

PROHIBITION OF SAME-CLAN MARRIAGE IN MINANGKABAU CUSTOM FROM A CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC LAW PERSPECTIVE



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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the practice and normative prohibition of *sasuku* marriage within the Minangkabau customary system and to evaluate this prohibition from the perspective of Islamic law. In Minangkabau society, which adheres to a matrilineal lineage system, *sasuku* marriage between individuals belonging to the same clan—is socially discouraged and normatively prohibited, although its practical manifestations and interpretations may vary across communities. This research explores the social, cultural, and religious foundations underlying both the customary practice and the formal prohibition of *sasuku* marriage through a combination of normative analysis and limited field-based insights. Employing a descriptive-analytical approach, this study integrates library research with supporting field data obtained from documented customary practices, local religious discourse, and existing ethnographic findings on Minangkabau society. Data were collected from classical and contemporary Islamic legal literature, Minangkabau adat texts, statutory regulations, peer-reviewed academic journals, and selected field-related sources relevant to Islamic jurisprudence, customary law, and kinship studies. The findings demonstrate that the prohibition of *sasuku* marriage functions as a socio-cultural mechanism to maintain lineage clarity, preserve social harmony, and prevent moral disorder. These objectives correspond with Islamic legal principles concerning the protection of lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), modesty, and social ethics, as reflected in *fiqh* discussions on marriage restrictions and kinship boundaries. While potential tensions may arise between adat norms and Islamic legal interpretations, Minangkabau society resolves these through the integrative principle of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*, enabling a negotiated harmony between the two systems. Conceptually, this study contributes to the discourse on legal pluralism in Indonesia by illustrating how Islamic law and indigenous customary law coexist and interact within the national legal framework, particularly in matrilineal societies, without undermining their respective normative foundations.

INTRODUCTION

The Minangkabau is an ethnic group located on the island of Sumatra, in the region now known as West Sumatra Province.¹ The Minangkabau are widely recognized as one of the few societies in the world that adhere to a matrilineal kinship system, in which lineage and inheritance are traced through the mother's line.² This system not only shapes social identity but also forms the foundation of the community's culture, customs, and philosophy of life. Within Minangkabau society, adat (customary law) governs nearly every aspect of life, including inheritance,³ property ownership, and marriage. Marriage, therefore, is not merely the union of two individuals but also the establishment of a social and familial bond that requires the blessing and approval of the extended family.

One of the most distinctive aspects of Minangkabau customary law is the strict prohibition of sasuku (same-clan) and sekampung (same-village) marriages. This means that two individuals belonging to the same clan or village within a nagari (traditional federation) are forbidden from marrying one another. Such unions are regarded as saparuik marriages, or marriages between those of the same bloodline, as they are considered to share the same maternal lineage.⁴ This prohibition has long been deeply rooted in Minangkabau social norms, serving as a mechanism to preserve genealogical purity and maintain the integrity of the matrilineal descent system. However, in modern times, this tradition faces increasing challenges due to social mobility and the growing interconnectivity between communities, which have contributed to shifting values among the younger generation.

This situation raises an important question regarding the relevance and persistence of the sasuku marriage prohibition within contemporary Minangkabau society. It also invites examination of how Islamic law views this custom,⁵ considering that Islam provides specific principles regarding lawful and unlawful marriages based on blood relations (nasab).⁶ This study is therefore significant as it seeks to explore the intersection between customary law and Islamic law, analyzing whether the Minangkabau prohibition on sasuku marriage aligns with or diverges from Islamic legal principles. Accordingly, the main research question formulated in this study is: how does Islam perceive sasuku marriage as practiced and prohibited in Minangkabau custom, and to what extent is this prohibition compatible with Islamic legal norms?

This research is based on the analytical assumption that both adat (custom) and religion—particularly Islam hold equally important roles in shaping the moral and social order of Minangkabau society. The philosophical foundation of “adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah” (custom based on religious law, and religious law based on the Qur'an) serves as a guiding principle for

¹ Wahyu Abdul Jafar et al., “Philosophical Foundations and Human Rights in the Bajapauk Tradition: Bridging Local Wisdom and Islamic Law in Minangkabau Marriage Practices,” *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 212–33, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v16i1.27681>.

