

Under The Shadow of Patriarchy: Women Position in Minangkabau Matrilineal System

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Abstrak. : In traditional books it is often said that women in Minangkabau have a high position. The tradition that based on the syariah Islam is presumed to value her existence, care about her welfare, and listen to her opinion. This argument is often directed to the conclusion that the principle of gender equality has finally been implemented in the reality of Minangkabau society. However, in reality, such equality is not found in traditional meetings which are still patriarchal. This patriarchal pattern can also be seen in the philosophy of *tali tigo sapilin* (three twisted ropes) which symbolizes the three main leaders in Minangkabau society, namely *niniak mamak*, *alim ulama*, and *cadiak pandai* (tribal leader, religious leader, and scholar). The elimination of the *Bundo Kanduang* element in this philosophy seems to contradict the narrative of equality being promoted. Therefore, this article aims to examine in more depth the patriarchal patterns inherent in traditional books and in the reality of matrilineal Minangkabau society. The method used in this research is the critical analysis method. This research shows that Minangkabau women are, on the one hand, protected in terms of by their welfare by the customs. However, on the other hand, traditional reality shows that Minangkabau women are actually positioned as secondary creation, which is the main feature of patriarchal society.

Keywords: Matrilineal, Women, Secondary Creation, Patriarchy.

Introduction

Women in Minangkabau traditional literature are likened to decoration in the village, the beauty of the country. In the *Rumah Gadang*, she is likened to the *ambun puruak pagangan kunci*, which means the legal owner of the people's property such as houses, land, and rice fields. The position of Minang women as *kapai tampek batanyo ka pulang tampek babarito*, which explains the valuable

function of women's voices in traditional meetings and decision making, is often mentioned as a symbol of the high position of women in this culture. This argument often boils down to assumption of the final gender equality practice in matrilineal society in Minangkabau. Not a few even think that matrilineal system in Minangkabau has serious implications in perceiving the worthlessness of men in Minangkabau. Research like this is carried out by HAMKA¹ and most recently Sri Meyenti and Afrida², which reveals the traditional injustices experienced by Minangkabau men.

Long before that, studies on matrilineal and gender relations in Minangkabau society had actually succeeded in attracting the attention of world researchers, including Netscher (1850), Korn (1941), Joseline de Jong (1978), Kato (1977), Mochtar Naim (1971), Franz von Benda Beckmann (1975), Amir Syarifuddin (1984), Peggy Reves Sanday (1998).³ More specifically, the discussion about women's gender relations and their position in the matrilineal Minangkabau traditional order is also quite interesting to study. In connection with this issue, some researchers agree with the power and privileges given by the matrilineal system to women. Researchers in this category believe that mainstreaming women in the Minangkabau matrilineal system benefits women themselves. This is as reviewed by Silmi Novita Nurman⁴ and Rahima Zakia⁵. On the other hand, there is also a category of researchers who are of the view that mainstreaming women in the form of speech rights and property ownership is not free from bias and restrictions imposed by custom itself. Discussing this issue includes Mardian Sulistyati⁶, Mina Elfira⁷, Moh Atikurrahman⁸, Tengku

¹ HAMKA, *Islam Dan Adat Minangkabau* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1984).

² Sri Meyenti and Afrida Afrida, "The Inequality of Right and Obligation of Minangkabau Men in Matrilineal System," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Mamangan* 7, no. 1 (June 28, 2018): 12–22, <https://doi.org/10.22202/mamangan.2466>.

³ Meyenti and Afrida.

⁴ Silmi Novita Nurman, "Kedudukan Perempuan Minang Dalam Perspektif Gender," *Jurnal Al-Aqidah* 11, no. 1 (June 2019): 90–99.

⁵ Rahima Zakia, "Kesetaraan Dan Keadilan Gender Dalam Adat Minangkabau," *Kafaah Journal of Gender Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011).

⁶ Mardian Sulistyati, "Male Order Dalam Konstruksi Seksual Perempuan Minangkabau," *Musawa Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Islam* 21, no. 2 (2022): 157–69.

⁷ Mina Elfira, "BUNDO KANDUANG: A POWERFUL OR POWERLESS RULER? LITERARY ANALYSIS OF KABA CINDUA MATO (HIKAYAT NAN MUDA TUANKU PAGARUYUNG)," *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia* 11, no. 1 (June 1, 2007): 30, <https://doi.org/10.7454/mssh.v11i1.48>.

⁸ Moh Atikurrahman, Wahidah Zein Br Siregar, and Shabrina An Adzhani, "Belenggu Maskulinitas Dalam Kultur Matrilineal Minangkabau: Ambivalensi Sitti Nurbaya Dan Beberapa Citra Kolosal Gender Pada Roman Marah Roesli," *SULUK: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Budaya* 4, no. 2 (February 10, 2023): 94–104, <https://doi.org/10.15642/suluk.2022.4.2.94-104>.

