2. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE MINANGKABAU

2.1 The History of Minangkabau

The Minangkabau ethnic group, also known as Minang (Urang Minang in Minangkabau language), is indigenous to the Minangkabau Highlands of West Sumatra, in Indonesia. Their culture is matrilineal, with property and land passing down from mother to daughter, while religious and political affairs are the responsibility of men (although some women also play important roles in these areas). Today 4 million Minangs live in West Sumatra, while about 3 million more are scattered throughout many Indonesian and Malay peninsular cities and towns. The Minangkabau are strongly Islamic, but also follow their ethnic traditions, or adat. The Minangkabau adat was derived from animist beliefs before the arrival of Islam, and remnants of animist beliefs still exist even among some practicing Muslims. The present relationship between Islam and adat is described in the saying "tradition (adat) founded upon Islamic law, Islamic law founded upon the Qur'an" (adat basandi syara', syara' basandi Kitabullah).

For hundreds of year the roofs of the houses in West Sumatera have been built in the form of buffalo horns, and the people in that part of country call their land Minangkabau, which means “the buffalo wins” or “the buffalo’s victory”. If you ask the people the reason for their houses being built in this way and their country being named as it is, they will tell you this story. About six hundred years ago, the King of
Java sent a messenger to the people in West Sumatera. He wanted to let them know that he was now ruler of all the green islands of Indonesia, and that he would soon take over their land; that it would be better for them to surrender, for if they opposed the King, they would all be killed. Of course the people became greatly alarmed when they heard the message of the powerful King of Java, and their leaders quickly met to decide how they should meet this threat. We must do all we can to avoid war, one said. If there is a battle, think of the death and destruction. We are sure to lose, and then we will be the slaves of this foreign king. We must think of a way not to fight. We must outwit those who wish to conquer us.

There were many proposals, and finally one was set forth that was accepted by all the people as being the best possible way to defeat the enemy. The messenger from Java was told to submit this proposal to his King. Rather than face war, with the destruction it would bring to both sides, the people of West Sumatera proposed that each side, instead of fighting themselves, should bring a buffalo to the field of battle. The buffalo would then fight each other, and the outcome of their battle would determine the future course of affairs. If the buffalo of the Javanese King won, then the people of West Sumatera would surrender and become his subjects. If the buffalo of the people of West Sumatera won, than the Javanese king would make no further attempt to conquer them and they could continue to live as free men. And so it was agreed.

The king of Java sent his men to search all over his island kingdom for the most powerful buffalo they could find. They found one, and brought him to their
camp in West Sumatera, where they took care of him until the day of battle should arrive. All the people of West Sumatera had heard about the buffalo of the King of Java and they come to seen in all their lives. It was so strong and so large and so fine that the sight of it made them more dismayed and more discouraged than ever. Again they come up with ideas and plans, then rejected them all as useless. Finally, when they were nearly desperate, one of the rejoice. One of the men had a new buffalo calf, which he took from its mother. Another villager fastened sharp pieces of iron on the tips of the calf’s horns. They waited three days, and then went to the messenger of the King of Java, telling him that they had found a buffalo and were ready for battle. The next morning the King’s men brought their fine strong buffalo to the battle field, and at the same time the villagers led their little calf to meet the enemy. The air was filled with the loud rough laughter of the King’s soldiers when they saw the calf of the West Sumatera standing so helplessly on the wide open field.

For a moment nothing happened. It was as though the great buffalo of the King and the small helpless calf on the villagers were looking each other over before each decided what to do. Then the calf began to run. He had been kept from his mother for three whole days, and he was very hungry. To him, the big buffalo standing across from his looked just like his mother, and he ran straight to the large animal. Pressing his nose against the underside of him, searching for milk. As he nuzzled, the sharp-pointed pieces of iron on his horn pierced the belly of the buffalo, and with a roar of paint the great beast began to run across the field. The little calf ran after him, and the enthralled spectators watched the scene; the big buffalo running
with ever greater difficulty, blood flows from his wounds, the little calf determinedly catching up with him. Then the King’s buffalo fell, and as the little calf drew near him, a great shout went up from the people of West Sumatera gathered to watch the battle. “Minangkabau! Minangkabau! Minangkabau!” (The buffalo wins! The buffalo is victorious!).

