

## BUNDO KANDUANG'S CRITIQUE OF CULTURE-BASED POLYGAMY IN MINANGKABAU

### *KRITIK BUNDO KANDUANG TERHADAP POLIGAMI BERBASIS BUDAYA DI MINANGKABAU*

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#### ABSTRACT

*Polygamy is a marital practice in which a man has more than one woman as his wife. In Minangkabau, the practice of polygamy by husbands—based on Minangkabau culture and Islamic law—has been widespread since the early twentieth century. Therefore, cultural and religious-based polygamy is experienced by Bundo Kanduang in Minangkabau. This article discusses the role of Bundo Kanduang in responding to the widespread practice of polygamy among Minangkabau men. The discussion includes the extent to which adat integration is carried out by Bundo Kanduang, who plays a central role in Minangkabau's matrilineal culture. It also analyzes Bundo Kanduang and other Minangkabau figures who criticize the widespread practice of polygamy, arguing that this practice has degraded the matrilineal system and led to growing disappointment within the community. Data on Bundo Kanduang norms, cultural maps, and religious interpretations will be analyzed comprehensively. This article argues that Bundo Kanduang essentially has integrity from rumah gadang to nagari adat deliberation (being the power that rests). Unfortunately, according to Bundo Kanduang, the practice of polygamy has been reduced from adat-religious values to a deviant practice, and always justified in culture. Bundo Kanduang seeks to criticize the culturally grounded practice of polygamy that many Minangkabau people justify. The movement to challenge this can be seen when Bundo Kanduang voiced women's right to receive education and to leave the rumah gadang for the rantau (diaspora) areas, something considered a real taboo in Minangkabau culture. However, Bundo Kanduang's efforts remained grounded in matrilineal ideology, which continued to shape her conscience.*

**Keywords:** Bundo Kanduang, culture-based polygamy, Minangkabau culture

#### ABSTRAK

Poligami menjadi praktik perkawinan yang dilakukan laki-laki dengan lebih dari satu perempuan sebagai istri. Di Minangkabau, suami melakukan poligami berdasarkan budaya Minangkabau dan syariat Islam telah masif dilakukan sejak awal abad dua puluh. Oleh karena itu, poligami berbasis budaya dan agama dilakukan kepada Bundo Kanduang di Minangkabau. Artikel ini membahas peran Bundo Kanduang dalam menjawab praktik poligami yang telah masif dilakukan oleh laki-laki Minangkabau. Pembahasan mencakup tentang sejauh mana integrasi adat yang dilakukan oleh Bundo Kanduang yang menjadi peran sentral dalam kebudayaan matrilineal. Serta menganalisis tentang Bundo Kanduang dan tokoh-tokoh Minangkabau mengancam praktik poligami yang masif di Minangkabau tersebut karena kekecewaan telah merendahkan budaya matrilineal. Data dikumpulkan melalui norma Bundo Kanduang, peta kebudayaan, dan interpretasi agama akan dianalisis dengan komprehensif. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa Bundo Kanduang pada hakikatnya memiliki integritas dari rumah gadang hingga musyawarah adat nagari (menjadi kekuasaan yang bertumpu). Namun nahasnya, praktik poligami pun menurut Bundo Kanduang telah tereduksi dari nilai adat-agama, menjadi praktik yang melenceng, dan selalu dibenarkan dalam kebudayaan. Bundo Kanduang berupaya untuk mengkritik praktik poligami yang berbasis kebudayaan yang dibenarkan oleh sebagian besar masyarakat Minangkabau. Gerakan untuk menolak ini dapat dilihat ketika Bundo Kanduang menyuarakan hak atas menerima pendidikan dan keluar dari rumah gadang untuk berdiaspora ke daerah rantau yang menjadi tabu sebenarnya dalam kebudayaan Minangkabau. Namun, upaya Bundo Kanduang itu tetap membawa ideologi matrilineal ke dalam nuraninya.