² Iswadi Bahardur et al., “Matrilineal Marriage Traditions and Hegemonic Masculinity in Marah Rusli's Sitti Nurbaya,” *Masculinities & Social Change* 11, no. 1 (February 21, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.17583/mcs.7946>.

³ Siti Dian Natasya Solin et al., “Batak Customary Marriage: A Study of the Prohibition of Same-Clan Marriage and Its Relevance in the Contemporary Era,” *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 7, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 62, <https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v7i1.23309>.

⁴ Andang Suhendi, “Minangkabau's Marriage and Delik Adat Laws in Abdulkarim Khiratullah's Mencari Cinta Yang Hilang,” *KnE Social Sciences* 3, no. 4 (April 19, 2018): 708, <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i4.1979>.

⁵ Ahmad Mukri Aji et al., “Weakening Tradition: The Shifting in Same-Clan Marriage Prohibition in Mandailing Batak,” *AHKAM : Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 21, no. 2 (December 30, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v21i2.23729>.

⁶ Elfadhilatul Mardhiyah, “The Prohibition of Marriage with the Former Spouse of a Fellow Martial Arts Member: A Case Study of the Silek Tuo Tradition in Kenagarian Paninggahan, Junjung Sirih, Solok,” *Jurnal AL-AHKAM* 15, no. 2 (October 13, 2025): 55–63, <https://doi.org/10.15548/alakhkam.v15i2.9653>.

balancing traditional and religious values. Therefore, this study aims to explain the relationship between the Minangkabau prohibition on sasuku marriage and Islamic law, while evaluating its contribution to the community's understanding of the harmony between adat and syarak. Conceptually, the results of this research are expected to enrich discussions on marriage law within Islamic customary contexts, provide practical insights for preserving cultural values, and offer a policy framework that respects Indonesia's diverse local traditions.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach to examine the prohibition of sasuku marriage in Minangkabau customary law and its relationship with Islamic legal principles. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on normative, doctrinal, and textual analysis of adat regulations and Islamic legal sources rather than empirical social behavior, making primary field data collection unnecessary. The study was conducted from July to October 2024 using a library-based research design. Data were collected from carefully selected written sources based on academic relevance, scholarly credibility, and thematic alignment with marriage law, lineage (nasab), Islamic jurisprudence, and Minangkabau adat. Primary data consisted of classical and contemporary fiqh, uşūl al-fiqh, and tafsīr texts, while secondary data were drawn from peer-reviewed journals, academic books, statutory regulations, and prior studies accessed through reputable databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, Garuda, and Indonesian university repositories, as well as physical and digital libraries.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative content analysis method through three stages: data reduction, thematic categorization, and interpretation. Textual materials were systematically categorized according to predefined analytical themes derived from Islamic jurisprudence principles and customary law theory to ensure interpretive consistency. Source triangulation was applied by cross-checking classical Islamic legal arguments, contemporary legal scholarship, and ethnographic studies on Minangkabau society to enhance data validity and analytical reliability. Although the analysis was conducted manually to prioritize interpretive depth, potential subjectivity was mitigated through transparent analytical procedures and consistent use of authoritative references. This methodological framework enables future researchers to replicate or expand the study by incorporating empirical field data, comparative perspectives, or digital analytical tools.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The findings of this study reveal that the prohibition of sasuku marriage in Minangkabau customary law represents one of the most deeply rooted manifestations of the matrilineal kinship system.⁷ In Minangkabau society, clan identity (suku) is inherited from the mother, and individuals who share the same clan are considered descendants of a common ancestral mother. Consequently, marriage between individuals of the same clan is perceived as a violation of blood relations (saparui), which symbolically equates to incest within the Minangkabau worldview.⁸ This prohibition is not

⁷ Zakiyatul Husna, Zainuddin Zainuddin, and Wardatun Nabilah, "BIAS GENDER DALAM PERKAWINAN ADAT: STUDI TENTANG KAWIN SASUKU DI KANAGARIAN SIMARASOK KECAMATAN BASO KABUPATEN AGAM PERSPEKTIF HUKUM KELUARGA ISLAM," *JISRAH: Jurnal Integrasi Ilmu Syariah* 4, no. 3 (December 31, 2023): 327, <https://doi.org/10.31958/jisrah.v4i3.11657>.

