

## Islam and Minangkabau Culture

**Sulhati**

*University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara*  
*Jl. Kapten Mukhtar Basri No 3 Medan – Sumatera Utara, Indonesia*  
[sulhati@umsu.ac.id](mailto:sulhati@umsu.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

Minangkabau is an ethnic originated from Sumatera Barat Indonesia. Minangkabau culture has a peculiar character compare to other ethnic in Indonesia. While other ethnic in Indonesia mostly used a patrilineal system in heredity, Minangkabau culture uses matrilineal system. This concept has always been used for years even until now. Modernization and globalization may have affected this system lightly, but it doesn't change the core point in this belief, which has been maintained and guarded really well by the Minangkabau community. This article explains and analyzes particularly about the matrilineal system in Minangkabau culture and their life philosophy "adat basandikan syara" (tradition is based on shariah) and 'syara' basandikan Kitabullah' (shariah is based on Quran). These philosophy means Minangkabau customs are based on Islamic laws and Islamic laws are based on Al Qur'an. Therefore Minangkabau customs are basically based on Al Qur'an. This philosophy is used by the Minangkabau community after the Paderi War. Paderi War started from the conflicts between the religious leader of The Paderi and traditional figure in Pagaruyung Region in debate of everyday life activities which is restricted in Islamic laws, such as gambling, sabung ayam, drinking alcohol and also the matrilineal system. The loose implementation of Islamic religious rituals and the disagreement from the traditional figure triggered The Paderi and therefore started a civil war in 1803 called The Paderi War. This war lasted for years although finally both parties unite against The Dutch. The research conclude, there is no significant differences between Minangkabau traditional customs and the Islamic laws that are used in everyday lives of Minangkabau community.

**Keywords:** *Islam, Culture and matrilineal*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Rasulullah SAW brought Islam with an Ultimate Goal to the welfare of humankind both body and mind, happiness in the world and the afterlife. Islam gives clues about various human lives, from preach to be optimistic, hard-worker, not quick to complaints to subjects that require deep-contemplation so that human could through this worldlife. The sources are Al-Quran and Rasulullah'Hadist. This is the difference between Religion and Culture. Rule of Islam was came from Allah, Al-Quran; and from Rasul was His Hadist, while culture was came from human thoughts. Thus religion is not part of culture and culture is not part of religion. Religion and culture are interconnected. God Almighty the Creator conveys His teachings covering all things in this world, the nature of Allah, the nature of man, the nature of human life in this world, the nature of the universe, through Prophets and Apostles. The teachings of God, which is called religion, color the various cultures and thoughts produced by humans who embrace that religion, namely Islam.

Minangkabau culture is the result of human work and thought. This culture is adopted from one of the tribes who live in the Province of West Sumatra. Minangkabau culture is unique in its

kinship system. They adhere to the matrilineal kinship system and are a very few tribes in this world with this type of kinship system. Matrilineal kinship system according to Indonesian Wikipedia is a community custom that regulates the flow of offspring originating from the mother's side. Matrilineal comes from the word mater which means mother and linea which means line. So, matrilineal means to follow the lineage drawn from the mother's side. Adherents to matrilineal customs in Indonesia include Minangkabau and from outside Indonesia who adhere to this system are Indians. For the Minangkabau, everything is regulated according to maternal lineage, but strangely, there is no binding legal sanction if someone commits a violation. There is no law that is a reference or law governing this matrilineal system.

When it is related to Islamic law, there is a conflict between Islamic law and the kinship system of Minangkabau culture, whereas in daily life the Minangkabau culture is known for its commitment that the custom is based on Sharia and Shariah is based on the Book of God (Quran). Koentjaraningrat stated that “if there is a Minangkabau who does not follow the religion of Islam, then that is an astounding oddity. They may be said to know no elements of other beliefs except what is taught by Islam” (1993:261).

Minangkabau culture is strongly related to religion. Religion is the basis and source of law for behavioral actions and is a role model in living everyday, and customs is a system adopted by the Minangkabau tribe as an amplifier in practicing religion. As an example in the Minangkabau tradition prioritizing ethics and moral.