**Kata Kunci:** Bundo Kanduang, Poligami Berbasis Budaya, Budaya Minangkabau



## INTRODUCTION

The idea of polygamy is often understood as a way to protect women. The model of polygamy practiced by Prophet Muhammad and his companions aimed to provide support and protection for the wives and children of Muslim men who had died in jihad for the sake of Allah and the Prophet. However, the original purpose of polygamy has changed; women who enter polygamous marriages today are no longer those being protected or “saved,” as in the time when it was practiced to support widows of men who died in battle. Even in Minangkabau, the only matrilineal kinship system in Indonesia, women in polygamous marriages are demeaned by this practice, succumbing to their fate as Minangkabau women. Although Islam embodies the principle of equality between women and men (Nasution 2007, 98), this principle does not fully apply to Minangkabau women. In Minangkabau customs, women are the only icons displayed in the *rumah gadang*. Although they are regarded as the true Bundo Kandung, customary rules remain one-sided and often disadvantage women. In marriage, the consent of Minangkabau women is frequently overlooked. Parents and *mamak* (mother’s brother) have the right to determine whom their daughters will marry. Considerations such as age, maturity, and education are not regarded as important criteria for women. Instead, the ideal consideration is how eligible the prospective husband is—whether he is wealthy, holds a traditional title, or is considered clever.

The main reason polygamy has become widespread in Minangkabau is that Minangkabau tradition itself accommodates this practice (Sari, Samry, dan Midawati 2021, 141). The marriage tradition in Minangkabau limits the husband’s

movement within the scope of his wife’s kinship. Minangkabau husbands cannot enter into all customary affairs within the wife’s matrilineal kinship system. Because of these traditional factors, Minangkabau husbands are called *sumando*, which in practice only aims to provide offspring for the wife’s extended family. In material terms, the husband does not have the right to take his wife out of his tribe’s *rumah gadang*, so the husband never stays long in the wife’s *rumah gadang*. The husband is only obliged to provide for his children in the future. As the practice of polygamy grows into a tradition, the position of women in Minangkabau is increasingly objectified, like property and other objects. Resistance to this practice came to the fore in the mid-twentieth century by people oppressed by the abused tradition.

Minangkabau women from pre- to post-independence of Indonesia were in a transitional stage, struggling to obtain the same rights as men. Ruhana Kuddus and Rahmah El Yunusiah were Minangkabau women who championed the emancipation of these rights. They acted progressively to ensure that all Minangkabau women could have equal access to opportunities as Minangkabau men. The space for Minangkabau women to act is no longer confined by customary affairs within the *rumah gadang*, it has expanded more broadly to include access to the same education as men (Deliani, Khairat, dan Muslim 2019, 175). The purpose of receiving the same education was none other than to stimulate the critical thinking of Minangkabau women because, in the early twentieth century, women in Minangkabau tended to be regarded as objects in the social sphere. The woman herself in Minangkabau is a reflection of the customs in her tribe, an icon of the *rumah gadang*. Although all kinship affairs within Minangkabau clans

are deliberated in the *rumah gadang* the responsibility and guiding authority rest with Bundo Kanduang, the ruler of the *rumah gadang*. Bundo Kanduang is the central figure within the social and symbolic space of the *rumah gadang*. She embodies the values and systems that organize and sustain Minangkabau life (Wiemar et al. 2021, 143).

The ratio of the Minangkabau people's faithfulness should also be considered as the fundamental adage; *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah*. This adage gradually backfired on itself. Besides that, the Minangkabau traditional environment recognizes that custom and religion must work together in building the *nagari*. However, building a *nagari* is not only a matter of building and economic resources, it also builds its human resources. The Minangkabau people's understanding of the study of adat and Islamic fiqh is no longer relevant in matters of building human resources. Minangkabau people are glorified as intellectuals who have been recognized since the beginning of Indonesian independence. But the Minangkabau people do not seem to move forward for more modernist thinking. Especially on the issue of marriage, the Minangkabau people have not separated from their old traditions. Their response to textual studies of classical fiqh still has a dominant role in understanding family law in Minangkabau. Narratives in fiqh are conventional studies that are not appropriate to be interpreted as general marriage law in Indonesia, especially on the issue of polygamy (Yazid 2023, 70). Radically, based on gender justice, polygamy in the context of classical fiqh has not fulfilled women's rights progressively. In Minangkabau, polygamy is a practice that tends to abrogate women's rights. The practice of polygamy and its ideals have different ports, both in social society

(tradition) and contained in the prophetic treatise.