The King and his soldiers said no a word. Then quietly, they left the battle field, and were never seen again. The villagers put a wreath of flowers around the neck of the little buffalo calf and led him to his mother. The people of West Sumatera were still free. And that is why the houses and the headdress of the people are made to look the buffalo horns, and why their land is called “Minangkabau” or “The Buffalo’s Victory”.

2.2 The Culture of Minangkabau

The Minangkabau who predominate along the coasts of Sumatera Utara and Sumatera Barat, interior Ria, and northern Bengkulu province in the early 1990s numbered more than 3,500 million. Like the Batak, they have large corporate descent groups, but unlike the Batak, the Minangkabau traditionally reckon descent matrilinearly. In this system, a child is regarded as descended from his mother, not his father. A young boy, for finance, has his primary responsibility to his mothers’ and sister’s clans. In practice, in most villages a young man will visit his wife in the evenings but spend the days with his sister and her children. It is usual for married sisters to remaining their parental home. According to a 1980 study by
anthropologist Joel S. Kahn, there is a general pattern of residence among the Minangkabau in which sisters and unmarried lineage members try to live close to one another, or even in the same house.

Landholding is one of the crucial functions of the suku (female lineage unit). Because Minangkabau men, like Acehnese men, often migrate to seek experience, wealth, and commercial success, the women's kin group is responsible for maintaining the continuity of the family and the distribution and cultivation of the land. These family groups, however, are typically led by a penghulu (headman), elected by groups of lineage leaders. With the agrarian base of the Minangkabau economy in decline, the suku as a landholding unit has also been declining somewhat in importance, especially in urban areas. Indeed, the position of penghulu is not always filled after the death of the incumbent, particularly if lineage members are not willing to bear the expense of the ceremony required to install a new penghulu.

The Minangs are the world's largest matrilineal society; properties such as land and houses are inherited through female lineage. Some scholars argue that this might have caused the diaspora (Minangkabau, "merantau") of Minangkabau males throughout the Maritime Southeast Asia to become scholars or to seek fortune as merchants. However, the native Minangkabaus agreed that this matrilineal culture is indeed the result of (not the reason for) diaspora. With their men travelling out of the country for unspecified time (with possibility of some of them not returning home), it is only logical to hand the land and property to those who do not have to leave it: The women. This also ensures the women's (meaning: mothers of the future generations')
welfare and hence ensuring their offsprings welfare. Besides, native MinangKabaus argue that "Men can live anywhere and hence they do not need a house like women do". The concept of matrilineal can be seen from the naming of important museums such as "The house where Buya HAMKA was born" by Maninjau Lake. It has never been and never will be Buya HAMKA's house because it was his mother's house and passed down only to his sisters. Another museum in Bukit Tinggi was called by the locals: "Muhammad Hatta's Mom's house" where you will see that Muhammad Hatta (the Indonesia's Independence Proclamator) only had a room outside of the house, albeit attached to it.

As early as the age of 7, boys traditionally leave their homes and live in a surau (a prayer house and community centre) to learn religious and cultural (adat) teachings. When they are teenagers, they are encouraged to leave their hometown to learn from schools or from experiences out of their hometown so that when they are adults they can return home wise and 'useful' for the society and can contribute their thinking and experience to run the family or nagari (hometown) when they sit as the member of 'council of uncles'. This tradition has created Minang communities in many Indonesian cities and towns, which nevertheless are still tied closely to their homeland; a state in Malaysia named Negeri Sembilan is heavily influenced by Minang culture because Negeri Sembilan was originally Minangkabau's territory.

