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Cultivating Sustainability: A Cultural Linguistic Study of Minangkabau Environmental Proverbs

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A B S T R A C T

The research aims to examine the connection between language, culture, and environment by analyzing the representation of nature in Minangkabau proverbs and its cultural implications and cognitive awareness in traditional Minangkabau society. It is a descriptive study that analyzes meaning and cultural representation through a cultural linguistics approach. The research used 287 proverbs from various written Minangkabau resources, including tambo and books containing Minangkabau proverbs. The study focuses on three sustainability pillars: social, environmental, and economic. The research findings show that Minangkabau proverbs frequently utilize symbolism of nature and the environment to describe and reflect cultural values and rules of Minangkabau customs. The natural representations reveal the close relationship between the Minangkabau people and nature and the cognitive awareness and shared knowledge passed down from generation to generation. The results of this study highlight the need for further research on Minangkabau proverbs to explore cultural values and wisdom that can support program sustainability. Hence, preserving and promoting cultural heritage values are crucial for sustainable development, as it can contribute to socio-economic development and create new values for future generations.

I. INTRODUCTION

The significance of the environment, in existence cannot be overstated, given its influence, on our general welfare and success. Therefore, maintaining an sustainable environment is crucial for our survival and progress. The environment is a complex system that encompasses a wide range of elements, including but not limited to the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land we inhabit. It is essential to prioritize the protection and conservation of resources to secure a future, for both ourselves and upcoming generations.

As the world faces numerous environmental crises, it has become crucial to understand how various communities approach the concept of sustainability (Reo et al., 2019; Romaine, 2013). In this regard, proverbs, which are a significant form of cultural and linguistic expression, can offer valuable insights into how a society perceives and

incorporates environmental ethics in their thoughts and behaviors (Ashenafi, 2014). These wise sayings are a way to capture the wisdom and experience of generations. They also provide an interesting insight into how cultures perceive their relationship with nature (Gulum & Avsar 2020). Proverbs are a form of figurative language that can be interpreted as metaphors, as evidenced by a number of studies. Researchers Conenna and Kleiber (2002) and Mele (2013) have both highlighted the metaphorical nature of proverbs, with the latter emphasizing their role in shaping and conceptualizing worldviews and cosmology. Brown (2004) highlights the importance of proverbs in teaching, and how they can convey meaning through metaphor. Furthermore, Larson (2011) highlights the crucial role of metaphors in shaping our understanding of environmental sustainability. Larson stresses how the language we use to describe nature can influence how we act and perceive it. He warns against using metaphors

that could mislead us or hinder our efforts towards environmental sustainability.

For years, researchers have investigated into the intricate connections between culture, language, and the environment (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001; Haugen, 1972; Milfont & Schultz, 2016; Mugerauer, 1985; Mühlhäusler, 2006; Stibbe, 2021). This study aims to illuminate the various characteristics in which Minangkabau people observe and engage with the natural world. Through an exploration of these relationships, the researchers attempt to obtain a more intensive and comprehensive understanding of the complex characteristics in which Minangkabau people's beliefs, values, and customs shape their interrelationships with the nature.

Jindo (2009, p. 3) discusses the fascinating connection that existed between ancient language, cognition, and culture. His investigation led to the conclusion that metaphorical language is used in all forms of communication. The process of communication involves two basic domains, which are both abstract in nature. The first domain is known as the source domain, which utilizes metaphorical expressions to represent the observable phenomena of everyday life. The second domain is referred to as the target domain, and it is where these metaphorical expressions are applied to represent a different set of abstract concepts. When these two conceptual domains are seamlessly integrated with each other, a metaphoric conceptual coordination is achieved, which is also known as a 'conceptually integrated configuration'.

