to add to the fields of gender and agrarian studies, especially concerning the intersection of customary law, state administration, and gender-based agricultural justice in different communities. This study investigates the distribution of land ownership by gender through a comparative analysis of matrilineal and patrilineal

communities in West Sumatra and North Sumatra. This study uses a mixed-methods comparative study design. The research technique used is land administration data analysis, field interviews, and documentation studies in Tanah Datar Regency, Padang City, Samosir Regency, and Deli Serdang Regency.

This research is new in that it presents a comparative examination of the relationship among kinship systems, formal land administration, and substantive control over land in the context of rural and suburban agricultural transition. This study also conceptually distinguishes between symbolic ownership and substantive control in gendered land governance. Therefore, this research is likely to contribute to gender and agrarian studies, particularly regarding the interaction among customary law, state administration, and gender-based agricultural justice in diverse communities.

B. Discussion

1. Kinship Systems and Gender Relations in Land Ownership

Gender relations in land ownership in Indigenous groups are not only influenced by inheritance regulations but also by familial power structures, social legitimacy, land administration, and the economic developments within the community (Sebastian, 2026). Here, land is not just seen as an economic asset but as a tool for reproducing social power that determines one's place within the family and Indigenous society. Thus, the gendered distribution of land ownership provides a nuanced view of the interrelationship among custom, state, and market in determining access to and control over of agricultural resources.

The Minangkabau people of West Sumatra are known as a matrilineal society, in which women are the primary heirs to the high ancestral land through the maternal line. Administratively, this system shows a considerably stronger position for women than in patrilineal civilizations as daughters receive family land as part of clan continuation (Krismono et al., 2024).

However, women's administrative supremacy over land ownership does not inevitably mean total authority in agricultural decision-making (Siregar & Amran, 2020). The Ninik Mamak (Minangkabau customary leaders) still became the major figure in the framework of Minangkabau customary governance of family land, notably in land utilization, settlement of inheritance conflict, transfer of rights, and commercial contacts with external parties.

In everyday social practice, the Ninik Mamak serves not only as a protector of ancestral land but also as a mediator between women's families' interests and the community's communal interests. Thus, women landowners are usually involved in the administrative function of rights holders, but they are not the main actors in strategic decisions about the economic use of property. This role is evident in family talks when land is to be leased, used as collateral, or transferred for commercial use. "We are from Tanah Datar regency," said an informant.

"Women are the proprietors of ancestral land, but when it comes to land, decisions are often still addressed with the mamak (the matrilineal leader) since they are believed to be better educated about customary and family issues."

This implies that women's legal ownership in matrilineal civilizations is more a matter of symbolic legitimacy than of real control over agrarian resources. From a feminist perspective on land governance, land ownership rights cannot be defined merely as registering a name in land administration but must be recognized by their real power to control land use, distribution of economic benefits, and decision-making (Ho et al., 2023). In matrilineal communities, gender relations do not entirely negate male dominance but rather generate more hidden power structures through customary processes and familial authority.

Economic transition and urbanization have also brought about changes in women's symbolic ownership of ancestral land. The rising economic worth of land in

Padang City has made ancestral land not only a symbol of family continuity but also an investment asset and economic commodity. This has led to a transformation in the power dynamics within families, as decisions about sales, business partnerships, and property conversions are increasingly influenced by family members with access to official economic networks and government administration. In some circumstances, men have been more dominant in discussions with external actors, being viewed as having a superior aptitude for business and land administration.

These developments show that economic progress does not necessarily improve the position of women in matrilineal communities. As land becomes increasingly embedded in market mechanisms, agricultural relations tend to change from social protection based on custom to control and economic access based on capital. This is consistent with Peterman et al. (2017), who argued that asset ownership does not always translate into economic agency if social institutions and power relations continue to restrict women's capacity to govern the use of such assets.

Unlike the Minangkabau people, the Batak people of North Sumatra have a more pronounced system of agricultural ownership, in which men are the primary authority over family land. In a patrilineal system, land is considered a sign of clan continuity, and paternal inheritance is the primary means of preserving a family's genealogical identity. Land ownership is not merely a matter of economic access but is closely tied to men's social legitimacy within customary frameworks.

In inheritance practices, boys are the primary heirs to family land, as they are considered successors of the clan (Aulia et al., 2025; Nurdin, 2022). By contrast, women usually have access to land through marriage, family gifts, or restricted use, but they do not have complete ownership rights. Said one female source in Samosir Regency:

"Usually, family land is inherited by sons as they carry on the family line. "Women are more often

only offered housing or help from the family.”