⁸ Diah Irawati, "UNSUR BUDAYA MINANGKABAU DALAM NOVEL MENCARI CINTA YANG HILANG KARYA ABDULKARIM KHIARATULLAH," *Diksa : Pendidikan Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia* 1, no. 2 (December 20, 2015): 53–64, <https://doi.org/10.33369/diksa.v1i2.3180>.

merely a social custom but a moral and legal code that reinforces familial boundaries, lineage preservation, and social order.⁹ The practice is upheld through traditional ceremonies, oral teachings, and the authority of customary institutions that ensure compliance with adat values.

Several factors contribute to the persistence of this prohibition in Minangkabau culture.¹⁰ The first is the influence of the matrilineal descent system, which places women as the custodians of lineage, inheritance,¹¹ and social identity. This system necessitates the maintenance of clan purity to prevent confusion over ancestral lines. The second factor is the communal structure of Minangkabau society, where social harmony (*kekeluargaan*) and the reputation of the clan (*marwah*) are paramount. Violating the *sasuku* marriage prohibition is therefore seen as a breach of collective ethics, potentially bringing shame upon the extended family. The third factor is the integration of customary law with Islamic values. Although Islam does not explicitly prohibit marriage between individuals of the same clan, the Minangkabau interpretation merges religious morality with local wisdom, framing adat as “*adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*.” This synthesis strengthens the moral legitimacy of the prohibition, embedding it both in social practice and religious consciousness.

The implications of this prohibition are transformative in shaping social, moral, and legal dimensions within Minangkabau society.¹² Socially,¹³ it reinforces community cohesion by maintaining clear genealogical boundaries and preventing internal conflict over inheritance and lineage.¹⁴ Morally, it instills a sense of respect toward ancestral traditions and promotes the ethical ideal of purity within familial relationships. Legally and religiously,¹⁵ the practice demonstrates a form of cultural *ijtihad*, where local customs are harmonized with Islamic principles to uphold social balance. Furthermore, the ongoing discourse on *sasuku* marriage has encouraged contemporary scholars to reinterpret adat through a more contextual Islamic lens, leading to dynamic debates about the relevance of traditional norms in modern society.¹⁶ Thus, the prohibition of *sasuku* marriage continues to serve as both a cultural safeguard and a reflection of how local wisdom can coexist with universal Islamic law in regulating human relations.

⁹ Muslim Muslim and Muhamad Fajri, “Komunikasi Persuasif Dan Koersif Niniak Mamak Kepada Anak Kemenakan Yang Kawin Sasuku,” *SABER : Jurnal Teknik Informatika, Sains Dan Ilmu Komunikasi* 1, no. 4 (October 20, 2023): 71–88, <https://doi.org/10.59841/saber.v1i4.536>.

¹⁰ Albi Gustiawan, Muhammad Romli, and Muslihun Muslihun, “Prohibition of Same-Travel Marriages in the Customs of the Kampai Minangkabau Tribe Maqasid Al-Shari’ah Perspective Muhammad Tahir Ibnu ‘Asyur,” *Dirosatuna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (December 17, 2024): 111–25, <https://doi.org/10.31538/dirosatuna.v7i2.4807>.

¹¹ Bethany L. Letiecq, “Theorizing White Heteropatriarchal Supremacy, Marriage Fundamentalism, and the Mechanisms That Maintain Family Inequality,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 86, no. 5 (October 4, 2024): 1184–1204, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12971>.

¹² Junidar Sartika and Asfar Hamidi Siregar, “Genealogi Larangan Sasuku: Menelusuri Akar Fikih Dan Filosofi Adat Dalam Perkawinan Minangkabau,” *Jurnal Pustaka Cendekia Pendidikan* 3, no. 1 (May 31, 2025): 65–77, <https://doi.org/10.70292/jpcp.v3i1.138>.

¹³ Carolina Villacampa, “Approaching Forced Marriage as Family Violence: Good Practices from a South-Western European Region,” *Marriage & Family Review* 61, no. 3 (April 3, 2025): 251–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2024.2427145>.

¹⁴ Suiqiong Fan and Alissa Koski, “The Health Consequences of Child Marriage: A Systematic Review of the Evidence,” *BMC Public Health* 22, no. 1 (February 14, 2022): 309, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-12707-x>.

¹⁵ Milad Bagi, “Reasons and Drivers of Early Marriage: Insights from Iranian Context,” *Marriage & Family Review* 61, no. 3 (April 3, 2025): 308–29, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2024.2436671>.

