

Resilient Traditions, Modern Realities: Women's Agency in Minangkabau's Political Economy

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Abstract

This study explores the political economy of Minangkabau, a culturally rich and the world's largest matrilineal community. The research focuses on understanding the power dynamics between men and women by conducting a gender analysis. The findings reveal that Minangkabau women hold a unique and privileged societal position. Traditionally, societal expectations allocate more roles and responsibilities to men, particularly in economic and political domains. Contemporarily, the special rights held by women have faded and been replaced by dominant male gender roles. Some gender roles have begun to disappear, such as the role of Bundo kanduang, mamak and tigo tungku sajarangan. In accessing economic resources, Minangkabau women experience challenges from men, private parties, and the government. These ignore the role of women as the legitimate owners of inherited property in Minangkabau land. Meanwhile, Minangkabau women have difficulty competing with men within systems that tend to be biased for political resources. In addition, Minangkabau women increasingly participate in productive work, demonstrating their ability to compete with men in the labor market. Despite these advancements, the study highlights a challenge for Minangkabau women.

Keywords: *Matrilineal, Gender, Political Economy, gender roles, resources, gender division of labor*

I. INTRODUCTION

The West Sumatra region of Indonesia has a complex interaction of cultural traditions and sociopolitical frameworks, particularly among the Minangkabau ethnic group. Despite being the largest matrilineal civilization globally, the Minangkabau community represents a complex environment where gender relations cross with economic and political factors. Although previous studies have examined certain aspects of women's roles and rights, there is still a significant gap in the literature regarding a thorough examination from a political economy perspective. This study examines the complex relationship between gender dynamics and economic frameworks in West Sumatra's society. It intends to reveal the intricate power dynamics and socio-cultural norms that influence the experiences of individuals in this context. With this approach, we (the authors) aim to shed light on the complex interplay between gender and the political economy of the region. We aim to provide insights into the fundamental dynamics that shape society's organization and power systems.

Minangkabau is one of the symbols of Indonesia's cultural diversity. The Minangkabau traditions have evolved and flourished as folk cultural practices deeply connected to the Minangkabau matrilineal kinship system.¹ Every element within Minangkabau culture embodies profound philosophical principles that depict the fundamental attributes of the Minangkabau community. Traditions in Minangkabau culture encompass ceremonial, cultural acts, such as marriage, birth, and funeral rites, and serve as guidance in other aspects of life. The Minangkabau's proverbs, which include life teachings, uphold social order and community life.² The ancient Minangkabau dances embody the essence of life values and serve as manifestations of the soul, portrayals of cultural traits, and ideologies of the Minangkabau tribe.³ An intriguing aspect of Minangkabau culture is its matrilineal method of inheritance, which is based on the female bloodline. The Minangkabau people are renowned for being the largest matrilineal civilization in the world.⁴ Minangkabau women hold a unique and esteemed role in their community, as indicated by the proverb: "Limpapeh rumah nan gadang, Acang-acang dalam nagari, muluik manih kucindan murah, rang kampung sayang kasadonyo" (A pillar of a big house, a role model in the community, sweet-talking and smiling, loved by all villagers).⁵ This proverb signifies the significant roles that Minangkabau women hold in their community. They are here depicted as "queen bees,"

1 Noni Sukmawati, "Bagurau Saluang Dan Dendang Dalam Perspektif Perubahan Budaya Minangkabau" (2011) 35:2 Bagurau Saluang Dan Dendang Dalam Perspektif Perubahan Budaya Minangkabau.

2 A Bahauddin et al, *The Minangkabau house: architectural and cultural elements* (2012).

3 Roswita Sitompula & A Alesyantib, "Inheritance Law Analysis in the Indonesia Minangkabau Matrilineal Society".

4 Ratina Sankari, "Masyarakat matrilineal terbesar dunia ada di Sumatra Barat", *BBC News Indonesia* (7 October 2016).

5 Wendi Ahmad Wahyudi, "Perempuan Minangkabau dari Konsepsi Ideal-Tradisional, Modernisasi, sampai Kehilangan Identitas Nasionalisme Melayu Raya View project Samaun Bakri View project", online: <<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328292441>>.

responsible for producing honey for the children, while men are portrayed as workers and soldiers.⁶ This gender analysis of Minangkabau society adds an intriguing aspect to the study.

Recently, culture has become an important factor that requires more investigation in social studies. This also applies to political economics study, where scholars such as Bob Jessop, Stijn Oosterlynck, and Ngai-Ling Sum have expressed objections, arguing that merely connecting political and economic factors is inadequate to elucidate societal phenomena fully.⁷ As a result, the idea of cultural political economy has arisen.⁸ The cultural political economy approach emphasizes the influence of cultural aspects, including art, music, language, food, daily life, government, clothing, and religion. These are based on socioeconomic ideas of political economy institutions and interests, which have evolved throughout historical and sociological processes.⁹ Beyond cultural aspects of the study of political economy, the cultural political economy approach also contributes to the richness of approaches in the discipline of political economy. One unique feature of culture is its diversity, which offers differences. As stipulated by The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) ads, "Everyone looks at the world from a different point of view: the world would be a dull place if everyone agreed on everything."¹⁰ This phrase suggests that every culture has its unique method of structuring the political economy of its society and achieving homogeneity is challenging.

This parallels the assumptions of multiculturalism, which believes that the current perception of reality results from the dominant culture being identified as other and different. In this identification, minor or inferior cultural groups may try to challenge what has been defined by the dominant group as reasonable and correct.¹¹ The dominant ethnic community gains the privilege of representing other ethnic communities in a way they think is appropriate. In this context, the discipline of political economy that is currently developing and known today generally only represents the results of thought and culture from Western societies, which are not necessarily appropriate or suitable to be implemented for people of a much different culture.

Prior studies have been conducted regarding the status of Minangkabau women in the political and economic domains. Nevertheless, the researchers have not comprehensively examined the political-economic part as a unified entity or analyzed it independently. Hakam¹² conducted a study that examined the absence of Minangkabau

6 Erianjoni Erianjoni, "Pergeseran Citra Wanita Minangkabau: Dari Konsepsi Ideal-Tradisional ke Realitas" (2011) 1:2 *Kafa'ah: Journal of Gender Studies* 225.

7 Ngai-Ling Sum & Bob Jessop, *towards a cultural political economy: Putting culture in its place in political economy* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013).