This pattern exemplifies how the patrilineal system functions to reproduce the genealogical authority connecting land ownership and male identity in the customary society. The land tenure system is biased towards men to safeguard the family's reputation, traditional position, and control of the economy (Manurung et al., 2025). This means that women have less ability to achieve economic security through property ownership, especially in cases of divorce, family conflicts, or inheritance disputes.

Limited access to land also affects women's negotiating power in the home and customary society. Women who do not have land in their own names are generally more financially dependent on male relatives. This scenario not only affects their access to cash and company financing but also affects the long-term social security of women in rural communities. This case exemplifies how gender disparity in land ownership is a product of the interrelationship between traditions, economic institutions and formal governmental administrations.

However, urbanisation and the growth of land markets are beginning to change gender relations in suburban regions like Deli Serdang. Women's participation in formal economic activity creates more chances for land acquisition through purchases, investments, or contributions to the home economy. However, these developments have not fully changed land administration procedures, which still treat males as heads of household and as the principal owners of assets in the land legalisation process. In many situations, land bought through shared income is nonetheless recorded in the husband's name as the representative head of the family.

This case shows that officially gender-neutral state legislation may not necessarily result in an equitable allocation of power in social activities. From a legal pluralism perspective, in addition to the official land administration system, customary norms, family

structures, and social interactions have already created patterns of agricultural control in society (K, 2025). Thus, gender disparity in land management should not be regarded as a purely legal issue but as the outcome of power interactions within a pluralistic agricultural system between customs, the state, and the market.

2. Gender Distribution of Land Ownership

a. West Sumatra (Matrilineal)

The pattern of land ownership in West Sumatra reveals that the Minangkabau matrilineal system continues to affect the pattern of agricultural tenure, particularly in the rural regions in which customary systems are still relatively stable. But the link between legal ownership and substantive control over land is increasingly difficult in the context of urbanization and land commercialization.

Table 1. Distribution of Land Ownership by Gender in Tanah Datar Regency

Gender	Number of Plots	Percentage	Land Area (m ²)	Percentage
Female	27.056	64,7%	±11.164.030	31%
Male	10.619	25,4%	±4.416.310	10%
Unidentified	4.153	9,9%	±21.223.241	59%
Total	41.828	100%	±36.803.581	100%

Source: Computerized Data from the Land Office (KKP), processed by researchers, 2026.

Table 1 shows that women own the majority of formal land in Tanah Datar Regency, in terms of the number of both plots and the amount of registered land. This dominance implies that the matrilineal inheritance system continues to successfully control the allocation of agricultural assets along the maternal line. In Minangkabau society, ancestral land is not only an economic asset but also a symbol of the clan's continuity and the maternal family's genealogical identity.

The greater number of women in relation to land parcels is indicative of the continued strength of the customary legitimacy of women as land rights holders in rural regions based on custom. Tanah Datar is an

agrarian region dominated by family farms and community land. Such an arrangement brings about a slowdown in the fragmentation and commercialization of the land. Such an arrangement makes the social function of land more prevalent than the economic function.

But this administrative distribution does not imply equal economic control. Women are formally registered as owners, but the *mamak* (head of the family) and senior males in the customary organization still make decisions regarding the use of productive land, land transfers, and economic cooperation. This reflects the discrepancy between legal ownership and substantive control in the agricultural government of the matrilineal society (Djurfeldt, 2020).

In addition, the share of land area still to be recognized by gender is 59% of the total registered land area. This proportion suggests that the land administration system still has issues in delivering reliable gender-disaggregated data. This is methodologically essential, as the distribution of ownership by number of plots does not necessarily match the substantive distribution of land ownership. The number of plots is less significant in determining the economic capability of the agrarian sector than the size of the land. The distinction suggests that women do dominate administrative ownership, but they do not always own the property with the highest economic value. Having her name listed on the land certificate does not automatically grant a woman full rights to sell, rent out, or mortgage the property without the approval of the male circle in her family. This is also reflected in the fact of Minang women, as narrated:

“Women as owners but not executors. The executor must be a man. Women are traditionally entrusted with storing the harvest from the rice fields and gardens, but it is the men who manage and oversee the rice fields and gardens.”

A similar dynamic has been noted in other studies on gender and land rights in developing nations, which show that women usually hold small-scale assets. At the

same time, males continue to dominate the ownership of high-value property (Zougouri & Zoungrana, 2025).

