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# The Role of Culture in Cross-Cultural Marriage among Minangkabau Women

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## The Role of Culture in Cross-Cultural Marriage among Minangkabau Women

By Susi Fitria Dewi<sup>1</sup>, Maria Montessori, Randi Ade Saputra, Sintia Farsalena, Fatmariza Fatmariza, Rika Febriani, and Febri Yulika<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Marriage is the strongest relationship in terms of controlling human behaviour. There are various reasons why men and women want to be tied through marriage, such as religious, economic, social and cultural factors, and even politics. Cultural factors have special characteristics because they are the product of creativity, human feelings and intentions brought from birth that are passed down from generation to generation. This paper aims to describe the cultural values that affect the lives of the Minangkabau ethnic women who marry other ethnic men. This study is based on interviews with 37 women in 7 districts in West Sumatra where the Minangkabau tribe reside. The women live in either urban or rural areas such as Padang, Pariaman, Agam, Tanah Datar, 50 Kota, Payakumbuh and Solok. The women come from various educational backgrounds, from senior high school through to university with more than 5 years marriage between them. This research asked 4 main questions: What are the conditions that must be met by a man in order to be able to marry a Minangkabau woman? Where do the couple meet? What culture must be applied when running the household? How do they direct the future of their children? The results showed that a man from a different ethnic background than Minangkabau must follow the *malakok* tradition as a requirement if he wants to marry a Minangkabau woman. *Malakok* results in the men being traditionally accepted by the Minangkabau community. This tradition is still practiced in Minangkabau modern society, especially by those who live in *Nagari* (village) and who have a strong *Kerapatan Adat Nagari* (Village Culture Institution). The majority of women meet with their partners in the overseas area. They then bring their partners back to live with their extended family. The culture of the household is Minangkabau, including when educating any children. This study found that the Minangkabau culture places women as the educators of children, in addition to their roles as household regulators and role models for the community. These cultural values have proven to be successful in creating harmonious households, as well as becoming characteristic of Minangkabau women.

**Keywords:** Indonesian women, Malakok, Culture, Minangkabau, Cross-cultural Marriage

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## Introduction

The pattern of husband and wife relations in Indonesian society shows that the cultural factor is still strong as a reference in their interactions. This cultural factor influences the construction of Minangkabau women. Women in Minangkabau society are seen of as active and accepting masculinity, taking on responsibilities and being able to work together with men. The ideal role of women in Indonesia has been studied by some researchers. Kusmana (2015) saw that the generic meaning of *Ibu* as a form of female agency may be defined as a norm which consists of systems and standards for both the agent and any others referred to. When they are related to the Qur'an as the holy book for Islam, the Qur'an reproduces, modifies and produces the social practices of motherhood in line with the nature of women, as well as aligned with the existing dominant discourse and practice.

The famous proverb among Muslims is that a mother is the pillar of the nation. This reflects the important role of the mother in either the family and according to the state. The symbolic mother is not only the responsibility of the female agent herself, but also it is the responsibility of others including the nearest people surrounding her and the state or organisation to where she is affiliated. Women are seen of as dependent wives who exist for their husbands, their families, and the state (Suryakusuma, 1996).

This article found a different pattern, where the Minangkabau ethnic wives have the power to organise the household. Even though Minangkabau woman marry men from different ethnic groups, women still maintain their cultural values. This article aims to expose the role of culture in marriage performed by different ethnic couples, meaning Minangkabau women with other ethnicities. Different ethnicities mean that each couple has a different origin, where the values, norms and customs both involve their own principles. In Indonesia, with 358 ethnic groups and 200 sub-ethnic groups, the phenomenon of inter-ethnic marriage is common. The pattern of migration, the culture of the migrants and e-communication allows everyone to meet and establish love until they finally decide to get married. This study seeks to prove the hypothesis that each individual, both male and female, will never give up their cultural values in the household (Karandashev, 2015).

The households that have been established by different ethnic couples have more severe challenges than couples married to someone of the same ethnicity. Couples must have awareness that cultural differences are the principle to achieving happiness, and it is not a hurdle (Hidayati, 2017). Hurlock states that there are four challenges that will be faced by married couples; *first* is the adaptation to a new partner, *second* is the sexual adaptation, *third* is the financial adaptation and *fourth* is the adaptation to the family of the couple (Hurlock, 1990). This article only focuses on two of the adaptations made by couples of different ethnicities, which are the adaptation to the couple and the adaptation to the couple's family. When couples try to adapt, they attract each other's cultural values. For example, Minangkabau woman will try to adapt to her partner's family who comes from other ethnicities in order to have harmony in their households. There are three processes of negotiation in order to establish a consensus between two families who plan to marry. First, there is the tradition that will be used for the wedding ceremony. Either they will use the Minangkabau tradition, the husband's ethnic tradition or both traditions used alternately. The 37 informants stated that if the woman comes from Minangkabau, then the ceremony must be held in the woman's house even though it is just a simple ceremony. The reason for this is because marrying off a daughter is highest duty in Islam and Minangkabau culture. If a woman is not yet married because of a lack of finances, then according to the culture, her big family is allowed to mortgage customary land. Having a daughter who isn't married is a shame for the

family. The proverbs in Minangkabau say “*gadih gadang alun balaki*” (mature woman is not yet married). The ability of woman’s family to hold the wedding ceremony is a way to increase her prestige in the future.

