

Minangkabau Daughters: Mediators of Past and Future Minangkabau *Adat*

Mina Elfira

Abstract

Using my findings obtained from fieldwork that I undertook from 2002 to 2005 in West Sumatran Minangkabau of Indonesia, I wish to contribute to the discussion on how significant is the contribution of Minangkabau daughters, as the bearers and holders of *Adat* (a collective term for Minangkabau laws and customs), to the development of ‘matriliny’ values. Minangkabau is not only well known as the world’s largest matrilineal society but also as one that coexists amongst the mostly Islamic societies within Indonesia. The pluralism of the legal system in West Sumatran Minangkabau society displays this convergence of influences, consisting of *Adat* law, Islamic law and Indonesian national law. In Minangkabau daily life, quite often the implementation of these legal systems contradicts one another, especially in relation to property and inheritance, and marriage affairs. Through the experiences of some Minangkabau daughters (as case studies) it can be seen how far these daughters, implemented the *adat* into their daily life and transferred it to the next generation of Minangkabau. Moreover, an analysis of these voices reveals how active they are in the process of negotiation to fit the matriliney *Adat* into their daily life in contemporary Minangkabau society.

Keywords: Minangkabau, *Adat*, matriliney, Islamic law