Changes in agricultural ownership patterns are increasingly noticeable in metropolitan areas, for example, Padang City.

Table 2. Gender Distribution of Land Ownership in Padang City

Gender	Number of Plots	Percentage	Land Area (m²)	Percentage
Female	43.831	21%	±19,3 juta m ²	24%
Male	37.959	18%	±46,6 juta m ²	58%
Unidentified	126.000+	61%	±14,4 juta m ²	18%
Total	±207.790	100%	±80,3 juta m²	100%

Source: Computerized Data from the Land Office (KKP), processed by researchers, 2026.

This is contrary to Tanah Datar; in the distribution of land ownership in Padang City, there is a contradiction between the number of plots and the extent of land ownership. Administratively, more pieces of property are owned by women than by men. But males have a much higher share of land, owning around 58% of all registered land.

This distinction demonstrates that the structure of agricultural property in matrilineal cultures has been altered by urbanisation and the commercialisation of land. Women tend to have more plots of the land, but they are relatively small in size. Men control land on a larger economic scale and of higher commercial value. This situation shows how the transformation of the land market has created new forms of agrarian inequality that are not always visible through the number of plots owned alone.

This indicates that the matrilineal system does not necessarily lead to substantive equality in the ownership of agricultural resources. As more and more property is brought into market systems, land ownership is likely to become concentrated among individuals with better access to cash, commercial networks, and formal administration. Men are often believed to have a higher aptitude for managing external family business contacts

and, hence, to play a more dominant role in economic transactions and property development procedures.

This circumstance is consistent with Rao’s (2017) claim that asset ownership does not translate into economic agency if social relations and power structures continue to constrain women’s capacity to govern the use of such assets. Thus, women’s legal legitimacy in a matrilineal system may coexist with the concentration of economic dominance in the hands of males.

b. North Sumatra (Patrilineal)

The distribution of land ownership in North Sumatra is distinct from that in the matrilineal areas of West Sumatra. In Batak society, the patrilineal system makes men the clan’s primary heirs and the family land’s primary inheritors, so agricultural ownership is more concentrated among men, who serves as the genealogical representatives of the family. This can be found in the Samosir region. Samosir is the ancestral home of the Batak people, known as Siraja Batak. The Samosir region is also referred to as the center of Batak civilization. The residents of Samosir Regency are part of the Batak Toba ethnic group, which originates from the Lake Toba area (Firmando et al., 2023). Samosir is the ancestral region of the Batak Toba tribe, which has a powerful patriarchal cultural heritage. Given its rural characteristics, the Samosir community tends to be homogeneous and strongly attached to Batak patrilineal customs and culture. This situation reflects the dominance of regulations that confer special privileges on men, particularly regarding land inheritance.

Table 3. Gender Distribution of Land Ownership in Samosir Regency

Gender	Number of Plots	Percentage	Land Area (m ²)	Percentage
Male	17.198	76%	±33.500.000	Dominan
Female	5.092	23%	±7.800.000	Minoritas
Unidentified	±1%	±1%	Limited data	-
Total	±22.600	100%	±41.300.000	100%

Source: Computerized Data from the Land Office (KKP), processed by researchers, 2026.

Table 3 demonstrates a very large concentration of land ownership among men. The distribution of land ownership in Samosir Regency is predominantly male. This trend is evident in nine sub-districts within the Samosir Regency area: Harian, Nainggolan, Onanrunggu, Palipi, Pangururan, Ronggur Nihuta, Sianjur Mula-Mula, Simanindo, and Sitiotio. This dominance is strongly tied to the Batak customary system of inheritance based on the patrilineal line, in which land is positioned as a symbol of clan continuity and male social legitimacy in the traditional society. This is recognized by the Batak people, as noted:

“Yes, generally speaking, if a certificate is issued, it is typically in the man's name, as he is often considered the head of the family. This practice is largely rooted in tradition. The discussion is not about assigning blame or justifying this practice; it reflects the structure of the indigenous community system. Local beliefs dictate that the male inherits land in this customary system. Specifically, in the Batak region, this tradition predominantly favors males”.