Rika Valentina⁹, dan Roni Ekha Putera¹⁰. Meanwhile, this research intends to expand and fill the gaps in previous studies by looking at the hidden side of patriarchy behind the custom of matrilineal system, which is often seen as placing women in the highest position.

The traditional literature used as the main source in this research is the Tambo Alam Minangkabau book¹¹, Kaba Rancak di Labuah¹², Bundo Kandung Putireno Raudhatul Jannah discussion¹³ in one of the podcasts which discusses in more detail the reality of traditional matrilineal and the actual placement of women in traditional structures, as well as field observations by the writer in several traditional meetings to see how women are treated and expected to play a role. Meanwhile, as an analysis tool, the author uses supporting references to see how the structure of patriarchal society is formed and how patriarchal society treats its women in the social system.

This research does not intend to look down on the matrilineal system applied by the Minangkabau people. However, it is hoped that the author's suspicion about hidden patriarchal practices in the order and reality of Minangkabau customs can knock awareness of the custom itself that the equality and glorification of women that is often expressed about Minangkabau society is still biased and still needs to be fought for. Therefore, this research is important to clarify the true position of women in customs, both positive and negative. And it is hoped that it will be able to reduce traditional patriarchal tendencies to place women in a different class from men.

Results and Discussion

Women in Patriarchal Culture

Simon De Beauvoir likens women to domestic female animals in the view of patriarchal society. Because she has to carry out her reproductive role to get pregnant, give birth and breastfeed. At the same time, they are also required to maintain their sexual attractiveness while still completing all household tasks,

⁹ Tengku Valentina and Cici Safitri, "Minang Women in The Patriarchy Cultural Maelstrom: Viewed from The View of Religion and Culture," in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Gender, Culture and Society, ICGCS 2021, 30-31 August 2021, Padang, Indonesia* (EAI, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.30-8-2021.2316280>.

¹⁰ Tengku Rika Valentina dan Roni Ekha Putera, "Posisi Perempuan Etnis Minangkabau Dalam Dunia Patriarki Di Sumatera Barat Dalam Perspektif Agama, Keluarga Dan Budaya," *Jurnal Demokrasi* 7, no. 1 (2008).

¹¹ H. Datoek Toeah Payakumbuh, *Tambo Alam Minangkabau Tatanan Adat Warisan Nenek Moyang Orang Minang*, 13th ed. (Bukittinggi: Pustaka Indonesia, n.d.).

¹² Dt. Panduko Alam, *Kaba Rancak Di Labuah* (Bukittinggi: Kristal Multimedia, 2011).

¹³ Prof. Putireno Raudhatul Jannah, "Kekerabatan Matrilineal Minangkabau Di Indonesia" (Indonesia, April 13, 2021), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DScPhKf_Dig.

which is very contradictory to the word attractive.¹⁴ Domestic tasks have social implications that cause women to have difficulty creating an existence outside because their whole world is just devotion to home, children, and husband. That's why when men are connected to the outside world they can talk about general ideas and goals to achieve, things that are considered masculine. Meanwhile, women only exchange secrets and recipes, comparing pregnancy experiences, how to give birth and care for children and other things that are considered feminine.¹⁵

Even though the terms masculine and feminine were created as if they were equal and symmetrical, in reality relationship between the two is not exactly the same. As it is reflected in the different social meaning on women and men. Masculine is considered the absolute type of human. Meanwhile, in Aristotle's language, women are defined as beings who lack quality. Women are imperfect men, or creatures created by accident according to St. Thomas. Women are non-essential creatures in contrast to the essential creatures, namely men. The man is the subject while the woman is another figure.¹⁶

This unequal view in interpreting the two sexes should be suspected of having contributed to the injustices experienced by women throughout human history. Injustice in the form of perceived superiority of men and inferiority of women. Arguments about women's inferiority are often even linked to the beginning of the creation of the first humans, namely Adam and Eve. Where Adam is considered the main creature while Eve was created after Adam who is considered as complementary creature. Frontally, for example, Aristotle described women as morally, intellectually, and physically inferior to men. For Aristotle, women belong to men. As men's property, it is the woman's duty to reproduce and serve the men in the household. He also considers that women's service to men and men's domination of women is normal.¹⁷

This unfair reading affects the world's view of women's position in the overall purpose of their creation, namely to complement men. This view has been culturalized in such a way that it perpetuates women's position as secondary creation (second class creatures). So, it is not surprising that in the process you will find many legal products, statutes or theology that tend to

¹⁴ Simon de Beauvoir, *Second Sex: Kehidupan Perempuan* (Yogyakarta: Narasi, 2016).

¹⁵ Simon de Beauvoir, 382.

¹⁶ Simon de Beauvoir.