The question is, if the Minangkabau culture adheres to the matrilineal system in its kinship, does it not contradict the teachings of Islam especially about male leadership towards women. Allah stated in Quran Surah An Nisa verse 34: “*Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means.*” Also in Surah Al Baqarah verse 228, Allah stated “*...although husbands have a degree (of right) above them (wife)....*”

With the background of the description above in this article, the author examines that there is no conflict between the laws that originate from Islam and the Minangkabau culture, especially in the kinship system.

## **METHOD**

This article was compiled using a literature review study method by collecting material sourced from books, journals, and other sources. All material related to the writing of this article is collected and then studied and understood by the author to further search results that are outlined in this article systematically and chronologically. These search results can be described based on the order in which the goals are achieved.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Islam and Culture**

Human instincts recognize the existence of a power in this life outside of themselves and that power is a supernatural power outside that can be understood by humans in the mind. Supernatural power is set in the belief in religion. Nata (20) explains, there are at least three factors underlying human's need for religion, first, because of human nature. Al-Quran Surah Ar-Rum verse 30 states that there is the potential of human imagery to receive lessons from God “*Turn your face singlemindedly to the true Faith and adhere to the true nature on which Allah has created human beings. The mould fashioned by Allah cannot be altered. That is the True, Straight Faith, although most people do not know*”.

Information about the religious potential that humans have can also be found in Quran surah Al A'raf verse 172 “*And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from*

*their loins, their seed (or from Adams' loin his offspring) and made them testify as to themselves (saying): "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Yes! We testify," lest you should say on the Day of Ressurrection: "Verily, we have been unaware of this."*

Anthropologically even primitive people who have never obtained teachings from Prophets and Apostles about God are known to admit that there is a mysterious natural phenomenon and to their amazement so they believe there is a power outside of themselves in this nature. Even though their thoughts are limited to their imagination, fear of forces beyond their ability. Witnessing a tree that grew hundreds of years old but still lived on the root of a tree that plowed into the ground, as if there were spirits and souls in the tree, which they subsequently believed and worshiped as God. This fact shows that there is potential for religion from humans.

Carl Gustav Jung believes that religion includes things that are already present in the human subconscious in a natural and natural way. William James, philosopher and scientist from America said: "Although the statement is true that physical and material things are the source of the growth of various inner desires, but there are also many desires that grow from nature behind this material nature." James gave an example with the psychological symptoms of religion such as sincerity, sincerity, friendliness, love and sacrifice. So the background of the need for humans in religion is because in humans there is potential for religion. Second, Humans are religious because of weaknesses. Humans were created by Allah SWT with perfection but also has shortcomings. In Quran surah As Shams verse 7-8 Allah stated "*And (by) the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it (with discernment of) its wickedness and its righteousness.*" This verse shows that humans have the potential to do good and bad. To maintain the sanctity of good potential, then Islam in its teachings draws the Muslims to always draw closer to Allah SWT. In Quran Al A'raf verse 158 Allah stated: "*Say (O Muhammad) "O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, from (Him) to whom belongs the dominion of heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and causes death."* So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him that you may be guided."

Culture is the result of human thought. Sulhati (2014) said "Culture has an important role in shaping paradigm and relationships in society which means it also shapes the behavior and mindset of certain communities". Thus culture involves all aspects of human life both material and non material in human life. Culture moves in line with the movements of people who live in these societies. Human behavior which is an embodiment of behavioral activities in society becomes a pattern of behavior outlined by a society that regulates the relations of community members that originate from the culture prevailing in the community. Culture gives a great influence on the formation of behavior. Cultures form norms, attitudes, and values that are passed from one generation to the next and produce consistency over time so that ideologies that are intensely rooted in one culture may have little influence on another culture.

## **Minangkabau Culture**

### **a. History.**

Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia describe Minangkabau culture as a culture owns by Minangkabau community and developed on entire Minangkabau migrated area. Koentjaraningrat (1993 : 248) stated that the initial area of Minangkabau is as wide as current Sumatera Barat Province region, except the Mentawai Islands. At Minangkabau perspective, this region divided by particular area which are *darek* (land) and *pasisie* (coastal). Minangkabau culture are egalitarian, democratic, synthetic, that become an anti-thesis to the feudal and cyretic culture of Javanese. Initially, Minangkabau culture is animism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Later, religious leaders who had finished their Islamic studies in Middle East, urged the traditional leaders to change their Minangkabau beliefs which previously close to animism than Islam. The conversion from animism to Islam happened after the Paderi War ended in 1837, marked by an agreement between religious

leaders, traditional leaders and *cadiak pandai* (intellectual groups). They agreed to Islam as the fundamental of Minangkabau culture. The agreement reads: “*Adat Basandi Syara’, Syara’ Basandi Kitabullah*” (Tradition is based on shariah, shariah based on Quran). In the middle of 19th century, the education concept of human development in Minangkabau is based on Islamic values.