The second negotiation is the availability of rooms to be occupied by women with their husbands and children in their parents' homes. For a new family who do not have their own homes, this has economic benefits. Another benefit is that the relationship between women and their parents is still strong. This is because she can look after and serve her parents. For a husband who joins the wife's extended family at home, this makes him more careful when speaking and behaving so then his presence is well-received by the wife's extended family.

There is very little interaction between a woman and her husband's extended family. It is common knowledge that marrying a Minangkabau woman means that "the husband will take him away from her family" to become part of the wife's extended family. Minangkabau women visit their husband's family only during the holidays such as before the month of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and attending wedding invitations.

The results give rise to four interactional patterns; competition, accommodation, negotiation and backing down. In a successful and lasting marriage, the relations between husband and wife are dominated by the attitude of accommodation and negotiation. Marriage tends to fail and end in divorce when it is dominated by competition (Miall, H., Ramsbotham, O., & Woodhouse, 2000). This article found a different pattern, where the wives from the Minangkabau ethnic group had the power to organise the household. However, the wife's dominance actually makes her fully responsible for the affairs of their children and the household, and to support the family harmony. This means that women in Minangkabau have more responsibilities when playing her role as wife. For women who have a strong attachment to their culture and who live together with people with strong cultural norms, this responsibility must be accepted, and it is a source of pride. For the women who are not bound by culture and who do not live in a Minangkabau traditional community, this responsibility is seen of as a double burden and an injustice.

Many Minangkabau women profiles have been written by researchers both nationally and internationally. Girls have special rights in their home because they have their own rooms until they get married later on. Parents, wherever possible provide rooms for each of their daughters. This private space that is not owned by boys means that the Minangkabau women have a distinctive character, such as one of self-confidence and independence (Kato, 1967). When all girls are married, the granddaughter has an attachment to her mother's sister. These grandchildren will get attention because they are the successors of the family from the mother line or "people of one mother" (Kato, 1967). This is the characteristic of a matrilineal system where the women, mothers, daughters and grandchildren, can receive hereditary inheritance (*pusako tinggi*) both in the form of houses, land, fields and ponds, as livelihood resources.

The questions guiding this research are: ‘What rules apply that are performed by the Minangkabau women who are married to other ethnicities?’ and ‘How is cultural construction applied by the Minangkabau woman in her household?’ Davis (1996) stated that women from the Minangkabau ethnic group have strict rules regarding the family financial arrangements. This is the same with the Javanese cultures that makes the woman the financial manager. Women in Minangkabau have the role of being the economic regulators in the family (*Umbun puruik pegangan kunci*). This means that Minangkabau women hold the key to storing assets such as rice, fields and other property.

The woman's power over the economic assets is limited to fulfilling the household needs. She will report to the husband as *tungganai* (the oldest man in *rumah gadang*) about the use of assets. The Minangkabau community trust in the women to manage the family economy. The *first* rule is to prioritise the fulfilment of primary needs compared to secondary and tertiary needs. Basic needs include food, clothing and education, while secondary needs include household equipment such as the TV, radio, washing machine, refrigerator and other household appliances. Tertiary needs include recreation and travelling to visit the family members in distant places.

The *second* rule is that women must calculate the everyday expenses so then they can set aside money or the product of agriculture for the future. Minangkabau women divide the income into three parts; one third to eat and to meet their daily needs, one third to pay debts in instalments, and one third to save. This also happens in the families that do not work in the agricultural sector.

The *third* rule is that all decisions regarding the household income and expenditure must be known by the wives. If the wife finds expenses that are without her knowledge or if they do not agree with the expenses, then the household is prone to conflict. The three rules aim to save the family economics even if they are in a bad season or there is a crop failure. If a woman feels that she has run out of food, then she will seek additional money either through working or by borrowing from another family (Davis, 1996). This behaviour is understood by the majority of Minangkabau women, whatever their profession. This is why wives who are only as housewives often have side jobs to supplement the family income. This starts with trading as teachers, baby sitters, washers and housemaids after she is finished with her own household. This attitude is an implementation of the cultural construction related to the role of the wife in the household that is as a household manager and the guarantor of the family economy. Based on Davis's findings, the writers want to study what the requirements are to marry Minangkabau woman and how she organises a household, cares for the children and serves her husband when he comes from a different ethnicity.