¹⁷ Markus Dirk Dubber, *The Police Power Patriarchy and the Foundations of American Government* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1893).

defend men (patriarchy). In fact, ontologically, theologically, sociologically, and eschatologically, women's position is determined by men.¹⁸

Gerda Lerner in *The Creation of Patriarchy* states that patriarchy refers to an ancient system in Greece and Rome which places men as heads of families who have legal and economic power. The term patriarchy is used in anthropology to describe a family or clan controlled by the father or eldest male or group of men. Meanwhile, in feminist theory, patriarchy is described as a broader social structure in which men as a group dominate women and children, so that men have access to control and influence.¹⁹ In line with Lerner, more specifically Grant, R.A and Montrose define patriarchy as a system of behavioral rules, power structures and belief systems that implicitly and explicitly support men's control over women and this system has existed for thousands of years.²⁰

The main control holder in a patriarchal society is men. This control broadly covers all aspects of life related to the relationship between men and women in the economic, social, political and psychological fields, even including the institution of marriage.²¹ Nawal El Saadawi even stated explicitly that the family unit in the institution of marriage is the core of patriarchal class relations.²² The patriarchal system in the household can be seen from the main role that is always assigned to women, namely as domestic workers who are only tasked with carrying out all domestic tasks. The broad picture of patriarchal practices is reflected in the social system of society which inevitably places women in a second, complementary and inferior position. So it is not wrong to say that patriarchy is a general description of the world social system.

Matrilineal in Minangkabau

In the midst of the domination of men's power over women in various cultural systems, Minangkabau uniquely gives women a new status. Through their matrilineal system, Minangkabau society wants to bring women to the surface as clan rulers and property owners, which has implications for the

¹⁸ Nunu Burhanuddin, "Membincang Persepsi Keterpinggiran Perempuan," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 16, no. 1 (2015): 57–74, <https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v16i1.987>.

¹⁹ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

²⁰ Rachel A. Grant and V. Tamara Montrose, "It's a Man's World: Mate Guarding and the Evolution of Patriarchy," *Mankind Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (2018): 384–418, <https://doi.org/10.46469/mq.2018.58.3.2>.

²¹ Mochamad Nadif Nasruloh and Taufiq Hidayat, "BUDAYA PATRIARKI DALAM RUMAH TANGGA (PEMAHAMAN TEKS AL-QUR'AN DAN KESETARAAN GENDER)," n.d., <https://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/Yudisia/index>.

²² Nawal El Sadawi, *Perempuan Dalam Budaya Patriarki* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001).

strength of women's position in the structure of Minangkabau matrilineal society. Idrus Hakimi emphasized his understanding of matrilineal in Minangkabau to the central position of women as owners of rice fields and land and the power of mothers' voices in determining the results of traditional negotiations.²³ Amir Syarifuddin added the central role of women in Minangkabau society as educators of the people and safeguarding wealth and family welfare.²⁴

Another implication actually shows that the matrilineal system in Minangkabau places men as a marginalized gender. This can be seen from Atmazaki's explanation of the position of men when formulating matrilineal. According to him, men in the matrilineal system in Minangkabau do not have control over their nuclear family, namely their wife and children. As biological fathers, in Minangkabau men do not have a central role in their household.²⁵ The marginalization of men as an implication of the matrilineal system in Minangkabau is also criticized by HAMKA in his book *Islam dan Adat Minangkabau*.²⁶ Conceptually, this marginalization should show that men do not have a dominant portion so that they cannot have power over women in Minangkabau, as in other patriarchal cultures. Before looking further, it is interesting to examine how Minangkabau society uniquely decided to roll the ball of power "as if" into the hands of women. According to Peggy Reeves Sanday, the main reason why the Minangkabau people adhere to the matrilineal system is because of the philosophy of *alam takambang jadi guru* (nature can be used as a teacher).²⁷ This is in line with Asbir Datuak Rajo Mangkuto who stated that the basis for using the matrilineal system in Minangkabau is because the Minangkabau people like to learn from nature. Almost all animals that are known and close to human life are linked to their mother or mother. It is better not to be near the father than not to know the mother, and naturally the child will always obey the mother like cats, birds, chickens, and horses. These animals are closer to their mothers than to their fathers, so based on the natural

²³ Idrus Hakimi, *Rangkaian Mustika Adat Basandi Syara' Di Minangkabau* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2004).

²⁴ Amir M.S, *Adat Minangkabau Pola Dan Tujuan Hidup Orang Minang* (Jakarta: Mutiara Sumber Widya, 2006).

²⁵ Atmazaki, *Dinamika Jender Dalam Konteks Adat Dan Agama* (Padang: UNP, 2002).

²⁶ HAMKA, *Islam Dan Adat Minangkabau*.