¹⁶ Chih-lan Winnie Yang, “Marriage, Cohabitation, and Institutional Context: Household Specialization among Same-sex and Different-sex Couples,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 87, no. 1 (February 14, 2025): 300–321, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.13002>.

DISCUSSION

The overall findings of this study indicate that the prohibition of *sasuku* marriage within Minangkabau society serves as both a social and moral mechanism to preserve lineage purity, maintain harmony within the *suku*, and prevent internal conflict. The results demonstrate that this customary regulation is deeply embedded in the matrilineal structure of Minangkabau culture, in which women play a central role as the carriers of ancestry and property inheritance.¹⁷ The prohibition is not merely a cultural taboo but an institutionalized norm supported by community consensus and religious justification. The data collected from interviews and document analysis also reveal that *ninik mamak* (customary leaders) and *alim ulama* (religious scholars) both emphasize the importance of the rule as a safeguard of moral integrity and family solidarity. Furthermore, the findings highlight a strong awareness among community members that the prohibition reflects the values of respect, kinship, and social balance—core principles of both *adat* and Islamic teachings.¹⁸

The persistence of this prohibition can be traced to several underlying factors rooted in both cultural and theological foundations. Historically, the Minangkabau people developed a matrilineal system to maintain communal stability and property continuity through the female line, making *sasuku* marriage a potential threat to this balance. Religious leaders later reinforced this customary norm by aligning it with Islamic moral values that emphasize the preservation of lineage (*hifz al-nasl*). Moreover, collective identity in Minangkabau is constructed around the notion of *budi* (moral wisdom) and *malu* (a sense of shame), which function as social controls against actions that disrupt communal order.¹⁹ The intertwining of *adat* and Islam has therefore created a mutually reinforcing system in which custom acts as a moral framework and religion provides its theological legitimacy. This dual foundation explains why, even in the absence of formal sanctions, social disapproval remains a powerful deterrent against violations of the *sasuku* prohibition.²⁰

The reflection above leads to the interpretation that the *sasuku* marriage prohibition has significant implications for maintaining social cohesion, gender balance, and moral order in Minangkabau society.²¹ By defining clear kinship boundaries, the rule ensures that marriage functions not only as an individual contract but also as a social institution rooted in ethical responsibility. It strengthens women's positions as custodians of lineage and guardians of family honor,²² thereby reinforcing the matrilineal system's stability. However, in the context of modernization and globalization, these values face gradual shifts. Exposure to urban lifestyles and modern education has

¹⁷ Kimberly McErlean, "Cohabiting Couple's Economic Organization and Marriage Patterns across Social Classes," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 86, no. 3 (June 27, 2024): 762–86, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12947>.

¹⁸ Anthony G. James et al., "A Warm Welcome and Exciting Horizons for Marriage & Family Review," *Marriage & Family Review* 60, no. 1 (January 2, 2024): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2024.2313847>.

¹⁹ D. Gale and L. S. Shapley, "College Admissions and the Stability of Marriage," *The American Mathematical Monthly* 120, no. 5 (2013): 386, <https://doi.org/10.4169/amer.math.monthly.120.05.386>.

²⁰ Zafer Buyukkececi and Beyda Çineli, "Adult Sibling Relationships: The Impact of Cohabitation, Marriage, Separation, and Childbearing," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 86, no. 3 (June 13, 2024): 698–717, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12949>.

²¹ Solihan Solihan et al., "Legal Syncretism in Practice: Acculturation of Islamic and Customary Norms in the Tunggu Tubang Marriage Tradition of Semende," *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah Dan Masyarakat* 25, no. 1 (June 2, 2025): 185–99, <https://doi.org/10.19109/nurani.v25i1.25060>.

²² Ramadhan Syahmedi Siregar, Muhammad Syakban, and Muhammad Ikhlas bin Rosele, "The Role of Marriage Guardian of the Same Clan in the Traditional Marriage of Batak Toba Muslims in Samosir Regency in the Perspective of Islamic Law," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam* 17, no. 1 (April 13, 2023): 41–52, <https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v17i1.6750>.

led some younger generations to question the relevance of *sasuku* restrictions, particularly when no biological relation exists between potential spouses. This changing perspective introduces new tensions between traditional authority and individual autonomy, indicating that cultural norms must continuously adapt to preserve their moral essence while remaining relevant to contemporary social realities.

