



## Minang Women's Music in Matrilineal Kinship: Revealing the Boundaries of Ethics and Performance Aesthetics

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### Abstract

This research aims to reveal Minang women's music to find a common thread perspective on Minangkabau matrilineal women. The method used in this research is a women's perspective research method (feminist perspective). This method produces a very distinctive report, which is obtained from data through feminist ethnography, which is a report on the results of field research. The findings are that women's music based on *Adat Salingka Nagari* is a women's music that blends with *Adat* (tradition) and provides an opportunity to actualize themselves in the societies; as a result of being a *Anak Dendang* they get more than enough benefits and as family breadwinners.

**Keywords:** women music; matrilineal kinship; performance; minang; minangkabau

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### INTRODUCTION

Matrilineal is the first kinship system in the world which, until 1961 was still followed by 15% of the world's ethnic population, and the Minangkabau society is one of the largest matrilineal societies in the world (Kato, 1978; Stark, 2013). Yangsen et al. (2021) explain that Minangkabau society is unique and distinctive because the principle of matrilineal descent that it adheres to differs from other ethnic groups in Indonesia. That is, the descent is based on the maternal (women) line, therefore Minangkabau women have their position and role in the customs developed by their society.

In Minangkabau's matrilineal society, various forms of women's music have developed, namely music played by

Minang women. Some of the music is part of the custom, and some are outside the custom. Some kinds of music are part of the custom, some are integrated with custom, some only function as traditional celebrants, and some are completely outside the tradition. Women's music which is part of the tradition is often used in connection with certain traditional ceremonies or rites, meaning that it becomes a means for a traditional ceremony (ritual). Among them are *Talempong Bundo* in Singkarak (Sriwulan et al., 2014), *Lesung Alu Katentong* in Sungai Tarab (Indrawan et al., 2018), etc. In addition, there is women's music that functions as traditional celebrants, including *Talempong Uwaik-Uwaik* in Maninjau, *Talempong Sikatuntuang* in Payakumbuh, *Talempong Gandang Lasuang* in Padang Pariaman (Indrawan et al., 2018; Susandraja-

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ya et al., 2018), etc. Women's music that is completely out of custom is the presence of Minang women in *Saluang Dendang* performances and the jungle of Minang pop music (Sukmawati, 2008).

In addition, in the 1960s, women appeared as *Anak Dendang* in the *Bagurau Saluang* performance in the *Pagurauan Arena*. The show is held at night, known as *Bagurau Samalam Suntut* (Rustim & Simatupang, 2019). The emergence of this "*Anak Dendang*" is not easy, because it raises pros and cons from both the surrounding society. Their appearance is considered to embarrass society, especially to humiliate "*Mamak*" as Mother's brother in charge of guiding "*Kamanakan*." From the societal side, their role as *Anak Dendang* is considered despicable, considered bad women, bitches, therefore, they always get gossip from society (Hajizar, 2009).

In the 1990s, with the increasingly professional ability of *Anak Dendang*, his presence in the performing arts world began to be noticed by producers. Then came the Minang pop songs that departed from *Dendang*, including *Dendang* cadets, which are new songs sung by professional artists and singers (Suryadi, 2005; Hajizar, 2009). Until now, the presence of women in Minang pop music has become a separate part of society's entertainment.

In terms of performance ethics and aesthetics, the issues to be investigated include the dialectic between women's music in Minangkabau, which is integrated with tradition, with women's music as traditional performers, as well as women's music outside of tradition, such as the presence of *Anak Dendang* and Minang pop singers. The dialectic between ethics and performance aesthetics is also an integral part of this research/findings because as part of the Minangkabau society, which has a view of life-based on the *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK)", Minang women as musicians visually in their performances the show should be obedient to their way of life. The results of this dialectic are expected to find a common thread perspective on Minangkabau

matrilineal women.

## METHOD

This research uses a feminist ethnographic method (Mamangan et al., 2018). Feminist ethnography is based on the researcher's active involvement in producing social knowledge through direct participation in experiencing the social reality that she wants to understand (Davis & Craven, 2022). Researchers must also understand the social reality of women as previously invisible actors in sociological research (Reinharz, 1993). Feminist field research gave birth to basic concepts that lead to new theories where the population of the research was several *PenDendang* of *Lapiak Gurau* in Payakumbuh and Agam. The research sample is women musicians who are in the area of traditional music, children of *Dendang*, and *Anak Dendang*, who are transformed into Minang pop songs.