8 Jacqueline Best & Matthew Paterson, *Introduction: Understanding cultural political economy* (2009).

9 Josef Hien, "Culture and tax avoidance: the case of Italy" (2021) 15:2 *Crit Policy Stud.*

10 Best & Paterson, *supra* note 8.

11 Peter Caws, *Identity: Cultural, Transcultural, and Multicultural* (1994).

12 Ahmad Hakam, "Contested Gender Roles and Relations in Matriarchal Minangkabau" (2021) 2:1 *Muqoddima Jurnal Pemikiran dan Riset Sosiologi* 37-46.

women's involvement or representation in West Sumatran politics and its correlation with their cultural background. He discovered that gender constructs and the perception of women and men influence this. Although there may be disagreements between Islamic ideals and the state, the Minangkabau people are actively redefining gender identities and roles according to their beliefs, which take into account social rank, family relationships, and matrilineal traditions. Women in Minangkabau face expectations regarding their gender roles, influenced by customs, Islamic religion, and government regulations. These expectations often lead women to underestimate their capacity to engage in politics. However, it is important to acknowledge that women still play significant roles in ceremonial and kinship relationships within Minangkabau society.¹³ Beyond this, Idris¹⁴ identified no significant relationship between the matrilineal system and women's political participation in West Sumatra. According to him, women should possess a deep interest in political matters to thrive in politics and actively engage in effective, progressive, and sustainable efforts.¹⁵ In the economic realm, Meiyenti and Afrida¹⁶ highlight the inequality of rights and obligations of Minangkabau men in the matrilineal system, noting an imbalance between rights and obligations in the Minangkabau kinship system. Men in Minangkabau experience discrimination, as the matrilineal lineage system denies them access to the Harto Pusako Tinggi (High inheritance).¹⁷ Eliza et al.¹⁸ argue that matrilineality drives the spirit of entrepreneurship for Minangkabau men because they are forced to “wander (merantau)” in the tradition. The adat (customs and traditions) of the Minangkabau tribe are deeply rooted in a philosophy that emphasizes the importance of engaging in trade or entrepreneurship as part of their personal identity and pride as men.¹⁹

Similarly, earlier studies have analyzed gender in matrilineal civilizations in places other than Minangkabau. At this point, research on matrilineal societies has yet to examine Minangkabau conditions in political economy through the lens of gender analysis to identify power dynamics in resources and policymaking processes. For instance, a study by Shahriar titled “Gender Differences in Entrepreneurial Propensity”²⁰ compared entrepreneurial tendencies between patrilineal and matrilineal communities in Bangladesh. It revealed that men tend to exhibit higher entrepreneurial inclinations in

13 Ibid.

14 Nurwani Idris, “Perempuan Minangkabau dalam Politik” (2010) 22:2 *Humaniora* 164–175.

15 Ibid.

16 Sri Meiyenti & Afrida Afrida, “The Inequality of Right and Obligation of Minangkabau Men in Matrilineal System” (2018) 7:1 *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Mamangan* 12–22.

17 Ibid.

18 Eliza Eliza, Danarti hariani & D Pratama, *Cultural Effects of Economic Activity Minangkabau Society* (EAI, 2019).

19 Ibid.

20 Abu Zafar M Shahriar, “Gender differences in entrepreneurial propensity: Evidence from matrilineal and patriarchal societies” (2018) 33:6 *J Bus Ventur* 762–779.

patrilineal societies, whereas the opposite holds true for matrilineal ones.²¹ Another study, “Spending or saving?” by Rink and Barros,²² explored the impact of women's empowerment on household financial decisions in Meghalaya, India. It found that female empowerment significantly influences financial choices, with historical British influence and proximity to British bases considered as empowering factors explaining financial behaviors in matrilineal societies.²³

Moreover, an article titled “Gender (In)Equality in Ghana” by Simon Mariwah et al.²⁴ employs critical discourse analysis to scrutinize proverbs from the Akan tribe, a matrilineal society in Ghana. The objective was to investigate how these proverbs rationalize gender inequity in favor of men. The study revealed that certain Akan proverbs depict dominance over males, marking men as significantly vulnerable to societal gender role expectations.²⁵ Lastly, “Viewing Gender Through the Eyes of Proverbs” by Dzahene-Quarshie and Omari²⁶ compared proverbs in Ghana's matrilineal Akan society with those in Tanzania's Swahili society regarding gender roles and functions. The findings highlighted similarities in gender ideologies expressed through proverbs in both societies. However, differences emerged in the perception of women as sexual objects and the explicit mention of sexual organs and actions in Akan proverbs, whereas Swahili proverbs rarely discussed sexuality.²⁷

Based on the aforementioned studies, research can be observed that focuses solely on economic issues, gender gaps or inequalities, and the role of gender in matrilineal societies. However, exploring political economy in matrilineal societies, particularly the Minangkabau, is still limited, thus necessitating further research. To gain a deeper comprehension of the power dynamics between men and women in Minangkabau society, we assert that analyzing gender within the political economy of Minangkabau is imperative. Therefore, this study aims to examine the situation and function of Minangkabau women from a political economy perspective.

21 Ibid.

22 Ute Rink & Laura Barros, “Spending or saving? Female empowerment and financial decisions in a matrilineal society” (2021) 141 *World Dev* 105342, online: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X20304691>>.

23 Ibid.

24 Simon Mariwah et al, “Gender (In)Equality in Ghana: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Akan Proverbs on Masculinity” (2023) 58:7 *J Asian Afr Stud* 1156-1172.

25 Ibid.

26 Josephine Dzahene-Quarshie & Shani Omari, “Viewing gender through the eyes of proverbs: Reflections of gender ideology in the Akan and Swahili societies” (2021) 174 *J Pragmat* 128-142.

27 Ibid.

II. THE SHIFTING OF GENDER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN MINANGKABAU POLITICAL ECONOMY

Gender refers to the roles and characteristics of men and women constructed by society.²⁸ Gender roles are based on the different expectations that individuals, groups, and society have of people based on their sex and society's inherent values and beliefs regarding gender. For the Minangkabau people, having daughters is important because of her role as heir to the family's wealth. Not having a daughter thus brings disappointment because the family is considered unable to continue the family lineage.²⁹ Like in other matrilineal civilizations, such as the Khasi of Northeastern India, the Akan of Ghana, and the Mosuo of Southwest China, women in Minangkabau society are given greater importance in domestic matters than public activities. Minangkabau stands out among other matrilineal civilizations due to its unique gender role for women, specifically the position of *Bundo Kanduang* (The Womb Mother). In addition to overseeing domestic matters, the *Bundo Kanduang* also plays a significant role in community decision-making.³⁰

Bundo Kanduang represents the ultimate position and most esteemed role bestowed to women in Minangkabau society, following their progression through the preceding three roles.³¹ The initial function, referred to as *anak gadih* or daughters, spans from birth to marriage and centers around preparing girls to inherit Minang adat and heritage potentially. By age seven, females already take on maternal obligations, such as home chores and looking after younger siblings. The second role, *padusi*, refers to the stage of marriage when women are allocated chambers in the *rumah gadang* (traditional house for Minangkabau people). Within traditional society, individuals assume many roles as adults, wives, and daughters-in-law, exercising influence in social and economic domains such as land inheritance and marital obligations. Furthermore, *parampuan*, which may be translated as a gathering place for all pleasures, tears, and complaints, symbolizes the phase of motherhood in which women are esteemed for fulfilling crucial responsibilities. During this phase, women utilize cultural practices to address family matters and establish control in home decision-making and child-rearing tasks.³²

28 Judith Lorber, "Night to his day": The social construction of gender" (1994) 1 *Paradoxes of gender* 1-8.

29 Joke Schrijvers & Els Postel-Coster, "Minangkabau women: Change in a matrilineal society" (1977) 13:1 *Archipel* 79-103.