b. Language

Minangkabau ethnic uses the same language, Minangkabau, a language that has the same root with Malay. There are many similar words in Malay and Minangkabau but they have differences only in certain sounds (Koentjaraningrat, 1993:249). Examples: jua “jual”, takuik “takut”, alui “halus”, sampik “sempit”.

Minangkabau language mainly divided into 2 groups which is group[a] and group[o], example:

Malay	Dialect[a]	Dialect[o]
Kemana	kama	kamano
entah	antah	ontah
beli	bali	boli

c. Village Pattern.

Minangkabau culture called village as *nagari* and region as *taratak*. *Nagari* is the major settlement area and being called as the center of the village. *Taratak* is the forest and field area (Koentjaraningrat, 1993: 250). Minangkabau traditional house is in the form of stilt house, the floor is placed far above the ground. Minangkabau house is a rectangular long house and usually built based on the number of room inside. The house that have many rooms (*didieh*) and could accommodate every member of the family called Rumah Gadang. Rumah Gadang usually has a place that called *anjuang*, which is a special place in the house. Rumah Gadang has only 1 door which placed exactly in the middle of the facade.

Koentjaraningrat, 1998: 252 described Rumah Gadang as in below.

Didieh (rooms)	B						Front
A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	Back

A : Room

B : Open Space

The stair is usually placed in front of A4.

d. Leadership.

In leadership, Minangkabau philosophy is “*pemimpin itu hanyalah ditinggikan seranting dan didahulukan selangkah*” means leader is only a twig above and a step in front of others (Wikipedia Encyclopedia). This means a leader should be a populist and able to accept criticism (Syamdani:2008). Minangkabau doesn’t accept a dictator and totalitarian leadership concept. In related to this philosophy, Minangkabau is divided into many smaller area called *nagari*. Every *nagari* stands as a autonomous territory and led by a free leader. All of them has the same rights and obligation, and are seen equal within society.

e. *Pantun* and *Petatah Petitih*.

*Pepatah petitih* is an arrangement of sentences and short words, which sometimes sounds irregularly and rhythmically. Therefore, there is an assumption that the Minangkabau’s *pepatah petitih* is an inseparable part of the Minangkabau fiction. *Pepatah petitih* Minangkabau contains various peculiarities. The two literary components (*pantun* and *petatah*) that have helped enrich Minangkabau culture, when traced, turn out to have a very deep meaning. Almost all *petitih petatah*

interpret what is in the universe to be main thought of *petatah petitih* contents. The contents are figurative, like, parables, advice, advice and courtesy that are priceless.

In the Minangkabau realm, people who are able to convey their thoughts in a *pepatah petitih* are considered to be great people and highly respected by the community. The habit of speaking using *pepatah petitih* like that is still widely available in the Minangkabau villages. Deepening the contents contained in the maxim of the Minangkabau *pepatah petitih*, indirectly also practicing the Minang language.

Here are the examples of Minangkabau's *pepatah petitih*:

- a) *Putiah Kapeh dapek diliek, putiah hati bakaadaan*(White cotton can be seen, white hearts exist). Means, the color of cotton is usually white and can be seen with man own eyes but white heart can not be seen, can only be felt by the results of the act( Saydam, 2010:17)
- b) *Tiok tuneh tumbuhan kaateh, tiok urek tumbuhan kabawah* (each bud grows up, each root grows down). Means, events are natural, putting things in their place. ( Saydam, 2010:96)
- c) *Bak mambalah batuang, sabalah dipijakkan, nan sabalah diangkek kaateh*(It's like splitting bamboo, one side is lifted up, the other is stepped on). Means: This proverb is said to someone who is being unjust, one is helped and one is suppressed. ( Saydam, 2010:209)
- f. Dance art.