The presentation of data and information is the result of an analysis that discusses women's music in the categories of women's music that is part of tradition (which is integrated with tradition, and traditional celebrants), women's music whose presence is outside of tradition (such as the appearance of *Anak Dendang*) and Minang pop singer). These women's music was researched and seen during the process of each performance, both before—during—and after the performance. Then, ethically and aesthetically, the Minang women's music is revealed to find a common thread perspective on Minangkabau matrilineal women. In feminist ethnography, the social and cultural form of the society is considered to be the arrangement in the minds of the members of the society. So the task of researchers is to pry it out of their minds (Spradley, 1997). This ethnographic method produces a unique report, which is obtained from the data through the following stages: 1) initial study; 2) problem analysis; 3) material object information; 4) field observations; 5) documentation; 6) interview; 7) data analysis; 8) data presentation; 9)

drafting; and 9) reports.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Minang women in the ideal concept of Matrilineal

Minangkabau society positions women as glorified figures (Revita et al., 2018). This perception is based on the mythological background that the legendary Minangkabau leader in the past was a woman called *Bundo Kanduang*. All decisions in the social life of the Minangkabau society are under the stylization of *Bundo Kanduang*. After the period of the legend of under stylization of *Bundo Kanduang*, the authority of *Bundo Kanduang* is still inherited in the leadership structure of the tribes in Minangkabau villages (*Nagari-Nagari*). Each *Penghulu* with a *Rumah Gadang* has a *Bundo Kanduang* who also has an incarnation of authority as in the period of the *Bundo Kanduang* legend. His role is so big that the figure of *Bundo Kanduang* is described in an expression that reads as follows (Hajizar, 2009) in the Minangkabau dialect.

Nan gadang basa batuah  
Limpapeh rumah dan gadang  
Sumarak di dalam Nagari  
Hiasan dalam kampung  
Amban puruik pegangan kunci  
Amban puruik aluang bunian,  
Kok hiduik tampek banaza  
Jikok mati tampek baniat  
Ka pai tampek batanyo  
Ka pulang tampek babarito  
Jadi palinduang waktu paneh  
Ka unduang-unduang ka tanah suci  
Ka payuang panji ka sarugo.

Based on the Minangkabau Traditional *Tambo*, *Bundo Kanduang* is the nickname given to the woman who leads the Minangkabau Kingdom both as queen and as the mother of the king (the queen mother), where this title is passed down from generation to generation (Abdullah, 1970). Zubir & Rismadona (2014) stated that this title was first given to Dara Jingga, a daughter of a Minangkabau king who married a Singosari royal noble from Java, but this opi-

nion does not have strong evidence.

### Minang Women in Matrilineal Kinship

*Penghulu* (2001) explained that what is meant by *Parampuan* according to Minangkabau tradition is a woman, both a girl and a mother or wife, who always has commendable traits according to tradition, equipped with all skills and knowledge according to the abilities of a woman. His role is so great that the figure of *Bundo Kanduang* is described in a traditional expression which reads (Table 1) as follows (in the Minangkabau dialect):

By her nature, the woman figure as *Bundo Kanduang* plays a very important role in social life and is the main source for the fertile life of a character in society. He has a very important role besides men in the success of development in all fields, especially in the mental development of society. Thus, Minang women are expected to be women who have good character, polite behavior, and wear shame in themselves. Donate or be *Jangga* (odd) for the society if you see a woman doing the things in the "*Sumbangan Duo Baleh*" above because if it is done, it will certainly bring shame to the woman, her tribe, and her society. Therefore, every Minang woman who stays away from these discordant behaviors can be called a civilized woman who maintains her manners as a woman.

### Women's music based on *Adat Salingka Nagari*

The concept of *Adat Salingka Nagari* automatically affects the cultural concept of the *Nagari* society itself which is realized in the concept and existence of a type of art that exists in the *Nagari*. The principle of the relationship between the geographies of a *Nagari* and the cultural products of the *Nagari* society later developed into an expression (*Adat Salingka Nagari; Takaran Salingkar Bambu; Lain Padang Lain Belalang; Lain Lubuk Lain Ikannyo*). This expression means that in a *Nagari* society there are specific characteristics of socio-cultural products and their art forms, which are different from other *Nagari* societies in Mi-