In studies of Bundo Kanduang, the research objects fall within the scopes of philosophy and culture, social science and history, as well as anthropology (Arif 2020, 13). To support this study, the data are divided into primary and secondary sources. The presentation of these data is reviewed by categorizing them into value, conceptual, and application aspects of Bundo Kanduang's actions as a critical response to culture-based polygamy in Minangkabau. The approach used in this study views religion as a form of absorbed knowledge; thus it can be interpreted as an effort to understand religion through the examination of religious practices that emerge and develop within society.

Bundo Kanduang is depicted in historiography as a woman who embodies Minangkabau customs, yet she tends to be treated as an object by Minangkabau men. The widespread practice of polygamy in the early twentieth century needs to be revisited so that this research can offer a new perspective. The practice of polygamy can penetrate the locus and tempus of customs within the matrilineal kinship system. In other studies, the practice of polygamy has been generalized due to the strong influence of adat rather than Islamic law. Thus, the practice of polygamy tends to reduce the husband's rights and obligations in marriage. The neglect itself not only illustrates how deviant the practice of polygamy is but also leaves a bad mark on the Minangkabau customary system that adheres to matrilinealism. Ignoring Minangkabau women's marital rights is tantamount to damaging the image of Minangkabau women as Bundo Kanduang. This research will prove that the Bundo Kanduang progressive movement condemns the practice of polygamy that is not based on Islamic law.

The opposition to this flawed practice will be discussed as a form of progressive efforts by Minangkabau women to produce substantive justice for the future.

## CUSTOMARY INTEGRATION BASED ON BUNDO KANDUANG IN MINANGKABAU

Minangkabau oral culture or 'kaba' states that Bundo Kanduang is *limpapeh rumah nan gadang* (Ernatip and Devi 2014, 81; Penghulu 1994, 69). This definition of Bundo Kanduang explains socially and politically, that Minangkabau women called Bundo Kanduang are so iconic, they are the rulers of all property called *pusako tinggi* which is translated into matrilineal ancestral property in the form of objects and titles. Bundo Kanduang is one of the pinnacles of Minangkabau elite leadership, their power to decide issues subjectively and prerogative (Samry dan Omar 2012, 28). However, uniquely, Bundo Kanduang's position is not within the Minangkabau jurisdiction system, but within her position, there are also wiser decisions. The position of Bundo Kanduang itself is essentially the source of wisdom of the Minangkabau people (Abdullah 1970, 16). By birth (sex) is female, so being a Bundo Kanduang is an inherent responsibility. Because women in Minangkabau are the motor of the matrilineal cultural system, without Bundo Kanduang, families, relatives, and tribes are as good as extinction.

In the early days of the Minangkabau civilization, Bundo Kanduang was a term for Minangkabau women that referred to the position of the eldest mother within the scope of kinship and tribe, certainly, this scope was so broad. The woman called Bundo Kanduang has the power of centralized (individual) property rights over

tribal property called treasure *pusako tinggi* (Ernatip and Devi 2014, 69). Bundo Kanduang is the mother of the group responsible for stability and coherence in Minangkabau kinship. The extensive naming of Bundo Kanduang with duties and functions has been reduced to a simpler meaning. This reduction of meaning changes from the oldest woman to all women who are elders in the maternity lineage with specifications of motherhood and leadership (Blackwood 2001, 138). The meaning of Bundo Kanduang is reduced because it existentially requires other recognition. Not only in custom, Bundo Kanduang is also seen through the eyes of the state and religion (Islam).

These two views reduce the broad meaning of Bundo Kanduang to a narrow one. In state terms, Bundo Kanduang is a special position given in the village government (*nagari*) to run the wheels of government in West Sumatra Province. As well as being a women's program in West Sumatra as a form of state support in paying attention to the women's movement on a national scale. In Islam, the interpretation of Bundo Kanduang tends to be confined within a dominant and prescriptive framework. Every exposition of Bundo Kanduang is ultimately framed with the answer "men have more power and greater responsibility than women." This answer is none other than to keep women in their honor as good women who are in the *rumah gadang* (Blackwood 2001, 139). However, being a woman in Minangkabau is a responsibility to family, relatives, and tribe, Zelfeni Wimra quotes a Minangkabau proverb to strengthen the meaning of this responsibility, namely '*daripado baputiah mato, labiah elok baputiah tulang*' (Wimra 2020, 21–22).