30 Joel Lalenghiana Darlong & Shardin Suting, "role of Khasi women among the Khasi tribe in Meghalaya's Jatah Lakadong village" (2023) 2:09 *Sprinj Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 62-68; *What does it means to be a family man in a matrilineal society?*, by Mihye Shin, Dubravka Žarkov & Freek Schiphorst; Josephine Dzahene-Quarshie & Shani Omari, "Viewing gender through the eyes of proverbs: Reflections of gender ideology in the Akan and Swahili societies" (2021) 174 *J Pragmat* 128-142; Heide Goetner-Abendroth, "Re-thinking 'Matriarchy' in Modern Matriarchal Studies using two examples: The Khasi and the Mosuo" (2018) 24:1 *Asian J Women Stud* 3-27.

31 Gusna Ronsi, "Citra Perempuan dalam Peribahasa Minangkabau" (2011) 2:1 *Jurnal Elektronik WACANA ETNIK* 39.

32 Schrijvers & Postel-Coster, *supra* note 27.

The final role, the *Bundo Kanduang*, is considered the head woman who has the right to determine the policies taken in the *rumah gadang*. Roles of the *Bundo Kanduang* include being an *urang rumah* (the owner of *rumah gadang*), an *induk barih* (a housewife who arranges food and drink for the entire extended family), and a wise leader. *Bundo Kanduang* plays a significant role in Minangkabau due to her central power in the *rumah gadang*. All decisions that men bring into *musyawarah* (deliberation, the process of carefully considering and discussing different viewpoints to establish an agreement) in the *kaum* (village) council house should be discussed first with the *Bundo Kanduang* and other female relatives in the *rumah gadang*.³³

Meanwhile, gender roles for Minangkabau men consist of two roles: *urang sumando* (husband) and *mamak* (maternal uncle, specifically the brother of one's mother).³⁴ In essence, men have a central role to look after and protect women. The husband, or *urang sumando*, has an important role and function in the Minangkabau household. He acts as head of the family towards his wife and children and is also obliged to protect the family, be a role model for his children, and earn a living for the survival of his family members.³⁵ *Urang sumando* is symbolized by the Minangkabau people as “ashes in the furnace,” meaning its position and existence are very fragile. They are called “outsiders” who live in their wives’ houses because of their marriage ties. Thus, their existence and treatment at home traditionally depend on the generosity of the wife’s family in how they view their *urang sumando* role. Therefore, the husband’s position in Minangkabau is likened to ash when the wind blows it. Their existence is not seen as very important, and they are equal to guests staying at his wife’s house.³⁶ Minangkabau men did not have a place to live in the pre-colonial era, with neither booths nor rooms for them to sleep in. The *rumah gadang* room was only intended for women. Traditionally, they must live and grow up in the *surau* (a small mosque or other Islamic assembly building), where they would learn the Quran and other knowledge. Thus, the role of men in the *rumah gadang* is to protect women’s high inheritance (ancestral property that is inherited matrilineally and held collectively by a clan or extended family).³⁷

According to A. A. Navis, males in Minangkabau society have a clear divergence in their duties and places, particularly in relation to their spouses. In contrast to patrilineal or bilateral societies, Minangkabau males did not possess land or dwellings, which are crucial resources in an agrarian civilization. As a result, they lack entitlement to the results of their community's work. A man's perception of love is primarily limited to the affection he receives from his mother. The father maintains remote contact, solely visiting his

33 P R Sanday & R G Goodenough, *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Incorporated, 1990).

34 Prihatini Adnin, “Peranan Suami Minangkabau di Perantauan terhadap Kaum dan Keluarga” (1998) 59:69 *Era Hukum*.

35 Siti Fatimah, “Gender dalam Komunitas Masyarakat Minangkabau; Teori, Praktek dan Ruang Lingkup Kajian” (2012) 2:1 *Kafa`ah: Journal of Gender Studies* 11.

36 Arifin Zainal, “Buru Babi: Politik Identitas Laki-laki Minangkabau” (2012) 24:1 *Humaniora* 29–36.

37 Jelly, Afrizal & Maskota Delfi, “Palang Pintu: Politik Identitas Laki-Laki Minangkabau Sebagai Sebuah Respon Terhadap Stigma Janda” (2019) 9:1 *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*.

mother's residence throughout the night and departing before daylight, which leads to minimal communication between the father and son. The mother's demeanor towards him is characterized by formality and emotional detachment, while his wife, perceived as an outsider, cannot provide assistance during challenging periods or attend to his needs when he is unwell. He regards his mother as the major and most genuine source of affection. Meanwhile, his sister accommodates him for pragmatic motives, seeking refuge from their mother as she does not obtain it from her own spouse. Men strive to satisfy their spiritual requirements by seeking appropriate veneration and acknowledgment for their services and achievements, thus enhancing their society's and community's prestige.³⁸

Then there is what is known in Minangkabau custom as *mamak*, the term for a brother from the mother's side. He acts as a buffer and protector for his sister, who inherited a high inheritance in the *rumah gadang*. Beyond this, the central role of the *mamak* is to guide the children (*kamanakan*) of his sisters. This aligns with the Minangkabau proverb "anak dipangku kamanan dibimbing" (the son is lapped, and the niece/nephew is guided). So *mamak* provides knowledge, religion, values, norms, and customs for his nephews to be safe, responsible, and independent in the future. *Mamak* has a noble role in Minangkabau as a respected person, has decision-making wisdom about problems that occur in the *rumah gadang* or family, and is a role model for his nephews.³⁹

Minangkabau men have multiple tasks within the *gadoang* house, including being spouses and *mamak*. Additionally, they are responsible for addressing community issues through three specific positions known as *tigo tungku sajarangan*. These roles include *niniak mamak*, *alim ulama*, and *cadiak pandai*.⁴⁰ *Niniak mamak* (traditional leaders) are elderly people in Minangkabau, such as traditional leaders who are already familiar with customs. *Alim ulama* (religious leaders), teachers, or pious people understand religious teachings. The Minangkabau people adhere to the traditional philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (The custom is derived from the principles of Sharia, which in turn is derived from the holy books). *Cadiak pandai* is an individual who is widely recognized for possessing extensive knowledge in society, and it can be a scientist, scholar, intellectual, or politician.⁴¹

These three roles are leaders or people who organize and determine policies in Minangkabau customs. Matters concerning customary affairs, such as inheritance, children's issues, buying and selling, or marriage, are taken care of by *niniak mamak* as traditional leaders. Meanwhile, matters related to religious affairs, spiritually guiding the

38 AA Navis, *Falsafah Minangkabau Dalam Pembangunan Bangsa dan Agama* (Jakarta: s.n, 1984).

39 Rahima Zakia, "Kesetaraan dan Keadilan Gender dalam Adat Minangkabau" (2011) 1:1 *Kafa`ah: Journal of Gender Studies* 39.

