

NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN RELIGION AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY MINANGKABAU SOCIETY

Vivi Yulia Nora,^{1)*} Novi Hendri,²⁾ Hardi Putra Wirman,³⁾
¹²³Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi
 *Correspondence Author: vivyulianora@uinbukittinggi.ac.id

ABSTRAK

This article examines the dynamic negotiation between Islam and Minangkabau *adat* in contemporary West Sumatra, framed within the philosophical principle of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS–SBK). While previous studies often emphasize harmony between *adat* and Islam, this research argues that their relationship is better understood as an ongoing process of negotiation shaped by legal pluralism, cultural hybridity, and public reasoning. Drawing on qualitative methods—literature review, limited ethnographic observation, and in-depth interviews—this study employs the theoretical frameworks of cultural hybridity (Bhabha), legal pluralism (Benda-Beckmann), and Islamic public reasoning (Bowen). The findings reveal that the interaction between *adat* and Islam is not static but continuously reconstructed through social practices such as inheritance, marriage, gender relations, and local governance. This study highlights the urgency of understanding how local Islamic practices adapt to modernity, globalization, and changing gender norms. It contributes to sociological debates by demonstrating that Islam in Minangkabau operates as a flexible and dialogical system that accommodates local traditions without erasing them.

Keywords: Islam, Adat, Minangkabau, Negotiation, Hybridity

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji negosiasi dinamis antara Islam dan adat Minangkabau di Sumatera Barat kontemporer, yang dibingkai dalam prinsip filosofis Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS–SBK). Sementara studi-studi sebelumnya sering menekankan harmoni antara adat dan Islam, penelitian ini berpendapat bahwa hubungan mereka lebih baik dipahami sebagai proses negosiasi berkelanjutan yang dibentuk oleh pluralisme hukum, hibriditas budaya, dan penalaran publik. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif—tinjauan literatur, observasi etnografi terbatas, dan wawancara mendalam—studi ini menggunakan kerangka teoritis hibriditas budaya (Bhabha), pluralisme hukum (Benda-Beckmann), dan penalaran publik Islam (Bowen). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa interaksi antara adat dan Islam tidak statis tetapi terus direkonstruksi melalui praktik-praktik sosial seperti warisan, perkawinan, hubungan gender, dan pemerintahan lokal. Studi ini menyoroti urgensi untuk memahami bagaimana praktik-praktik Islam lokal beradaptasi dengan modernitas, globalisasi, dan perubahan norma gender. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada perdebatan sosiologis dengan menunjukkan bahwa Islam di Minangkabau beroperasi sebagai sistem yang fleksibel dan dialogis yang mengakomodasi tradisi lokal tanpa menghapusnya.

Kata Kunci: Islam, Adat, Negosiasi, Minangkabau, Hibriditas

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Islam and Minangkabau customs constitutes a critical dimension of social identity in West Sumatra, encompassing both cultural and religious spheres. The maxim *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS–SBK) has historically served as a normative foundation, affirming that Minangkabau *adat* is rooted in Islamic principles and that Islam, in turn, is manifested through customary practices (Mariana & Anna, 2024). Nevertheless, empirical realities reveal that this relationship is marked not only by integration but also by tension and negotiation. Contestations arise in key areas of social life, including the matrilineal inheritance system, marriage arrangements involving the roles of *mamak* and *wali*, and the customary leadership structure that intersects with religious authority. By examining these dynamics, this study seeks to illuminate the evolving interplay between religion and culture in contemporary Minangkabau society and to contribute to broader debates on the localization of Islam in Indonesia.

In the contemporary social context, these tensions signify more than a mere divergence of principles; they represent a complex process of social and cultural negotiation. Islam and *adat* are not mutually exclusive systems but instead engage in an ongoing dialogue aimed at achieving new forms of balance that correspond to societal dynamics. The ABS–SBK maxim should therefore be understood not as a fixed doctrine but as an adaptive mechanism that enables Minangkabau society to preserve the continuity of tradition while simultaneously accommodating the pressures of modernity and global change.

In the existing literature, most studies on the relationship between Islam and Minangkabau customs emphasize harmony and compatibility between the two domains. Classical works, such as those of Taufik Abdullah (1971), Dobbin (1983), and Kato (1982), highlight processes of accommodation and integration that underscore the convergence of *adat* and Islam. Yet, relatively few studies interrogate the dimensions of negotiation, conflict, and value transformation within this relationship—particularly in the contemporary context, where education, social mobility, and globalization have profoundly reshaped Minangkabau social structures.