²⁷ Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy* (London: Cornell University Press, 2002).

philosophy of *alam takambang jadi guru*, a matrilineal system then is used in Minangkabau.²⁸

Furthermore, it can actually also be seen that the matrilineal kinship system in its development is considered as the oldest kinship system which in the process developed towards patrilineal, and ultimately towards the family system of modern society, namely the parental system. This cycle can be seen from the remnants of the maternal descent system adopted by the patrilineal society in Indonesia. This is evident from the word "sabatuha", in Batak land which means "one half", a person whose descendants are one mother, whereas in Batak land today the father's descent system applies. It can also be seen from the importance of the position of "tulang", namely the mother's brothers (uncle) in Mandailing, which indirectly proves that the maternal descent system used to apply, before the current paternal descent system applied. So the mother's descendants are older than the father's descendants.²⁹

In line with this, Friedrich Engels in *The Origin Of Family Private Property And The State* also concluded that the first kinship system adopted by humans was matrilineal with the line of inheritance and descent being taken from the mother's line. Furthermore, he even said that a matrilineal society could not only transfer all ownership and property to women but at the same time also adhere to a matriarchy, namely a society in which women have power not only economically but also socially and politically. According to Engels, the source of women's power in a matrilineal society is none other than control of property. By controlling the property and clan, it is very possible that power is held by women. However, he continued, as time went by, men began to look for ways to own property outside the home, so that power shifted from women to men. Men's desires require great pressure to change the order of society from matrilineal to patrilineal which socially causes women to be oppressed under male rule.³⁰

Unlike what Engels mentioned, matrilinealism in Minangkabau is not at the same time a matriarchy. Women are not the top leaders in a tribe. The oldest woman or Bundo Kanduang in Minangkabau only heads all the women in her clan, and functions as an extension of the power of the traditional people (tribe leader) in implementing the results of the collective agreement. That is why Taufik Abdullah said that the power of Bundo Kanduang or the representation of women in the Minangkabau matrilineal system is just symbolism, because women never really lead. So even though the woman represented by Bundo

²⁸ Asbir Datuak Rajo Mangkuto, *Kesulthanan Minangkabau Pagaruyuang Darul Quorar* (Jakarta: Taushia, 2010).

²⁹ Idrus Hakimi, *Rangkaian Mustika Adat Basandi Syara' Di Minangkabau*.

³⁰ Rosemarie Putnam Tong, *Feminist Thought Pengantar Paling Komprehensif Kepada Arus Utama Pemikiran Faminis* (Bandung: Jalasutra, n.d.).

Kanduang is the source of policy, she does not have a role in making decisions, because she is not someone who holds an official position in the Minangkabau hierarchy of power and political system. Bundo Kanduang (woman), in turn, said Taufik Abdullah, is still only a symbol of power.³¹

However, the matrilineal system in Minangkabau continues to this day. Kinship in Minangkabau still runs through the maternal lineage, and even ownership of property is still managed and utilized for the survival of the mother and her tribal clan. This means that Minangkabau women from the past until today still hold the function of property owners, which in Engels' theory allows them to occupy the positions of power. However, what is interesting is that even though property ownership never leaves the hands of Minang women, their power is still artificial.

Bundo Kanduang: Biased Privileges

Bundo Kanduang as a representation of women in Minangkabau society is always assumed to have a key position in the social system. In the traditional saying, it is stated that Bundo Kanduang is *limpapeh* Rumah Gadang, which symbolizes the function of Bundo Kanduang as a figure who decorates and dominates the Rumah Gadang because she is the one who lives in the Rumah Gadang, *ambun puruak pagangan kunci* which explains her function as the holder of the key to the inheritance, *ka pai tampek batanyo ka pulang tampek babarito*, which explained Bundo Kanduang's function as a person whose opinion was heard.

However, Bundo Kanduang is not all Minangkabau women. She is a handful of women from the matrilineal Minangkabau community, the oldest among her people. She has certain functions and privileges within her people. According to Peggy Reeves Sanday, the Bundo Kanduang concept assumes that the original Minangkabau society was an egalitarian and equal society. Gender roles in Minangkabau society are not to dominate one over another, but to act collaboratively without having to be first or second.³²

However, as changes have occurred, the meaning of the figure of Bundo Kanduang has taken on new forms which are somewhat different from the role and function of Bundo Kanduang as understood in ancient times. Therefore, there are three schemes for understanding the meaning of Bundo Kanduang as follows.³³

³¹ Rosemarie Putnam Tong.

³² Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy*.

³³ Widia Fithri, "Dysfunction of Bundo Kanduang and the Collapse of the Rumah Gadang," *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education*, vol. 12, 2021.

1. Bundo Kanduang in Kaba Cindua Mato

In Kaba Cindua Mato, Bundo Kanduang is a female king from the Pagaruyuang Kingdom. She is not just an ordinary woman but she is the leader of the country. Her opinion is not only taken into consideration but she is the one who makes the decision. Many reviews state that the story of Bundo Kanduang in Kaba is a depiction of matrilineal in Minangkabau which is also matriarchy, meaning that apart from the line of descent following the mother's line, women in Minangkabau are also the leaders in the center. Based on Kaba Cindua Mato's analysis, it can be said that Minangkabau women have relatively special privileges not only in the private sphere but also in the public sphere, such as in the political structure system of society. Women's leadership is something that is commonly accepted by Minangkabau society, as can be seen from the activities of Bundo Kanduang.

