

Academic Article

## Understanding the Concept of Merantau, Tau Jo Nan Ampek and Ninik Mamak in Minangkabau Culture in West Sumatra, Indonesia

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### Abstract

This article examines Minangkabau culture in West Sumatra, Indonesia. In this province, the people still maintain a culture, namely the cultural heritage of their ancestors, even though they no longer live in their hometown. Scholars say that the Minang people have carried out the concept of rantau to make a living outside their hometown and have implemented a family system managed by the parents of the wife's family. In this case, this article will look at the foundations of the Minang people's cultural knowledge and the strategies that Minang families carry out to maintain their customs in the contemporary era. By conducting an ethnographic study, we found a portrait of Adat of Minangkabau embedded with religious and ethnic foundations, which can be seen from the many concepts and their applications in society, not only in the private sphere but also in the public sphere. It is hoped that this study will fill the gap in understanding one of the ethnic groups in the archipelago in anthropological studies in Southeast Asia, which is still vital in maintaining its culture, even though they have difficulties protecting it.

**Keywords:** Culture, Ninik mamak, Minangkabau, Adat, Rantau

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## Introduction

This article aims to discuss Minangkabau culture in the present context by looking at some concepts that play a significant role in society. It must be admitted that the Minang people have a culture of migrating to other countries. It is interesting to observe how cultural production still maintains tradition. In this context, the study of Minangkabau becomes urgent to be carried out as it is a part of the culture in the Malay world (Andaya 2008). Cultural analysis becomes very important, especially in understanding the way the community views (Johnston, 2005) (Suryohadiprojo, 2008).

Besides, studying the culture of strategic studies also plays an important role (McDowell, 2009). Scholars make cultural studies an attempt to understand the changing ways of thinking in a society. Social sciences and humanities that study culture are used as tools to produce various strategies known as strategies from below (Freedman, 2013: 321-343 and 433-458). In the context of Indonesian-ness, culture has always been a particular concern for the government in maintaining a sense of national unity (Supardi, 2013). One area that has solid cultural roots is in West Sumatra. The Minangkabau culture has powerful roots in Islamic teachings and customs (Kahn, 1980, De Jong, 1980, Naim, 2013, T. Abdullah, 1996, 1987, Dobbin, 2008, 1974). In history, the Minangkabau people have brought their spirits to wander in all directions (Kahn, 2006, Mee & Kahn, 2012). Minangkabau also has some of the thinkers of Indonesia. The influence of the ethnic Minangkabau can also be found in the Malay Land Peninsula in Malaysia, Singapore, and Southern Thailand (Kahn, 2006, Mee & Kahn, 2012).

It must be admitted that the siege of foreign cultures continues today in Minang society. An ethnographic study has been conducted in West Sumatra to answer this question. The core question to be answered in this study is how the Minangkabau people maintain their culture in the current context. The author conducts and observes the culture of the Minang people in Padang, Bukit Tinggi, and Sawahlunto. The author conducted in-depth interviews with several local communities in the areas. To understand the concept of migrating, the author also researched the diaspora of the Minang people in the Riau Islands and Aceh. The aim is to find out how they maintain their culture, even though they are far from their hometown.

The Minangkabau cultural structure has become a kind of bastion of systematic defense to deal with various things that will affect the way the view of the community. The role of custom institutions is also very influential. Cultural studies are critical in the nation-state because cultural components shape a nation's image and identity (Attfield, 2000). In this context, there is a situation known as remote cultural engineering. This process is done through cultural interpretation carried out through theories that are not based on local cultural concepts. The introduction of initially based theories or ways of analyzing culture is sometimes not followed by a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical or meta-theoretical basis (Parkinson, 1993). Then, the understanding of culture studied through the theories of social sciences and humanities based on mere rationality, as the basis of modern theories, results in cultural assessment from the perspective of Western sciences. In this regard, Charles Taylor (1985, p.135) put forward a view:

And this we can see when we consider the issue: are there standards of rationality that are valid across cultures? Can we claim that, for instance, people or pre-scientific culture who believe, let us say, in witchcraft or magic are less rational than we are? Or at least those beliefs are less rational.