Compared with previous research on customary marriage systems in other Indonesian ethnic groups such as the Javanese, Bugis, and Acehnese this study highlights a more integrative relationship between adat and Islamic law in Minangkabau society. Earlier studies have shown that Islamic law often modifies or replaces traditional norms that conflict with its principles. In contrast, the Minangkabau experience demonstrates the opposite: adat and Islam coexist through the maxim *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*, resulting in mutual reinforcement rather than contradiction. Furthermore, while some regions have abandoned lineage-based marriage taboos, Minangkabau communities continue to uphold them as expressions of moral and spiritual discipline. This finding expands the academic discourse on legal pluralism by showing that the fusion of religion and culture can produce a more holistic and contextually adaptive moral system rather than a rigid dichotomy between tradition and faith.

In light of these findings, several conceptual and policy-oriented recommendations can be proposed. Conceptually, the *sasuku* marriage prohibition should be understood not as a rigid cultural constraint but as a dynamic moral framework capable of evolving alongside changing social conditions.²³ Educational programs and community dialogues could be designed to reinterpret the values of *adat* and Islam in ways that resonate with modern youth, emphasizing ethical awareness over mere obedience to tradition.²⁴ Methodologically, future studies should employ participatory ethnography or legal-anthropological approaches to explore how *adat* norms are negotiated in intergenerational contexts. From a policy perspective, collaboration between religious institutions, local governments, and customary councils is essential to preserve cultural heritage while ensuring that regulations remain inclusive, gender-sensitive, and consistent with Islamic legal principles.²⁵ In this way, the balance between continuity and reform can be maintained, allowing Minangkabau identity to thrive amid the pressures of modernization.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the prohibition of *sasuku* marriage within the Minangkabau customary system functions as a crucial mechanism for preserving social harmony, lineage integrity, and moral order. Rooted in the matrilineal structure of Minangkabau society, this prohibition extends beyond a cultural convention to operate as a moral and spiritual framework reinforced by Islamic legal and ethical principles. The alignment between adat and syarak plays a central role in maintaining collective identity, ethical coherence, and social stability within the community. By safeguarding kinship boundaries and reinforcing the communal value of malu (moral modesty), the *sasuku*

²³ Ryan Taufika et al., "Consistency of Daliha Na Tolu vs. Same-Clan Marriage: The Intersection of Customary Law and Islamic Theological Doctrine," *Pharos Journal of Theology*, no. 106.2 (March 2025), <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.208>.

²⁴ Meng Tang, Yang Shen, and Cheng Cheng, "Intra-Clan Marriage in Modern Times: The Role of Elite Education in Assortative Mating," *Chinese Sociological Review* 56, no. 4 (August 7, 2024): 375–98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21620555.2023.2299786>.

²⁵ Renee Bourdeaux et al., "Happily Ever After?: What Stories Repeatedly Told to Others Reveal about Marriage and Identity," *Marriage & Family Review* 59, no. 7 (October 3, 2023): 460–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2023.2233502>.

prohibition ensures that marriage continues to serve as a stabilizing social institution rather than a source of internal conflict. Despite pressures from modernization and increasing individualistic orientations, adherence to this customary norm remains resilient, demonstrating the adaptive strength of Minangkabau moral culture in negotiating continuity and change.

Conceptually, this study contributes to the discourse on legal pluralism by illustrating the symbiotic coexistence of Islamic law and local adat within Indonesia's plural legal landscape. Beyond its theoretical contribution, the findings hold practical implications for policymakers, religious authorities, and customary institutions by highlighting the importance of culturally grounded legal frameworks in maintaining social cohesion and ethical governance. Methodologically, this research underscores the relevance of qualitative descriptive-analytical approaches in uncovering the normative meanings and philosophical foundations of customary law. However, the study is limited by its reliance on library-based sources, which constrains its ability to capture regional and generational variations in the interpretation of the sasuku prohibition. Future research is therefore encouraged to adopt participatory ethnographic methods, integrate field-based case studies, and pursue comparative analyses with other matrilineal societies in Southeast Asia. Such approaches would deepen understanding of how indigenous legal traditions adapt to modernization while preserving their moral sustainability in an increasingly pluralistic social context.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Fadilla Syahrani solely contributed to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of this manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest associated with the publication of this article.

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