**Table 1.** The meaning of *Bundo Kanduang* in Minangkabau

Bundo Kanduang	Meaning
<i>Nan gadang basa batuah</i>	The great big ( <i>Batuah</i> ): <i>Gadang</i> means people who are elders and become role models <i>Basa</i> means to be a leader and regulator in his tribe <i>Batuah</i> means as a wise person
<i>Limpapeh rumah dan gadang</i>	Become a compliment in <i>Rumah Gadang</i> : Women are pillars in <i>Rumah Gadang</i> (main pillar <i>Rumah Gadang</i> . Move freely within the family to nurture) <i>Limpapeh</i> it means <i>Tonggak Tuo</i> which is located in the middle <i>Rumah Gadang</i> . If the <i>Tonggak Tuo</i> is solid, the house is safe, but if it wobbles or is not strong enough, it will collapse. In line with what is contained in the Prophet's hadith, it means that women are the pillars of the state, good women, good women, damaged countries, damaged women, and the state.
<i>Sumarak dalam Nagari, hiasan dalam kampuang</i>	Lively and ornate inside <i>Nagari</i> : Become a <i>marwah</i> village ( <i>Nagari</i> ), make the country lively and become a decoration of " <i>katagak Nagari mamaga Nagari</i> "
<i>Kok hiduik tampek banaza</i>	When life is a place of vows If you die, where do you intend?
<i>Jikok mati tampek baniaik</i>	<i>Kok hiduik tampek bernazar</i> (his life is the source of all desires) <i>Kok mati tampek baniaik</i> (his death became the source of all intentions)
<i>Amban puruik pegangan kunci</i>	Key holder power center Heirloom holder
<i>Amban puruik aluang bunian</i>	Given the trust and authority to hold the key to the <i>Rangkiang</i> ( <i>Sako jo Pusako</i> ) <i>Sako</i> ; the ownership of the people who are inherited by the mother's lineage/title.
<i>Ka pai tampek batanyo</i> <i>Ka pulang tampek babarito</i>	Where to ask when going A place to deliver news when you're back Women are the direction setters/advisors, women are the upstream and the estuary of their people's problems
<i>Jadi palinduang wakatu paneh</i>	To be a protector from the hot sun A strong woman who becomes a protector in any problem that plagues her family
<i>Ka unduang-unduang ka tanah suci (Madinah)</i> <i>Ka payuang panji ka sarugo.</i>	As a guide to the holy land (Mecca and Medina) As an umbrella to go to Heaven Women become protectors, supervisors and determinants in this world and the hereafter. <i>Ka Undang-Undang Ka Madinah</i> (To be a refuge to Medina). <i>Ka Payuang Panji Ka Sarugo</i> (become a big umbrella to heaven)

nangkabau.

About women, it turns out that the presence of women in the performing arts of music is still very dominant in the *Nagari* in Minangkabau. The performing art forms are categorized into three, namely: 1) there is women's music that blends with tradition; 2) there are those who celebrate tradition; and 3) there is also the presence of music outside of tradition. Women's music that blends with tradition means that women's music is part of the

traditional procession. Therefore, tradition cannot be carried out without the presence of women's music. The women's music includes *Talempong Bundo* in Singkarak, as shown in Figure 1.

*Talempong Bundo*, is a term for *Talempong* music played by a group of women musicians in the Minangkabau village of Singkarak. This music game is only performed in the *Maanta Padi Saratuhih* ceremony, namely the harvest offering ceremony performed by the women of the *Induak Bako*

(father's sisters) in a series of marriage traditions of *Anak Pisangnya* (child of a brother).



**Figure 1.** *Talempong Bundo* in the *Maanta Padi Saratuiah Ceremony* in Singkarak.

Meanwhile, *Lesung Alu Katentong* is a *Lesung* music performance played by a group of women musicians in the Sungai Tarab (Figure 2). This *Lesung* music can only be played in several traditional activities such as the appointment of the *Penghulu*, Death of the *Penghulu*, and wedding parties (Sriwulan, 2014) which can be seen in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** *Lesung Alu Katentong* in Sungai Tarab

The second type of music used to celebrate tradition is also found in different villages. This type of music consists of 1) *Talempong Uwaik-Uwaik* in Maninjau (Aliman, 2017); 2) *Talempong Sikatuntuang* in Payakumbuh; and 3) *Talempong Gandang Lasuang* in Padang Pariaman (Indrawan et al., 2018; Susandrajaya et al., 2018) which can be seen in Figure 3.