In Clifford Geertz's (1973) seminal study, religion is conceptualized as a symbolic system that structures human experience, whereas custom functions as a social institution regulating everyday life. Within the Minangkabau context, *adat* not only operates as a set of social norms but also constitutes a collective identity transmitted across generations (Geertz,

1973). The maxim *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS–SBK) illustrates the symbolic integration of custom and Islam, although in practice this integration frequently entails processes of negotiation.

Historical studies indicate that the Islamization of Minangkabau society began in the sixteenth century through trade networks, itinerant religious scholars, and the establishment of Islamic educational centres (*surau*). Dobbin (1983) observes that this process unfolded gradually, occurring in tandem with broader socio-economic transformations within the region. Kato (1971) further explains that the encounter between Islam and the matrilineal kinship system produced a distinctive form of social hybridity: while customary inheritance laws rooted in matrilineal traditions were preserved, ritual and moral dimensions became increasingly shaped by Islamic values

Homi Bhabha (1994) introduced the concept of third space, a space for cultural negotiation that produces hybridity. In the Minangkabau context, third space is evident in marriage practices, inheritance, and customary deliberations, which constantly negotiate Islamic norms with matrilineal customs (Bhabha, 1994). Luthfi (2021) found that this negotiation is not merely a compromise but also a strategy for maintaining local identity amidst globalization.

Gender constitutes a central dimension of negotiation within Minangkabau society. The region is renowned for its matrilineal system, which accords women a prominent role in matters of inheritance. By contrast, Islamic inheritance law emphasizes a patrilineal framework. Mulia (2014) demonstrates that gender negotiations in Minangkabau have produced a distinctive arrangement: high-ranking ancestral properties continue to be inherited according to customary principles, whereas newly acquired livelihood assets are distributed in accordance with Islamic law. This dual system fosters a degree of harmony between *adat* and religion, while simultaneously revealing latent tensions embedded within the negotiation process.

Globalization and the migration of Minangkabau people (*merantau*) have further reinforced the transformation of customary practices (Siregar, et.al., 2022). Kahin (1999) demonstrates that national political and economic dynamics shape how Minangkabau communities interpret both *adat* and Islam. Generational differences also emerge: younger groups tend to emphasize formal religious authority, while older generations highlight the flexibility of custom (Navis, 1984). This indicates that the ABS–SBK principle should not be regarded as static, but rather as an interpretive framework that is continually redefined.

Studies by Woodward (2011) and Hefner (2000) reveal that local expressions of Islam are closely intertwined with identity politics. In the Minangkabau case, *adat* functions both as

a marker of local distinctiveness and as a tool of political legitimacy. Syafii Maarif (2009) underscores the importance of analysing the relationship between Islam and *adat* not only through the lens of normative harmony but also within the broader framework of Indonesia's pluralism.

Earlier scholarship on Minangkabau (e.g., Abdullah, 1971; Kato, 1982) largely emphasized the compatibility between Islam and custom. More recent studies (Luthfi, 2021; Zainuddin, 2018), however, highlight the increasing prevalence of conflict and negotiation, particularly in relation to gender, local politics, and the interpretation of religious law. Consequently, ABS–SBK must be understood not as a fixed empirical reality but as an ideology that is continuously produced and contested.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to offer a new perspective on the dynamics of Islam–*adat* relations by foregrounding the negotiation processes among key social actors such as *ninik mamak* (traditional elders), *ulama* (religious scholars), and *bundo kanduang* (female elders). It further examines how Islamic and customary values adapt to contemporary social, economic, and cultural transformations. The paper aims to explain how Islam and Minangkabau *adat* negotiate their positions and authority, both ideologically and in everyday practice. In doing so, this research not only enriches sociological studies of religion and local culture but also contributes to a broader understanding of how religion can engage in dialogue with local traditions without compromising its universal values.

Despite extensive studies on Minangkabau society, most previous works (Abdullah, 1971; Kato, 1982; Dobbin, 1983) tend to emphasize structural harmony between Islam and *adat*. However, contemporary transformations—such as globalization, migration, and gender discourse—have intensified contestation and reinterpretation within this relationship. Therefore, this study is important because it shifts the analytical focus from “harmony” to “negotiation”, highlighting how actors actively reinterpret ABS-SBK in everyday life. Unlike earlier studies, this research integrates perspectives of legal pluralism and gender analysis to show how *adat*, Islam, and the state interact dynamically in contemporary Minangkabau society.