Here, a re-interpretation of human concepts and human typologies is based on understanding other cultures (Geertz, 1973), for example, when cultural conceptualization is sometimes attached to political studies. Here, culture is seen as part of cultural politics that arises in post-war political sociology, which aims to reproduce Western democratization situations worldwide. (Wedeen, 2002, p.713). Consequently, the discovery of cultural studies will not run away from the direction and the purpose of planting democracy from the West, which seems to be the case in the naturalization of social sciences and humanities in the era of modernism and post-modernism. P. Adolf Heuken (1981, p.6) wrote as follows:

In addition, thoughts on the original spiritual and religious thoughts throughout the archipelago ... that from within the realm of this most original belief, we must and can dig up the noble beliefs of God. And based on this divine understanding and faith in God according to universal religions will be and

can be accepted and developed healthily. So, the past is never entirely past. We, humans, are not horizontal creatures, but creatures that are rooted in the culture in which we live.

In understanding Minangkabau culture, this study will explore three concepts: *merantau*, *tau jo nan ampek*, and *ninik mamak*. *Merantau* is the concept of moving away from one's hometown for a certain period to earn a living, which has become the culture of the Minangkabau people. In Indonesia, this community is known as the people who like to wander the most. In addition, the concept of *tau jo nan ampek* is essential knowledge for the Minangkabau people in maintaining their daily culture. The last concept is how the Minangkabau family kinship system is through the *ninik mamak* concept.

### The Concept of Merantau among Minangnese

When "Minangkabau" is mentioned in some academic sources, it has four things: first, the struggle of Islam in the Minangkabau community, especially in reforms in the archipelago (Dobbin, 2008; Dobbin 1974, Parve 1996; Azra 1999; Noer 1996); second, the power of Minangkabau traditions in facing the challenges of the times (Junus, 2007); third, the role of Minangkabau figures in national history (Noer, 1996; Fridiyanto, 2016; Rahardjo, 2017; Graves, 2007); and fourth, Minangkabau's spirit wandering in all directions (Naim, 2013; Murad, 1978). On the other side, Azyumardi Azra (2003, p.37) said there were three characteristics of the Minangkabau people: migrant traditions, Islamic solid faith and practices, and matrilineal customs. Minangkabau is one of the most meritorious regions in the history of forming a nation-state in Indonesia.

Therefore, in the study of national imagination, the Minangnese show the interconnections between culture, religion, and nationalism (Andaya, 2008, p. 82- 107). The Minangkabau culture influenced the Minangnese, both in the province of West Sumatra and outside the province. There was a book that described the stories and figures of the Minangnese who were very inspiring for Minangnese, *Saudagar Pariaman Menerjang Ombak Membangun Maskapai* (Zed, 2017). The central figure presented in this work is the life story of a successful Minang trader named Muhammad Saleh. The narrative in this book presents the story of Muhammad Saleh's joys and sorrows from childhood to success in the business world and illustrates the historical side of Minangnese as a whole.

M. Dawam Rahardjo (2017, p.534) wrote: "Padang Restaurant that applies a network system and individual initiative, now not only by Padang people but also by the local Archipelago community." In other words, *Warung Padang* has patched a sense of nationalism which is very important in constructing nationalism in Indonesia, which is supported by the fact that the Minangnese like to wander from their homeland. Tanah Minang. Mochtar Naim (2013, p.3) said that from the aspect of sociology, the term wandering contains six main elements, which are: "leaving home; of one's own volition; for a long period or not; intending to earn a living, seek knowledge or seeking experience; usually to return home; and migrating as a social institution that is entrenched." When meeting a Minang wanderer on Danau Maninjau, he told how he had begun his journey to Jakarta. He built a business by leaving the village. Their overseas travel is approximately 30-40 years which shows that they wander within a generation. Usually, on certain holidays, for example, Eid al-Fitr, they take the time to go home. During their stay abroad, they remained in contact with their hometown. There are times that successfully bring along a family, either settling together or just paying for a visit. We had met with the manager of *Warung Padang* in Yogyakarta when I was in college (1996) until my visit in 2016. He is already married to a Javanese. He has been using the Javanese language in his daily life because the culture around it is Javanese culture. We were told that his family was still in Padang. *He manages the Warung Padang*, mainly targeted by students around the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta.