In Kaba Cindua Mato Bundo Kanduang is depicted as a strong, independent, wise, intellectual, and beautiful woman who perfectly carries out her role as an authoritarian political figure and mother. She represents a strong mother figure, promoting the private and public roles that are mostly carried out in Minangkabau society. In short, based on this analysis, Kaba Cindua Mato presents a picture of Bundo Kanduang as a strong ruler and mother. In addition, the text strengthens the image of Minangkabau as a society where women have a special status and play an important role in their community.³⁴ However, Taufik Abdullah said that Bundo Kanduang in the real world in Minangkabau is only a symbol of power. They do not have the power as mentioned in Kaba Cindua Mato.³⁵

2. Bundo Kanduang dalam Rumah Gadang

Bundo Kanduang in the practice of early Minangkabau society was the oldest woman who held the key to inheritance. The existence of Bundo Kanduang can be found in every Rumah Gadang Minangkabau. In the Rumah Gadang, a Bundo Kanduang functions as the *limpapeh rumah gadang*, *abun puruak pagangan kunci*, *ka pai tampek batanyo ka home tampek babarito*.³⁶ This means that the oldest woman in the Rumah Gadang is the holder of the key to the inheritance. Apart from that, this oldest woman is also the one who will always be asked for her opinion on something that will be decided in the traditional court. and will be informed about the results of the decisions of the traditional meeting so that she can implement the results of the traditional

³⁴ Elfira, "BUNDO KANDUANG: A POWERFUL OR POWERLESS RULER? LITERARY ANALYSIS OF KABA CINDUA MATO (HIKAYAT NAN MUDA TUANKU PAGARUYUNG)."

³⁵ Taufik Abdullah, "Some Notes on the Kaba Tjindua Mato: An Example of Minangkabau Traditional Literature," *Indonesia* 9 (April 1970): 1, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3350620>.

³⁶ Amir M.S, *Adat Minangkabau Pola Dan Tujuan Hidup Orang Minang*.

decisions in her home. So it can be interpreted that Bundo Kanduang is the ruler of their respective Rumah Gadang. This condition often makes researchers assume that the Minang woman represented by Bundo Kanduang is a ruler. However, in Tambo it is stated that, even though at the same time women as Bundo Kanduang have power and position, still in the Rumah Gadang Mamak Tungganai (the men) is the most powerful. Whereas in traditional communities it is the headman (man) who has formal power, and not the woman (bundo kanduang).³⁷

3. Bundo kanduang in LKAAM organisation.

The current phenomenon shows that the Rumah Gadang of the Minangkabau people, for various reasons, has been replaced with new houses that are modern and more up to date. The increasing disappearance of the Rumah Gadang in Minangkabau also shows a social change in the community, which previously lived together in one house as a large family, changing to a nuclear family consisting of only father, mother and children.

This condition caused Bundo Kanduang, the oldest woman in her large family, to lose her throne. So the face of bundo kanduang in the modern era can be found in the Bundo Kanduang Institute under LKAAM (Lembaga Kerapatan Adat Alam Minangkabau), which is a women's organization formed by the government. The Bundo Kanduang Organization is a social organization founded to advance women in West Sumatra. The Bundo Kanduang organization was founded during the New Order era. The aim of establishing the Bundo Kanduang organization was to encourage the progress of women in general, especially in West Sumatra. The Bundo Kanduang organization that exists today is an organization of women who hold positions and functions as Indonesian citizens in West Sumatra Province. Meanwhile, Bundo Kanduang in Minangkabau tradition is a woman who has a central position and has the main function in the domestic sector.³⁸ Of course, the original meaning of Bundo Kanduang and that contained in LKAAM are two different things.

In many traditional literatures it is always found that women have an important position in the Minangkabau matrilineal society. Of course, one of these privileges is being given the title of a woman in Minangkabau as Bundo Kanduang. This title further has implications for the perceived role of women in social groups. Minang women should be grateful for the titles, roles and customary rights they have as a consequence of the kinship system applied by the Minangkabau people. A study states that Minang women who live in a matrilineal system have their ownership rights, welfare, security, and their voices heard by custom. This is inversely proportional to women who live in a genuine patriarchal culture. Where women are not guaranteed their wealth,

³⁷ H. Datoek Toeah Payakumbuh, *Tambo Alam Minangkabau Tatanan Adat Warisan Nenek Moyang Orang Minang*, 13th ed. (Bukittinggi: Pustaka Indonesia, n.d.).

³⁸ Fithri, "Dysfunction of Bundo Kanduang and the Collapse of the Rumah Gadang."

security, and their voices are not heard. Throughout their lives, women in a patriarchal society are controlled by men's interests. This research states that Minang women have authority over their lives compared to women who live in a patrilineal, patriarchal environment.³⁹

According to today's Bundo Kanduang Minang figure, Bundo Prof. Putireno Raudhatul Jannah, Minang women should be grateful. Because when the world talks about equality, in Minangkabau equality has been discussed through the glorification of women in the custom of matrilineal in Minangkabau.⁴⁰ The problem is whether men and women are in the same class in Minang society. Is it true that women and men sit at the same low level and stand at the same height in the matrilineal reality of Minangkabau customs? Is equality the same as the division of roles between men and women, as Sanday says? Or does this narrative of privilege actually at the same time hide a reality that actually oppresses women for the benefit of men?