This study is grounded in three main theoretical perspectives. First, cultural hybridity and the “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) provide a framework to understand how new identities emerge from the interaction between Islam and *adat*. This perspective emphasizes that cultural identity is not fixed but continuously produced through negotiation. Second, legal pluralism, as developed by Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, explains how multiple legal systems—

adat, Islamic law, and state law—coexist and interact in Minangkabau society. Rather than functioning hierarchically, these systems are constantly negotiated in everyday practices, particularly in inheritance and land tenure. Third, the concept of public reasoning in Islam (Bowen, 2003) highlights how Muslims interpret religious norms through deliberation within specific social and cultural contexts. In Minangkabau, this reasoning process is visible in negotiations between ulama, *ninik mamak*, and community members.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, focusing on the Minangkabau community in West Sumatra as the unit of analysis. The case was selected due to the distinctive philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS–SBK), which provides a rich context for examining negotiations between Islamic principles and customary practices in contemporary social life. Data were collected through multiple methods. First, a literature review was conducted, including the study of traditional texts that address the relationship between Islam and Minangkabau *adat*. Second, in-depth interviews were carried out with key informants, including *ninik mamak* (traditional leaders), *ulama* (religious scholars), and academics specializing in Minangkabau history and culture. Third, direct observation of ongoing religious and customary practices within the community allowed the researcher to capture how negotiations between religion and *adat* unfold in everyday life.

Data analysis followed the stages outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994; 2018): (1) data reduction, involving the selection, focusing, simplification, and organization of raw field data; (2) data display, presenting the data in descriptive narratives that facilitate the identification of meaning; and (3) conclusion drawing/verification, which entailed interpreting the data in depth to uncover patterns and meanings related to the negotiation between Islam and *adat* in Minangkabau society. Through this methodological framework, the study aims to provide a comprehensive account of the dynamics of interaction between Islam and Minangkabau *adat* in the contemporary social context, considering historical trajectories, everyday practices, and their broader implications for society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Historical Relationship between Islam and *Adat* in Minangkabau

Each indigenous community within an ethnic group possesses a distinctive philosophy of life that shapes its worldview. For the Minangkabau, three defining domains are inseparable:

devotion to Islam, adherence to the world's largest matrilineal kinship system, and the tradition of migration (*merantau*) (Taufik, 2023). In this context, *adat* functions not merely as a set of social rules but as a cultural identity that unites the community and underscores its uniqueness within Indonesian society. *Adat* regulates nearly all aspects of life, including kinship patterns, inheritance, deliberation, artistic expression, and oral literature. The maxim *adat alam takambang jadi guru* reflects the principle that custom is derived from human experience and natural wisdom.

The adage *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS–SBK) serves as an integrative principle binding Minangkabau customs with Islamic teachings. Within this framework, *adat* is positioned as a local expression of universal Islamic values, while Islam provides transcendent legitimacy for *adat*. Yet anthropological research demonstrates that this integration is not always harmonious. Abdullah (1971) argued that ABS–SBK functions more as a normative ideology than as an empirical reality, since in practice *adat* and Islam often enter spaces of negotiation and even conflict.

Inheritance provides a clear example of this tension. Minangkabau *adat* adheres to matrilineal principles, whereby ancestral heirlooms are inherited through the maternal line. Islamic law, by contrast, emphasizes patrilineal inheritance, granting men primary rights as heirs. This tension is negotiated by dividing domains: high-ranking heirlooms follow customary law, while newly acquired assets or livelihood property are distributed according to Islamic law (Kato, 1982).

Beyond inheritance, Minangkabau *adat* plays a political role in strengthening social cohesion, while Islam provides moral and spiritual foundations. In customary forums such as the *Nagari Customary Council* (KAN), ABS–SBK serves as a reference for collective decision-making, though interpretations of *adat* and sharia often vary across generations and groups. Thus, the relationship between custom and religion in Minangkabau remains dynamic, adaptive, and open to negotiation within shifting social and historical contexts.

The Islamization of Minangkabau represents a significant phenomenon in the socio-religious history of the Indonesian archipelago. Islam entered the region in the sixteenth century via trade routes along the west coast of Sumatra and was reinforced by religious scholars and traditional educational institutions such as the *surau* (Azra, 2017; Dobbin, 1983). The *surau* functioned not only as a place of worship but also as a center for transmitting religious knowledge, moral education, and producing clerics who became agents of Islamization at the local level (Azra, 2004). Unlike in several other regions of the archipelago, Islamization in

Minangkabau was gradual and accommodating rather than radical or conflictual. Kato (1982) emphasized that the encounter between Islam and the matrilineal kinship system produced a distinctive form of social hybridity. While customary inheritance laws based on maternal descent were preserved, ritual practices, worship, and moral norms were increasingly shaped by Islamic teachings.

Abdullah (1971) interpreted the integration of Islam into Minangkabau *adat* as the outcome of a dialectic between universal religious values and the need to preserve local identity. This dialectic gave rise to ABS–SBK, which since the early nineteenth century has served as ideological legitimacy for reconciling two seemingly divergent value systems. ABS–SBK has functioned not only as a normative slogan but also as an epistemological framework underpinning the authority of *ulama* and *ninik mamak* (traditional leaders).