Andaya, in *Leaves of the Same Trees* (2008, p.90), explained that the concept of *rantau* (overseas) was "achieving a river flow" or "beach boundary." As Joel S. Kahn (1980, p.223) said, *rantau* was: "traditionally, the outlying district of Minangkabau, now used to refer to anywhere outside one's home village." Kahn (1980, p.8) also said:

*Rantau* refers to a geographical area phenomenon – the highlands and the cultural core, respectively. *Rantau* is taken to mean the outlying districts to the south, east, and west of the *Darat*. This includes the coastal plain on the Indian Ocean side of West Sumatra and the hilly regions to the south and east. The term *rantau* can also be taken to refer to any area outside the *Darat* populated by large numbers of Minangkabau migrants.

Here it is seen that an individual's attempt to leave his hometown is an attempt to "... establish an ethnic boundary with the Malayu and reaffirm its distinctive identity" (Andaya, 2008, p.89). Azra (2003, p.35) describes this concept as follows: "The Minangkabau realm is traditionally divided into two parts, namely, *darek* or the inner highland and *rantau* or outer areas or borders." Christine Dobbin (2008, p.6) mentions that the *darek* area is "nature Minangkabau over the world of Minangkabau." Furthermore, Azra (2003, pp.35-36) explained the concept of *darek*:

*Darek* is a plateau surrounded by three mountains: Mount Merapi, Mount Sago, and Mount Singgalang. Minangkabau believes that their ethnic history begins with a settlement on the southern slope of Mount Merapi, a volcano on the Bukit Barisan cluster. From this geographical environment, they spread to inhabit what is now called the Province of West Sumatra. The division of settlements ... is centered on *luhak*. There are three *luhak* in the heart of Minangkabau; namely *Luhak Agam*, *Luhak Tanah Datar*, and *Luhak Limapuluh Kota*. These three regions (*luhak nan tigo*) are considered the proper Minangkabau region, and it makes *darek* different from overseas - a term applied to all border areas, which includes Minangkabau settlements. Then, the term *rantau* also applies to areas outside the Minangkabau Nature but is socio-culturally influenced by the Minangkabau.

People from *darek* will travel to the region, including going to Padang city even known as *Rantau City* (Naim 2013, p.4, Makmur 2018, p.14). In the meantime, the concept of the meeting between customs descended from *darek* to *rantau*, as for Islam coming from *rantau* upwards to *darek*. Here is the aphorism of the Minangkabau: "*Syarak Mendaki, Adat Manurun*" (Fathurrahman 2008, p.42).

In the present context, when this research was conducted in several cities of West Sumatra, it appeared that the lives of the Minangkabau people had developed, from what they should be. However, efforts to continue introducing Minangkabau culture are still prioritized. For example, it is stated that Padang people are good at trading. The term "*Padang Bergadang*" is their pride as those who are good at wandering. Usually, the wanderer is a teenager. One informant who is an online taxi driver tells us that there is a culture of shame among teenagers who graduated from high school but still receive pocket money from their parents. Therefore, they will migrate to Padang city. There, they will work no matter what, to sustain their lives. Success is not when they go overseas, but when they return from overseas. This online taxi driver narrates how he experiences working as a builder. From his life journey to wandering in Padang city, he then managed to become a government employee despite having a high school diploma.

Traveling overseas is a must for boys. The overseas preparations began when they were in their hometown. A person with overseas experience will act as a teacher for young people in the village, who will be taught how to prepare when they want to leave their hometown. First, they will receive religious knowledge from the teacher. This knowledge is seen as a provision, for both the world and the hereafter. After that, they will be taught how to live overseas known as the science of *kadi pakai*. They will also be taught martial arts. One informant mentioned that these overseas preparations became the mainstay of the Minangnese because they were clever in some of the fields, such as Islamic studying (*mengaji*), cooking, sewing, farming, trading, martial arts, and gardening.

Even in trading, wanderers also do very organized things. They will empower their people in their hometown. If there is food that comes from their hometown, it will be specialized. The names of the hometowns are attached to the menu, for example, *Kapau Rice*, *Martabak Kubang*, *Sate Padang*, and so on. Cooking is one of Minang's expertise. The Padang people do not want their area to be controlled by traders from outside. For instance, *Indomaret*, *Alfamart*, and *Alfamidi* will not be found in Minang land. Informants said that ethnic sentiment was still a stronghold in bringing outlets from outside West Sumatra. This sentiment is supported by administrative power, especially if the business is controlled by ethnic Chinese. It was stated

that someone tried the Minang Mart, but because it was suspected that the store owner was not Minang. Therefore, it had to be closed because it did not get a positive response from residents. This trading soul is known through the concept of ethnic entrepreneurs. All business buildings are carried out through the strength of family or neighborhood relatives. Therefore, it is rather difficult to be opposed by businesses outside Minang because ethnic sentiments are deeply rooted in the Minang community. This is what delivered, said the informant, about the identity factor in the overseas world and the business of the Minangkabau people.