40 Elvira Mulya Nalien, Ira Meiyenti & Ilham Sentosa, "The Role of Tungku Tigo Sajarangan in The Community Development Planning of Minangkabau, Indonesia" (2020) 12:2 *TRANSFORMASI: Jurnal Manajemen Pemerintahan* 141-155, online: <<https://doi.org/10.33701/jtp.v12.i2.881>>.

41 Nindi Suarti, Fitri Eriyanti & Afriva Khaidir, "Social Relation of Tungku Tigo Sajarangan Institution in Running Function at Nagari Katiagan".

community, and providing guidance for the right path in the world and the hereafter are left to the alim ulama, and matters of science and solutions to knowledge-related problems are left to the *cadiak pandai*.⁴²

These three roles represent the foundations on which Minangkabau decision-making is based: adat, religious sharia, and law. They are also called the “three twisted ropes,” symbolizing a strong and sturdy bond.⁴³ Throughout the Minangkabau civilization, three twisted ropes are essential to synchronize and prevent conflicts arising from each regulation. Although these three legal foundations are expected to work harmoniously, they often conflict. These three pillars encompass legal systems that serve as means of identification for persons. Occasionally, an individual declares their identity as a Minangkabau individual, adhering to the Islamic faith and holding Indonesian citizenship. At some point, these identifications may differ from one another.⁴⁴ For example, customary legal orders may consider ethnicity and membership in a local descent group as conditions for acquiring political and economic rights in the village. On the other hand, state legal orders may consider ethnicity irrelevant to national citizenship rights.⁴⁵ Another example is the difference in the power given to control resources, particularly precious family heirlooms, which are typically passed down through the female line of descent in adat. In Islam, inheritance rights are solely bestowed onto males, but the government holds authority over public resources within the framework of state law.⁴⁶ In addition, regarding land tenure, there are differences between customary law and national agrarian law regarding the basis of rights, the process of recognition, and the legal structure, where national agrarian law is based on state regulation and a structured legal framework.⁴⁷ The clash among these three principles (adat, religious sharia, and law) exemplified by the Padri War of 1803-1838 showcased the confrontation between adat and sharia.⁴⁸ Another instance is Law No. 5/1979 on villages under President Soeharto's tenure, which reduced the authority of customary leaders in Nagari by standardizing village structures across Indonesia by replacing adat leaders with village heads elected by the state and operating within a uniform national bureaucratic structure.⁴⁹ Therefore, within the Minangkabau civilization, including the “three twisted

42 The Role of Tungku Tigo Saj.Arangan in Preserving Minangkabau Custom in Pariangan Village Province Flat Land District West Sumatra, by Alridho Putra & Dra Bedriati Ibrahim.

43 Ninawati Syahrul et al, *Local Wisdom Based Leadership Philosophi Minang Proverb* (Atlantis Press, 2024).

44 Franz von Benda-Beckmann & Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, “Identity in dispute: law, religion, and identity in Minangkabau” (2012) 13:4 *Asian Ethnicity* 341-358.

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*

47 Anne Gunadi, “The Embodiment of Adat Law as an Element of Legal Certainty in Administration of Adat Rights” (2019) 9:3 *Indonesia Law Review*.

48 Taufik Abdullah, “Adat and Islam: An examination of conflict in Minangkabau” (1966) 2 *Indonesia* 1-24.

49 Iskandar Syukur, “Adat Community in the Village Government: State and Society Relations in Indonesia” (2013) 5:1 *ASAS: Jurnal Hukum Ekonomi Syariah*.

ropes," is crucial for achieving harmony and avoiding problems arising from each law.

Examining Minangkabau gender roles uncovers a conventional and normative discrepancy between males and females. Men are conventionally obligated to fulfill certain societal duties, implying greater responsibility than women. Scholars such as Buya Hamka have criticized this conventional arrangement, contending that it tends to exhibit bias against men. Hamka asserts that despite their considerable obligations, males in Minangkabau norms do not possess the power to utilize inherited property.⁵⁰

However, over time, traditional Minangkabau gender roles favoring women have changed. Some privileges and special positions of women in Minangkabau are slowly diminishing and being replaced by male dominance. Although custom still states that heirlooms and women have special rights to be guarded and protected, it is no longer the expected ideal in practice. According to Evelyn Blackwood, three factors significantly impacted these changes. The first factor is the Dutch colonization of West Sumatra, which required interaction between adat and colonial Western values. The second factor is the entry of Islam into the Minang land, introducing some adjustments between adat and Islamic teachings. The last phenomenon is the influence of the New Order (The term of office of the second Indonesian President, Suharto, spanned from his ascension to office in 1966 to his retirement in 1998), which aimed to instill nationalism and Pancasila ideology (Indonesian state philosophy, consisting of five principles: (1) Belief in the one and only God, (2) Just and civilized humanity, (3) The unity of Indonesia, (4) Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives, and (5) Social justice for all the people of Indonesia).⁵¹

The presence of Dutch colonizers in Minangkabau impacted women's gender roles related to land and their participation in the public sphere. The Dutch colonizers ruled by appointing local figures as an extension of their influence to implement their policies. Figures appointed by the Dutch would usually be a senior man with the title *penghulu*, meaning the head of the tribe.⁵² This Dutch rule strengthened male dominance over land tenure because the Dutch authorized them to do so. Additionally, all land decisions would only be discussed with male officials, so women in *rumah gadang* lost their full authority on property. In addition, the Dutch presence in Minang land also impacted the education of Minangkabau women. When the Dutch government stipulated that land be planted with coffee commodities, the colonial government forced residents in West Sumatra to plant coffee on their land in 1940.⁵³ This rule to increase coffee production demanded the need for local bureaucrats in charge of several Dutch offices. Therefore, the Dutch government established local schools in West Sumatra to produce more

50 *Penentangan Laki-laki Minangkabau terhadap Budaya Minangkabau dalam Novel Hamka.*

51 Evelyn Blackwood, "Representing Women: The Politics of Minangkabau *Adat* Writings" (2001) 60:1 *J Asian Stud* 125-149.