This proverb implies that from the moment a woman is born in Minangkabau, she becomes a stake between disgrace and



pride for her family, relatives, and tribe. Everything depends on her ability to fulfill her duties as a Minangkabau woman – bringing either pride or disgrace. This proverb warns of the importance of maintaining honor as a woman in Minangkabau. It is better to die than to live in shame. To maintain their self-esteem, Minangkabau women guard their behavior to avoid actions that are shameful or improper. The success of Minangkabau women to carry out their duties and become a symbol will be called Bundo Kanduang. Namely, women who become noble in the family, relatives, and tribe. In Minangkabau women, there are *sako* and *pusako* (honor and customary heritage). Minangkabau women are a locus that carries the heavy burden of custom (Wimra 2020, 204). The title of Bundo Kanduang will be attached by customary recognition when she is married. This situation is also referred to as having worn custom perfectly. Customary recognition requires Bundo Kanduang to carry out functions and roles in the community. So by this marriage, the woman called Bundo Kanduang has a political right or power over deliberations in the extended tribal family (Ernatip and Devi 2014, 71).

Another form of recognition for Bundo Kanduang within the kinship group (*kaum*) is based on her ability to lead all the women and girls in the *kaum*. The quality of her leadership reflects the extent of her charisma as a Bundo Kanduang (Ernatip and Devi 2014, 70). Bundo Kanduang is a non-formal leader of all women and their children and grandchildren in her community. Her leadership grows out of her ability and charisma which is supported and recognized by the members of the community. The values embodied by Bundo Kanduang and her authority have evolved into a form of matrilineal political movement with significant influence. One

aspect of this movement concerns the issue of polygamy practices, which has existed since the colonial period. For them, this practice represents a condition that is unacceptable. If the practice in question only undermines the status of women in Minangkabau, such polygamous practices will only make the marriage transactional and only benefit one party (Samry dan Omar 2012, 28).

Bundo Kanduang is a woman who is honest, knowledgeable, and articulate. The request to be this kind of figure is not just to live as a housewife, but they must actualize it for the village community. Such a role makes Bundo Kanduang a highly noble person who plays an important role in the community (Blackwood 2001, 140; Penghulu 1994, 77–80). Being honest and knowledgeable is a Bundo Kanduang's duty, but being articulate is a Bundo Kanduang's right. They have the same rights as titled men in Minangkabau, Bundo Kanduang have the same rights to speak and express opinions in the traditional deliberation forum in Minangkabau (Blackwood 2001, 142). Before achieving this full right, there are four responsibilities as a Bundo Kanduang, these responsibilities are exposed as a form of role modeling (Ernatip and Devi 2014, 81–84; Penghulu 1994, 89–103). First, *manuruik alua nan luruih*, follows the rules set by Minangkabau custom itself. The rules are sacred and inviolable, for example, Minangkabau women are obliged to be the heirs of customary property called *pusako tinggi*. Second, *manampuah jalan nan pasa*, meaning that every Bundo Kanduang is obliged to carry out Islamic law as the religion adopted by the Minangkabau people. Third, *mamaliharo harato pusako*, Bundo Kanduang is obliged to maintain and manage customary heirlooms so that they become an investment for the community in the future. Fourth, *mamaliharo anak jo kamanakan*, as

Bundo Kanduang also carries out the obligation to look after their children and nephews, both boys and girls. So that all tribal descendants know customs and religion while still in the care of Bundo Kanduang.