Successful wander stories can indeed be seen when they return to their hometown, during the Eid al-Fitr. Here, quiet houses began to be crowded. One of the areas visited, when the research was conducted was Koto Gadang. The informant told us that Koto Gadang was "a quiet village" because wanderers left their homeland together with their assets. It was said that successful wanderers would hire people around the village to live in their homes so that the house was still alive and maintained. Likewise, if there are rice paddies, they will also ask the person to work on them. The Koto Gadang landscape is only filled with large houses.

Those who wander will indeed build a house in their hometown if they are successful. Rumah Gadang is a symbol of success. The informant's parents mentioned that they would return to their hometowns, if they were old or if other things caused them to have to go home forever. For example, a fire in Tanah Abang caused the parents to choose to close the convection business in Jakarta and go back to their hometown. Some returned home because they felt they had failed overseas. This story was obtained from an informant who told about several years of wandering in Jakarta but did not show satisfactory results, then he decided to return home. He is a public transportation driver in Jakarta. After failing in other lands, he returned to his hometown. Then, he started odd jobs again in one of the government offices. When it was discovered that he had been a driver in Jakarta, he was offered to become a driver. When he began to migrate to Padang City, he felt like a "stranger" in his own country.

A young child also reported a failing situation. His parents sold goods from a black market. Being asked what the modus operandi was, he mentioned that there was a need for recklessness in this business. They must understand the quality of the items. Then, the goods are sold to customers, purely because of trust. These illegal goods, he said, were also sold to security forces. This is because no one dares to question the black-market goods. He also once delivered goods to all corners of Sumatra. They were not afraid to collect money from top-level officials. Guts and networking are key in this business. However, a few years later, the business lived, but he said there was no blessing in the life of his family. Finally, they closed down. The end of the story is mentioned as *Rantau Gila*, not *Rantau Cina*.

Overseas who never returned to this hometown is often heartbreaking. They call it the *Rantau Cina*. After being successful overseas, they did not want to return to their hometowns at all. This overseas pattern is common among Minangnese, especially if they have wandered abroad. They did not tell us at all about what was going on overseas and broke up in contact with relatives in their hometown. Minangnese will consider this normal. Some people say that sometimes they are considered lost on the earth when they go abroad.

In Minang culture, there are four types of overseas, namely: *merantau ujung bandua*, *merantau pipik*, *merantau Cino*, and *merantau dunia*. *Merantau ujung bandua* is someone who goes to make a living in another place that is not too far from the village of origin. Here, the wanderers do not stay where they wander. Meanwhile, *merantau pipik* is earning a living a little far from their hometown. However, they settled overseas, only occasionally returning to bring fortune to their hometown. *Merantau Cino*, is going to a place far from home. They settled in a place to wander because it is so far from their hometown, and they very rarely return to their hometown. Usually, they only send sustenance from their business to their hometown. Communication is established with the village of origin (Dt. Rajo Pengulu, 2005, p.91). However, it does not rule out the possibility that communication and returning home would not do, as explained above.

There is a social cycle in the concept of overseas relations with the hometown that began from their religious teaching in *Surau* as their preparations. Those who teach the science of *kadi pakai* are those who have already wandered. They will spread various experiences, as explained above, to candidates who want to have start *Rantau*. Likewise, those who wander must make a social investment in relatives because they are the ones who will be next to the wanderers returning home. They must make up with the core family because when they die, they will be buried in their hometown, not in their wife's village. Therefore, when they are old, a person will be more with their core family, than with their wife's family. If during the time, they do not

invest socially with relatives, it is rather difficult for them to enjoy their old age at home since when they were successful overseas, they were stingy with their relatives.