## Method

This research used a case study to look for the "red thread" between the opinions, knowledge and behaviour of informants with cultural values (Endraswara, 2006). This analysis rests on the assumption that starting from the mating activities through marriage, taking care of the household through to planning the future of the children, it is always related to the culture as a whole (which has a complex pattern). There were three steps taken in this study. The *first* is understanding the cultural values of the Minangkabau women that serves as a reference for the community. *Second* is by conducting in-depth interviews with Minangkabau women as informants who are married with men from different ethnicities. The cultural differences between the husband and wife are considered to be "confounding variables" related to family tied to its respective culture. The study successfully interviewed 37 Minangkabau women who married men from other ethnicities. The area of this research was in West Sumatra which consists of Padang city, Pariaman city, Agam Regency, Tanah Datar Regency and Lima puluh kota regency. Th three main questions addressed in this article are as follows. *First*, are there certain conditions for men who want to marry Minangkabau ethnic women? *Second*, where do they meet? *Third*, what culture is used when managing the household? The results from these

interviews were then analysed to find out what values the women still hold in modern Minangkabau society.

## Result and Discussion

Culture as a conditioning force shapes patterns of behaviour (Sutrisno, Mudji & Putranto, 2005). Culture also functions to exert pressure on individuals in order to meet material and emotional needs (Chris, 2013). For Minangkabau women, *adat* is the most important thing in their lives, especially as a reference when managing the household (Nuri, 2017). This study found that men from other ethnicities who want to marry Minangkabau women are required to carry out the *Malakok* tradition. This tradition ensures that men have adopted brothers from the Minangkabau ethnic group who will give them the title of *adat* and protect them from various problems related to the customs. If a man has carried out the *Malakok* tradition, then the entire process of the traditional marriage ceremony will fulfil the element of balance and equality. This tradition influences the traditional leaders from both the male and female parties. Men who are accompanied by traditional leaders, will be respected as in the Minangkabau proverb of "*tagak samo tinggi, duduak samo randah*".

Not all men who marry Minangkabau women practice the *Malakok* tradition. This depends on the request of the prospective wife's family. If the attachment of the wife's family to their traditional leaders is strong, then it is obligatory for men to follow the *Malakok* tradition. However, if the attachment of a woman's family is weak or tends to ignore traditional values, then the marriage is carried out according to the pillars of the Islamic religion. Attachment to customary values is strongly influenced by the place of residence in which the female family lives. If they live in a *rantau* area, then they tend not to require the *Malakok* tradition. If the men consider not following the *Malakok* tradition, then they don't have any privilege in the *adat* ceremonial, although he still can marry the Minangkabau women.

The meeting of Minangkabau women with prospective husbands of different ethnicities can occur in three situations. *First is* in his residence because of the transmigration program. *Second*, is in the workplace or in educational institutions such as tertiary institutions, where men from other ethnic groups occupy the West Sumatra region for a specific purpose. This research found that Minangkabau ethnic women meet their potential husbands in the *rantau* area (an area outside of West Sumatra) and that Minangkabau women have a small chance of meeting their husband in West Sumatra. The women will consult with their extended families to ask for consideration as to where the marriage and residence will take place. The tendency of the parents is to ask their daughters to bring their husbands home, to get married at home and to go on to live together. She then invites her future husband to live with her extended family in West Sumatra, so then the language, food, art and future of his descendants is dominated by the Minangkabau ethnic culture. This applies to the couple who live outside West Sumatra, whose descendants are still dominated by the Minangkabau tradition. The dominance of wives in the organisation of the households has become a source of success for Minangkabau women in maintaining family harmony with their husbands from different ethnicities. The people of Minangkabau have pride when their kinship ties are still strong, as proven by their togetherness with girls who bring their husbands and children together in one house. Parents who live alone do so because their daughters have their own home with their husbands. They are pitied by the community because it is considered that no one takes care of them in their old age. The Minangkabau community thinks that girls are obliged to take care of their parents by living with them or by building their own homes close to their parents' homes.

This study has also found that men from outside the ethnic group received requests from their future wives and future parents-in-law to live together in one house. They understand that this is a characteristic of the Minangkabau culture with its matrilineal system. Only 19% decided to occupy their own house and only 5% of women wanted to live with their husband's extended family. The results of the interviews with women who live in a large family of husbands complained that they realised that this decision was contrary to the Minangkabau culture that wanted a husband to live in the wife's family's home. He does so because he attaches great importance to family harmony.