The Padri movement of the early nineteenth century marked another critical phase of Islamization. Initially influenced by Islamic puritanism from the Middle East, the movement entered into dialogue with Minangkabau customs following a period of violent conflict. The post-Padri War settlement reinforced ABS–SBK as a social consensus: Islam provided the spiritual foundation, while *adat* maintained kinship structures and social organization (Dobbin, 1983; Kahin, 1999).

Thus, Islamization in Minangkabau was not simply the adoption of religious teachings but a historical process characterized by negotiation, accommodation, and conflict. The outcome was the formation of a society with a dual identity—religious and cultural—that continues to define the Minangkabau today.

Forms of Negotiation between Islam and Custom in Social Practice

The concept of cultural negotiation can be illuminated through Homi K. Bhabha’s (1994) framework of the “third space.” According to Bhabha, when two distinct cultural systems encounter one another, the outcome is neither total domination nor complete assimilation. Instead, a third space emerges—an arena for encounter, dialogue, and resistance—where identities are fluid and continually renegotiated.

In the Minangkabau context, the intersection of Islam and matrilineal customs has produced a distinctive form of social hybridity. Marriage practices exemplify this hybridity: while Islamic law emphasizes the role of male guardians, Minangkabau custom accords a central role to the maternal uncle (*mamak*). Negotiation between these systems often results in compromise, whereby a marriage guardian is required under Islamic law, but decisions must also involve deliberation within the customary family (Kato, 1982; Luthfi, 2021).

Inheritance practices further illustrate this negotiation. Custom dictates that high-ranking heirlooms are passed down through the female line, whereas Islamic law emphasizes patrilineal inheritance. The resolution has been a division of domains: ancestral heirlooms remain governed by customary law, while newly acquired assets are distributed according to Islamic principles (Mulia, 2014).

Negotiation is also evident in local political institutions such as the *Nagari Customary Council* (KAN), where *ulama* and *ninik mamak* share authority. ABS–SBK serves as the normative foundation in this forum, yet interpretations vary across generations. *Ulama* tend to emphasize adherence to formal sharia, while *ninik mamak* stress customary flexibility to preserve social harmony (Abdullah, 1971; Navis, 1984).

In the contemporary era, globalization and modernization have expanded the arena of negotiation. Many young Minangkabau who migrate to urban centres or abroad bring new experiences that reshape their religious and cultural identities. Some interpret *adat* more strictly in line with Islamic norms, while others adopt more relaxed approaches influenced by modern values. This demonstrates that Minangkabau identity is fluid, adaptive, and open to transformation (Kahin, 1999; Zainuddin, 2018).

An interview with one *ninik mamak* illustrates this perspective:

“In our view as *ninik mamak*, the relationship between Islam and Minangkabau customs is like two sides of the same coin—they cannot be separated. Our customs stand on the teachings of Islam, and Islam guides customs to remain on the right path. That is the meaning of our saying, *Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*. Custom governs how people relate to one another, deliberate, respect parents, build households, and preserve ancestral heritage. Meanwhile, Islam provides the foundation of values, morals, and laws that regulate our relationship with God. Thus, the two complement each other. In the past, there were moments when custom and Islam seemed at odds, particularly regarding inheritance and gender roles. Yet our society has always sought a middle ground, adapting custom to Islamic teachings without abandoning cultural roots. For example, high inheritances remain with women, while livelihood assets follow Islamic law. This wisdom emerges from deliberation between *ninik mamak* and religious scholars. For us, the relationship between custom and Islam is not a ready-made harmony but a process continuously maintained. Islam gives spirit to custom, while custom provides the forum for practicing Islam in daily life. Without *syarak*, custom would be incomplete; without custom, *syarak* would not take root in Minangkabau.” (Interview, 2025).

Thus, cultural negotiation in Minangkabau is not merely a practical compromise but a dynamic process that enables the community to sustain tradition while adapting to contemporary demands. This ongoing negotiation makes Minangkabau a distinctive example of religious and cultural integration in Indonesia.

Social Implications of Negotiation for Contemporary Minangkabau Society

1. Gender in the Relationship between Islam and *Adat*

Gender constitutes a central dimension of negotiation between Islam and *adat* in Minangkabau society. The matrilineal kinship system positions women as the primary inheritors of high-ranking ancestral property and as symbols of lineage continuity. This cultural position accords women relatively high social status compared to patrilineal societies in other regions (Blackwood, 2000; Nofialdi, et.al., 2025). Yet within the framework of Islamic law—particularly in matters of inheritance and leadership—men often occupy dominant roles. This tension has generated distinctive mechanisms of negotiation.