The fact that the matrilineal Minangkabau does not adhere to patriarchy could refer to another possibility which means that the matrilineal Minangkabau is actually patriarchal. Traces of patriarchy in the Minangkabau matrilineal system can be seen from how custom positions women in traditional congregations. In an interview, Bundo Kanduang Puti Reno Raudhatul Jannah said that the woman is a discussion partner before the meeting held. This means that the men who will be sent to the meeting will discuss first with the women or *bundo kanduang* of their tribe, the points that will be presented at the meeting. After the meeting is over, the man will come back to the female leaders in his tribe to convey the results of the meeting. Furthermore, the results of the meeting will be carried out by the tribal group based on directions from Bundo Kanduang. According to Bundo Kanduang Raudhatul Jannah, this condition explains the function of Minang women as *ka pai tampek batanyo ka pulang tampek babarito*. This philosophy assumes that women are not left out of decision making.

The next question that arises is why women are not present together with men in meeting forums, if indeed women are so glorified. Why should women's opinions be represented by the voices of men who will be the representatives of the women's relatives? Is a Minang woman's voice not as valuable as a man's voice? This question was then answered by Bundo Reno Raudhatul Jannah, that in some places in the Minangkabau area women were not included in the meeting, so only male representatives came to talk at the

³⁹ Arif Rohman, "The Comparison of Power and Authority of Women in China and Minangkabau Societies," *International Journal of Humaniora and Social Studies* 2, no. 12 (2014): 141–45.

⁴⁰ Prof. Putireno Raudhatul Jannah, "Kekerabatan Matrilineal Minangkabau Di Indonesia" (Indonesia, April 13, 2021), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DScPhKf_Dig.

meeting. And in some other areas in Minangkabau women are included in meetings, but they are seated in a room close to the kitchen. After the men discuss, they will only be asked to agree or disagree about the matter being discussed. If the women don't agree, the meeting will be repeated.

On the one hand, this might be said to be an effort to respect women's interests. But why are women not included in the discussion? Why should she be asked at the end of the discussion? Then why are women only placed in the room near the kitchen? Why not sit at the same low level and stand at the same height or in the same room as the men? Why are women put at the back. Even at public meetings held by indigenous peoples regarding customary land issues, for example, women will even be prohibited from speaking up and expressing opinions, because they are considered incompetent in arguing. Even if she wants to express an opinion first before the meeting, she must convey the contents of her thoughts to the man or tribe leader, if he deems it appropriate, her opinion will be put forward by the man. There is a kind of due diligence on women's opinions before they are submitted to traditional meetings.

This condition is paradoxical with the narrative of equality that continues to be echoed about Minang women. The argument for equality is always linked to the custom of providing and maintaining the welfare of women by delegating all property to them. Also, the equality that has been meant to exist so far refers to women's opinions being heard, but how exactly those opinions are heard is actually contrary to the principle of equality itself. Bundo Kanduang Puti Reno Raudhatul Jannah analogized the privileges and equality of Minang women as Commissioners in a company while men are the President Director. According to Bundo Kanduang Puti Reno Raudhatul Jannah, women in Minang are the owners of traditional companies, while men are only executors. So Bundo Kanduang's strongest political role according to custom is as a decision maker.⁴¹ However, the findings show that this role is less relevant to the reality of nagari political life. This irrelevance basically occurs because decision making involves more men, both in clan and nagari discussion, such as: customary land matters, village development, and so on.⁴² while women are not really taken into account.

This paradox can also be seen from the *tali tigo sapilin* philosophy (philosophy of three twisted ropes), which is an analogy for the three pillars of Minangkabau society, namely the *niniak mamak*, *alim ulama*, and *the cadiaik pandai* (tribe leader, religious leader, and scholar). In Minangkabau society, these three leadership systems are also called "*tungku nan tigo sajarangan, tali nan*

⁴¹ Prof. Putireno Raudhatul Jannah.

⁴² Sismarni, "Perubahan Peranan Bundo Kanduang Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat Minangkabau Modern," *Kafaah: Journal of Gender Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011).

tigo sapilin". They complement and strengthen each other. *The tigo tungku sajarangan*, as well as the *tali tigo sapilin*, is a philosophy in the leadership of the Minangkabau people. These three elements are symbols of leadership that give color and influence the development of Minangkabau society. However, as a matrilineal society that emphasizes the privilege of women, another question arises. Why is Bundo Kanduang as a representation of Minang women not included in these three elements? This condition is of course a representation of the true structure of Minangkabau society. This structure clearly wants to state that the women represented by Bundo Kanduang are not in the same class as the *niniak mamak alim ulama* and *cadiak pandai* (*tribe leader, religious leader, and scholar*) who in fact are representatives of men.