Lakoff's work in cognitive linguistics during the 1970s had an enormous effect on how we interpret metaphors used in daily communication. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphors help people define and structure their conceptual system through physical objects, actions, situations and knowledge to gain comprehension of more abstract topics like math, relationships and death. Speakers use metaphors as channels of communication with listeners that allows them to extract the idea or object they need from its word container and so aiding us all in comprehending abstract or foreign concepts through understanding more tangible concepts more readily and fully.

Furthermore, Larson (2011) investigates interrelationships of metaphors, environmental sustainability, and human values. He explores how language shapes human understanding of nature

and sustainability, emphasizing the importance of accounting the social context of environmental metaphors. Larson discusses how science, society and values are interconnected in the environmental discourse, promoting the need to reframe metaphors to align with sustainability concepts.

Larson (2011) emphasizes the power of metaphors when considering sustainability issues within an environment. They form our perceptions about nature and sustainability while reflecting cultural values and priorities within any society where metaphors are employed. Metaphors also serve as effective methods of communicating complex scientific ideas to nonscientists who may lack expertise. In the context of sustainability, metaphors can help us understand complex scientific concepts and communicate them to both scientific and non-scientific audiences. However, the metaphors we employ may reinforce certain worldviews and values, which can have implications for sustainability. By studying social-ethical implications and suggesting alternative metaphors aligned with sustainability principles, we can potentially break the cycle of circular feedback between our view of ourselves and our view of nature.

Metaphors in sustainability discourse not only help communicate complex scientific ideas more efficiently but also reveal any values embedded within the language used for sustainability discourse. By exploring the socio-ethical implications of environmental metaphors and understanding how they influence our perception of nature, we can gain new insight into how language, culture, and sustainability all come together. Sharifian (2017) elaborates further by noting that metaphors are not only literary devices; they are also cultural representations that use shared experiences, beliefs, and values to convey abstract concepts in more tangible forms that resonate more readily with audiences. By studying metaphors within different cultural settings, researchers can uncover cultural schemas, categories, and models that shape how people think and communicate. Cultural linguistics and metaphor are particularly crucial when discussing environmental matters since cultural conceptualizations of it can shape people's understanding and interactions with it. Metaphors used to describe environments can reveal cultural beliefs regarding their composition as well as our role in their formation and shaping by reflecting

these attitudes towards nature as humans interact with it.

Indonesia, like other regions around the globe, faces numerous environmental problems that threaten both human and animal populations alike. Climate change causes extreme weather events with rising sea levels; pollution degrades air and water quality while habitat destruction jeopardizes many species (Colombijn 1998; Monk & Priatna 2022; Parker 2018); its consequences can have long-lasting ramifications (Cleary & DeVantier 2011).

Minangkabau, one of Indonesia's largest ethnic groups, boasts an expansive and unique culture shaped over centuries by history, tradition, and custom. One unique aspect includes their vast collection of proverbs, which has been passed down from generation to generation with meaning rooted deeply within history, tradition, and custom - each carrying valuable moral lessons as they impart life lessons through metaphorical language - making these proverbs invaluable guides and sources of guidance and inspiration to future generations (Moeis et al. 2022).

The traditional proverbs of the Minangkabau people frequently highlight the significance of the environment (Almos et al., 2014; Hakimy, 1994; Navis, 1984; Oktavianus, 2022). These wise sayings reflect the community's deep appreciation for the natural world and their recognition of the critical role it plays in their daily lives (Almos et al., 2014). From the importance of preserving natural resources to the necessity of living in harmony with the earth, these proverbs are a testament to the Minangkabau people's wisdom and respect for the environment (Sukma Utami & Oue, 2021).