Gender negotiation in Minangkabau can also be understood through Bowen's concept of public reasoning, where debates over inheritance and marriage reflect broader struggles over equality and justice in Muslim societies (Bowen, 2003). Studies by Sulaeman (2020) further demonstrate that disputes over marriage and inheritance in Minangkabau are not merely legal conflicts but arenas where *adat*, Islamic law, and state law intersect, producing negotiated forms of gender justice.

Inheritance practices illustrate this dynamic. High-value ancestral property is passed down to women in accordance with custom, while livelihood assets or lower-value property are distributed according to Islamic law, which grants men a larger share (Kato, 1982; Mulia, 2014). This division is often regarded as a functional compromise that enables *adat* and sharia to coexist. However, research indicates that such compromises do not fully eliminate tensions, especially in cases of family disputes or when modernity reshapes notions of private property (Zainuddin, 2018).

Gender roles are also evident in leadership structures. Women traditionally hold rights to land and the family house, but management responsibilities are entrusted to the *mamak kepala waris* (maternal uncle). This arrangement produces a distinctive division of roles: women serve as symbolic owners, while men act as practical managers. From a sociological perspective, this division reflects unequal power relations, despite women's elevated symbolic position (Mulia, 2014).

Negotiation further extends into religious institutions. Male clerics dominate formal Islamic authority structures such as mosques, *surau*, and the *Nagari Customary Council* (KAN). Yet women retain cultural authority through the figure of the *bundo kanduang*, senior women who safeguard customary values and embody clan honor. In certain cases, the voice of the *bundo kanduang* exerts significant influence in shaping customary decisions, even if not formally recognized within institutional structures (Navis, 2018).

Interviews with academics and historians corroborate these findings. One respondent noted that “women in Minangkabau are the original kings,” symbolically possessing decision-making authority. This perspective underscores that women’s power in Minangkabau is cultural and symbolic, yet it remains influential in shaping social and customary decisions. The notion of *raja asal* (original king) reflects the historical view that women are the source of genealogical legitimacy in matrilineal societies. Men may hold public or formal positions, but their authority derives legitimacy from maternal lineage. In this sense, women’s authority is embedded in kinship structures that position them as the centre of social reproduction and as symbols of clan honor.

In religious contexts, although women seldom appear as formal leaders, the presence of the *bundo kanduang* plays a crucial role in maintaining harmony between tradition and religion. They serve as moral figures, ensuring that religious practices remain aligned with customary values and do not disrupt social balance. Thus, gender negotiations in Minangkabau extend beyond formal roles within religious institutions to encompass symbolic power that underpins the social and cultural stability of the community.

2. Modernity and Globalization

In the contemporary era, globalization and modern education have introduced new challenges to gender negotiations in Minangkabau society. Educated Minangkabau women have begun to reinterpret both *adat* and sharia, particularly in relation to economic rights, political participation, and public roles. Some women’s activists argue that the matrilineal system often functions symbolically rather than substantively, failing to provide women with genuine autonomy in critical decision-making processes (Mulia, 2014; Hasyim, 2016).

Thus, gender in the relationship between Islam and Minangkabau *adat* reflects a complex dialectic: women enjoy high symbolic status within custom, yet men remain dominant within structures of religious governance and authority. This ongoing negotiation illustrates the

interplay between symbols, structures, and social practices, which continue to evolve in response to changing times.

Modernity and globalization have also reshaped the broader dynamics of Islam–*adat* relations. The Minangkabau are renowned for their tradition of *merantau*—migration in pursuit of knowledge, experience, and livelihoods. This practice has long connected Minangkabau communities to the wider world, reinforcing their identity as a cosmopolitan society rooted in both tradition and religion (Kahin, 1999).

Within this context, *adat* is undergoing reinterpretation. Younger generations pursuing higher education in major Indonesian cities and abroad often prioritize Islam as their primary identity, positioning *adat* as secondary. This shift has altered understandings of ABS–SBK: while older generations view it as a principle of compromise between custom and religion, younger generations increasingly interpret it as the subordination of *adat* to Islamic law (Luthfi, 2021).

Globalization further introduces modern values such as individualism, gender equality, and democratization, which frequently clash with *adat*'s emphasis on collectivist, deliberation, and hierarchical structures. For instance, marriage practices are changing, with more young Minangkabau choosing partners outside traditional customs or even across ethnic boundaries—choices that were once considered taboo.

The rise of information technology and social media has accelerated these transformations. Minangkabau identity is now shaped not only through traditional forums and *surau* but also through digital spaces, where debates on *adat*, Islam, and modernity unfold openly. These new arenas of discourse highlight generational fragmentation and create fresh opportunities for identity negotiation.