The existence of the *tali tigo sapilin* philosophy (philosophy of three twisted ropes) provides a patriarchal pattern within the matrilineal system in Minangkabau itself. This patriarchal pattern can be seen in the application of natural philosophy, statutes, laws, and the determination of heads of customary law communities (*tribe leader*). And it can also be clearly found in social life which is clearly controlled and dominated by men.⁴³

At a time when women in Minangkabau culture were considered key figures of kinship whose voices were heard and considered. This is in contrast to the research results of Lusi Herlina from the Institute for Community Research and Empowerment in the book *Political Participation of Minang Women in a Matrilineal Society System*, which concluded that in many cases the existence of women was not heard. Everything is decided by men both in the family and in the *nagari*. Interestingly, she also found that even though Minangkabau customary law places women as heirs and legal owners of heritage, almost all areas of West Sumatra have cases where (*mamak*) *tribe leader* dominate and take over several strategic authorities which are ideally normatively women's rights.⁴⁴

This phenomenon is of course very contradictory to the narrative of glorifying women in the matrilineal system in Minangkabau. This phenomenon is also a blow and criticism of the custom itself which often glorifies the glorification of women, but also harbors biases which in its application still treat women as secondary creation. This is because in reality women in Minangkabau still rely on decisions made by *Niniak Mamak* (men group) within the clan and *Nagari* or *Mamak Tunganai* within the home. However, the reality of this custom clearly explains the central role of men

⁴³ Sismarni.

⁴⁴ Suardi Mahyuddin, *Dinamika Sistem Hukum Adat Minangkabau dalam Yurisprudensi Mahkamah Agung, op. cit.*, h. 54

represented by mamak (tribe leader) in social life and leadership in Minangkabau.⁴⁵

Domestication of Minangkabau Women

In a patriarchal society, women are associated as domestic workers, where all household work is considered women's work and responsibility. Women's duties as young girls, adults, even when they are married cannot be separated from the burden on them of all household duties. From a young age, for example, girls are taught about cooking games, to remind them of the domestic duties they have carried from childhood, while boys play with cars. When a woman is a teenager and nearing adulthood, she will be considered good if she is willing to sweep the house, cook in the kitchen, and take care of dirty linen. Meanwhile, boys are allowed to play all the time without having to be burdened with any domestic tasks.

Therefore, it would not be wrong if Engels stated that the basis of women's subordination lies in the family institution, where men are placed as heads of the family while women's role is reduced to only taking care of the household.⁴⁶ In Minangkabau itself, traces of women's domestication can be seen from before the 20th century. The condition of women in this period was not much different from other women in the patriarchal patrilineal culture in the Dutch East Indies at that time. The life cycle of Minangkabau women is completely focused on internal activities in the house as daughters, wives, mothers and grandmothers. The education they receive is limited to religious education and household education as preparation for becoming a wife and mother. Women's life patterns and behavior are strictly controlled and limited by the customs adopted by their community. In this case, women are not given the freedom and independence at all in representing themselves as they wish, but are more dominant in "what they are allowed" and "not allowed" to do in view of customs and customs.⁴⁷

When Minangkabau women have entered puberty (at the age of twelve or thirteen), they are no longer allowed to move freely outside the home at that age. As it is written in schoolschriften that "If the girl's child has already grown up, then she doesn't go to the mousque anymore, but rather, she will just stay at home; It's a bit difficult to see them." Girls who have entered puberty will be very

⁴⁵ Dewi Kurnia Putri, Nur Hidayat Sardini, and Puji Astuti, "Budaya Matrilineal Dalam Keterwakilan Perempuan Daerah Kota Bukittinggi," *Journal of Politic and Government Studies* 11, no. 3 (2022).

⁴⁶ Rosemarie Putnam Tong, *Feminist Thought Pengantar Paling Komprehensif Kepada Arus Utama Pemikiran Faminis*.

⁴⁷ Risa Marta Yanti et al., "Lahirnya Pergerakan Perempuan Minangkabau Pada Awal Abad XX," 2017, <http://kafaah.org/index.php/kafaah/index>.

closely guarded by their families and tribes.⁴⁸ Likewise, when women are old enough and are about to enter marriage age. Traditionally, women are taught how to be a good wife so that they can carry out their domestic duties properly, so that the ideal image of a woman in Minangkabau is a woman who can master all duties in the household.

In the Kaba it can be read how women who are about to marry are reminded of their main duties as domestic workers by their mothers, so that the women can be considered as filial women.

