

Timor-Leste: From the Lens of Binary Oppositions

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Outline

- Introduction
- Binary Opposition in Anthropology
- Timor-Leste as Dualistic Society
- Cosmology
- Symbolism
- Belief System
- Political System
- Insider (Indigenous/Timor) Vs Outsider (Foreign/*Malae*)
- Marriage
- Discussion

Introduction

- **Binary opposition** is the system by which, in language and thought, two theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set off against one another. **Dualism**: the division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects, or the state of being so divided
- Anthropologists used the idea of dualism or binary opposition to analyze social structures
- Among them Van Wouden, Levis-Strauss, James Fox, etc.

Binary Opposition in Anthropology

- Van Wouden (1935 [1965]): cross cousin marriage is 'pivot' to social organization represented two opposed system of afinál relationship between groups' which provided the basis for all-embracing cosmological classification – formed the foundation for the dualistic and triadic patterns of classification – interwoven in the cosmologies of eastern Indonesia.

Binary Opposition in Anthropology

- Levi-Strauss (1956) in his ‘Do dual organizations Exist’ aim to look at comparison between American Indian and Indonesian type of dual structure.
- James Fox (1989): Analyzed three case studies of dualism (Savu, Rote and Atoni).

Binary Opposition in Timor-Leste



***Kaibauk* - Masculine**



***Belak* - Feminine**



Binary Opposition in Timor-Leste

Political
House
(Masculine)



Ritual House
(Feminine)

Binary Opposition in Timor-Leste

Ritual Language – Naueti:

- 1) "Wono Malae ne lo ---- It is foreign war
- 2) Le'a Malae ne lo ---- It is foreign conflict
- 3) Uka la watu o ---- Run on the **rocks**
- 4) Uka la kai o ---- Run on the **trees**
- 5) Horo la baha o ---- Hide on the **mountains**
- 6) Horo la ba'a lale ---- hide in the **valleys**
- 7) Buikia toto'o, Anakia toto'o ---- [we are] indeed the little chickens without their mother, [we are] indeed orphans without parents
- 8) Otarae-wailita gamama'a lebati --- **girl-boy** are all here today
- 9) Uma'ana-Oasae gamama'a lebati --- **wife giver - wife taker** are all here today
- 10) Ware-Kaka gamama'a lebati --- **Younger - older brothers** are all here today
- 11) Ana ulu - Ana Iku gamama'a lebati --- **Younger - older sisters** are all here today
- 12) inatua-amadae* gamama'a lebati --- **aunties - uncles** are all here today

*Inatua (in Naueti): Father's sister; amadae: Father's sister's husband

Binary Opposition in Timor-Leste

Tasi-Feto (North)