Almost in all area of Minangkabau has traditional dance to greet important guests. There are dances that performed when the guests is walking inside the venue and there are also dances performed when the guests are already inside the building. The main element to show is the art of motion accompanied with sounds. This is called *Galombang*. Traditionally, *Galombang* is a symbolic performance to welcome guests according to their position. The word *Galombang* is a Minangkabau language for “wave” and it is showing a wave-like motion (the up and down motion of the sea water) formed by the *randai* dancers (Indonesian Heritage, 2002:24).*Galombang* is part of Minangkabau culture even before Indonesia independence. It is strongly connected to the first ruler of Minangkabau, Adityawarman (1347-1375) and it become a dance that representing the Minangkabau culture

### **Kinship System in Minangkabau Culture**

The majority of the world culture use patrilineal system, while Minangkabau culture use the matrilineal system. This matrilineal concept includes marriage, inheritance, ethnic title, etc. Communities using matrilineal system is a notion that compose and create rules about life and activity ordinances that connected to the mother heredity. A boy or a girl is a part of the mother's clan. The father could not include his children to his clan as in a patrilineal system. The children in Minangkabau culture will have their mother's name tribe. Koentjaraningrat (1993:254) explains that a father in a Minangkabau family considered a different family from his wife and children's family, and vice versa. Therefore, nuclear family isn't an absolute unity, eventhough the nuclear family also plays an important role in the education and future of the children. Another peculiar thing is eventhough Minangkabau has a matrilineal system, the family affairs must be taken care of the adult man in the family who acts as a *niniek-mamak* of the family. *Mamak* means the mother's brother (Koentjaraningrat, 1993: 255). Men and women position in Minangkabau culture is equal. Men has the rights to control everything in their community, including controlling the use and division of heirlooms. Women as the owner of the heirlooms could use it all for the family needs. A marriage with *mamak's* son considered a fair pattern because of the same term used for the wife's brother and wife's mother.

“In the past, the relationship between man and woman considered free and didn't bond with marriage. In order to make the genealogy system easier, based on the child's birth, it is women who give birth. Therefore, the descendant based on women family is in first place” (Munir, 2015:15). Branislaw Malinowsky said there are 7 heredity system among Minangkabau culture, which are: (1)

heredity based on mother's line (2) The tribe is formed by mother's line (3) Revenge is an obligation for all tribe (4) Theoretically, the tribe authorities are mother's but this is rarely used (5) Every person should have marriage to people from different tribe (6) The one who have the authority is actually the brother (7) Marriage is a matrilocal system, that is the husband comes to the wife's house (Rauda, 2004:217).

A marriage with *mamak* children is the easiest way, because *mamak* could paved the way to the future marriage discussion. In Minangkabau marriage, dowry is actually unrecognised. There is no culture as the bride present some gifts for the groom as normally known in Islam. In some other different regions, the groom's family present some money to the bride's family as a means to invite the bride to marry the woman. This is called *uang jemputan*. But the important thing in Minangkabau community is the exchange of the symbolic object between the two families, usually a ring or a *keris*.

### **Analysis of Islam and Kinship System in Minangkabau Culture**

The analysis of Islam and Minangkabau culture is written to describe several points that allegedly conflicts between Islam laws and Minangkabau tradition.

#### 1) Heredity.

Islamic laws has stated that heredity or in Islam terminology called *nasab* if following father family. *Nasab* is the family bond connected by marriage that a child is following his/her father. This is stated in Quran Surah Al Ahzab verse 4-5 '*Allah has never put two hearts within one person's body; nor has He made your wives, whom you compare to your mothers' back (to divorce them), your true mothers; nor has He made those whom you adopt as sons your own sons. These are only words that you utter with your mouths. But Allah proclaims the Truth and directs you to the Right Path. Call your adopted sons after their true fathers; that is more equitable in the sight of Allah. But if you do not know their true fathers, then regard them as your brethren in faith and as allies. You will not be taken to task for your mistaken utterances, but you will be taken to task for what you say deliberately. Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Compassionate.*'

The heredity in Minangkabau culture is following mother family line. But there is no legal sanctions about this. If anyone comit a violation, there is no book of law or punishment for the rule breaker. This system has been rooted in Minangkabau culture and the community obey it really well. Eventhough Minangkabau highly use matrilineal system, but man and woman position is equal. A *Datuk* must be a man, and also the headman and the member of the village officer. The distribution of heirlooms must also be done by men. Men roles inside and outside his community is an obligation. The matrilineal part lies that the men referred to here are men according to this lineage. Men roles are as nephew, brother and headman. It can be concluded that there is no conflict between the Minangkabau culture and Islam.