52 JS Kahn, "'Tradition', matriliney and change among the Minangkabau of Indonesia" (1976) 132:1 *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 64-95.

53 Rusli Amran, *Sumatra Barat : Plakat Panjang* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1985).

educated workers to work under the colonial government. Ultimately, this would support exploitation programs in the area to provide profits for the Netherlands.⁵⁴

The Dutch government's establishment of modern formal education in West Sumatra revolutionized the lives of Minangkabau women. As the years went by in the early 20th century, an increasing number of Minangkabau women took formal education in schools established by the Dutch.⁵⁵ Even contemporary data shows a high level of education of Minangkabau women. According to the Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of West Sumatra Province in 2017, the percentage of women who completed higher education (undergraduate to postgraduate diplomas) in West Sumatra is higher than men.⁵⁶ Even contemporary data shows a high level of education of Minangkabau women. According to the Office of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of West Sumatra Province in 2017, the percentage of women who completed higher education (undergraduate to postgraduate diplomas) in West Sumatra is higher than men.⁵⁷ Almost all Minangkabau people are Muslim. In 2021, the Muslim community in West Sumatra accounted for around 97.6% of the total population,⁵⁸ and West Sumatra is considered to be a province where the population upholds strong Islamic values,⁵⁹ The existence of Islam in West Sumatra is considered to have impacted the strengthening of patriarchal values in Minangkabau society. Yet, customary values and Islamic teachings are closely linked to one another in Minangkabau society, as exemplified in the philosophy of “adat basandi syara' syarak basandi kitabullah.” This demonstrates Minangkabau society's efforts to harmonize customary values and Islamic teachings.⁶⁰ It cannot be denied that there are some important differences in both value systems, especially related to gender roles. For example, the type of family recognized in Islamic Law is patriarchal (lineage based on men, including the inheritance of property), where the husband and father are responsible as head of the family. Additionally, differences include the permissibility of polygamy in Islam. This is different from the Minangkabau tradition, which is based on female lineage, and when women are married, they will live in the land of their family of origin. Even when living overseas, women still live in their own place, not in their husband's or their family's property.⁶¹ Thus, Minangkabau women feel they have pride and a high position. Likewise, the

54 S Nasution, *Sejarah pendidikan Indonesia* (Jemmars, 1983).

55 *The Influences of The Modernization of Education toward Minang-Girls' life in Sumatra's Westkust I (1900-1942)*, by Risa Marta Yati (2014).

56 *Profil Gender dan Anak 2016*, by Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Provinsi Sumatera Barat (2017).

57 Erwati Aziz, Mohamad Dzofir & Aris Widodo, “The Acculturation of Islam and Customary Law: an Experience of Minangkabau, Indonesia” (2020) 8:1 QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies) 131.

58 *Jumlah Penduduk Sumatera Barat Menurut Agama/Kepercayaan (Jun 2021)*, by Viva Budy Kusnandar (Padang, 2021).

59 Abdullah, *supra* note 48.

60 Asrinaldi Asrinaldi & Yoserizal Yoserizal, “Problems with the implementation of Adat Basandi Syarak Syarak Basandi Kitabullah philosophy” (2020) 33:2 Masyarakat, Kebudayaan dan Politik 162.

61 Schrijvers & Postel-Coster, *supra* note 27.

permissibility of polygamy in Islam is considered to have legitimized a practice that harms Minangkabau women even before the arrival of Islam.⁶² The husband's role in Islamic teachings is also more dominant than in the Minangkabau tradition, as Islamic teachings grant the husband or father full authority over his wife and children.⁶³ The increasing role of husbands reduces the role of men as *mamak* because, in Islamic teachings, there is no dualism in the role of men as husbands and *mamak*.

The last factor that significantly impacted the changing gender roles in Minangkabau was the influence of the New Order. The New Order government's policies had two impacts on gender roles in Minangkabau society: the domestication of women and the waning role of *tigo tungku sajarangan*. Promoting the nuclear family and motherhood became part of the national development policy of the New Order government under President Soeharto, emphasizing women's domestic responsibilities as mothers based on their biological nature.⁶⁴ This domestication of women determines women's primary roles as mothers and wives who support their husbands. This differs from the Minangkabau tradition, which gives authority to women in kinship and community as *Bundo Kanduang*.⁶⁵ The second impact relates to delegitimizing the power of the three *tungku sajarangan* in Minangkabau through the implementation of Law No. 5 of 1974. The New Order government regime strengthened its control over local governments, including West Sumatra.⁶⁶

III. CHALLENGES IN MINANGKABAU WOMEN'S ACCESS TO RESOURCES

There are two kinds of resources relevant to the context of this discussion: economic and political. Economic resources relevant to Minangkabau include women's access to land, housing, and other productive resources. The difficulties women experience in accessing land resources, housing, and other productive resources such as rice fields impact women's capacity to achieve food security and security of livelihood, which increases the risk of poverty and abusive behavior toward women.⁶⁷ Minangkabau customs recognize

62 Nenan Julir, *Akultisasi Adat Perkawinan Minang ke dalam Hukum Perkawinan Islam dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pengembangan Hukum Keluarga Islam di Indonesia* Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, 2020) [unpublished].

63 Akhyar Hanif et al, "Sociological Studies Minangkabau Traditional Mariage" (2023) 6:1 Melayu Arts and Performance Journal 95-104, online: <<http://dx.doi.org/10.26887/mapj1>>.

64 Julia I Suryakusuma, "The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia" in Laurie J Sears, ed, (Duke University Press, 1996) 92.

65 Evelyn Blackwood, *Webs of power: Women, kin, and community in a Sumatran village* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

66 Asrinaldi Asrinaldi, "Delegitimation of Indonesian Traditional Leaders: An Analysis in Minangkabau, West Sumatra Province" (2022) 13:2 *Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik* 253-273.

67 *2009 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development Women's Control over Economic Resources and Access to Financial Resources, including Microfinance*, by United Nations (New York, 2009).

inheritance (pusaka or pusako) in two forms: pusaka tinggi (high inheritance) and pusaka rendah (low inheritance). The difference between the two forms of inheritance is that high inheritance passes down from generation to generation with many heirs, while low inheritance does not. Minangkabau women have privileges in economic resources such as land, housing, and other resources considered high heirlooms.⁶⁸ As a determinant of lineage based on the matrilineal system, the woman has the right to have and pass on inheritance to her child.

