

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: The language of Minangkabau is also known as Minang and Padang and is widespread among the Indonesian archipelago. It's spoken in west central Sumatra among other areas. It has many dialects and it's classification, from most general to most specific, is Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, Malayo-Sumbawan, North and East, Malayic, and finally Malay.¹

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): min¹

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): The Minangkabau homeland is bordered by the Malay homelands of Riau and Jambi to its east, the Batak homeland to its north, and the Kerintji homeland to its south. The Indian Ocean lies to the west.

1.4 Brief history: The Minangkabau society was significantly changed in the nineteenth century after the Dutch government replaced the Dutch East India Company. The Paderi Wars, which began as a local Minangkabau adat traditionalists and Islamic fundamentalists, which led to the development of a more intensive colonial administration. A new and more elaborate hierarchy of administrative districts and leadership positions were defined. Schools provided Western education that was necessary for obtaining these positions and a new type of Minangkabau elite was produced. A rapid expansion of commercial agriculture happened at the beginning of the twentieth century.²

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: The Acehnese were dominant sea traders along the west coast of Sumatra, and their homeland is north of the Batak homeland, and they had a very strong Islamic influence on Minangkabau culture. The culture was also strongly influenced by Malay and Javanese trading empires during the fifth and sixth centuries. The impact of these empires led to royal institutions at Pagarruyung which is where the Minangkabau king is located. The Paderi wars also had an effect, and led to the development of a more thorough colonial administration.²

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): The traditional homeland is located on the Padang Highlands and thus is part of a chain of mountains that are near to the west coast of Sumatra. Some of these peaks are active. Mountain lakes are in the area and provide water to irrigate the wet-rice fields in flat parts of the highlands.² The fertile central highlands are the most densely populated.³

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: As of 2007, the population is around 5,530,000 and 500,000 in Jakarta.¹ Another source says that there are approximately eight million Minangkabau people that live in Indonesia, and half of them occupy West Sumatra and about 300,000 of them live in Malaysia.² The provincial capital, which is also the largest city, of Padang has a population of over 200,000 as of 1971.³

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): wet-rice²

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: fish,² water buffalo⁵

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production: Men harvest rice, do other work in commercial agriculture, fish, work with metal and wood, and trade. Women garden vegetables, transplant and weed the rice fields, take care of children, prepare food, and make crafts like weaving and pottery.²

2.6 Land tenure: the conditions vary across the land, but the areas with well-watered valleys and slopes that aren't too steep support the cultivation of wet rice; the drier hills support the commercial crops; mountain lakes support fishing; forest support the ability to collect wild products; and village compounds support the gardening of

vegetables as well as crafts and petty commerce.² Rubber, copra, coffee, gambier, cinnamon, and cloves are some cash crops that are important to the Minangkabau society.³

2.7 Ceramics: Pottery is a common industrial art.²

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

2.9 Food taboos: N/A

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? The discovery of coal in 1867 led to the improvement of sea transportation, and new ports were built to accommodate larger ships.³

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): no statistical data available.

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): no statistical data available.

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): Data not available.

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): Varies.³

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): In the communal home, there is a variable amount of people in the matriclan that inhabit the house, but it can be anywhere from 40 to as many as 100.³

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): No data available.

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Variable.³

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Many marriages end simply through desertion, but divorce is possible through Islamic law.² In 1930, the census stated that 14.2 of every 100 adult persons ended in divorce in West Sumatra.³

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: polygyny is allowed but is not common anymore, it used to be much more prevalent in the past, with 8.7 of every 100 males being married polygynously, but monogamy has become much more prevalent with education and religious implementation.^{2,3}

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Technically, no, but in the case of marriages involving parties of high rank, there can be groomprice.⁵

4.9 Inheritance patterns: Matrilineal inheritance is very important. There are two types of property, however: earned and ancestral. Earned property involved goods produced for exchange and can be inherited by either the son or daughter since it is individually owned. The rules of such inheritance is most likely Islamic, and the male heirs receive full shares while female heirs receive half shares. Traditional rules can also be followed in which males inherit from males and females inherit from females. When it comes to ancestral property, such as goods that are produced that come from a communally owned means of production, females are the only ones who can be the inheritants. Male leaders of the matrilineal group, such as the mother's brother, are in charge of matters of inheritance.²