The migration of the Minangkabau people has created human and cultural diasporas. Besides, the film *Merantau* shows how the Minangkabau youth struggle to leave their hometowns. This image also reinforces our assumption that the concept of *rantau* is Minangkabau's youthful journey into a man. In several songs, the narratives of sadness and concern for life in *rantau* are presented, to the point that a lover loyal awaits the young man to come back from overseas.



**Figure 1** The movie *Merantau*

Source: [https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merantau\\_%28film%29](https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merantau_%28film%29)

There is a narrative that says that when someone is successful in the tradition of wandering, they should not be arrogant. In Minang culture, there are sad stories as folklore. For example, in the story of Malin Kundang's success, when he returned, he was too arrogant towards his mother. Ultimately, he was cursed to become a stone. Another example of the pain of a man who migrates is found in the love story novel between Siti Nurbaya and Samsul Bahri. Here, it is told that Siti Nurbaya was proposed to by someone else when her lover migrated from Minangkabau to Jakarta. The story implies how sad a Minangkabau woman is when they are forced to marry someone else when their lover is away. This story is very famous in Minangkabau society. These stories show that there is a concept of culture in Minangkabau that may be different from other regions in Indonesia. The position of men in Minang culture is indeed not so strong in the household. Azra said: "Generally, the position of a man in the Minangkabau tradition is very difficult (Azra, 2003, p.39)."

### ***Tau Jo Nan Ampek as the Foundation of Minangnese***

There is a concept called *Tau Jo Nan Ampek*. M. Sayuti Dt. Rajo Penghulu, chairman of LKAAM West Sumatra, said: "The knowledge of that Four is one of the Minangkabau's identities in society, nation, and state" (Dt. Rajo Pengulu 2005, p.i). In the Minangkabau tradition, it was explained that those who did not know *Jo Nan Ampek* were insinuated as not knowing customs or manners (Amir M.S. 2011, p.7). Here is a narrative of everything that guides the life of Minangnese that is all four as follows:

- |      |                          |  |
|------|--------------------------|--|
| I.   | <i>Nagari nan ampek:</i> | 1. First <i>Banjar</i><br>2. Second <i>Taratak</i><br>3. Third <i>Koto</i><br>4. Fourth <i>Nagari</i>                          |
| II.  | <i>Nan ampek adat:</i>   | 1. <i>Adat nan sabana adat</i><br>2. <i>Adat nan diadatkan</i><br>3. <i>Adat nan teradat</i><br>4. <i>Adat istiadat</i>        |
| III. | <i>Nan Ampek Law:</i>    | 1. Bayinah Law = Witness testimony<br>2. Qarinah Law = Behavior<br>3. Ijtihad Law = Real Evidence<br>4. Science Law = Research |

- IV. *Undang nan Ampek*:
1. *Luhatk Rantau* Law
  2. *Pembentukan Nagari* Law
  3. *Dalam Nagari* Law
  4. Law No. 20 (Amir M.S. 2011,p.7)

These ideas have become the basis of Minangkabau's knowledge. In this case, all four knowledge is also found in various social systems of the Minangkabau community (Dt. Rajo Pengulu, 2005). The knowledge must be learned among the Minangkabau people. It could be said that someone is not a Minangnese if they do not understand *jo nan ampek*. In other words, the cultural system in the form of a thinking system is engineered through knowledge *jo nan ampek*. These concepts are then formulated from the family to the public. The result of this thinking system is crystallized in four different forms of life of the Minangkabau people:

What is meant by the actual customer is the original, unchanging, which is not weathered by the rain and heat. If forced to change it, he is disabused *indak mati, diasak intake layua* (revoked not died, moved not withered). Some things are often expressed in this aphorism and proverbs, such as the laws of nature that are the philosophy of their lives.

The meaning of customs is the custom that prevails in the public or local community, such as ceremonial events or social behavior were doing good will be considered good. These standard features are a tree that *gadang dek diambak, tinggi dek dianjuang* (great because it was respected, high because it was flattering), which means that they can grow just because they are well cared for.

The meaning of the custom herein is called constitution and regulations, as found in *Undang-Undang Luhak dan Rantau, Undang-Undang nan Dua Puluh*. It is against this custom to do what is imagined to be: *jikok dicabuik mati, jikok diasak layu* (if removed (he) dies, if moved (he) wither), like rooted trees, which can grow if no hand interrupts their life.