High inheritances cannot be traded. They can only be pawned under the following circumstances: 1) A community member passed away and there is a requirement to cover the expenses associated with handling the deceased's body; 2) A Minang girl is still unmarried; 3) A ceremony is organized to elevate the penghulu (A historic designation bestowed upon a male leader or senior within a clan); and 4) The rumah gadang is in a state of disrepair.⁶⁹ These show that Minangkabau customs pay special attention to the fate of women, so high inheritance assets can be pawned if Minang women are unmarried and need money. Beyond unmarried women, Minangkabau culture is also concerned with economic security for married women. If a divorce occurs in Minangkabau society, it is the husband who has to leave the wife's house so that women have no difficulty in finding a place to live after divorce.⁷⁰ Women have also played a vital role in the economy of a community. The oldest woman in the rumah gadang, called limpapeh, has the honor of ruling community wealth. She manages the distribution of wealth. Meanwhile, the oldest man, called mamak kapalo warih, maintains and develops the community wealth, but he cannot use it.⁷¹

Women's ability to access economic resources in Minangkabau has encountered growing obstacles over time. Minangkabau women frequently encounter injustice when it comes to administering inherited assets, which are meant to benefit women. An incident in Nagari Bonjol, Dharmasraya District, West Sumatra Province, exemplifies how men (mamak), who are responsible for safeguarding valuable ancestral property (pusako), sell pusako land for personal gain. The Male Communal Ruler here exhibited authority over selling communal land.⁷² The incident violated the traditional customs of the Minangkabau people, as ancestral land is inherently not allowed to be transferred. Nevertheless, outsiders could gain access to it through a negotiation process agreed upon by all parties involved.⁷³ However, women who have the right to ownership of these resources are not involved in the negotiation and decision-making process; thus, it has

68 Wahyudi, *supra* note 5.

69 Zakia, *supra* note 39.

70 *Ibid.*

71 Iva Ariani, "Nilai filosofis budaya matrilineal di Minangkabau (relevansinya bagi pengembangan hak-hak perempuan di Indonesia)" (2015) 25:1 Jurnal Filsafat 32-55.

72 *Gender Inequality and the Oppression of Women within Minangkabau Matrilineal Society: A Case Study of the Management of Ulayat Forest Land in Nagari Bonjol, Dharmasraya District, West Sumatra Province, Indonesia*, by Abdul Mutolib Yonariza (2016).

73 Siti Raga Fatmi, "Permohonan Tanah Ulayat di Minangkabau Menjadi Tanah Hak Milik" (2018) 5:3 Lentera Hukum 392.

an implication for the impoverishment of women. In addition, the practice of selling and mortgaging pusako land often occurs in West Sumatra, which is usually done by men (mamak). Here, the profits are taken to his wife's house so that the sister (who is the legal owner of the property) has no access at all to the money generated. This practice is common in West Sumatra, starting mainly in the 20th century, and has been going on for many years. Women's authority in Minangkabau is linked to their economic responsibilities and ownership of land, so women's authority in society is reduced without these.⁷⁴ The same thing happened to Minangkabau women in Gunung Sarik Kota Padang regarding the sale of excavated land and stones on the heirloom land owned by the ninik mamak. In response, the women there, who were members of the Gunung Sarik Saiyo Cooperative, carried out a struggle movement to fight for their deprived rights.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, political resource refers to anything that can be used to influence a political outcome and actions available to the interaction participants.⁷⁶ In Minangkabau society, the term **Bundo Kanduang** is known as an element of women's identity politics. The **Bundo Kanduang** has a high position in the village because of her vital role in decision-making. There are four types of political representation in Minangkabau society: urang nan ampek, ninik mamak (village elders), alim ulama (scholar of Islam), *cadiak pandai* (intellectuals), and **Bundo Kanduang**.

The **Bundo Kanduang** has traditional power and is crucial to decision-making. They meet with the **Bundo Kanduang** and ninik mamak before making traditional gathering decisions. The **Bundo Kanduang** must participate in any decisions. Therefore, the outcomes of the forum, or *musyawarah*, are communicated to her.⁷⁷ Based on this point of view, it is evident that women in Minangkabau have political resources to influence the policy outcomes because of the existence of a **Bundo Kanduang** identity. They also have access to political participation in society. **Bundo Kanduang** has a role in Minangkabau political life: as a developing agent for *Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah* (consensus) between Islam and Minangkabau values, as the owner of the vote and veto rights, and as the source of adat reference.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, in contemporary practice, the role of **Bundo Kanduang** has become merely symbolic due to the decrease of communal living in *rumah gadang* settings.⁷⁹ In West Sumatra, under government

74 Pak Ok-Yun, "Resourcefulness without resources: the life history of a landless Minangkabau village woman" (1996) 24:1 *Asian J Soc Sci* 97-111.

75 Sari Martha Yolanda, Dewi Anggraini & Indah Adi Putri, "Gerakan Perempuan Salingka Gunung Talang dalam Menolak Pembangunan Geothermal di Kabupaten Solok" (2021) 1:1 *Tanah Pilih* 20-32.

76 William P Browne, *Groups, Interests, and U.S. Public Policy* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1998).

77 Zakia, *supra* note 39.

78 Amaliatulwalidain, "Dinamika Representasi Peran Politik Bundo Kanduang Dalam Sistem Pemerintahan Nagari Modern Dari Representasi Substantif Menuju Representasi Formal Deskriptif" (2016) 1:1.

79 Yusmarni Djalius, "Minangkabau Women and Change" (2010) 25:3 *Sarjana* 161-174.

regulations on regional autonomy, a governing structure was formed in Nagari consisting of executive and legislative branches. Bundo Kanduang was allocated as one of the legislative members along with mamak, alim ulama, cadiak pandai, and the youth generation called BPAN (Badan Perwakilan Anak Nagari or Village Representative Body). However, in practice, the quantity and quality of Bundo Kanduang involvement is minor. The number of women represented in BPAN is only around 13.3%-16.7%.⁸⁰ In terms of quality, women in BPAN, on average, only maintain ordinary member positions, less likely to occupy important decision-making positions. Additionally, they tend to be placed on commissions representing women's domestic roles or roles as regulators of domestic affairs (such as social, cultural, and welfare commissions).⁸¹ This shows that even Minangkabau women such as Bundo Kanduang face challenges in accessing political resources to influence the policy-making process. Despite the rules that require the Bundo Kanduang in government, in practice it is merely a formality.

Apart from using their identity as a Bundo Kanduang, women can also influence policy and be involved in the policy-making process by entering directly into the world of politics. This is guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution, Article 27, which states that the position of women is equal to men in the fields of law and government. Additionally, Election Law No. 12 of 2003 explains the form of women's representation in the political world, where the law has accommodated 30% of women's representation in nominating legislative candidates.⁸² Thus, women can participate in the political stage to lead the wider community at both regional and central levels, especially for Minangkabau women. This reality is inseparable from the matrilineal system in Minangkabau, where women are placed in a central position and regulate policies and decisions within the community.