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Mothers and fathers are in charge of socializing children. The father helps educate his children and helps find husbands for his daughters. The mother's brother also has a strong interest in the success of the children as well. Older siblings also help socialize younger ones.²

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: N/A

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Exogamy is strictly upheld in that members of one suku, or matrilineal clan, are expected to marry a member of another suku.³

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? Paternity is not partible, but the males are seen as little more than a means to impregnate his wife.³

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”): It is inferred that their belief in the mother’s role in procreation is that she is strongly tied to her children, and is a very important figure, as she is recognized as part of the nuclear family while the husband is not.³

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? No.³

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: *Can't find data*

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): Cross-cousin marriage is preferred, especially the marriage of a woman to her father’s sister’s son.²

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? It is inferred that they do not.⁵

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: No.³

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? A matrilineal relative. The relationship between the children and their father ceases upon the death of the mother, excepting for the ceremonial gift giving between the father’s sublineages and his children.³

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades: No.⁵

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) : Monogamy is most prevalent, so there is normally just one father. The father is seen by the relatives of his wife as not much more than a means of impregnation³

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? There is a lot of respect for the oldest male in the house, the elder, who is the maternal grandmother’s brother.³

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations: Female descent is a distinguishing feature of this culture. Matrilineal inheritance determines who gains use of traditional wet-rice land and house land. Royal kinship was patrilineal.² Minangkabau over the last 150 years appears to slowly be replacing matrilineality with a more patrilineally-oriented system, according to some scholars.³

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: members of the same matriclan are not supposed to marry one another.²

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes.³ The marriage ceremony is spectacular, and is the climax of many months of exchanges and ceremonies making up the entire marriage ritual. Some have dubbed Minangkabau marriage as “the exchange of men.”⁵

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? N/A

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?): marriage is mostly dependent on kin relations, and cross-cousin marriage is preferred.²

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? It varies.³

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: N/A

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: *Can't find statistics.*

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: No talk of violent death, mainly talk of conflict surrounding other foreign powers for control of the Minangkabau, but mainly makes it seem like the Minangkabau never really put up a fight. The Dutch, British, and others all played a role in the foreign domination of the Minangkabau due to valuable trading items. The Padri wars resulted in the Minangkabau society as it exists today.³

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: N/A

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Minangkabau grow many crops for trade with other communities, such as rubber and coffee. The Minangkabau traditionally are known for their production of gold. Tin was also discovered, prompting the Dutch East India Company to sign a treaty that led to the monopoly trade of the newfound ore. Pepper became an important item for trade in the seventeenth century. Chinese purchased pepper from the Minangkabau. The Dutch eventually gained a monopoly on pepper trade as well. Rebellions were frequent towards the Dutch on the coast back in the seventeenth century. The Minangkabau used to be powerless to the foreign domination.³

4.18 Cannibalism? No.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: The domestic unit traditionally consists of a woman, her daughters (whether they be married or unmarried), and her daughter's children. Her unmarried grandsons and sons sleep in the local prayer house and those who are married sleep "as guests" in the houses of their wives. The husbands of the woman and her daughters sleep as guests in the house. Each married woman has her own room and this is a place in which to "receive her husband." There is normally a great common room that runs full length all the way through the middle of the house, and rooms span either side of the house. Older women who don't have children normally move into smaller houses built near the great house as the original family expands.²

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): The Minangkabau are noted for their inclination to migrate, or "merantau." In Minangkabau context, the word *merantau* is understood to mean to leave one's home village in order to find wealth, knowledge, and fame.³

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): West Sumatra is divided into eight districts called *kabupaten* which are then divided in to subdistricts called *kecamatan* and further divided into "nagari." Each nagari has a mayor called *wali nagari* and he is elected by the village council. The *bupati* is the government-appointed head of the district. Below the village council level are the chiefs of the different lineage segments and they make formal judgements on property rights and other matters regarding the law and they receive "labor service" from lineage members in return for their services.² Historically, there were Minangkabau *raja*, or kings, who were respected and revered, but they did not seem to possess much power of the Minangkabau world. In the nineteenth century, the Padri basically got rid of the royal line. The *raja* had the main role of simply acting as arbiter in the case of wars and disputes between villages.³ There is a lack of centralized political power and the nagari, or territorial units, have a very strong autonomy and it is often characterized as a "village republic."³