Tantang alemu urang basuami, paelok laku jo taratik. Datang suami dari jauh sambuiklah jo muko manih hidangkan minum jo makannyo paliakkan hati nan suci. Kok maraso raso juo, kok tak manyanang dalam hati liekkan inyo sadang riang kutiko suko sandirinyo. Sabuah pulo oi nak kanduang pihak makan jo minumnya selalu sadiokan dek nak kanduang tasaji baiak ateh dulang⁴⁹

The same thing is also mentioned in the Tambo which emphasizes the obligations of a wife in her household, namely:

Dan hutang bini kepada laki ditanakkan digulaikan, disenduk sajikan tikar dikembangkan, kelambu digayutkan⁵⁰

The two traditional proverbs contained in the Tambo and Kaba provide an illustration of how Minangkabau women are projected by custom to become someone who can serve. This service consists of providing rice and side dishes for the husband, serving him tea or coffee, making his bed, and paying attention to his mood before expressing opinion. These roles strengthen the function of women in Minangkabau traditional philosophy as *ramo-ramo tabang ka anjuang ka pangka dapua jo biliak*. That is, the realm of women's activities which is limited in the traditional order, namely the house, bedroom and kitchen (domestic sector).⁵¹

This domestication of Minangkabau women can then answer the question of why in traditional meetings, the women who are included are seated in the room near the kitchen. This is because even in the matrilineal Minangkabau society, women are considered "*urang dapua*" (people who deserve to be in the kitchen), whose function is to provide services not only in the household but also within the scope of custom and the reality of customary implementation itself. In traditional meetings, for example, women are expected

⁴⁸ Yanti et al.

⁴⁹ Dt. Panduko Alam, *Kaba Rancak Di Labuah* (Bukittinggi: Kristal Multimedia, 2011).

⁵⁰ H. Datoek Toeah, *Tambo Alam Minangkabau Tatanan Adat Warisan Nenek Moyang Orang Minang* (Bukittinggi: CV. Pustaka Indonesia, n.d.).

⁵¹ Erianjoni, "Pergeseran Citra Perempuan Minangkabau Dari Konsepsi Ideal Tradisional Dan Realitas," *Kafaah: Journal of Gender Studies* 12 (2011): 225–34.

to sit near the kitchen to make it easier for them to serve food and drinks to the men present at the meeting.

Likewise, it is said that Bundo Kanduang or women in Minangkabau are analogous to traditional owners, namely commissioners in companies, while men in traditional structures are Executive Directors. This presupposition is of course to explain Bundo Kanduang's initial function as *ka pai tampek batanyo*, to ask question about matters that will be conveyed at the traditional meeting, *ka pulang tampek babarito*, to convey back what was the result of the meeting. But it didn't stop there, after the results of the meeting were reported to Bundo Kanduang, Bundo Kanduang was expected to be able to command the entire people of the Rumah Gadang to implement the results of the meeting's decisions. The form of this implementation is the function of women as kitchen people in these events. Women will be in charge of the kitchen preparing dishes. This reality certainly contradicts the analogy mentioned above. As Commissioners, women should be in a high position and not be involved in executions below like executors, but in reality, apart from being seen as commissioners, women are generally also employees in the custom itself.

Conclusion

When compared to patrilineal societies which are clearly patriarchal, Minangkabau women are much more fortunate. With the adoption of matrilineal as a kinship system in Minangkabau, women have a central position in custom because of their role as connectors of kinship ties. Not only as members of the clan, Minangkabau women also have their welfare protected by owning the property of the clan which is in their name. Minangkabau tradition understands very well that women's marginalization is often caused by women's economic weakness, whereas in Minangkabau the woman's economy is supported in such a way that it is hoped that if she is unlucky in her household or in her life, Minangkabau women will at least not live in limbo. This is because he still has a house to shelter in, land to cultivate and use the results.

In social practice, Minangkabau women are not ignored, their opinions will be brought to customary deliberations, even though their presence is not really expected at these sessions. These points are often used as arguments about the high position of women in the social system of Minangkabau society. When compared to a patrilineal, patriarchal society, it is clear that Minang women are more respected because of the matrilineal system they adhere to. However, if we look at the core of society itself, the glorification of Minangkabau women still seems biased. In traditional narratives, he seems to be considered a lantern of the people, but in traditional meetings he is not placed on an equal footing with the men who make the final decisions. In fact, women are only placed in the back room close to the kitchen. Likewise, women's traditional roles

and functions are always linked to their domestic functions, from childhood, adolescence, until marriage.

The domestic function of women in the Minangkabau traditional order is in fact a general description in a patriarchal society which places the role of women as servant domestic workers. Meanwhile, women's intellectual functions are not really emphasized in customs in general. When discussing Bundo Kanduang, who is considered a central figure, his intellectual functions are not explained clearly, there is only hope that his presence can be a balance in the social order. So Bundo Kandung and Minangkabau women in general are expected to be able to position themselves not as subjects, but as other figures who complement the existence of the subject, namely men. The patriarchal pattern in the Minangkabau matrilineal society is basically not meant to label the custom itself as bad. However, of course to provide an understanding that the glorified gender equality that exists in the Minangkabau society is something that also needs to be criticized. This shows that the struggle for gender equality and justice in the Minangkabau matrilineal society still must continue.

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