The topic of women's inclusion in contemporary politics has been a subject of extensive debate, with society historically impeding women from participating in the political sphere. Even though Minangkabau adheres to a matrilineal system, women still experience difficulties with patriarchal culture, which is still dominant today. This is evident from the data on the number of elected legislative female representatives in the West Sumatra DPRD from 2014 to 2019, which was 6.15% in the 2019 election. This is a relatively low figure compared to the 30% quota for female representatives set by the government. Despite the efforts of political parties to fulfill this quota, the election results show a different reality. This, of course, has a negative impact on women's access to political resources.⁸³ This is due to the fact that, for several Minangkabau women, their primary concerns revolve around their household and family. According to the Minangkabau women participants in the research titled "Women in politics in matrilineal societies (a case study of West Sumatra, Indonesia)," they emphasized that the primary responsibility of mothers is to nurture and care for their children. Furthermore, women

80 Irawati Irawati, "Bundo kanduang dan tantangan politik dalam Badan Perwakilan Anak Nagari (BPAN)" (2010) 9:1 Jurnal Demokrasi.

81 *Ibid.*

82 Mansour Fakih, *Analisis gender dan transformasi sosial* (Yogyakarta: INSISTPress, 2008).

83 Hakam, *supra* note 12.

are limited by time and do not possess the same level of freedom as men. It is thus difficult for women to compete with men in politics if both gender groups are assessed with the same assessment criteria.⁸⁴

The explanation above indicates that Minangkabau women have access to economic and political resources normatively. Minangkabau customs, norms, and values allow women to access productive resources and influence societal decisions. However, in contemporary practice, Minangkabau women face many challenges in gaining such access to economic resources. In addition to the domination of men (*mamak*) in the family, challenges also come from the government and private parties, who ignore women's roles in the process of buying and selling high-heirloom land. Likewise, with political resources, *Bundo Kanduang* women lose their veto power with the diminishment of *rumah gadang* living traditions. Although the government is trying to revive the role of *Bundo Kanduang* through BPAN, male dominance remains strong. Minangkabau women's efforts to influence the policy-making process through contestation in elections also generated obstacles because Minangkabau women were assessed with criteria and conditions that were more favorable to men, making it difficult for women to participate.

IV. GENDER IMBALANCE DIVISION OF LABOR IN MINANGKABAU SOCIETY

When discussing economics, gender studies consider the gendered division of labor, which consists of productive and reproductive types of work.⁸⁵ Productive work refers to all work considered to generate income or wages, as well as activities that produce goods to not be consumed or used by themselves. These include the production of commodities that have a selling value in the market, such as the household industry in both formal and informal sectors.⁸⁶ Reproductive work is work in the household, such as raising children, cooking, and cleaning. Often assumed to be the responsibility of women, men may also often perform reproductive work such as repairing machines or washing cars. Reproductive work generally does not generate income but impacts the economy and family welfare. This work is associated with being in the women's sphere and is often considered less valuable than productive work or not considered at all.⁸⁷ In reproductive work, since the beginning in Minangkabau, domestic activities such as cooking and managing home affairs have been the duty of women, while hunting and

84 Selinaswati Selinaswati, "Women in Politics in Matrilineal Society: A Case Study of West Sumatra, Indonesia".

85 Alessandra Pescarolo, "Productive and reProductive Work" (2018) 30 *What is Work?: Gender at the Crossroads of Home, Family, and Business from the Early Modern Era to the Present* 114.

86 Lusi Fausia & P Nasyiah, "Gender dalam kawasan DAS Citanduy: kajian aktivitas reproduktif dan produktif perempuan dalam sumberdaya alam" (2005).

87 *Principles When Planning and Outlining a Gender Analysis*, by SIDA (2015).

working outside were the duties of men.⁸⁸ The belief in Minangkabau society that men are breadwinners has caused women's domestic workloads to be heavier than men's. This emphasizes that domestic affairs are the responsibility of women, so women will feel shame if these are not carried out properly.⁸⁹ In childcare, on the other hand, understanding that Minangkabau women are considered heirs of the family lineage, research entitled "Perbedaan Keterlibatan Ayah dalam Pengasuhan Anak pada Etnis Minang ditinjau dari Tingkat Pendapatan/ Differences in Father's Involvement in Childcare among Ethnic Minang in terms of Income Levels" has found that Minangkabau men have on average, "medium" and "high" participation in childcare. This is based on the three dimensions of the father's involvement scale in parenting, namely engagement, accessibility, and responsibility.⁹⁰ Therefore, it can be concluded that although women generally carry out domestic household tasks such as cooking, Minangkabau men are still involved in reproductive work related to childcare.

In terms of productive work, since the 16th century, Minangkabau women have been involved in agricultural activities as a method to maintain their heirloom property. Agriculture was the most dominant productive economic activity in Minangkabau society then.⁹¹ In the 16th century in West Sumatra, women held great control over the land and labor on the farms they owned. This dominant role of women in agricultural activities showed women's authority over both women and men, within and outside their kinship.⁹² The economic activities of the Minangkabau community in the agricultural, farming, and livestock sectors were no different in the division of labor between men and women because farming and livestock-raising activities were carried out together in the family. However, since the Presidential administration, there has been a shift in how the concept of work is viewed in Indonesian society— especially in Minangkabau. As productive work has come to be interpreted as work outside the home typically carried out by men, this makes married women assume that they are "only" housewives, even if they are involved in production activities that generate income.⁹³ The Soeharto government regime emphasized the importance of women's domestic roles by promoting that women's main duty was at home and that they should only work if necessary. As a result, Minangkabau women became more focused on domestic work, which did not directly generate

88 Yal Aziz, "Tugas Perempuan Minang dalam Rumah Tangga", (22 November 2018), online: sumbarprov.go.id.

89 Fatmariza Fatmariza & R Febriani, *Domestic Violence and The Role of Women in Modern Minangkabau Society* (EAI, 2019).

90 Lusi Usmani, "Perbedaan keterlibatan ayah dalam pengasuhan anak pada etnis minang ditinjau dari tingkat pendapatan" (2017) 5:1 Jurnal RAP (Riset Aktual Psikologi Universitas Negeri Padang) 43-52.

91 Lemni Ertati & Saefur Rochmat, "Pengaruh Sistem Keekerabatan Matrilineal dalam Kegiatan Pertanian dan Perdagangan Lada di Minangkabau Pada Abad XVI" (2017) 9 Jurnal Pemikiran Pendidikan dan Penelitian Kesenjarahan 299-305.

92 Evelyn Blackwood, "Women, land, and labor: Negotiating clientage and kinship in a Minangkabau peasant community" (1997) *Ethnology* 277-293.