### **Malakok as a Condition for Other Ethnic Groups if They Want to Marry Minangkabau Women**

*Malakok* (attachment) is a tradition that belongs to the Minangkabau ethnic group that is about accepting a marriage proposal from men from other ethnic groups to Minangkabau ethnic women. Fitri (2016) wrote that *Malakok* is also practiced by other ethnic groups such as *berkedim* in Negeri Sembilan Malaysia. Batak ethnicities also have a similar mechanism called the *Buying Marga*. The ethnic Aceh call it *Peuseujuk* (Eriyanti, 2016). There are three purposes behind *Malakok*; (1) to occupy the Minangkabau ethnic area for a long time, such as following the transmigration program, (2) to get recognition as part of a tribe that is of Minangkabau ethnicity and (3) to marry a Minangkabau ethnic woman (Hafizah, 2017). This study focuses on *malakok* as a requirement of marrying Minangkabau women.

In order to obtain the right to marry a Minangkabau woman, a man must be willing to fulfil the terms and conditions of the *Malakok* tradition. Hafizah (2017) wrote that the condition that must be fulfilled by a man is to give 2 until 5 of gold<sup>3</sup>, which fills a tray made from brass (*carano*) along with betel leaves (*daun sirih*). This is used in the *adat* ceremony and given to the *penghulu* (the leader). In addition, slaughtering buffalo or cow to be cooked and consumed with the local community is another requirement. After these conditions are fulfilled, *penghulu* from all sub-ethnicities will declare that a person or a group of people has become part of the Minangkabau ethnic group symbolised in the form of *tali ameh* (golden rope) connections. They are now called a nephew. Fitri (2016) wrote about individual and groups who have done the *malakok* tradition. They have an obligation to swearing allegiance and maintaining tribal honour. Ethnic migrants will experience cultural acculturation because they have to use the local ethnic language and follow the prevailing norms. The ability to use the local language takes about one year, and usually there are individuals who are willing to bridge the communication process. (Eriyanti, 2016).

Hafizah wrote that there are three stages in the *Malakok* tradition. *First*, the father of the married man must go to the *penghulu* to convey his purpose. *Second*, *penghulu* will provide a number of terms and conditions that must be followed by their families. *Third*, they have to carry out the *malakok* ceremony in the traditional hall (Hafizah, 2017). The continuation of *Malakok* is the marriage to a woman from the tribe who received it. Marriage, which is preceded by the *Malakok* tradition, is guarded by *penghulu* because it has an influence on inter-ethnic relations. Conflicts that occur in the household must be immediately resolved with their *penghulu*. This is an important part of the *Malakok* tradition. It is a strategy of cultural adaptation and the prevention of inter-ethnic conflict. *Malakok* serves to strengthen social structures and to maintain social harmonisation (Eriyanti, 2016).

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<sup>3</sup> Ibgold (satu emas) is terminology that uses in West Sumatra and other regions that influence by Minangkabau tradition to indicate 2,5 grams of gold, either it's 24, 20 or 18 carats.