In a patrilineal society, land ownership serves not only as a means of economic access but also as a determinant of status within the social structure of both the family and the traditional community. Thus, land ownership is a tool for the reproduction of male social power in the genealogical system of Batak society. Ownership in a man's name is a common pattern observed. This practice is in line with the privilege of a male child. This practice is part of how Batak daughters can elevate the status of their husband's family, as recounted:

“According to Batak customs, if a Toba daughter marries, she elevates her husband's family's status. She follows her husband's family. Therefore, if the child is a boy, he becomes the successor to his parents. He is the successor to his parents. When the daughter inherits the land, the sons often complain about it. For example, in my

case, my father has three sons and one daughter. Occasionally, the sons complain when the daughter receives the inheritance. So it feels unfair if the inheritance has to be divided among the children”.

The concentration of land among males also implies that gender disparity within patrilineal areas is not just in the administrative sphere but also in the substantive management of agricultural economic resources. Women without land in their names often have difficulty accessing credit, agricultural support, and legal protection in cases of family strife or inheritance arguments. The distribution pattern in Deli Serdang Regency is more dynamic than in rural regions such as Samosir due to urbanization and the presence of a land market.

Table 4. Distribution of Land Ownership by Gender in Deli Serdang Regency

Gender	Number of Land Parcels	Land Area
Male	±19%	±7%
Female	±20%	±9%
Unidentified	±61%	±84%
Total	100%	100%

Source: Computerized Land Office Data (KKP),
processed by the researcher, 2026.

Data show that land ownership not identified by gender still dominates, both in terms of the number of plots (±61%) and the area (±84%). Meanwhile, ownership by men and women is relatively balanced in terms of the number of plots, but women own a slightly larger share of the land area.

In Deli Serdang, the distribution shows that urbanisation and integration in the land market are beginning to create new bargaining spaces for women to acquire land through official economic activity and market transactions. However, the high share of data not identified by gender shows the weakness of the gender-disaggregated land data system in the national land administration.

These data restrictions have significant

methodological consequences, in that they may affect the credibility of research on the distribution of land ownership by gender. The interpretation of quantitative data has to be studied carefully and combined with field interviews, social observations and documentation study to avoid administrative bias. This triangulation suggests that distribution patterns in administrative data generally conform to dominant social practices in the community.

This situation demonstrates that formal, gender-neutral land legalization has not fully transformed the social structures that have long shaped the distribution of agrarian power. Formal land administration systems still operate alongside customary norms, family structures, and patriarchal social practices that determine who is deemed worthy of being the primary owner of family land.

3. Impacts of gender inequality on land governance

Gender disparity in land ownership shows that land governance cannot be regarded merely as a matter of formal legal administration but also as a question of power distribution within society's social and economic structures. In this sense, land certification and legalising land rights do not necessarily lead to gender-based agrarian justice, as land administration processes remain subject to family norms, customary practices, economic access, and power relations that develop within local communities.

The issue reveals a mismatch between formal legal recognition and real access to agricultural resources. In several of circumstances, women have gained legitimacy in administration as property owners but do not yet have equal power to decide on the land's economic use, to make agricultural choices, or to oversee high-value land transactions. This case shows that the legalisation of land can lead to administrative acknowledgement, but not to any meaningful transfer of agrarian authority.

These consequences are significant for the implementation of agricultural reform plans and modernised land administration. Certification

programmes for land have traditionally focused on providing legal certainty of ownership and expediting the legalisation of assets, but have not fully considered gender relations in the control of agrarian resources. Gender-neutral administrative systems imply equal rights for all family members to land ownership. However, social realities indicate that access to agricultural decision-making is still mediated by patriarchal family structures and customary societies.

In this respect, land legalisation may reproduce agrarian inequality if land registration and administration processes continue to treat the male head of household as the primary representative of family asset ownership. The outcome is that women hold secondary administrative jobs, notwithstanding their roles in the administration of home economies and the acquisition of family assets. Several studies on land administration in developing countries have reported similar findings, indicating that formal land registration systems may perpetuate gender bias unless complemented by specific measures to safeguard women's rights (Doss et al., 2018).

Another concern is the quality of the national land data governance. The high proportion of unidentified land ownership data by gender indicates that the land administration system remains limited in its ability to produce a gender-responsive agrarian database. Not only does the lack of gender-disaggregated data make it impossible to quantify agricultural inequality effectively, but it also constrains the state's capacity to develop inclusive and evidence-based land policy.