93 Suzanne Brenner, "Webs of Power: Women, Kin, and Community in a Sumatran Village. By Evelyn Blackwood. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000. xvi, 219 pp. 21.95" (2001) 60:3 *J Asian Stud* 913-915.

income.⁹⁴

Since the Soeharto regime tends to domesticate women, women often consider that they are only housewives, even if they are directly involved in farming activities that generate income for the family.⁹⁵ They often prefer to identify themselves as housewives rather than farmers, while the productive activities on the farm are considered domestic or reproductive methods to support men's productive work.⁹⁶ Women's perceptions of work are based on Evelyn Blackwood's fieldwork research on a rice-producing village in West Sumatra, Taram, during 1989-1990 and 1996, located in a fertile valley between the volcanic Sago Mountains. This study focused on 125 households in Taram village, which was chosen because of its long history as a rice-producing community and as a center of Islam and strong matrilineal practices. The New Order government's emphasis on women's ideal role as domestic wives and mothers meant that women's income-generating activities were considered less valuable in household labor. The impact of the policy was the disappearance of Minangkabau women, who used to play a dominant role in household economic activities. However, after the Soeharto regime, women were less considered in income-generating activities. In agricultural households, work, household, domestic, and productive tasks cannot be easily separated. In West Sumatra, childcare and housework go hand in hand with agricultural and livestock tasks such as husking corn or coconuts, drying rice, collecting eggs, and herding cattle.⁹⁷ Along with the changing demands of the times, increasing women's education, and economic demands to meet household needs, the participation of Minangkabau women in productive work has begun to change.⁹⁸ According to the Gender and Child Profile of West Sumatra Province in 2016, the number of women participating in productive work in West Sumatra was around 40.37% of the total 2,347,911 at the time. Of these, most women's work was as employees (788,282 people or 33%), followed by unpaid family work (as much as 356,487 or 28%).⁹⁹ Several studies on Minangkabau women's participation in productive work mention that women experience a double burden as housekeepers, educating children, and working mothers.¹⁰⁰ As an additional challenge, besides working in the formal sector, Minangkabau women also work in the informal sector, such as being tailors and traders in grocery stalls.¹⁰¹

94 Michele Ford & Lyn Parker, *Women and work in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2008).

95 Juliette Koning et al, *Women and households in Indonesia: cultural notions and social practices* (Routledge, 2013).

96 Ford & Parker, *supra* note 94.

97 Brenner, *supra* note 93; Evelyn Blackwood, *Webs of power: Women, kin, and community in a Sumatran village* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

98 Novia Nengsih, "Beban Ganda Perempuan: Penguatan Ekonomi Perempuan Melalui Inklusi Keuangan Syariah di Minangkabau" (2020) 13:2 AL-MAIYYAH: Media Transformasi Gender dalam Paradigma Sosial Keagamaan 172-183.

99 Dinas Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Provinsi Sumatera Barat, *supra* note 56.

100 Susi Fitria Dewi et al, "The role of culture in cross-cultural marriage among Minangkabau women" (2019) 20:9 J Int Womens Stud 68-82.

101 Nengsih, *supra* note 98.

Despite the double burden experienced by Minangkabau women, there has been a positive change in women's participation in productive work in West Sumatra. In 2022, BPS (Badan Pusat Statistik, The Central Bureau of Statistics) data showed that West Sumatra is the province with the most female professionals in Indonesia, which is around 60.1% of the total professional workers (followed by Gorontalo at 59.25% and North Sulawesi at 55.39%).¹⁰² Meanwhile, the percentage of women's contributing income in West Sumatra's economy has increased from 2017 to 2020, reaching 37.5% in 2020.¹⁰³ The contribution of women as professionals and the total income of women has a positive influence on the achievement of development in West Sumatra. The government is also aware of the potential involvement of women in the economy in West Sumatra. This is evident in Regional Regulation No. 7 of 2023, which emphasizes the importance of empowerment and protection of women and children.¹⁰⁴

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the preceding discussion, this gender study of the political economy in Minangkabau concludes that the distinctiveness of the matrilineal Minangkabau society has normative implications for various customary regulations exhibiting preferential treatment towards women. Regarding gender roles, it can be inferred that while traditional Minangkabau norms place larger obligations on men and grant more privileges to women, the present phenomena reveal a contrary situation. Three primary factors contribute to gender transformation in Minangkabau. Firstly, the Dutch colonization of Minangkabau resulted in the diminishing authority of Minang women over *harto pusako* (inheritance rights) and the introduction of modern education through Dutch-established schools, leading to increased involvement of Minangkabau women in public affairs. Secondly, the introduction of Islam into Minangkabau is believed to have contributed to the reinforcement of patriarchal dominance in the region. This has led to an increased emphasis on husbands' authority and a diminished role for the *mamak*. The third factor is the New Order government's policy of domesticating women and homogenizing the village's political apparatus, which affected the diminishing role of the three twisted ropes (*niniak mamak*, *alim ulama*, and *cadiak pandai*) in Minangkabau.

Despite customary norms that assert communal ownership of property and the responsibility of men to protect it, the current reality contradicts this. Numerous cases of land disputes disadvantage women and even lead to their impoverishment. This is due to their exclusion as landowners—as men, private entities, and even the government disregard the fact that Minangkabau women possess authority over the land, which

102 *Sumatra Barat Punya Tenaga Profesional Perempuan Paling Banyak se-Indonesia 2022*, by Erlina F Santika (Padang, 2023).

103 Elsa Yunara, Isra Yeni & Muhammad Irfan Irfan, "Pengaruh Pemberdayaan Perempuan Dalam Ekonomi Dan Politik Terhadap Pembangunan Perempuan di Provinsi Sumatera Barat" (2023) 5:2 *Jurnal Kajian Ekonomi dan Pembangunan* 79-88.

104 sPadang, *Peraturan Daerah Provinsi Sumatera Barat Nomor 07 Tahun 2023*, (2023).

cannot be sold without their consent. In the realm of political resources, a similar phenomenon occurs with Bundo Kanduang, which represents the political authority held by Minangkabau women. However, it is currently perceived as a mere symbolic figure, lacking any real influence over policy-making decisions. The level of women's representation in legislative seats in West Sumatra remains significantly inadequate, falling short of the government's mandated 30% quota. Women in politics confront the problem of competing with men equally, despite their distinct circumstances.

In the context of labor division in Minangkabau, women have traditionally been tasked with domestic chores and childcare responsibilities inside the household while simultaneously assuming a significant part in overseeing the family's agricultural operations. The domestication of women was further facilitated by the policies of the New Order regime, which regarded women's primary role as being confined to their homes as wives and mothers. As the demands of the modern era and women's education levels rise, there has been a noticeable increase in women's involvement in productive work. However, despite their contribution to income generation, women continue to face challenges, as they are still responsible for completing reproductive work at home.

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