Studies conducted previously to explore the depiction of nature in Minangkabau have explored this representation. Heni and Subiyanto (2021), in their research, reported that Minangkabau people use ecological symbols during *Batimbang Tando* (engagement ceremonies) in order to maintain harmonious relations between nature and cultural life. *Batimbang Tando* offers families an arrangement that upholds local traditions through dialogue between both families. A key step of this process is for representatives of both families to speak (*pasambahan*) to find common ground through metaphoric language in finding agreement on married life agreements. During the ceremony, host family offered *siriah* (betel) and

pinang (areca nut) as symbols of bittersweet life in Minangkabau culture. The research indicates that nature and cultural life co-exist harmoniously in Minangkabau culture and exist together, serving to keep harmonious relations between both realms. Almos et. al, (2014) explore Minangkabau proverbs to determine how well they represent its vibrant flora and fauna. Through an examination of these proverbs with lenses of linguistic anthropology and pragmatics, they provide a thorough study, uncovering both their cultural meaning and ways in which they're used daily life. Bahri (2020) conducted a research study aimed at exploring the local wisdom contained within the proverbs of Minangkabau. this research indicate that these proverbs contain significant levels of meaningful satire which ties directly back into the sociocultural environment of Minangkabau communities. Recent studies on Minangkabau proverbs and nature have focused heavily on understanding their meaning. These studies have not viewed proverbs as a way to conceptualize the cultural and cognitive awareness of the Minangkabau people, as reflected in their use of natural elements. In addition, previous studies did not explore the correlations between Minangkabau people's proverb-based cognitive awareness and sustainability issues that would strengthen and preserve environmental, social, and economic aspects of Minangkabau society.

This research will investigate the cultural conceptualization present in environmental proverbs and their relation with sustainability. It aims to explore the underlying cultural values and beliefs of Minangkabau proverb and how they are related to the principles of sustainability. The research will investigate environmental proverbs used in different context to uncover their meanings and implications. The result of this research is intended to contribute to a better understanding of how cultural beliefs and practices can impact environmental sustainability.

II. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative method to explore the meaning and application of Minangkabau Proverbs. The objective was to conduct content analysis to understand their cultural importance as well as communication value; 287 proverbs from various sources such as books or *Tambo* Minangkabau were selected carefully as subjects of the examination. *Tambo* is a rich and fascinating oral tradition that has been passed

down through generations in the Minangkabau culture (Navis, 1984). From the data, the researcher identified proverbs that contain environmental and natural entities and then analyzed the data. In analyzing Minangkabau proverbs, the pillar of sustainability (Purvis et al., 2019) will serve as a guiding framework. The concept of sustainability is based on three pillars: the environment, society, and the economy. Sustainable development can only be achieved when these three pillars coexist without any one area taking priority over the others. This means that environmental protection, social equity, and economic profitability must work together to achieve sustainable development. By analyzing the function and the meaning of Minangkabau proverb and categorizing the data based on the pillars of sustainability, it can reflect how Minangkabau culture values contribute to the sustainability development. Moreover, further analysis focuses on the cultural linguistics (Sharifian, 2017) as well as the metaphor and environment (Larson, 2011) analysis to evoke the collective knowledge of Minangkabau people. In analyzing Minangkabau proverbs that contain environmental aspects, first, the lexical analysis of the words that make up the proverbs need explanation. Next, metaphor analysis is conducted by analyzing the environmental entities used to form the metaphor and its meaning based on Larson (2011). After explaining the meaning of the metaphor, the analysis is then conducted with a cultural linguistic approach (Sharifian, 2017) to explain how Minangkabau people represent their shared knowledge and cognitive awareness in the form of metaphors as a reflection of their culture and relationship with the environment and nature.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion is focused around the results of this study, which were explained using sustainability as its cornerstone (Purvis et al., 2019). Sustainability can be broken down into three distinct pillars - environment, society and economy. These pillars were first introduced in the Brundtland report back in 1987. Sustainable development can only be realized when environmental protection, social equity and economic profitability coexist without one area dominating another. Simply stated, all three pillars must be equally balanced for sustainable future. Analysis of data allowed us to investigate deeper into the relationship between shared knowledge and cognitive awareness among Minangkabau people towards their environment -

expressed uniquely and creatively through proverbs - and community beliefs and values, which helped the Minangkabau people live more harmoniously with nature.