What is meant by custom is the rule born of the agreement or consensus of the people who use it, as the term implies: *Patah tumbuhan, hilang baganti* (the broken ones will arise, the lost ones will be replaced). As disasters break a tree, it will grow back into its original trunk. When he disappeared, he replaced another tree in its former place because it had to exist for human life (A.A. Navis 1984, p.89).

All four custom explanation is also made by the four actors, as mentioned above, orang ampek Jinnah. The explanation is as follows:

A leader is an indigenous leader who constantly strives to protect and guard the interests of his nephew/niece in the race and family. This leader was appointed based on the clan consensus. A leader is chosen or approved by his nephew and niece, old and young, or rich and poor. The leader's decisions are the ultimate ones based on the fairness of his nephew/niece, and every decision taken by the nephew and *Mamak* (uncle from the mother clan) must together take responsibility for maintaining and controlling him. The color of the leader's clothes is black. Its philosophical meaning, *hitam tahan tapo*, stands firm (*istiqamah*).

*Manti* originated from *mantri*, which means the person believed to help the leader administratively custom in the tribe. In the words of the Minangkabau custom, it is called *manti permato nagari* as *ulasan jari sambungan lidah* by the leader either in or out of the tribe. Leadership principle, *kato manti kato mufakat, tagak di pintu susah* which means *manti* must keep leader's talk that lame and difficult to keep nephews/nieces secure, orderly and peaceful in all respects. His work has always provided custom information, custom enlightenment, discussion of customary law, and custom additions. The color of *manti* clothing is yellow. Its philosophical meaning is grandeur, resilient to swear and praise, and faithful to the work

*Dubalang* also called *hulubalang*. *Dubalang* is a customary function of its people chosen by the leader with the agreement of the nephew/niece. *Dubalang* is responsible to the head of the council for the enforcement and guarding of all decisions that have been agreed upon. If anyone violates the decision “*nan lunak disudu*,

*nan kareh ditakiak*”, the decisions must be made fairly and wisely. *Dubalang* principle is *kato dubalang kato mandareh tagak di pintu mati*. This means that the *dubalang* must be firm, fast, and close in upholding the truth even in the face of death. The color of *dulubalang* clothing is red. Its philosophical meaning is courage. Being brave because it is correct, and being afraid because it is wrong.

The word *Mualim* or *malin* refers to pious scholars and *mualim*. *Malin* is a function in the tribe entrusted by the leader for the agreement of the nephew/niece. The principle of leadership is *kato malin kato hakikat, tagak di pintu kitab*, whose function is *suluah bendang dalam nagari, nan tatu sah dengan batal, tau hal dengan haram*. His work provides Islamic religious guidance, marriage management, *thalak*, referral, birth, death, *zakat*, *infaq*, alms, and others. The color of *mualim* clothing is white. Its philosophical meaning is pure and clean. White is *tahan sasah, suci tahan basuah*, which always invites people to do good, honest, righteous, and fair (Rajo Pengulu, 2005, pp. 97-98).

### **The Role of Ninik Mamak in the Minangnese Family**

HAMKA in *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup* tells us how men are as follows:

That is why there are customary law, stating that all men, whether *mamak* or *semenda*, have no power in the house, and cannot stay in the house for long. During the daytime, it is quiet in the house because men are not present; they go to the fields or rice paddies. Late at night, they come home, and in the early morning, they are gone (HAMKA, 1982, p.2).

It is also told by Auda Murad about the marriage system in Minangkabau culture. The male position remains the guest of the female, known as *sumando* (guest). Wives and husbands will not separate from the birth of their relatives. It is said that the *sumando* has no authority or responsibility for his wife or children. A biological *sumando* has a relationship with his child through a bond of love, a deep bond. In general, he comes to his wife for biological purposes. Therefore, he comes at night, returning in the morning to his relatives. He is more with his family and is responsible for his sister's children (Murad, 1978, p.15). This situation differs from Joel S. Kahn's (1980, p.50) findings when he states: “However, the evidence does not entirely support this contention. In any case, it would be difficult to argue that the modern Minangkabau husband is a mere visitor in his wife's house. It is here he eats, sleeps, and spends most of his free time.”