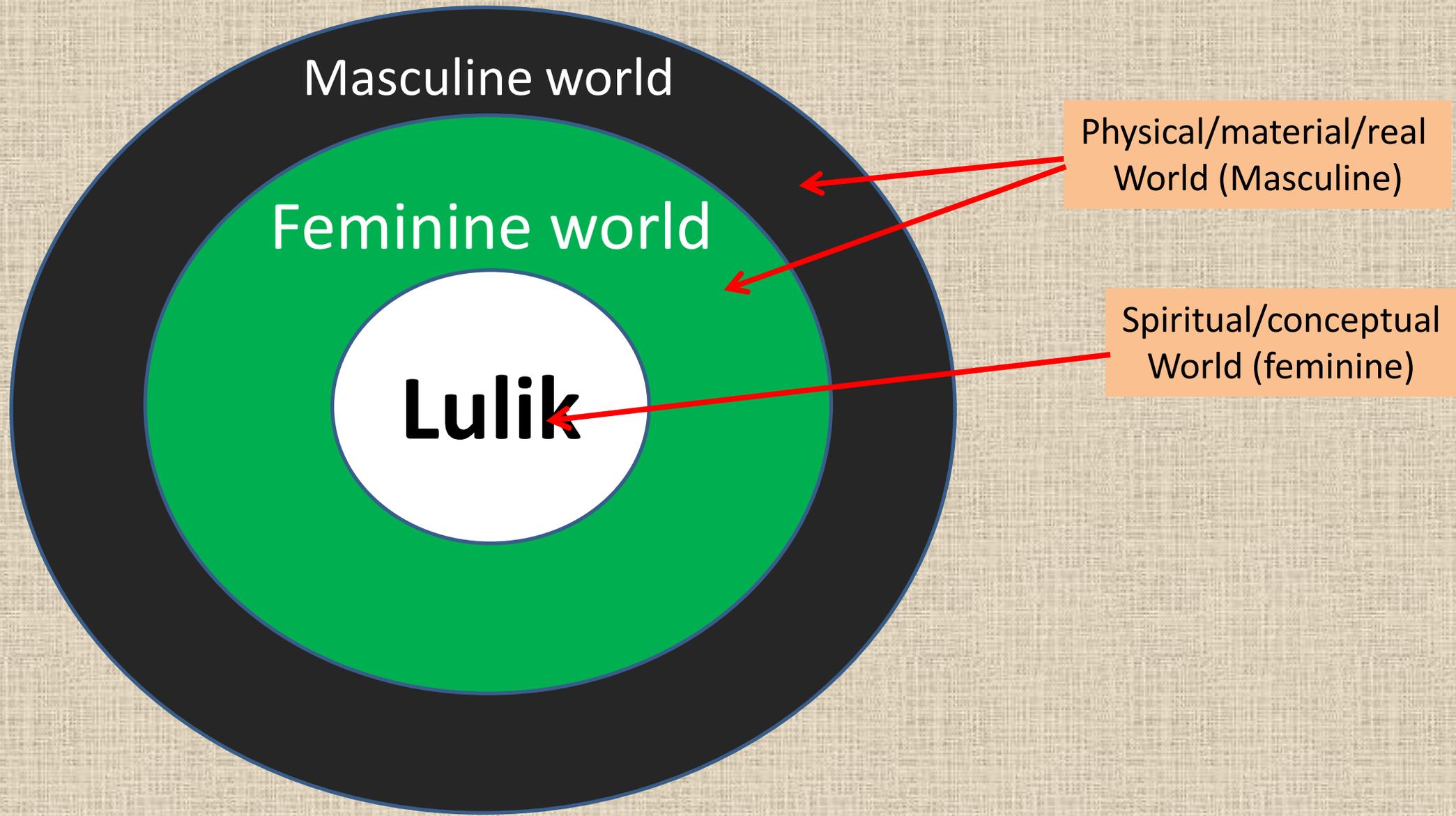
Rai-ikun
(West)



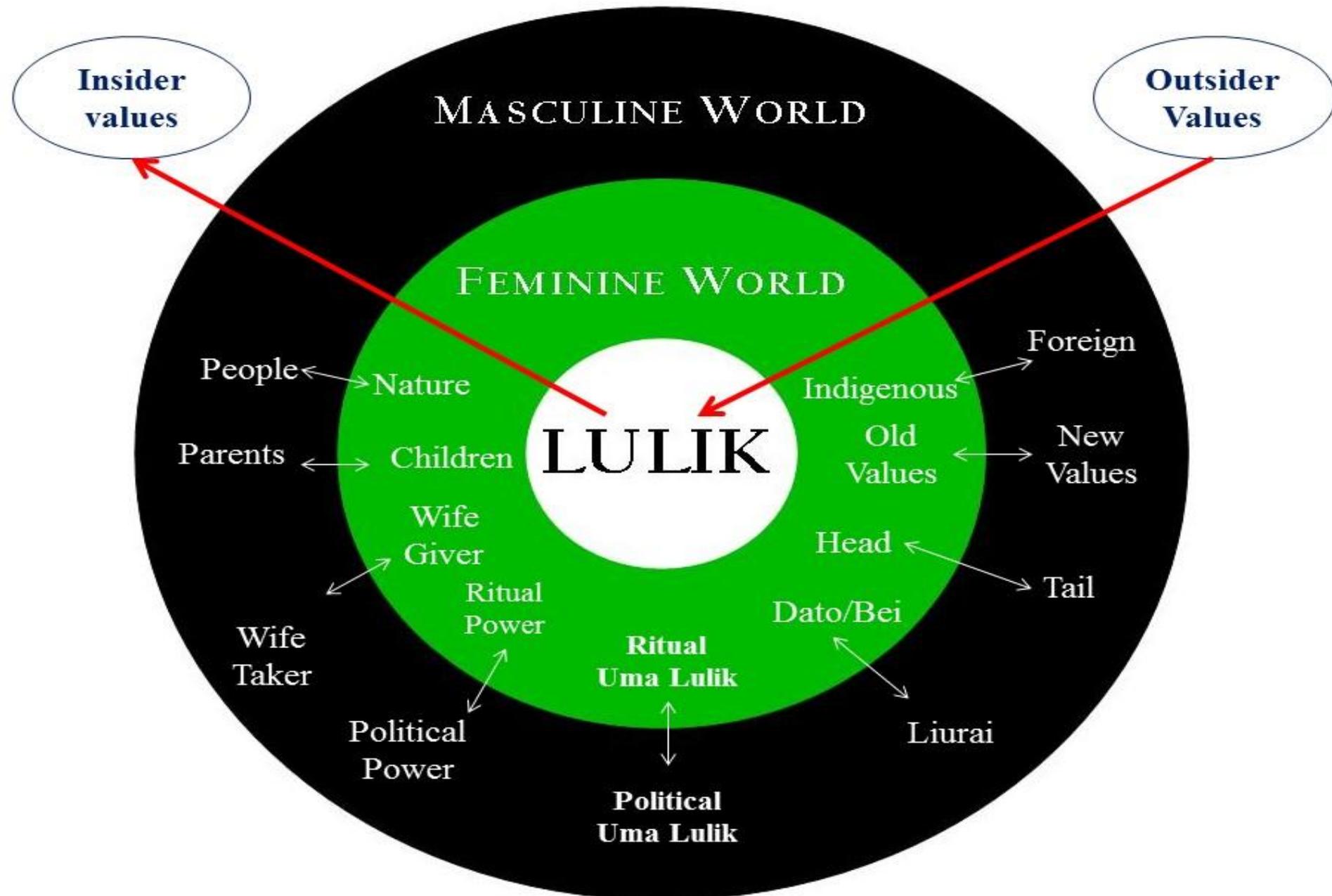
Rai-ulun
(East)