Social pillars

Sustainable practices are driven by multiple social pillars which represent various disciplines including community relations, education, justice and health. However, in this discussion we will discuss further into the social relationships and structures present within Minangkabau community. These people are known for their intricate social fabric which incorporates matrilineal traditions as well as strong family ties. The Minangkabau people are renowned for their complex social fabric, which is shaped by matrilineal traditions and a strong emphasis on kinship ties. By exploring the intricate social fabric of this community, we can uncover their values, beliefs, and customs that underpin their way of life. This understanding is essential for developing sustainable practices that are respectful of their cultural context and promote social justice and equity.

Alam takambang jadi guru

(Nature is a teacher)

Minangkabau culture places great value and importance toward the principle of *Alam takambang jadi guru* (Nature is a teacher). The Minangkabau people believe that nature is the ultimate source of knowledge and wisdom. They have long recognized the power of metaphor in conveying complex concepts and life lessons, and have therefore adopted its use as a primary means of teaching (Hasanuddin, 2017). Minangkabau are skilled at using metaphors to share knowledge derived from nature's processes and insights that lie deep within their culture. This ancient tradition has helped to shape the culture and identity of the Minangkabau people, and continues to be a vital part of their heritage to this day (Andaya, 2000).

Regarding nature, Minangkabau people have a unique cultural perspective that sets them apart from several other societies. Unlike those that view nature as divine or a representation of God (Gilkey, 1994; Harvey, 2021; Kroitor, 1960; Sinha, 1995), Minangkabau people do not regard nature as divine or God. The Minangkabau people's adherence to Islamic teachings, which prohibit the worship of anything but Allah, has led to a high regard for these teachings (Simon, 2014). Their philosophy

of *Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah* (the tradition is based on the religion, the religion based on the holy book) reflects this deep-rooted connection to their faith and values.

This proverb perfectly conveys Minangkabau culture's admiration and love of nature. Their term of reverence for nature mirrors their reverence for humans: they refer to nature as their teacher - equally respected but more so! Observing nature provides ample lessons about their own culture; thus giving rise to numerous expressions based on it (Navis 1984). Their deep knowledge is displayed through this belief which emphasizes nature's place within their lives as they observe its effect upon culture (Navis 1984). This proverb displays their deep knowledge of their world, showing their deep understanding as part of culture. This collective belief drives people to actively contemplate everything that happens around them. As their proverb says:

"pandai mambaco nan tasurek, arif manyimak nan tasirek"

(read what is written, wisely decipher what is hidden).

Minangkabau people have a unique perspective towards nature. They consider nature an entity with dynamic properties; constantly shifting and evolving over time. Each aspect serves a special purpose in life for these Minangkabau people. This perspective leads them to treat the natural world with the utmost respect and reverence. The Minangkabau people understand that they must adapt to the changing nature of their environment to live in harmony with (Chadwick, 1991). As the proverb goes:

"sakali aia gadang, sakali tapian barubah"

(once the big wave comes, the bank changes).

The phrase "*Aia gadang*" (big wave) is a powerful metaphor that represents the unpredictable nature of change. It signifies that changes can happen at any moment, regardless of whether we are prepared or not. *Tapian* (river bank) is a location where people carry out their daily activities like bathing or washing dishes. However, during big waves, the area gets wiped out, and people have to find alternative places to continue their daily activities as the previous location may not remain the same. The expression is often used to remind the people of the need to stay flexible, adaptable, and open-minded in the face of uncertainty and unexpected change.