From an economic-political perspective, globalization has altered the ownership and use of customary (*ulayat*) land. The influx of capitalist investment into West Sumatra often conflicts with communal rights regulated by *adat*. In many cases, communities invoke ABS–SBK to defend customary rights, while younger generations argue that economic modernization requires *adat* to be reinterpreted in ways more adaptive to contemporary needs (Zainuddin, 2018; Nurdin, 2022).

Thus, modernity and globalization not only challenge but also enrich the negotiation between Islam and *adat*. The flow of information, social mobility, and lifestyle changes encourage Minangkabau society to reinterpret traditional values through a contextualized Islamic lens. In this process, *adat* does not decay or lose relevance; rather, it is continually reproduced to meet the demands of the times. Practices such as inheritance, deliberation, the

role of the *mamak*, and gender relations undergo reinterpretation, demonstrating cultural flexibility. *Adat* emerges as a dynamic and fluid identity—transforming in response to social change while preserving traditional roots. Consequently, the relationship between Islam and *adat* is sustained, but in forms that are increasingly adaptive, reflective, and responsive to contemporary challenges

The Historical Relationship Between Islam and Custom in Minangkabau

Research findings indicate that the relationship between Islam and Minangkabau customs is the result of a long historical process involving interaction, compromise, and reinterpretation of values. The principle of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK) serves as the moral foundation and symbol of the collective identity of the Minangkabau people. However, as explained by Abdullah (1971), this principle is dynamic and continually adapted to social change. The relationship between Islam and customs is not a static harmony, but a social process that is continually negotiated between generations and between social groups.

The Minangkabau case reflects a classic example of legal pluralism, where adat law, Islamic law, and state law coexist and interact dynamically (Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann, 2014). Changes in one domain inevitably affect others, supporting the argument that “changing one means changing all” within the *adat*–Islam–state triangle. This triadic relationship demonstrates that the negotiation between *adat* and Islam cannot be understood in isolation but must be situated within broader socio-political transformations in Indonesia.

Research confirms that the dialectic between Islam and Minangkabau customs has not always been seamless. The process of Islamization, which began in the sixteenth century, generated tensions between universal Islamic values and local matrilineal traditions. Conflicts such as those witnessed during the Padri Movement illustrate the ideological clash between Islamic reformist groups and indigenous communities committed to preserving local customs (Dobbin, 1983). Yet from these tensions emerged a consensus embodied in the principle of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS–SBK), which unites adat and Islam within a mutually reinforcing normative framework.

This compromise resonates with Homi Bhabha’s (1994) theory of the “third space,” which posits that cultural identity is formed through negotiation between competing value systems. In the Minangkabau case, this third space is expressed in the functional relationship

between *ulama* (Islamic scholars) and *ninik mamak* (clan leaders). The *ulama* safeguard sharia law, while the *ninik mamak* regulate social relations and transmit customary values. Together, they embody a form of cultural hybridity that enables Minangkabau society to sustain both religious and cultural identities. Thus, the consensus between *adat* and Islam should not be understood as the resolution of conflict but rather as the product of an ongoing dialectical process—one that continues to shape Minangkabau identity through negotiation, accommodation, and reinterpretation.

Forms of Negotiation between Islam and Custom in Social Practice

Negotiations between *adat* and Islam in Minangkabau society are most visible in inheritance, marriage, and traditional ceremonies. Communities distinguish between high-ranking (customary) and low-ranking (Islamic) inheritance, representing a compromise between matrilineal and patrilineal systems (Kato, 1982). In marriage, *adat* accords decision-making authority to the maternal uncle (*mamak*), while Islam emphasizes the role of a male guardian from the paternal line. These two systems are reconciled through deliberation, which functions as the primary social mechanism for resolving differences.

An interview with a traditional leader (*ninik mamak*) revealed the perspective that “custom and Islam are like two sides of the same coin.” This view underscores that harmony between *adat* and Islam is not automatic but the product of ongoing deliberations sustained by traditional leaders. Such negotiation reflects the concept of practical religiosity, in which religious practice is not only normative but also adapted to social and cultural realities. Through this continuous process, Minangkabau society has maintained a balance between Islamic teachings and social demands.

Gender plays a crucial role in these negotiations. The matrilineal kinship system symbolically positions women as owners of high-ranking inheritance and guardians of lineage continuity. Yet in practice, men remain dominant in both customary and religious authority structures (Mulia, 2014). The figure of the *bundo kanduang* embodies women’s moral authority, safeguarding clan values and dignity.