Tasi-Mane (South)

Timor-Leste Cosmology



Timor-Leste Cosmology



Timor-Leste Cosmology

Lulik: the ritual center, the concept, the cosmos, the divine, the spiritual world, the ancestors, the root of life, the moral standards, **the core values**

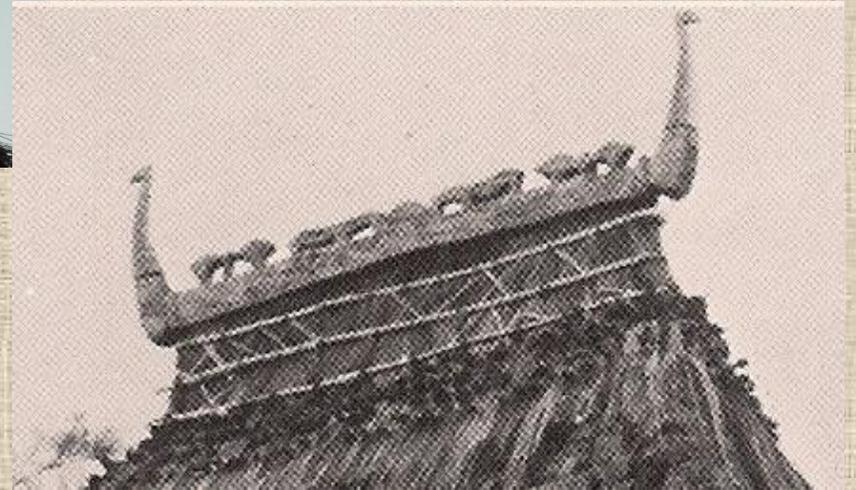
Feminine world (silent, Immobile, passive, cold)

Masculine world (noisy, mobile, active, hot)