Increasingly, married couples go off on merantau; in such situations, the woman's role tends to change. When married couples reside in urban areas or outside...
the Minangkabau region, women lose some of their social and economic rights in property. One apparent consequence is an increased likelihood of divorce.

1. Ceremonies and Festivals

Minangkabau ceremonies and festivals include:

- Turun mandi – baby blessing ceremony
- Sunat Rasul – circumcision ceremony
- Baralek wedding ceremony
- Batagak pangulu – clan leader
  Inauguration ceremony. Other clan leaders, all relatives in the same clan and all villagers in the region are invited. The ceremony lasts for seven days or more.
- Turun ka sawah - community work ceremony
- Manyabik – harvesting ceremony
- Hari Rayo – Islamic festivals
- Manta pabukoan – sending food to mother-in-law for Ramadhan
- Tabuik – Muslim celebration in the coastal village in Pariaman
- Tanah Ta Sirah – Inaugurate a new clan leader (Datuk) when the old one died in the view hours (no need proceed batagak pangulu, but the clan must invite all clan leaders in region).
- Mambangkik Batang Tarandam – Inaugurate a new leader (Datuk) when the old one died in the pass 10 or 50 years and even more, must to do Batagak Pangulu.
2. Performing Arts

Traditional Minangkabau music includes *saluung jo dendang* which consist of singing to the accompaniment of a *saluung* bamboo flute, and *talempong* gong chime music. Dance includes the *tari piring* (plate dance), *tari oayung* (umbrella dance) and *tari indang* (also known as ending or badindin). Demonstration of the Silat martial art is performed. *Pidato adat* are ceremonial orations performed at formal occasions.

*Randai* is a folk theater tradition which incorporates music, singing, dance, drama and the silat martial art. *Randai* is usually performed for traditional ceremonies and festival, and complex stories may span a number of nights. It is performed as a theatre in the round to achieve an equality and unity between audience member and the performers. *Randai* performance is a synthesis of alternating martial arts dance, song, and acted scenes. Stories and delivered by the acting and singing and are mostly based upon Minangkabau legends and folktales. Randai originated early in local martial arts, storytelling and others performance traditions. Men originally played Male and female characters in the story but, since 1960s, woman have participated.

3. Cuisine

*Rendang* is a dish which is considered to be characteristic of Minangkabau culture. It is cooked 4-5 times a year. Other characteristic dishes include *Asam Padeh*, *Soto Padang*, *Sate Padang*, *Dendeng Balado*. Food has central role in the Minangkabau ceremonies which honor religious and life-cycle rites. Minangkabu food is popular among Indonesia and restaurants are presents throughout Indonesia.
Padang restaurants, named after the capital of West Sumatera, are known for placing a variety of Minangkabau dishes on a customer’s table with rice and billing only for what is taken. *Nasi Kapau* is another restaurant variant which specializes in dishes using offal and tamarind to add sourness to the spicy flavor.

4. Architecture

*Rumah gadang* (big house) or *rumah bagonjong* are the traditional homes of the Minangkabau. The architecture, construction, internal and external decoration and the functions of the house reflect the culture and values of the Minangkabau. A *rumah gadang* serves as a residence, half family meetings and for ceremonial activities. The *rumah gadang* is owned by the woman family who live there; ownership is passed from mother to daughter. The houses have dramatic curved roof structure with multi-tiered, upswept, gables. According to Minangkabau tradition, the roof shapes were meant to mimic the horn of buffalo. Shuttered windows are built into walls incised with profuse painted floral carvings. The term *rumah gadang* usually refers to the larger communal homes. However, smaller single residences share many of its architectural elements.