These women musicians' three forms of musical performances function as traditional celebrants. In preparing for the wedding of a man or a woman, mothers will cook until the evening at the homes of the two prospective brides. For the mothers

not to be bored, *Talempong Uwaik-Uwaik* was played by another group of mothers to liven up the atmosphere of the evening. The sound of *Talempong* music will make mothers happy, dance, and dance; they take kitchen utensils such as spoons, glasses, and plates and ring them with various beats so that it adds to the boisterous game of *Talempong Uwaik-Uwaik*.



**Figure 3.** 1) *Talempong Uwaik-Uwaik* in Maninjau; 2) *Talempong Sikatuntuang* in Payakumbuh; and 3) *Talempong Gandang Lasuang* in Padang Pariaman

The first and second types of women's music do not cause problems in the community. Because its presence is related to the implementation of rituals and traditional ceremonies. So that since its appearance, which is said to coincide with the birth of Minangkabau traditions in the past, the performing arts are still used and continue to function while supporting communities to this day. Thus, the third type of music emerged, related to the presence of women in *Bagurau Saluang* performances and Minang pop songs. To discuss this third type of music, it is necessary to look at the Minangkabau atmosphere from the entry of Islam until the 1960s.

The entry of Islam to Minangkabau in the 13<sup>th</sup> century has, of course, changed the way of life of the Minang society (Dobbin, 1977). The matrilineal Minang society combined with the patrilineal Islam that came later. This condition is carried out continuously by the Minangkabau community, even today.

Then came the figure of *Bundo Kandung*, who led the Pagaruyung Kingdom,

and made Minangkabau customs the basis for society's lives (Elfira, 2007). The figure of a wise and highly respected woman makes Minangkabau custom sustainable to this day. The ethical view of *Bundo Kanduang* as a wise women leader continues to emerge in the lives of Minangkabau women to this day. *Bundo Kanduang* glory also affected all Minangkabau women. This reflection then resulted in Minang women not being allowed to channel their artistic talents to be enjoyed by the public, except in the *Rumah Gadang* belonging to the tribe belonging to their society.

When, in 1960, a woman dancer (*Anak Dendang*) appeared in the *Pagurauan Arena*, she was challenged and criticized by her mother, who was considered to have embarrassed her people, especially by humiliating *Mamak* as the mother's brother, who had the main responsibility for guiding her nephew. Their role as *Anak Dendang* is considered despicable, they are considered as women who are not good, bitches, therefore they always get negative views from society. Working as a singer is considered a despicable and shameful job, and they are even considered prostitutes, because they always go out late at night and come home early, and this embarrasses the villagers. Apart from that, the performing art of *Bagurau Saluang* which is familiarly called *Bagurau* is a male life that lasts all night (Figure 5).

*Anak Dendang* secretly still go to the neighboring villages, because from the results of being the *Anak Dendang* they get more than enough profit. So that over time the presence of *Anak Dendang* with *Dendang* in the *Pagurauan* world can be accepted by the society. In the end, *Mamak* couldn't talk anymore, because they came home with a profit so they could change the family's economy. *Anak Dendang* began to expand the stage for their performances, they had begun to dare to play on storefronts in Banto Market, Bukittinggi City, Padang Panjang City, and Payakumbuh City. But in the 1990s, their performance space was growing and changing, so they were invited to perform from hou-

se to house. Producers began noticing their presence in the performing arts world with the emergence of professional women singers in the 1990s.

Then came the pop songs of Minang with the genre of cadets, such as new works of songs sung by artists and professional singers, Mis Ramolai, Melati, (or Asben). Their songs are enjoyed by people who have a passion for the *Saluang Darek* tradition. From the other side, it can be seen that there was a transformation from *Dendang Darek*, which was initially accompanied by *Saluang* musical instruments, into Minang pop music accompanied by Western musical instruments, single organ, or musical arrangements that were processed in the recording studio.

One of the transformation processes is when the sometimes non-diatonic, free rhythm *Dendang* melodies are transformed into Minang pop songs that have a diatonic scale background using rhythm. As for the lyrics, some are taken from the traditional dance itself, and some are only the *Dendang* concept that is adopted. Of course, Minang pop songs called "*Dendang Taruna*" are enjoyed by connoisseurs who have fun with *Saluang Darek* dance.

### Dialectic of Minang Women as Artists

If we examine the historiography according to Falma & Aziz (2021) of the presence of women in Minang musical performances, then from previous studies as previously explained, it is found that *Talempong Bundo*, *Lesung Alu Katentong* (music performances that are part of the tradition); *Talempong Uwaik-Uwaik*, *Talempong Sikatuntuang*, *Talempong Gandang Lasuang* (music performances that function as traditional celebrants), and the presence of women as singers in *Bagurau Saluang* performances and the jungles of Minang pop music (as music performances that are outside of tradition). *Talempong Bundo* and *Lesung Alu Katentong* are musical performances that are said to have been born since the Minangkabau tradition exists.