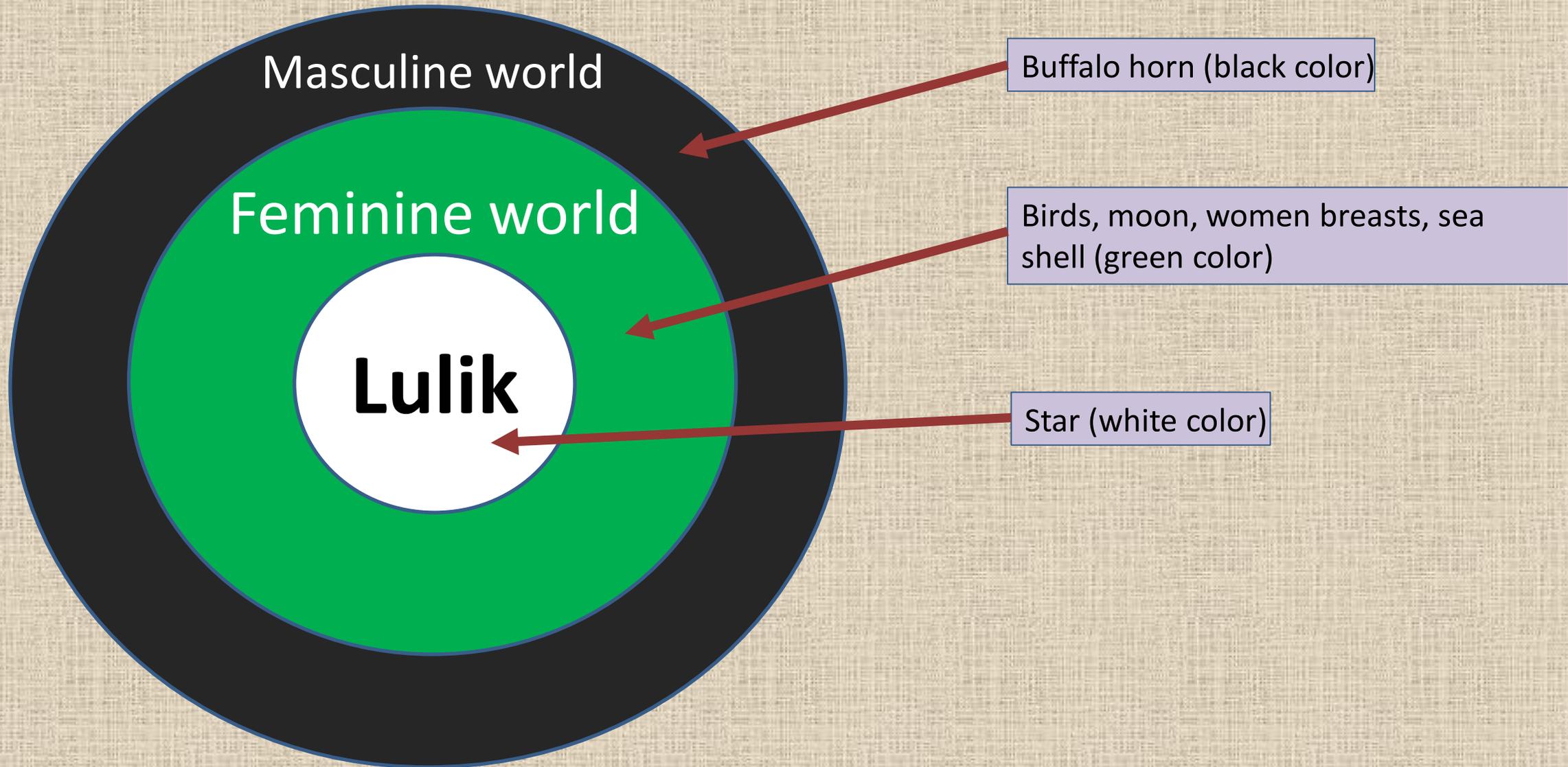
1. Nature
2. Wife Giver (*Umane*)
3. Ritual Power
4. Ritual Sacred House
5. Ritual Leader
6. Older
7. Old Values
8. Indigenous
9. Earth
10. Insider
11. Water
12. Pig, bird, snake (feminine animals)

1. People
2. Wife Taker (*Fetosan*)
3. Political Power
4. Political Sacred House
5. Political Leader
6. Younger
7. New Values
8. Foreign
9. Sky
10. Outsider
11. Fire
12. Water Buffalo, cattle, goat (masculine animals)