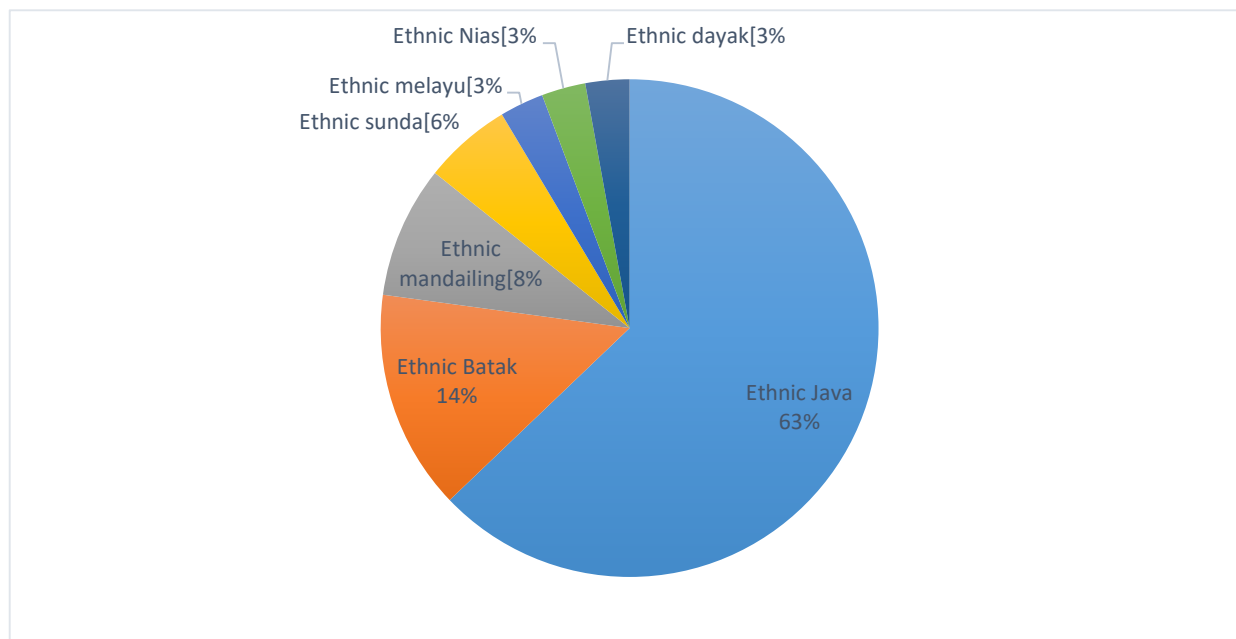


Hafizah writes that if men from other ethnicities do not want to or are reluctant to follow the *Malakok* tradition, then there are negative consequences. *First*, he cannot marry a Minangkabau woman (Hafizah, 2017). *Second*, he cannot participate in *adat* meetings. *Third*, there is no assistance or protection from *penghulu* if they have a problem. Fitri emphasised that *malakok* has become a necessity for other ethnic groups if they want to stay long in West Sumatra. *Malakok* is not practiced by the Minangkabau if they inhabit areas outside of West Sumatra. This means that *Malakok* is a form of acceptance of the Minangkabau community in the West Sumatra region towards the wishes of other ethnic groups to marry Minangkabau women (Eriyanti, 2016). However, *Malakok* can only be practiced by Muslim men (Eriyanti, 2016). If there is a desire from non-Muslim men to marry Minangkabau women, then there are two obligations that must be done. The first is to convert to Islam and the second is then to follow the *Malakok* tradition.

### Javanese Ethnic Husbands as a Choice of the Minangkabau Women

Based on interviews with 37 informants spread across West Sumatra, there were dominant ethnic groups who were more likely to get married to Minangkabau ethnic women. These were the Javanese, Batak, Mandailing, Malay, Sundanese, Nias and Dayak ethnic groups. The following are the percentages of ethnic origin of the husbands in the 37 couples of Minangkabau female informants.

**Figure 1. Ethnic Diversity Chosen by the Minangkabau Women as Husbands**



Based on the field results, ethnic Javanese husbands are considered to be superior to Minangkabau women. The results of the interview state that there are two main reasons why Minangkabau women like Javanese ethnic men. *First*, since the beginning of their meeting, Javanese men show a positive character, like having gentle manners when treating their partners. This positive attitude is also shown to both parents as prospective in-laws. *Second*, Minangkabau women feel that they are given full authority by their husbands to control and regulate the arrangements related to their children and households. There is very little intervention by the

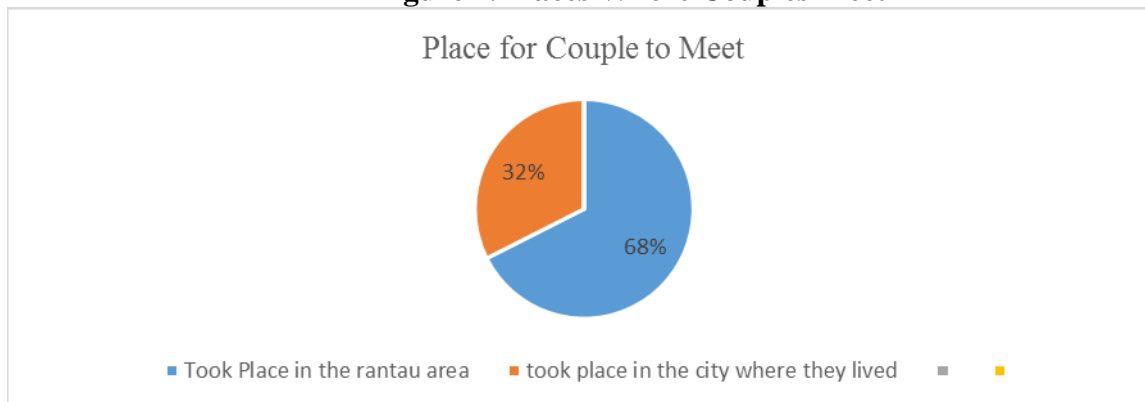
husband in relation to the choices and decisions taken by his wife. This allows the wife able to do the best for her family. This study found that the cultural factors from the Javanese family, that of a multicultural understanding that from the husband and their socioeconomic status, also influences the harmonious relationships in the family.