5.4 Post marital residence: Matrilocal/Uxorilocal.² The husband moves in or near his wife's house and stays there at night, but strictly speaking, he still belongs to his own mother's house and goes back there frequently during the day.³

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): The homeland is divided into three basic territorial units.² The territorial units are defined by natural or man-made boundaries.³

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: Village states called *nagari* make up the basic territorial units. Each unit is a community that is self-sufficient with gardens, houses, prayer houses, a community meeting hall, a mosque, and agricultural lands. There is normally a central open market as well. There are several styles of houses, one of which is described as old, long, and wooden that is propped up high on foundations and have roofs that bow down deeply in the middle and rise steeply at the ends. Fruit trees offer shade to the houses and there are rice fields behind.² Authority within a lineage is not in the hands of the father, but of the maternal uncle, called the *mamak*. Daily family life is centered around a communal type of housing called an *adat*. The *adat* is organized with one half being an open space that functions as a living room, a sleeping area for children, elderly women, and guests, and a hall for ceremonies. The other half is compartmentalized into sleeping quarters for married or marriageable females and their children. The sleeping compartments are about 3 meters by 4 meters.³

5.9 Specialized village structures (men's houses): Once the sublineage members who all live in the same house (*sabuah paruik*) outnumber the capacity of the house, a group of related houses that are separate are where the members move. These houses are likely to be clustered together. Also, young boys sleep in a prayer house at night until they get married. Upon divorce from a wife or death of a wife, the man must move back to the prayer house.³

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? From one of my sources, I am inferring that they sleep on mats on the ground, but I am not certain.³

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: The largest social grouping that is below the "nagari" level is the matriclan, and there are usually four or more. Moieties and phratries are not present. Matriclans are divided further into subclans, and members of subclans consider themselves to be close relatives even if they can't trace genealogical relationships. The subclans are divided into isolated lineages, which are then divided into lesser subunits called *sabuah paruik* ("of one womb") that are the primary corporate landholding units. These units are divided further into a few more subunits that are domestic groups called *urang sapariuak* ("persons of one cooking pot") and some of these units are made up of more than one household.⁴ The largest matrilineal grouping is called the *suku*, which is the matrilineal clan. The lowest level and the smallest unit is called the *samadai*, which refers to the mother and her children.³

5.12 Trade: Men of Minangkabau are among the "most widely known and active traders in Southeast Asia." Their involvement is due largely to the fact that they can't inherit Minangkabau rice land.² Gold, tin, and pepper were traditional items of trade that got the Minangkabau involved in commerce. They also have many cash crops they trade.³

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Yes, there is a distinction based on original ancestry. The descendants of the original settlers are divided into three categories. The top are related by blood to the original settlers. The middle are related to the original settlers because they came from another nagari in order to settle permanently and found a suku they affiliated with. The second group seems to have the same rights over properties as the top group. The last and lowest category are those who are related to the original settlers "by gold or money" and these were, in olden times, debt bondsmen, prisoners of war, or purchased slaves. They were denied certain privileges. In contemporary times, the social stratification is more fluid, and white collar workers, merchants and intellectuals contend for high status.³

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): There are religious officials such as the "imam" which is the head of the mosque, the "khatib" also known as the preacher, the religious judge called the "kadi" and the caller to prayer known as the "bilal." There are other specialized people who know about religion called the "urang siak" and the "ulama."²

6.2 Stimulants: As far as medicine goes (not necessarily stimulants), herbal remedies and word charms are used.²

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal): There are funeral ceremonies and burials. There are also ritual feasts any time someone changes social status. There is a ceremony surrounding circumcision. Ramadan in an example of a seasonal ceremony/ritual.³

6.4 Other rituals: Each week, there is the important ceremonial occasion of the Friday sermon. The feast days at the end of Ramadan, and the days of feasting before embarking on the hajj are also important. There are ritual feasts in celebration of any kind of change in social status.² There are special ceremonies for each time a new communal house, *adat*, is built.³