### **DENOUNCING POLYGAMY: COLLECTIVE RESISTANCE OF MODERN MINANGKABAU**

The right to marry or - to enter into a polygamous marriage— is not solely held by Minangkabau women. The decision to marry or be polygamous comes from the woman's parents and the *mamak* (customary leader in the mother's family). Thus, underage marriages and polygamy are rampant, and it becomes an oppression of women's rights. The marriage customs that have been binding over the years have begun to be challenged by Minangkabau women today (Putri 2018, iv). Not only were women disadvantaged by the practice of polygamy, but some Minangkabau men also voiced criticism of the practice of polygamy, which sparked sharp public debate. Famous male figures such as Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Buya Hamka), Muhammad Radjab, Bahder Djohan, and Moehammad Sjafei in various writings and conferences. These figures are the children of polygamous husbands in Minangkabau. As children, they reflect on their adult selves and deplore the massive practice of polygamy in Minangkabau. Buya Hamka recounts his life as the son of a polygamous cleric in his book 'Kenang-Kenangan Hidup' (Hamka 1951, 63), telling the story of his father who had three wives during his lifetime.

Women also have to accept the situation of sharing their status of wife with another woman. The impact of this arrangement is felt not only by the wife but

also by her children. This was told by Muhammad Radjab (a journalist figure from West Sumatra) in his autobiography 'Semasa Kecil Di Kampung.' Radjab felt that, as the child of a polygamist, he was treated unfairly by his father, even though his father was a respected scholar in Minangkabau. As a child, Radjab rarely had the opportunity to spend time with him (Radjab 2019). Djohan in the 1926 youth congress in Jakarta in his speech also opposed the practice of polygamy in Minangkabau. For Djohan, his home village had abused the practice of polygamy as a bad custom, which abrogated the rights of Minangkabau women (Stures 1960, 158). Sjafei was openly disappointed with the practice of polygamy in Minangkabau. For him, the practice is far from the practice guided by Islam; polygamy even makes men (husbands) abuse their rights and obligations by Islamic law (Stures 1960, 158).

In 1912 in Minangkabau, in a newspaper called 'Soenting Melajoe' there was an article entitled '*perkawinan*' written by Djoeriah from the Payakumbuh area. This is evidence that women's readings of the concept of marriage in Minangkabau have existed since the colonial era (Putri 2018, 1; Blackburn dan Bessell 1997, 110). According to Djoeriah, marriage in Minangkabau has become transactional since Minangkabau parents prefer to marry men who have customary rank and were politically favorable to tribes during the Dutch East Indies colonial period. Marriage becomes unreasonable or also referred to as not paying attention to the level of *kafa'ah* in the dominant Islamic religion in Minangkabau. The resistance to the concept of marriage described by Djoeriah is the large age gap between young women and old men. This issue was not a concern for the woman's parents. The practice became massive in the early twentieth century. Djoeriah's

assumption as a Minangkabau woman voices that women have become objects in the matrilineal environment.

There are four indicators of the practice of polygamy in Minangkabau (Putri 2018, 91–94). First, Minangkabau men who are wealthy and already married tend to practice polygamy. The tendency often leads them to pursue young and beautiful women as additional wives. The wealth in question includes material wealth, social power, and honor. It refers to individuals such as nobles, the wealthy, traditional leaders, and religious scholars. Secondly, customary rules in *nagari* prohibit women from leaving the village even though they are already someone's wives, so only the husband migrates from the village. Thirdly, husbands in Minangkabau are fond of marrying overseas, because they do not bring their wives from their home villages. Fourth, the practice of polygamy with the term 'picking up people' (*urang bajapuik*) where the woman's parents and the woman's mother's family propose to Minangkabau men to gain honor for the mother's tribe. Educated Minangkabau women also become selective, fearing the bad habits in Minangkabau regarding the practice of polygamy by Minangkabau men. Although men are assured of their wealth, dignity, and faith (Putri 2018, 108).

From the Minangkabau perspective, a prospective husband is valued for his social respectability. This reflects a form of materialism. In the past, women who sought marriage—or were willing to enter polygamous unions—often did so on the condition that the man was a respected person, such as a *penghulu*, a wealthy merchant, and a scholar. This perspective has since been interpreted more broadly in assessing prospective husband today. However, it is not necessarily shared by women as future wives. Rather, this

viewpoint is shaped by parents and elite figures within the women's tribe (Yaswirman 2017, 139). Disobedience will only become a problem when women intervene in this perspective. The result of this perspective is detrimental to the woman herself, but beneficial in terms of material for her tribe. Minangkabau women are saved by the rules and regulations of marriage in Indonesia, Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage (Law 1/1974). However, just because polygamy is not allowed, it does not eliminate this old perspective. Marriage in Minangkabau is ultimately not done based on love or feelings of love. Such marriages indicate two practices, such as polygamy and divorce (Putri 2018, 4). Although marriage, polygamy, and divorce have been regulated in laws and other regulations, such as Law 1/1974. Women's groups in Minangkabau still experience historical traumas in the issue of polygamy and divorce.