These data restrictions reveal that women's invisibility in land governance extends beyond land ownership to the process of producing land administration statistics. When land administration statistics leave most owner data as "gender unidentified," it is not merely a technical issue. It reflects a gender-neutral land policy design, which in practice perpetuates the marginalization of women by ignoring existing cultural inequalities. One structural indicator of bias against women is the gender-disaggregated data gap,

which is the limitation of statistics or data that is not broken down by gender. The failure of the administration to provide inclusive statistics will harm women's fundamental rights, including legal vulnerability during a crisis (Salim et al., 2026). From a gendered land governance perspective, land data is not just a technical administrative tool but also part of a power mechanism that determines who is visible, recognized, and legitimized in the formal agrarian system (Ho et al., 2023). Therefore, land administration reform must reinforce gender-disaggregated data systems as part of efforts to develop more inclusive land governance.

Gender inequality in landownership has implications for household economic sustainability and the social protection of women that extend beyond administrative issues. Ownership of land is intimately tied to access to financing, agricultural support, productive investment, and long-term economic stability. Women without control of land tend to have less power in the household and community, especially in cases of family strife, divorce, or inheritance issues. In agricultural countries, land is the principal source of social security and family economic productivity, which might make women more economically vulnerable.

This scenario indicates that gender agrarian inequality is not only about the allocation of assets but also about the distribution of social and economic hazards in agriculture. Thus, a land policy strategy limited to asset legalization, without taking into account power relations, might result in a procedural agrarian reform that fails to address the causes of social inequality.

From the standpoint of legal pluralism, land governance in Indonesia is shaped by interactions among state law, customary law, and local social practices, which influence one another and affect the validity of land ownership. The social structure that has historically shaped society's agrarian economy cannot be isolated from land policy implementation. Even though land laws are technically gender-neutral, inequalities can arise

when they are applied in a social context that still views men as the primary representatives of family authority and management of agrarian assets.

The circumstance highlights the necessity for gender-responsive land governance in national land reform. Land certification alone is not enough to improve gender-based land governance – reform of the land registration system, gender-disaggregated agrarian data, increased access for women to land administration services, and women's participation in agrarian decision-making at the family and community levels are also needed.

Moreover, the harmonisation between state legislation and customary law is necessary to guarantee that the protection of women's rights does not end with administrative recognition. The harmonization discussed here is transversal and has been operating independently until now. Horizontal harmonization occurs, for example, through mass land registration instruments (such as PTSL) that adopt gender-disaggregated data collection standards required in modern data governance. Meanwhile, vertical harmonization is the alignment between marriage law and local customary law. This will guarantee the state's recognition of land rights, thereby averting conflicts with local patriarchal structures. In a heterogeneous society like Indonesia, gender-based agrarian justice requires a governance mechanism that can bridge the concept of equality in national legislation and the social dynamics that arise within indigenous and local communities.

In principle, this situation demonstrates that formal ownership in a matrilineal system fails to guarantee substantive gender equality, and a gender-neutral formal legal system may still allow social domination in the control of agrarian resources. Gender concerns in land governance should be viewed as power relations that operate through the connections between state administration, social structures, and agricultural economic development.

C. Conclusion

The gendered distribution of landholdings in West Sumatra and North Sumatra exemplifies the continuing effect of the kinship system on land governance. The Minangkabau people practise matrilineal descent, and women have greater administrative legitimacy as landowners through the system of maternal-lineage inheritance. On the other hand, the patrilineal Batak culture demonstrates more male dominance in land ownership and management as part of the continuation of the clan and family genealogical framework. Formal land ownership, however, does not often entail real control over the economic use of land and agricultural decision-making. In both systems, power dynamics in families and communities still determine the allocation of access to and control over agrarian resources.

Economic development, urbanisation, and land commercialisation have also impacted patterns of gender relations in land governance. The integration of land into markets has progressively shaped control over land through access to finance, economic networks, and formal administrative capability. The conditions show that the matrilineal system does not always guarantee gender equality in the field of agriculture, and that the formal legal system without gender distinctions has not yet fully abolished inequalities in land ownership. Moreover, the significant amount of land ownership data not classified by gender shows that the governance of national land data still has problems in establishing an inclusive and gender-responsive agricultural database.

This means land reform cannot be realised by land legalisation and certification alone, but requires a restructuring of land governance that takes into account the gendered elements of power relations, social structures, and economic access. To improve the responsiveness of land governance to gender, systems of gender-disaggregated data need to be improved, state and customary laws harmonised, and women's participation in decision-making on land issues at the family and community levels strengthened. Hence, gender-based agrarian justice should be seen not just as a formal acknowledgement of land ownership but also as an

attempt to substantively increase women's access, control, and bargaining leverage in land resource governance.

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