6.5 Myths (Creation): The first Minangkabau is believed to have come from the volcanic peak of Marapi. One version of the story says that founders arrived in the midst of a huge flood, when the peak of the mountain was no larger than an egg. Another version states that the founders came directly out of the crater. The descendants of the founders spread into the three core areas that the highlands are divided into, and then into the outside edges of the homeland.² Alexander the Great is believed by the Minangkabau to be their ancestor, according to legend.³

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games): blacksmithing, carpentry, wood carving, weaving, tailoring, pottery, and jewelry are all the common industrial arts in Minangkabau culture. Poetry, music, portraiture, and architectural decoration are also practiced.²

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

6.8 Missionary effect: At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Padri, Islamic fundamentalists, caused the reformation to Islam.³

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: Death is viewed in the light of Islam and the burial ceremonies are carried out in accordance with Islamic law.²

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.): Sunni Muslim.¹ In order to consider oneself a member of the Islamic faith, one must confess their faith, pray five times a day, fast during Ramadan, undergo the pilgrimage to Mecca (the hajj), and give alms. Many Minangkabau do not follow all of these practices since they are born Muslim, but this is partially due to the fact that they aren't fully aware of the technicalities of their religion.² The main conflicts are between tradition and modernity, as the Minangkabau are strongly in matrilineal practice, but Islam is patrilineally-oriented.⁴

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: *Not mentioned.*

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut: *Not specified.*

7.4 Scarification: No.

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Normally both sexes wear something along the lines of t-shirts and jeans.⁵

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: For marriage ceremonies, women wear something along the lines of an embroidered tunic over a “sarong woven from golden and red silk threads” and bob their hair and bind it in fragrant leaves. A golden headdress is also worn, and coral and gold bead necklaces are draped around the woman’s neck, and brass plated bracelets cover her forearms. This is the adornment for women of higher status that are to be married. Ancestral heirlooms are worn by those who cannot afford to rent such wedding regalia.⁵

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: In marriage, women wear the above described adornment, while males wear a man’s sarong and a suit.⁵

7.8 Missionary effect: No specific mention of missionary effect on adornment.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system: Hawaiian.²

8.2 Sororate, levirate: In ancient times, property used to be given to one’s own children rather than one’s sororal nieces and nephews. According to the “tambo,” the origin of giving property to sororal nieces and nephews is resultant of the two founders of Minangkabau running their ship aground. The founders asked their children and nieces and nephews to help haul the ship ashore, but only the nieces and nephews agreed. They were assisted by spirits and after the ship floated on its own again, the two founders decreed that all property be given to sororal nieces and nephews as reward/payment for their services.³

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Hawaiian, but there are several special expressions that term those who are relatives that have a common remote ancestress. The mother’s brother, sister’s child, and relatives with the *same* great-grandmother and grandmother get special terms. This indicates the importance of matrilineal descent.²

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

- Populations in rural areas are most often unbalanced in the favor of female and elderly people. In the urban areas, the populations are usually in favor of male and young people.²
- Commercial crops are cultivated on drier hills and included items like cinnamon, coffee, fruit, and rubber.²
- When married people die, there are changes in relationships between the lineage segments of the different clans.²
- Interestingly enough, the Minangkabau follow matriliney while they are believers in the patrilineally-oriented Islam.³
- Most of the Minangkabau migrants become merchants.³
- A formal writing system is not thought to have been introduced to the Minangkabau until the introduction of Islam, so the Minangkabau have the *tambo* as a means of knowing the heritage of their past. The *tambo* was originally transmitted orally and eventually was written down in Arabic and it describes the beginning of Minangkabau culture.³

Numbered references

¹ http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=min

² <http://www.everyculture.com/East-Southeast-Asia/Minangkabau-Orientation.html>

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⁴ Swift, M.G. “Minangkabau and Modernization.” *Anthropology in Oceania; Essays Presented to Ian Hogbin*. By Herbert Ian Hogbin, L. R. Hiatt, and Chandana Jayawardena. [Sydney]: Angus and Robertson, 1971. 255-62. Print.

⁵ Krier, Jennifer. The Marital Project: Beyond the Exchange of Men in Minangkabau Marriage. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 27, No.4 (Nov. 2000), pp.877-897.