#### 2) Heirloom

Islam laws has stated that heirlooms must be divided in accordance to *faraidh* law, which has been arranged certain division between men and women. Allah stated in Quran surah An Nisaa verse 7: "Just as there is a share for men in what their parents and kinsfolk leave behind, so there is a share for women in what their parents and kinsfolk leave behind – be it little or much – a share ordained (by Allah)". But in Minangkabau culture, all heirlooms are shared to only women from the mother line of descent. In this case, there is a controversy between Islam law and Minangkabau culture. Some of Minangkabau theologist against this but Hamka (1985:103) whom thoughts are more to the moderate side stated that "the high end heirlooms can be categorized to charity, which can be used by the family, but cannot be trade. Even so, this type of charity is different from what Islam has taught because it only apply to certain people and using traditional laws (not Islam laws)." In Minangkabau culture, the high end heirlooms are the heirlooms such as pond, field, and cemetry. This type of heirlooms isn't come form parents or grandparents job. And so Islamic laws

can not be applied to this heirlooms. In the rules of Ushul Fiqh, this heirlooms categorized into *ihtisan* and *urf*, which aims for the good and traditional customs that do not conflict with Islam. The implementation of this heirlooms concept is to look after the Minangkabau people, especially women who are thrown out of their own villages when they are divorced by her husband.

## CONCLUSION

1. There is no basic contradiction between Islam and Minangkabau culture. Minangkabau culture sticks to its philosophy which is “adat basandikan syara” (tradition is based on shariah) and “syara’ basandikan kitabullah” (shariah is based on Quran)
2. Minangkabau culture with its matrilineal system functioning women as family heirlooms’ binder, maintainer and depositor. While men role as family heirlooms’ arranger and defender.
3. Basically matrilineal system in Minangkabau culture isn’t to reinforce women position in the family but to confirm that women has a position in the family to look after and preserve family heirlooms from extinction.
4. Men and women position in Minangkabau culture is equal.

## REFERENCES

- Geertz, Clifford (1992), *Kebudayaan dan Agama*, Jakarta, Kanisius
- Hamka, (1985), *Islam dan Adat Minang Kabau*, Jakarta, Pustaka Panji Mas
- Heritage, Indonesian (2002), *Seni Pertunjukkan*, Jakarta, PT Widyadara
- Koentjaraningrat (1993), *Manusia dan Kebudayaan di Indonesia*, Jakarta, Djambatan
- (1993), *Kebudayaan Mentalitas dan Pembangunan*, Jakarta, PT. Gramedia Pustaka Utama
- Munir, Misnal (2015), *Sistem Kekerabatan Dalam Kebudayaan Minangkabau: Perspektif Aliran Filsafat Strukturalisme Jean Claude Levi-Strauss*, Jurnal Filsafat UGM, Vol2, No 1
- Nata, Abuddin (2011), *Metodologi Studi Islam*, Jakarta. PT Raja Grafindo Persada
- Rauda.PR, (2004), *Sistim Matrilineal Dalam Adat Budaya Minangkabau, dalam Ch.N. Latif, Minangkabau Yang Gelisah; mencari Strategi Sosialisasi Pewarisan Adat dan Budya Minang Kabau Untuk Generasi Muda*, Bandung, CV.Lubuk Alung
- Rini, Dwi, dkk (2018), *Potret Budaya Lokal Masyarakat Tanjung Raya Kabupaten Agama Sumatera Barat di Era Digital*, Jurnal Komunikasi Pembangunan eISSN 2442-4102 Juli 2018, Volume 16, No. 2
- Saleh,Salmi ( 2002), *Adat Minagkabau Menjawab Tantangan Zaman*, Sumatera Utara, LAHP
- Saydam, Gouzali (2010), *Keajaiban Pepatah Minang*, Bandung, CV Pustaka Setia
- Sulhati, (2014), *Disertasi, Pengembangan Model Tematik Berbasis Webbed Dalam Meningkatkan Perilaku Islami Ibu Rumah Tangga*, Repository.upi.edu. perpustakaan .upi.edu.
- Syamdani (2008), *PRRI, Pemberontakan atau Bukan?*, Jakarta, Media Pressindo