The dehumanization of women in Minangkabau became a turning point of resistance because at that time education also entered as a situation changer. The beginning of Minangkabau women learning modern education was the starting point of the awakening to oppose the massive and excessive practice of polygamy. The flow of advanced education made Minangkabau women become educated people. They create a gap between the past and the developing period, at the beginning of this developing life Minangkabau women began to fight anyone who took away their rights. This opposition includes the arranged marriage system, early marriage, arbitrary divorce of husbands, and the practice of polygamy abuse.

## BUNDO KANDUANG'S CRITIQUE OF POLYGAMY CULTURE IN MINANGKABAU

The critique of polygamy in Minangkabau is a concern in the movement and cultural modernization by Bundo Kanduang. This criticism is the self-criticism of Bundo Kanduang, who lives and acts as a Minangkabau woman. In a Minangkabau proverb, Bundo Kanduang falls under the frame of 'sungguah inyo parampuan nan basipaik laki-laki' (women behave masculine) (Irwan 2017, 57–60). The interpretation of this proverb illustrates Bundo Kanduang's effort to gain independence as a human being within Minangkabau society. In this context, the independence she seeks involves the right to education and the right to migrate or take part in the rantau (diaspora), as Minangkabau life is divided between the luhak (Minangkabau territory) and the rantau (outside Minangkabau territory). Because so far, only Minangkabau men have access to education and diaspora. However, humans, including Bundo Kanduang, have the same conscience to feel the luhak and rantau.

This incongruity is because, in essence, the task of being a Bundo Kanduang is to maintain matrilineal values. However, Bundo Kanduang in the modern era she is on the verge of losing its value. In the Minangkabau social arena, Bundo Kanduang is only considered as a quantity (Midawati, 2021, p. 174). However, there is a rebuttal to this, as Bundo Kanduang with that quantity does not completely abandon the value of being Bundo Kanduang. Namely, by instilling matrilineal values carried out by people in the rumah gadang to prospective Bundo Kanduang. Embedding values through prohibitions, orders, customary rules, and traditional

stories framed in religious and cultural enlightenment (Hasibuan, Daulay, dan Masuwd 2022, 170). By instilling the values of Bundo Kanduang, 'limpapeh rumah nan gadang, pusek jalo kumpulan tali, umbun puruik pagangan kunci, sumarak dalam nagari, nan gadang basa batuah' (a large pillar of a traditional house, the center of a net of ropes, the holder of treasures and trust, pride in the village, which is great again auspicious). Wherever they are, in luhak or rantau, Bundo Kanduang remains in this value orientation (Febriani dan Dewi 2021, 58; Hasibuan, Daulay, dan Masuwd 2022, 168). These values are adopted by Bundo Kanduang as a right to find freedom for themselves. Bundo Kanduang becomes more precise in acting and choosing decisions because she has managed to find the most substantial basis for deciding. Even later faced with the situation of bearing a double burden in balancing public and private roles. These values have become a strength for the Bundo Kanduang.

The lifestyle of Minangkabau women has entered the realm of modernity. The customary rules and Islamic religion that once governed Minangkabau life had to make room for new daily practices. The new lifestyle, which began to take shape in the early twentieth century, influenced the critical reasoning of Bundo Kanduang. It marked the beginning of social critique and renewal toward a more flexible Minangkabau society in both the domestic and public sphere of men and women (Angraini 2021, 9). As did Amna A. Karim, Nurani Talawi, Rangkaja Ch. Sjamsoe, Rasoena Said, Ruhana Kuddus, Saadah Alim, Siti Agam, Siti Djatiah, Siti Nurma Kajo, and Sjarifah Nawawi were Minangkabau women who helped build the world of women's newspapers in Minangkabau during the Dutch colonial period (Yati 2020, 159; Rahmana, Nurdin, dan Wirman 2021, 79).