The author then did a cross-check with the Javanese husbands. The full power given to the wife in the arrangement of the household is of mutual accord to the Javanese customs. Minangkabau women have strong self-confidence, so they receive respect from their husbands in terms of carrying out their responsibilities. In addition, the concept practiced by Javanese men when dealing with other ethnicities is that every human being has a collateral relation, that is, a relationship of interdependence with other humans (Idrus, 2012).

### **Minangkabau Women Meet with Their Partners in the *Rantau* Area**

Another interesting thing is the crossing of paths between Minangkabau women and their partners in the *rantau* area, such as in Jakarta, Pekanbaru and even Malaysia. Based on the interviews with 37 informants, 25 women stated that they met their prospective husbands at work or when they were studying outside of West Sumatra. Those who wander have a better education (students) and they are open about their relationships with men who are not ethnic Minangkabau. Only 12 informants noted that they met their partners in the city where they lived. This fact shows that the tradition of *merantau* is no longer the property of Minangkabau men but that it has shifted to becoming a choice for women, with the aim of either working or having an education that allowed her to finally find her mate. This means that Minangkabau women have independence in terms of determining their goals and future.

**Figure 2. Places Where Couples Meet**



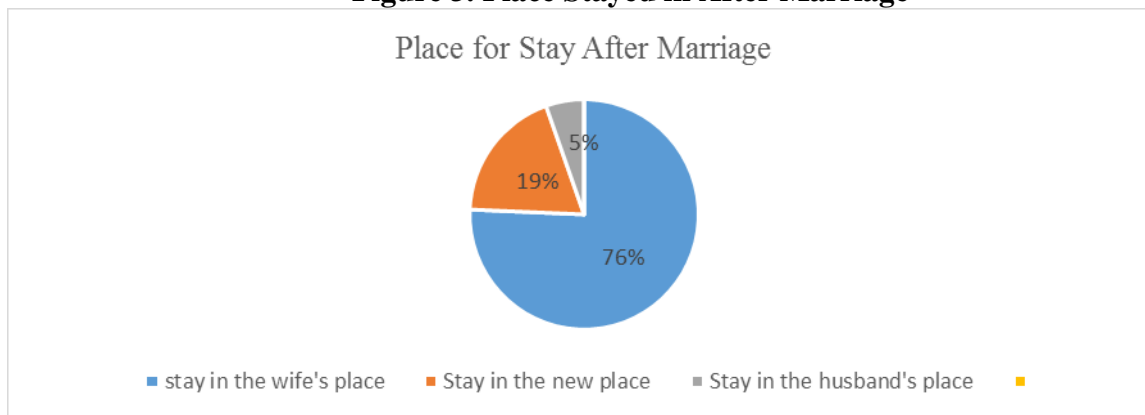
*Merantau* is a traditional Minangkabau tradition that obligates boys to leave their hometowns. There are three purposes of *merantau*; trade, for study and to earn money (Marta & Futures, 2014). It has never been written in Minangkabau *adat* literature that the purpose of migration is to find a mate. This means that meeting with one's spouse in the *rantau* area if they are of a different ethnicity is an unexpected fate. One of the important contributions of this study is showing the women's ability to *merantau* despite their cultural obligations to maintain their family's assets and traditional values. Families that allow their daughters to be away are more likely to let their daughters get married to people from other ethnic groups. The respondents stated that their big family gives them support to marry their partner who they met in the *rantau* area. This happens because there has been a paradigm shift in modern Minangkabau society, which is nowadays a multicultural society. Both Minangkabau men and women are expected to

match with people from the Minangkabau ethnic group. The parents are worried that their children will stay forever in the *rantau* and forget about their hometowns. This is the reason why women who wish to marry other ethnic men face challenges from their parents. They must be able to convince their parents that their decision to marry ethnic men does not affect their devotion to their parents and to their hometown. This means that Minangkabau women who are married to other ethnic men have the ability to influence others, in addition to a strong intention to marry their partners.

### **Minangkabau Women Invite Their Husbands to Stay in the Houses of Their Big Family and Participate in Minangkabau Culture**

Based on the results of interviews with 37 informants, 28 couples decided to stay in the wife's place in Western Sumatra. Only 9 couples settled in the *rantau* area or in their husband's house. This suggests that the culture of everyday life is Minangkabau culture.