An academic interview added an important dimension: “Women in Minangkabau are the original kings, although symbolically they have authority in decision-making.” This statement highlights that women’s power, while symbolic, is nonetheless substantial, as they serve as the source of genealogical and moral legitimacy within the Minangkabau social system. The *bundo kanduang* thus functions as the guardian of harmony between *adat* and Islam, ensuring that social change does not undermine noble values. From a sociological perspective,

this illustrates cultural agency—power derived not from formal positions but from moral and symbolic roles that sustain the social structure.

Social Implications of Negotiation for Contemporary Minangkabau Society

Modernity and globalization have profoundly reshaped the relationship between Islam and adat in Minangkabau. The tradition of *merantau* (migration) has long connected Minangkabau people to the wider world, broadening horizons and opening space for the reinterpretation of traditional values (Kahin, 1999). Educated young Minangkabau increasingly prioritize Islam as their primary identity, while *adat* is regarded as a complementary cultural element. This shift reflects a process of reflective identity transformation, in which old values are not abandoned but reinterpreted within contemporary contexts.

In the digital era, discourse on *adat* and Islam has expanded into social media. Online platforms have become new arenas for younger generations to debate the meaning of ABS–SBK and the role of *adat* in modern life. This demonstrates that *adat* is not static but adaptive. Drawing on Giddens’ (1991) theory of reflexive modernization, modern societies employ tradition not as a constraint but as a resource for negotiating new identities amid global change. In this sense, the transformation of Minangkabau identity strengthens ABS–SBK as a flexible and contextual framework of values.

Negotiations between *adat* and Islam have contributed to social stability and cultural cohesion despite rapid change. ABS–SBK functions as an adaptive mechanism that protects society from value disorientation caused by modernity and globalization. Yet these dynamics also generate new challenges, including disputes over customary land, debates on women’s leadership, and questions regarding the moral authority of religious scholars. ABS–SBK thus operates not only as a symbol of identity but also as a discursive arena where society reconsiders justice, ownership, and morality.

Furthermore, in Minangkabau society, Islam is a religion that is not perceived from an essentialist perspective, therefore it is transhistorical. Reality shows that the expression of Islam in certain geographical contexts is the result of the interaction between Islamic teachings and local culture. Minangkabau customs and culture have been acculturated with Islam since its introduction to the Minangkabau region around the 8th century AD. Before its introduction, customs and culture existed based on their customs. This acculturation occurred peacefully, therefore, the decisions of traditional leaders did not cause chaos and resistance from traditional stakeholders in the region. The acculturation of Minangkabau customs and culture with Islam

took the form of synthesis, while customs adapted to its teachings (Aziz, Dzofir, & Widodo, 2020).

The findings of this study reinforce the view that Islam and Minangkabau *adat* constitute a mutually supportive dual system. Together, they create a balance between transcendent and social values, between faith and community. This ongoing negotiation enables Minangkabau society to adapt to change while preserving its traditional roots as both a religious and culturally distinctive community.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the relationship between Islam and Minangkabau customs is the product of a long, dynamic, and layered historical process. The principle of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS–SBK) functions not merely as a moral motto but as an ideological framework that regulates the interplay between religious values and socio-cultural norms. Within this framework, *adat* and Islam are inseparable; each adapts to the other while jointly affirming the collective identity of the Minangkabau people. This study contributes to the broader discourse on Islam in Indonesia by demonstrating that Islam does not necessarily replace local traditions but instead engages in continuous dialogue with them. The Minangkabau experience shows that Islam can function as a flexible and adaptive system that accommodates cultural diversity while maintaining its normative core. The Islamization of Minangkabau did not unfold through revolution but through accommodation and dialogue with local traditions. The encounter between Islam and the matrilineal kinship system produced a distinctive cultural hybridity, whereby religious values were integrated into customary structures without erasing their cultural character. In daily life, this negotiation is evident in practices of inheritance, marriage, and customary decision-making, all of which are mediated through deliberation. Gender constitutes a crucial dimension of this dynamic. Minangkabau women occupy a symbolic position as “original kings,” safeguarding values, lineage, and social balance, while men assume formal roles in customary and religious leadership. This relationship illustrates the balance between symbolic and structural power that underpins social stability in Minangkabau society. Modernity and globalization have further expanded the arena of negotiation between *adat* and Islam. The younger generation increasingly reinterprets ABS–SBK in light of new values such as gender equality, rationality, and openness. The tradition of *merantau* and the rise of social media have rendered Minangkabau identity more reflective and adaptive. This transformation demonstrates that *adat* is not a static heritage but a living entity, continually reproduced in response to changing times.