5. Oral traditional and literature

Minangkabau culture has a long history of oral traditions. One is the *pidato adat* (ceremonial orations) which are performed by *panghulu* (clan chiefs) at formal occasions such as weddings, funerals, adoption ceremonies, and *panghulu* inaugurations. These ceremonial orations consist of many forms including pantun, aphorisms (*papatah-paptih*), proverbs (*pameo*), religious advice (*petuah*), parables
(tamsia), two-line aphorisms (gurindam), and similes (ibarat). Minangkabu traditional folktales (kaba) consist of narratives the present the social and personal consequences of either ignoring or observing the ethical teachings and the norms embedded in the adat. The story teller (tukang kaba) recites the story in poetic or lyrical prose while accompanying himself on a rebab.

A theme in Minangkabau folktales is the central role mothers and motherhood has in Minangkabau society, with the folktales Rancak di Labueh and Malin Kundang being two examples. Rancak diLabueh is about a mother who acts as teacher and adviser to her two growing children. Initially her son is vain and headstrong and only after her perseverance does he become a good son who listens to his mother. Malin Kundang is about dangers of treating your mother badly. A sailor from a poor family voyages to seek his fortune, becoming rich and marrying. After refusing to recognize his elderly mother on his return home, being ashamed of his humble origins, he is cursed and dies when a storm ensues and turns him along with his ship to stone. The said stone is in Air Manis beach and is known by locals as Batu Malin Kundang.

Other popular folktales role of the woman in Minangkabau society. In the Cindua Mato epic the woman is a source of wisdom, while in the Sabai na Aluih she is more a doer than a thinker. Cindua Mato (Staring Eye) is about traditions of Minangkabau royalty. The story involves a mythical Minangkabau queen, Bundo Kanduang, who embodies the behaviors prescribed by adat. Cindua Mato, a servant of the queen, uses magic to defeat hostile outside forces and save the kingdom. Sabai nan Aluih (The genteel Sabai) is about a girl named SAbai who avenges the murder of her father by a
powerful and evil ruler from a neighboring village. After her father’s death, her cowardly elder brother refuses to confront the murderer and so Sabai decides to take matters into her own hands. See seeks out the murderer and shoots him in revenge.

2.3. The Language

The Minangkabau language (Baso Minangkabau) is an Austronesian language belonging to the Malay Linguistic sub group, which in turn belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian branch. The Minangkabau language is closely related to the Negeri Sembilan Malay language used by the people of Negeri Sembilan, many of which are descendants of Minangkabau immigrants. The language has a number of dialects and sub-dialects, but native Minangkabau speakers generally have no difficulty understanding the variety of dialects. The differences also exist. Minangkabau dialects are regional, consisting of subtle differences which can be detected by native speakers. The Padang dialect has become the lingua franca for people of different language regions.

The Minangkabau society has a diglossia situation, whereby they use their native language for everyday conversations, while the Indonesia language is used for most formal occasions, in education and in writing, even to relatives and friends. The Minangkabau language was originally written using the Jawi script, an adapted Arabic alphabet. Romanization of the language dates from the 19th century, and a standardized official orthography of the language was published in 1976.
2.4 The Religion

Since about the sixteenth century, the Minangkabau have followed Islam of the Sunni sect; however, the practice of Islam have only been strictly adhered to since about the eighteenth century. Previous to Islam, the Minangkabau followed their adapt, or customary beliefs. The adapt is based on the maternal influence that the Minangkabau emphasize. This is the main difference of the Minangkabau compared to other religions: they have an emphasis on woman that most Islamic cultures do not have, and they have combined their maternal influences with their Islamic beliefs. Their customary religion was a form of animism, in which each person has two souls, one real soul and one *semangat*. The *semangat* is used to explain illness, because when a person is ill, it means an evil spirit has overtaken their *semangat*. The adapt is sometimes referred to as the relationship between humans and nature. As early as the seventh century, Muslim traders brought Islam to the Minangkabau. During the times of the Crusades, local rulers wanted to attract Muslim until about the eighteenth century, when they were strongly influenced by the *Wahhabi* movement in Mecca, the holy city of Islam. This movement sought to remove societal such as opium. From this point on, the Minangkabau have been very strict in their Muslim beliefs, however their *adat* has been incorporated into their religions as well.