**Figure 3. Place Stayed in After Marriage**



According to the Minangkabau custom, after marriage, the husband is invited to live with his wife's extended family. This matrilineal custom, aims to ensure the stability of the life of the new couple while at the same time, demonstrating a strong attachment between women and their mothers (Abdullah, 2009). According to Minangkabau custom, the wife's family home, *Rumah Gadang*, must still be occupied and maintained by a woman. *Rumah Gadang*, including the land, fields and various other resources, will become her wealth and sustain her life (Boestami & Sjanir, 1992). The family will separate themselves from the wife's extended family if they have economic stability. However, a woman will still visit her extended family and *rumah gadang* because she is holding *Pusako Tinggi* of the land and house. This applies to all women in Minangkabau society.

There are several habits practiced in matrilineal families. *First*, the house is occupied by the wife. This mastery has an impact on the responsibility borne by the wife when it comes to taking care of the household. The wife cleans the house, the yard, arranges the furniture and fixes all of the household appliances. She will be proud if the house looks clean, neat and complete with amenities. The wife receives appreciation from two parties; first from her own extended family and second from her husband. The home for Minangkabau women is not just a shelter but it also has a social and cultural function. The house is a family gathering place for receiving guests and for educating and caring for the children. This role is in line with the Minangkabau proverb, which states that women are *sumarak dalam nagari* (as a source of family pride because

of their morals). If every woman makes her house neat and the environment is clean, then this creates a lively and beautiful *Nagari*.

*Second*, the wife controls the food. The wife determines the menu that is served every day. The husband will receive a dish that will be served by his wife. At the beginning of the marriage, when the couple still lives with the wife's parents, the financing of the daily meals is borne by the wife's parents. The husband will be served the best cuisine because he is considered to be a guest in the wife's family home. If the wives are late in serving the food or it is not tasty, her attitude will be considered shameful. The expertise in cooking becomes a source of pride for a woman (Boestami & Sjafnir, 1992). To fulfil the kitchen needs, the wives sometimes work as a traders, employees, labourers or teachers. The nature of Minangkabau women is that they do not stay at home. She must work to increase the household income to meet their collectie needs. The nature of women controlling household consumption is in line with *umbun puruik pegangan kunci* (as a controller of the household economy). As mentioned earlier, women from well-known Minangkabau ethnic groups have strict rules regarding the regulation of the family finances (Davis, 1996). Although this shows that women in Minangkabau carry heavy responsibilities, this is what forges women into being strong when dealing with household problems. The results of the interviews conducted with the husbands prove that they are dependent on their wives in various ways including the children, the household and the economy. They tend to respect and give respect to the extended family of the wife.

*Third*, the wife is responsible for caring and educating the children. Children in Minangkabau are heirs to the ancestral wealth (*harto pusako tinggi*). If a family has not been blessed with children, especially girls, then it will be troublesome. This is because girls receive the inheritance. Based on the results of the interviews with 28 informants who settled in West Sumatra, children were more familiar with their mother's culture because they often visited their mother's extended family. Once a year, they visit their father's extended family in Java. The language used by the children in the family is the Minangkabau language. Even though they do not live in West Sumatra, the mothers tend to use the Minangkabau language with their children to instil cultural values. The art that is often enjoyed is Minangkabau art. However, related to their prospective partner, the parents give them freedom. This freedom is because their own parents choose a partner according to their pleasure and happiness. The attitude of the Minangkabau women is that they are responsible for the education and future of their children. This is in accordance with *adage limpapeh rumah nan gadang* (as a children's educator) and *pusek jalo kumpulan tali* (as a determinant of the future child). A mother from the Minangkabau ethnic group will feel ashamed if she fails to educate her children.

Referring to Suhendi & Wahyu (2000), this study proves that the construction of the Minangkabau culture has created four patterns within a kinship system. *First*, the children get inheritance from their mother's family as successors and descendants. Children have close relations to their mother's family. Education, health and the children's success are the prominent responsibility of the mothers. *Second*, married couples avoid divorce because the community appreciates family integrity. This makes the wife more patient and they mask their husband's shortages. In the Minangkabau community, a husband or wife places themselves as complementary to their partners. This means that the husband masks his wife's shortage as well. The respondent stated that they were aware of their partner's strengths and weaknesses and that it was their duty to make it complete. *Third*, married couples also have respectful relationships, especially when the couple is dealing with others. This is done to show that they value their partner. The sentence "... I asked my husband first ..." or "... I asked my wife first..." indicates

that the wife or husband need approval from their partner before making a decision. *Fourth*, the couples have relations in the form of partnerships. Minangkabau people consistently divide roles where the husbands work in the public sphere while the wife works in the domestic sphere, except for a forceful situation that requires the women to join in in terms of earning a living. This division of labour means that the wives and husbands have power in their respective places. The four patterns of this relationship are consistent with the matrilineal Minangkabau tradition and these are the key to family happiness. This is because it becomes the pretension and purpose of the husband and wife as partners. This fact shows that there is a cultural interaction between the inner forces of both women and men in terms of family practices.