The underlying pressure on a Minangkabau woman stems from being subjected to “double colonization”: first, by the Dutch colonial authorities on a broad scale, and second, by local Minangkabau customs that particularly constrain women (Angraini 2021, 7; Rahmana, Nurdin, dan Wirman 2021, 79). To prove this, there are records of polygamy practices in the Minangkabau area during the Dutch colonial period at the highest level in the entire Dutch colony. These records date from 1925 to 1938 (Arya 2017). The rate of polygamy in Minangkabau was quite high compared to other Islamic-populated areas in Indonesia (Dutch East Indies), the data shows the highest peak of polygamy in 1930. Most husbands in Minangkabau had two wives with a percentage of 89 percent, with the remaining husbands having three and four wives. The census also indicates that there were divorces after that. It also indicates that polygamy and divorce are a series of serial marriages. Thus a Minangkabau woman before reaching the age of 20 has often changed partners through marriage five or six times in her life (Reenen, 1996, 222–23).

This record connects to the anxieties of Minangkabau women in the early twentieth century. After marriage, Minangkabau women became full-fledged Bundo Kanduang. Duties and obligations have filled their lives to take care of their children, nieces and nephews, extended tribal families, and husbands. Their involvement also includes economic management (Yati 2017, 149–50; Ermagusti, Arrasyid, dan Hadi 2023, 33). All of these things happen because of marriage. The task of being a Bundo Kanduang in reality requires them to be dexterous and observe the economy widely by themselves. On the other hand, they cannot read, write, count, and continue in

school (education) because it is hindered by the culture of keeping girls in the rumah gadang before marriage.

Education is an access for all human beings because education does not categorize men and women. Ruhana Kuddus became a driving figure of education for women in the early twentieth century. Access to education led Minangkabau women to have critical discourse and reasoning. Then, utilizing political opportunities and criticizing policies began to grow in the Minangkabau women's movement. Since the ‘1908 Tax Rebellion’, Bundo Kanduang has been integrated into the political space and policies carried out in women's association organizations, both Islamic and anti-imperialist political lines (Yati 2017, 155; Ermagusti, Arrasyid, dan Hadi 2023, 33). The trigger for the modernization movement of Minangkabau culture by Bundo Kanduang was that the access to education that was prevalent for Minangkabau men was also available to women. In the early twentieth century, Minangkabau elites during the Dutch colonial period had access to education for all their children and nephews, including women. Certainly, the Dutch colonial move was an act of ‘bribing’ to freely have access to nagari logistics in Minangkabau, by providing access to education with a European education curriculum (Yati 2017, 151). However, this became a cultural modernization that was useful for equalizing women and men in Minangkabau in terms of education.

This movement had an impact in the early twentieth century, Minangkabau women at least had some independence thanks to the Bundo Kanduang values they fought for. The challenge in the twentieth century is to maintain this modernization. Certainly, political, cultural, educational, and social currents. Integrating Bundo Kanduang and participating in the political ranks are not

the only ways to maintain what has been fought for. Through education, Minangkabau women began to be interested in the early twentieth century to enter a new space (medium) to convey ideas and criticize the relationship between custom and religion that had been tangled (ambiguous) in its implementation. This medium was the printed newspaper Sumatera Weskust, which had existed since 1859 in Dutch. The involvement of women in writing and giving ideas to this newspaper triggered the birth of a new newspaper. 'Soenting Melajoe' was the first Minangkabau women's newspaper which began its first edition on July 12, 1912. This newspaper became the forerunner of the circulation of women-only newspapers in the Dutch East Indies as a whole (Yati 2020, 153; Ermagusti, Arrasyid, dan Hadi 2023, 33; Silfia Hanani 2018, 83). All the writings and publications of women's newspapers concentrate on issues of arranged marriages, marriages, polygamy that deviate from religious treatises, and marriage rituals (alek) that have been reduced in Bundo Kanduang's observations. For them, the meaning of marriage and its traditions have been mixed up, so that the authenticity of marriage and polygamy no longer reflect customary and religious norms.

