THE NEW IBAN BILEK-FAMILY STRUCTURE: A THREAT OF THE DYNAMICS OF OUR TIME¹

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Abstract

This article aims to explore the impact of female headed families on the Iban traditional bilek family structure. Hence, this study and the field data tend to stipulate that the increasing number of single mothers among the Iban is more likely or inevitably affect [if not] change the traditional structure of the bilek-family. In essence, the traditional family was previously absolute patriarchal in nature in terms of the hierarchical position and decision-making have continued to witness dynamic changes in the social realities. Accordingly, the absence of male as head of the family within this new form of bilek will further impact the role(s) and responsibilities that some contemporary Iban women are forced to shoulder.

Keywords: Iban Traditional family, bilek-family, New family structure, Single motherhood, Decision-making, Iban women

Introduction

Besides socialization and wellbeing of members, family has always been identified as first and foremost, the fundamental unit of production and reproduction. Essentially, within families, important non-market