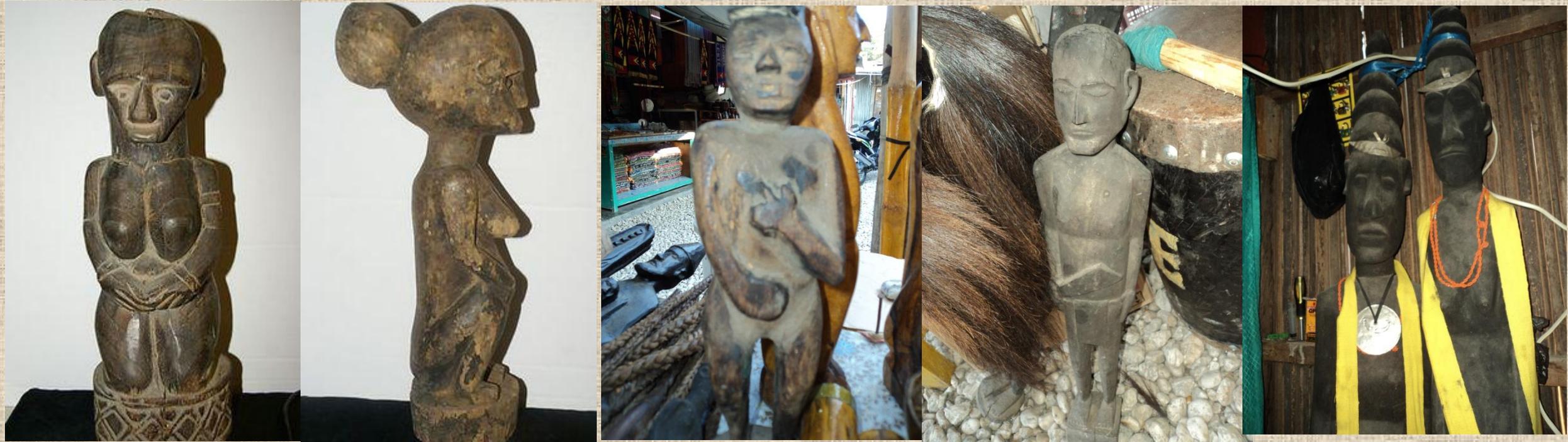
Symbolism



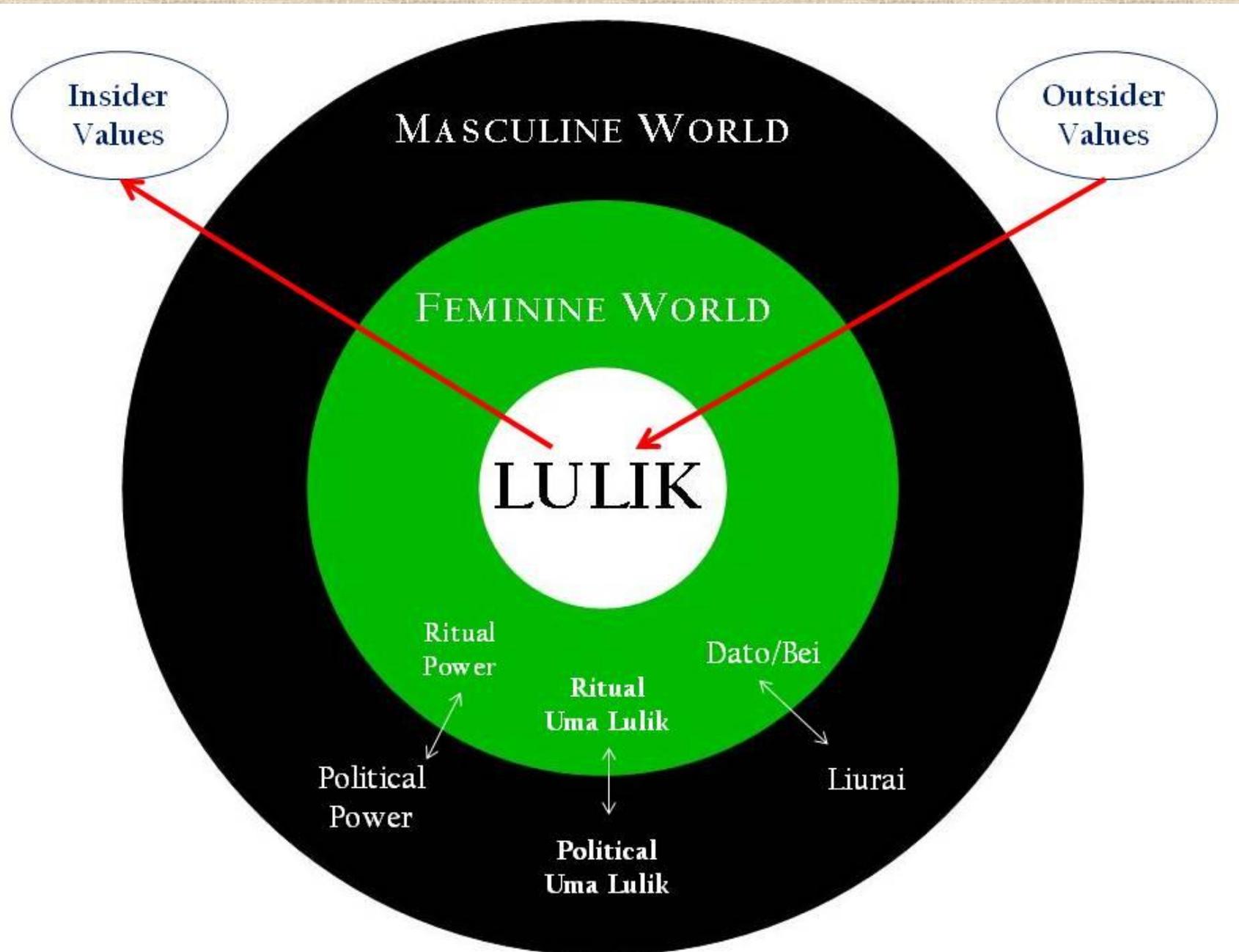
Lulik, Symbolism and Cosmology



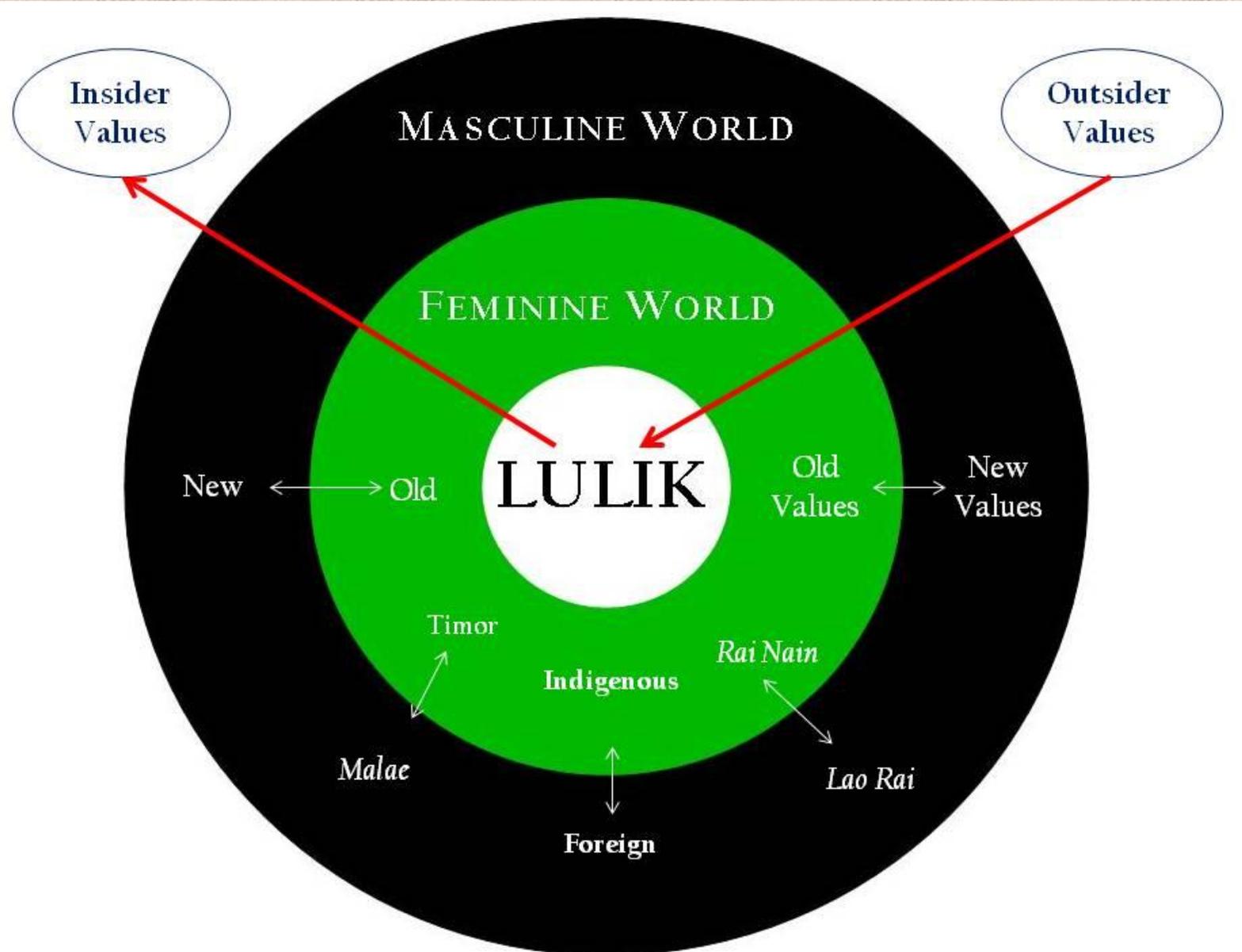
Duality in Belief System



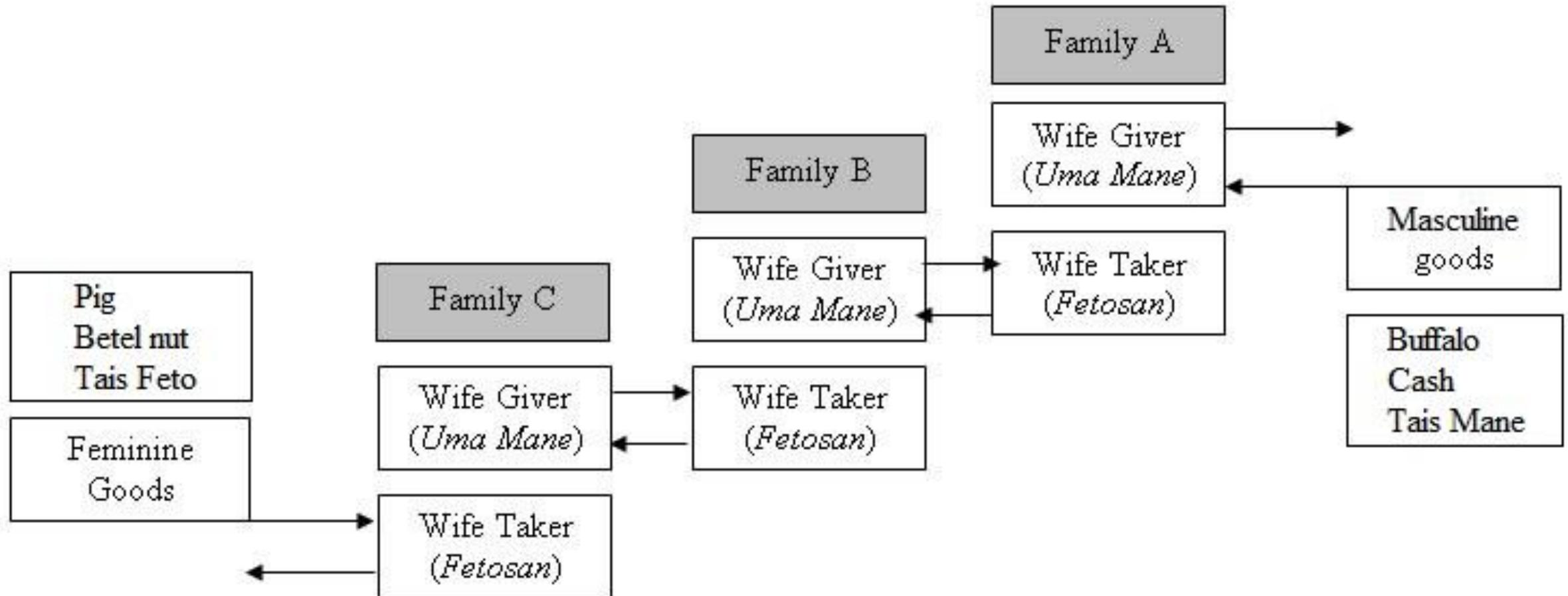
Political System



Indigenous – Foreign Dualism



Dualism in Marriage Relationship



Discussion

1. The closer you are to the center [of the diagram] the more superior/powerful you become because the center controls the most important value for the society, which is life itself.
2. **Feminine** world is ritually superior but politically inferior to **masculine** world and it represents the idea of peace, fertility and tranquility; while masculine world represent the idea strength, security and protection.
3. In real life the two worlds of **masculine** and **feminine** must complement each other in order to create a balance society to achieve peace and tranquility.
4. The categorization of **masculine** and **feminine** worlds, does not necessarily means the **feminine** world is solely for women or **masculine** world equals men, rather it emphasizes that both sexes operate in both worlds.
5. People value one part of a binary opposition over another

Matak-Malirin For us all
Thank you