In addition, the twentieth century saw the movement of the future Bundo Kanduang. They began to move out of the rumah gadang and began to rework matrilineal ideology for a new home outside the territory of the old rumah gadang. Certainly, in the end, they also built a new rumah gadang in the new territory. The buildings and land in this new territory are the result of the couple's earnings. But returning to the Minangkabau tradition, the claim to ownership will be controlled by the woman (wife) and continued by the woman's descendants as well (Blackwood

1999, 53). This claim to the house and land reinforces matrilineality with new resources in the lineage. Certainly, this is a form of modernizing the tradition of cultivating matrilineal ideology as a guide to life. The sumando factor that has no authority in the wife's house has also been reduced. Because of the actions of Minangkabau women who began to leave the rumah gadang environment. Because of opportunities like this, the crucial factor of polygamy in Minangkabau is reduced.

In the norm of Bundo Kanduang who has a high degree above her tribe members due to the right of ownership of pusako tinggi property. Then, if the pusako tinggi is not maintained and exhausted, the noble positions of Bundo Kanduang will collapse and reality has proven, that Minangkabau women participate in earning a living and work for the sake of family and tribe because the pusako tinggi property has been exhausted or mortgaged or sold for the benefit of the tribe (Kurnia 2017, 65). The absence of pusako tinggi property indicates the decline of the Bundo Kanduang's holistic caste. Because of custom too, Minangkabau men do not get the right to ownership of pusako tinggi property.

Minangkabau women who have the desire to diaspora, it is likely that the pusako tinggi property left behind will be indicated as pawned and sold. This is a measure of the courage of a Minangkabau woman. They have the agility to bet on the future, while originally Bundo Kanduang has been wallowing in wealth in her hometown (Wenhendri, Yusril, dan Ediwari 2019, 70). There are two possible attitudes of Minangkabau women in the diaspora. The first possibility is that by going into diaspora, Bundo Kanduang brings the values of the Minangkabau matrilineal ideology to the rantau area. The second possibility is to leave all aspects of matrilineal culture

(Ayuningtyas et al. 2020, 153). These two possibilities are present because of their experiences and reflections on the culture and tradition of being a Bundo Kandung in the rumah gadang. However, the property that is left behind and not maintained is a neglect of Bundo Kandung's duties in Minangkabau matrilineal culture. However, blaming Bundo Kandung is not appropriate in her code of ethics if mortgaging and selling occurs. In reality, this is done by the datuak (tribal chief) or niniak mamak (tribal elder). It can be claimed that the mortgaging and selling of pusako tinggi assets is done by people who still live in the village and benefit personally from the empowerment of this communal property.

## CONCLUSION

Bundo Kandung is central to the pillars of rumah gadang and matrilineal culture. Being a Bundo Kandung means maintaining the values of being an independent woman in Minangkabau. By being self-sufficient, Bundo Kandung criticizes customary and religious policies that perpetuate the practice of polygamy in Minangkabau. The practice of polygamy is criticized for restoring the ideals of polygamy in accordance with the treatise that has been conveyed in the sharia, which has so far become culture-based polygamy. Bundo Kandung's critical power comes from the struggle for their rights to be independent as human beings. The factor of receiving formal education and the right to diaspora are the forerunners of critical reasoning to criticize polygamy in Minangkabau. These two factors are present because of the inequality of rights that are not equal to Minangkabau men. The limited space for accessing education for Minangkabau women was finally kicked off so education sparked the critical reasoning

of Bundo Kandung. They gave birth to a critical discourse on the practice of polygamy that has been tainted in the name of custom and religion. Even the right to travel was denied to Minangkabau women. Previously, women were prohibited from leaving the gadang house, they were prepared to receive customary property (pusako tinggi). Even though she is married, as a wife, she is not allowed to leave to follow her husband. This customary rule became a crucial factor in why husband practiced polygamy until their overseas territories were dispersed. Bundo Kandung's progressive steps with their critical reasoning succeeded in gaining the right to disperse as well. Uniquely, receiving education and being in the diaspora strengthens the matrilineal ideology that Bundo Kandung values.

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