The *Bundo Kanduang* heirs of this musical show are generally elderly, all of

whom are around 50 – 70 years old on average. However, society still needs them as musicians in every traditional ceremony that requires them; likewise, Minang women as players for *Talempong Uwaik-Uwaik*, *Talempong Sikatuntuang*, *Talempong Gandang Lasuang*. These women spend days preparing the banquet for the traditional feast. To avoid falling asleep, they play their music as entertainment for themselves and those who work to prepare for the party.

The presence of women in the two musical performance groups above differs from that of women in *Bagurau Saluang*. Because *Bagurau Saluang* is a music show that is held at night and at that time it was considered taboo for women to leave the house. Moreover, as a performing art that is a public spectacle, these women show their bodies in front of many people when the performance is held. Their presence from the 1960s to the 1970s was considered to violate customary rules for women. Even above all, they are women with high artistic talent and want to be allowed to actualize themselves in society.

In the writing of Sukmawati (2008), as narrated above, she is a woman singer in the arena of jokes, which later received criticism and challenges from her mother. The women dancer (*Anak Dendang*) continues to sing in neighboring villages because from the results of being an *Anak Dendang* they get more than enough benefits.

On the other hand, from the results of field research for months following the journey (*Anak Dendang*) and coupled with notes collected from various previous studies, it can be seen how these women struggle to earn a living to meet the needs of their families. Most of them reflect on themselves that they are the main figure as the breadwinner of the family because most of them “fail” in fostering their household. Therefore they struggle by going out at night and coming home the next morning to sing songs to support their father, mother, and children.

Every day, they live on two stages: the family stage as a domestic space and

the performance stage as a public space. When in the domestic space, she is a mother who has to care for, educate and raise her children daily. But when he is in public, he must dress up beautifully, and strive to be the best singer to make as much money as possible. With a beautiful voice, attractive rhymes, and beautiful make-up, she sits in front of joking boys from 21.00 WIB in the evening to represent herself as a dang child. He'd be home before the call to prayer for Fajr sounded, and he'd be home maybe an hour or two later. When he got home, he had only slept for a while and had to get up again to prepare breakfast for his children who were going to school.

Every day, the children of the dance have to make crossings between the two spaces, from the domestic space to the public space, from a housewife with all her quirks to becoming a singing child with all her professionalism. He never thought about being tired because as a single parent, mother, and father to his children, he thought about how to get his children to eat every day. The crossing of the two spaces can be seen as the struggle of the women of singing children in their lives.

The crossings were carried out by the singing children continuously, from day to day, from night to night, without having time to talk about being tired, about being tired and being tired. What they are thinking at this time is when the community has begun to accept them in public spaces so that they can contribute to an atmosphere that is already comfortable to work in. Metaphorically, they are women who are constructed in a matrilineal and patrilineal Minang culture.

When narrating the lives of Minang women who are performers of the arts, when she is on the stage, she uses extra-daily bodily techniques, which are bodily techniques that are different from her daily life. If daily bodily techniques are built on the principle of efficiency, then bodily techniques in performances are not the case (Clark & Tamplin, 2016). The bodily techniques built into art aim to cultivate enchantment. This charming technique

has a kind of aura, and this aura radiates from the object of art and the performer of the art (Ahlers, 2016).

## CONCLUSIONS

The presence of women as (children) is under the shadow of matrilineal culture. There has been a change in its development, and these women are given the freedom to appear in musical performances. Currently, what can be seen, Minang women as players (*Anak Dendang, Talempong Bundo, Lesung Alu Katentong, Talempong Uwaik-Uwaik*) are cultural heirs who donate their lives to traditional arts, keeping traditional arts alive. On the other hand, the women who broke into the Minangkabau conservative can be seen again. Hoerijah Adam, et al and their students Raimah, Syofyani, and Gusmiati Suid in the field of dance, represent a symbol of the shift in the social concept of Minangkabau society life at that time. In terms of dress etiquette, the Minang singers are already wearing Muslim clothes (*Hijab*). Meanwhile, from the performance etiquette of the female dancers, when they are on the stage for a polite sitting performance, they use pillows that are placed on their thighs, and when singing, their heads look down, and of course, their eyes look down.

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