In this study, it was proven that the effectiveness of family harmony is influenced by the Minangkabau matrilineal culture. Culture thus becomes a reference for how the role of the wives and husbands are divided. Minangkabau custom explicitly states that there are four main roles for a woman; *limpapeh rumah nan gadang* (as a children's educator), *pusek jalo kumpulan tali* (as a determinant of the future of the child), *Umbun puruik pegangan kunci* (as a controller of the household economics), *sumarak dalam nagari* (as a part of the family pride because of their morals) and *nan gadang basa nan tuah* (pious, intelligent and knowledgeable). The demands of the Minangkabau culture become a strong identity for women, as well as being a special attraction for men. Deviating from the role determined by *adat* results in instability and divorce. The findings of this study show that Minangkabau *adat* puts the role of women in the household as more important than the role of the husbands in earning a living.

The problem that is experienced by the career women with a domestic role that is demanded by society and culture is having a double responsibility. Some working wives who became respondents felt overwhelmed if they had to educate their children and take care of the household without the help of their closest family. This situation means that the wives have to think pragmatically according to the principle "*karir sukses rumah tangga beres* (success in their career and in the household)". This means that the Minangkabau women must think to use all of their potential so then the interests of the individuals, families and the demands of society can be balanced and harmonious. In certain situations, the closest person to be asked for help is the mother and sister. At this time, the husband also has an awareness that is related to helping his wife to organise the household.

Based on the results of the interviews conducted with 37 informants, the Minangkabau ethnic women did not experience any difficulties in terms of making adjustments for their husbands and his extended family. This is because most of them do not live close to the husband's family. This shows that the interaction of the Minangkabau women with the husband's extended family is classified as lesser. The minor problem that arises is the food menu that must be prepared for the husband and his extended family when they visit. The wives must present two kinds of menus; that which can be enjoyed by their own family and that by their husband's family. Wives must learn to cook dishes that their husbands like. For the Minangkabau women, this is considered to be a challenge and not a burden. The results of another study (Simamora, 2017) indicate that there are distinctive relationships in different ethnic marriages because each party forces themselves to be able to accept the new patterns and styles of communication, dialect and language, including communication behaviour. Likewise, Friska in Pakpahan (2013) revealed that to maintain the family harmony and to prevent conflict, the couples must be careful when communicating. According to them, the act of caution is wiser than causing friction.

The results of the study by Juliani & Cangara (2015) stated that in inter-ethnic marriages, a common thing to find was that one of the dominant couples enforced the application of their

culture. This started from the food menu that is served every day and progress to how to educate any children. In this study, it was found that the Minangkabau women were dominant in terms of applying her culture in the household. Benazir's research (Pratamawaty, 2017) reveals there to be four strategies in maintaining marriage with couples of different ethnicities; willing to use the language of their partner, familiarising themselves by accepting their partner's communication style, understanding their extended family and their partner's culture in terms of attachment to a large family and respecting their partner's activities related to being active in a public space along with their relationship as a part of their privacy. These four things are shown by the husbands who marry women from the Minangkabau ethnic group.

Hidayati revealed that a couple with an undergraduate degree have a high ability to understand problems in their marriage (finance, religion, the utilisation of leisure time) so they tend to have the most successful marriages (Sri Hidayati, 2017). In other words, the higher the education level therein, the more stable the marriage is. This is different from the results of this study where out of the 37 informants, 25 of them are only high school graduates and 12 people have a bachelor's degree. The main factor that causes them to survive optimally is the clear division of roles between the wife and husband. The application of the role is in accordance to the culture as understood by each partner. Sri Hidayati (2017) also states that women have better cultural adaptations than men. In this study, the men of Javanese ethnicity showed a better ability in terms of cultural adaptation than other ethnic groups.

## **Conclusion**

The results indicate two conclusions. *First*, the construction of Minangkabau culture has a strong influence in terms of regulating the role of the husband and wife in the household. The citizens in West Sumatra consistently carry out this cultural construction because it is in line with their household goals and makes the family life harmonious. *Second*, on the other hand, the cultural construction of the role of the women means that working women have a double burden. Even though women participate in earning a living, domestic roles also remain their responsibility. However, this actually means that Minangkabau women maximize their potentials, so they can please themselves, their families and society. However, the research found that Minangkabau women are forced to accept all responsibilities because of the existence of a cultural construction that requires it. Theoretically, this study further strengthens the functional structural theory that families must share their roles and responsibilities in order to produce balance and harmony. This paper recommends that Minangkabau women carry on the cultural construction as a reference when performing their dual roles in the household. The wisdom of the Minangkabau culture creates a positive influence by performing a particular character in the household that is a part of achieving a happy family.

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