The statements above imply that women have a very important position in Minangkabau culture. This condition is known as matrilineal culture. However, this requires a very comprehensive explanation, as it relates to Minangkabau customs. The existence of women is so strong that it is stated that: "one belongs to his mother's family and not to his father's family (Junus, 2007, 254)." Andaya mentioned that the existence of this matrilineal custom was to contrast Minangkabau with two other ethnic groups in Bukit Barisan mountain. It is known that the Batak and Malay emphasize the patrilineal system. In Leonard Y. Andaya's words:

The greater emphasis on matrilineality may have been a conscious decision by the Minangkabau sometime between the late fourteenth and the early sixteenth century to underscore their difference from their immediate neighbors, the Malays, and the Hobo, who lay greater stress on patrilineal principles (Andaya, 2008, p.89).

Further, Andaya also mentions that the presence of Islam strengthened the patrilineal system in Sumatra by the end of the 13th century. This religion is a new phenomenon in the state of Minangkabau (Andaya, 2008, p.89).

Meanwhile, the role of *ninik mamak* is quite significant. In Minang culture, girls are very much expected. Therefore, if there are only boys, without women, then that is a problem, especially in the continuation of offspring. Here, the line of descent always takes precedence based on the "mother line" (Amir M.S., 2011, p.9). Therefore, the mother will play an active role in fostering her family. She holds control in the fields of education, securing wealth, and family welfare (Amir M.S., 2011, p.9). In running the wheels and their functions, the mother will be greatly assisted by the *ninik mamak* (uncle).

*Ninik Mamak* will look after his family (nephew/niece) closely in his daily life. This is one of the *ninik mamak* duties, namely caring for nephews/nieces (Jamil, 2016, p. 10). In addition, he must also be able to



solve a problem, if a dispute arises. In Minang language, it is referred to as "*kusuik kamanyalasaikan* and *karuah kamanjanian*." In addition, he must also "protect the inheritance that has existed as being hereditary" (Jamil, 2016, p.10). The term *mamak* is "someone related to the mother ... for example, a brother or sister, or the same function as that" (Jamil 2016, p.19).

Initially, it was said that *ninik mamak* would look after younger and older sisters. In his original family, he acts as *ninik mamak*. Whereas in his wife's family, he is *sumando*. Therefore, he will take care of the original family because the wife's family will be guarded by the wife. He will do the best for his family as *ninik mamak*. While in the wife's family, he will be looked after by *ninik mamak* of the wife's family, and so on. Looking after each other, all members are cared for by each other.

So, *ninik mamak*'s role is a central figure in the culture of the Minangkabau community. He with his principal will act like a prince, assisted by *manti*, *dubalang*, and *mualim*. However, at an even greater level, a concept known as *tunku tigo sajarangan* emerged, where in addition to *ninik mamak*, there were also scholars and clever people. They, with their knowledge, will maintain Minang culture in the public domain, namely religious and cultural education. The leader itself is a tribal leader (A.A. Navi, 1984, p.131). There are at least three levels of the leader. First, *Penghulu Suku* is the leader of the tribe. He is seen as *penghulu pucuk* or *penghulu tuo*. Secondly, *Penghulu Payung* is the leader who leads a tribal leader. He has to divide himself because the number of citizens has increased from the first tribe. Third, *Penghulu Indu*, the leader of the tribe, led the tribal people from those who had divided themselves from their troops (A.A. Navis, 1984, p.131).

## Conclusion

From the descriptions in this study, a few things are underlined. The central figures in Minangnese society play a very significant role. Religious, customary, and cultural authority holders carry out the cultural mission in the concept of *Adat Basandi Syarak* and *Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*. In this regard, the role of *ninik mamak* and its leader is strong in the Minangkabau community. Its role in the family and in preserving the cultural values of Minang can still be seen today. However, there have been changes in some of the joints of life, especially as the Minangkabau community is facing the current modernization. The concept of *rantau* can also be part of strengthening identity and ethnicity in the Minangkabau trading spirit.

Third, the concept of the Minangkabau community is through the concept of *Tau Jo Nan Ampek*. Here are the various views of the Minangkabau community that all is four. This study found how these ways of thinking are constructed, starting with the understanding of nature, God, and fellow human beings. Through this concept, the Minangkabau community can overcome every threat that arises in daily life. One of the pieces of evidence found is that in trade, the concept of identity and economic activity has enabled this society to cope with the economic encroachment of ethnic economics in Indonesia.

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