Overall, this research confirms that the relationship between Islam and Minangkabau adat is best understood as an ongoing process of social negotiation. Harmonization between the two is not a fixed state but the outcome of dynamic interactions involving *ulama*, *ninik mamak* (traditional elders), *bundo kanduang* (female elders), and the younger generation. This negotiation is key to the sustainability of Minangkabau cultural identity in the face of globalization and illustrates how local Islam can serve as a model for contextual, moderate, and inclusive integration of religion and culture.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah. T. (1971). Islam dan Pembentukan Tradisi di Asia Tenggara. Dalam T. Abdullah & S. Siddique (Eds.), *Tradisi dan Kebangkitan Islam di Asia Tenggara*. Jakarta: LP3ES.
- Aziz. E., Dzofir. M. & Widodo. A. (2020). "The Acculturation of Islam and Customary Law: An Experience of Minangkabau, Indonesia," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 8 (1).
- Azyumardi. A. (2017). *Surau: Pendidikan Islam Tradisi dalam Transisi Menuju Modernisasi*, Jakarta: Prenamedia.
- Bhabha. H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Dobbin. C. (1983). *Islamic Revivalism In a Changing Peasant Economy: Central Sumatra, 1784–1847*. Curzon Press.
- Fithri. W. (2013). *Mau Kemana Minangkabau?: analisis hermeneutika atas perdebatan Islam dan adat Minangkabau*. Jakarta: Gre Publishing.
- Geertz. C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.
- Hasyim. S. (2016). Islam, Politics and Gender in Indonesia. RSIS Working Paper.
- Hefner. R. (2000). *Civil Islam: Muslims and democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton University Press.
- Kahin. A. (1999). *Rebellion to integration: West Sumatra and the Indonesian Polity*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Kato. T. (1971). *Matriliny and Migration: Evolving Minangkabau traditions in Indonesia*. Cornell University Press.
- Koentjaraningrat. (1985). *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Luthfi. A. (2021). "Negotiating Islam and adat: The case of Minangkabau." *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 15(2), 201–220.

- Maarif, A. S. (2009). *Islam dalam Bingkai Keindonesiaan dan Kemanusiaan*. Bandung: Mizan.
- Mariana. M., & Anna, D. N. (2024). *Integration of Islam in the Adat Basandi Syarak , Syarak Basandi Kitabullah in Minangkabau Society Integrasi Agama Islam dalam Adat Basandi Syarak , Syarak Basandi Kitabullah di Masyarakat Minangkabau*. 5(2).
- Miles. M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Sage.
- Mulia. S. M. (2014). "Gender and Religious Negotiation in Minangkabau." *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 52(1), 55–80.
- Navis. A. A. (1984). *Alam Berkembang Jadi Guru*. Jakarta: Grasindo.
- Nofialdi, Iska, S. Zainuddin, Yenti. F. (2025). "Urf, Gender, and Customary Law: Negotiating Women's Participation in Boar Hunting in Minangkabau, Indonesia," *IJTIHAD: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan* 25 (2): 279-303. DOI:10.18326/ijtihad.v25i2.279-303.
- Nuridin. Z. (2022). "Legal Protection of Customary Rights Under Legal Pluralism and Its Impact on The Minangkabau Society: An Empirical Study in The District of Lima Puluh Kota, West Sumatra," *Cogent Social Science* 8, (1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2045722>.
- Pranowo. B. (2009). "Islam and Cultural Politics in Indonesia." *Studia Islamika*, 16(2), 201–230.
- Siregar. F.A., Yulika, F. Nofialdi, N. Harahap. I. Ridwan, B. Syahputra, I. (2022). "Merantau in The Ethnic Tradition of Minangkabau: Local Custom Without Sharia Basis?" *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam* 6 (1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v6i1.9954>.
- Sulaeman. O., Alfiaender, D., Kanus, O., Rahmi, S. N., & Utomo, B. (2025). "Negotiating Gender Justice in Minangkabau Marital Disputes: Between Adat, Islamic, and State Law." *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)*, 24(1), 39-49.
- Taufiq, M. (2023). *Qur'anic Culture Dalam Perkawinan Adat Di Minangkabau*. Uwais Inspirasi Indonesia.
- Von Benda-Beckmann, F., & von Benda-Beckmann, K. (2014). Temporalities in property relations under a plural legal order: Minangkabau revisited. *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 46(1), 18-36.
- Von Benda-Beckmann, F., & von Benda-Beckmann, K. (2012). Islamic Law in a Plural Context: The struggle over Inheritance Law in Colonial West Sumatra. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 55(4-5), 771-793.

- Bowen, J. R. (2003). *Islam, Law, and Equality in Indonesia: An Anthropology of Public Reasoning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Woodward, M. (2010). *Java, Indonesia and Islam* (Vol. 3). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Zainuddin, A. (2018). "Negotiating Matriliney and Islam in Minangkabau." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 49(3), 389–410.