Within the Minangkabau culture, nature is used as a powerful metaphor for leadership. The *baringin* (banyan tree), with its sprawling branches and deep roots, is the perfect representation of a good leader. As the proverb goes:

Daunnyo tampek balinduang, batangnyo tampek basanda, dahannyo tampek bagantuang, ureknyo tampek baselo

(The leaves are a place to shelter, the stems are a place to lean on, the branches are a place to depend on, the veins are a place to sit on)

Just as the banyan tree provides shade and shelter to all who seek refuge under its canopy, a great leader must also provide for and protect their people (Navis, 1984). The Minangkabau people view the banyan tree as a symbol of strength, resilience, and stability - qualities that are highly valued in their society. It is a fitting comparison, as both the banyan tree and a good leader are capable of weathering any storm and standing firm in the face of adversity.

In the Minangkabau culture, leaders hold significant responsibilities but they are not glorified excessively (Fahmi & Aswirna, 2020; Meiyenti & Afrida, 2018). The saying "*ditinggikan seranting dan didahulukan selangkah*" (one step forward, one level up) reflects the way leaders are treated. The leaders are one level higher but not placed on the top of the top. The role of a leader in Minangkabau society is not to be a king or a tribal chief, but rather to be respected and obeyed in accordance with their duties and authorities. The culture places great emphasis on the importance of honoring and following leaders who take on the responsibility of serving their community. This serves as a reminder that leadership is a service to the people and not a privilege (Awwali et al., 2019; Munir, 2018). The word *saranting* is derived from *ranting* (twig) which is used as a metaphor for leadership hierarchy in Minangkabau leadership.

The analysis of the proverbs mentioned above reveals that the traditional Minangkabau society has developed an egalitarian system that emphasizes equal distribution of power among its members or social equality. According to their social system, the leader is not an authoritarian ruler who holds complete control over the community. Instead, the leader is considered a responsible manager who is entrusted with the authority to oversee the community's resources and ensure that they are utilized for the benefit of all members (Munir,

2018). The Minangkabau society, being closely connected to nature, perceives the leader as a banyan tree, a symbol of strong and sturdy protection that provides security to the community. This comparison further highlights the Minangkabau people's deep emotional attachment and cognitive awareness towards nature, which they consider as a source of comfort, support, and knowledge. The use of a metaphorical representation of nature in the form of a banyan tree is an excellent example of how the Minangkabau people perceive and value the environment around them. Nature is seen as a vital component of their society, providing a sense of belonging and a place of refuge. This deep connection to nature not only strengthens their relationship with the environment but also reflects the values and beliefs that the Minangkabau community holds dear.

Environmental pillars

The term “environmental pillars” refers to a set of guidelines that aim to regulate human activities concerning nature, with the ultimate goal of achieving sustainable development. These pillars encompass several aspects, including the management, utilization, and protection of nature. The management of nature entails the planning and implementation of practices that ensure the sustainable use of natural resources. On the other hand, utilization refers to the ways in which humans make use of these resources to sustain their livelihoods. Lastly, protection refers to the measures taken to safeguard the environment from degradation and destruction.

The Minangkabau people are known for their unique culture and sustainable way of life. They have developed a deep understanding of their environment, which has enabled them to use natural resources in a way that supports their needs without causing harm to the ecosystem. For instance, they practice agroforestry, a farming technique that involves planting crops alongside trees (Febriani & Dani, 2023). This practice not only provides them with food but also helps to preserve the soil and prevent erosion. The Minangkabau people also have a strong cultural belief in the protection of nature, which has led them to establish customary laws that prohibit the exploitation of certain natural resources (Bahauddin et al., 2013; Febriani & Dani, 2023). Minangkabau culture offers an excellent example of how humans can coexist with nature in a sustainable and harmonious way. As the proverb

goes:

*Kayu pulai di Koto Alam
Batangnyo basandi-sandi
Jikok pandai dalam alam
Patah tumbuhan hilang baganti*

Milky pine tree at Koto Alam
the stem is branched
if you can manage the environment
The damaged will be repaired, and the missing will be replaced

This expression is an interesting saying from Minangkabau, delivered with rhythm and poetry. This saying is composed of multiple lines. The first two are couplets with rhyme, which add an artistic element to the whole expression. The rhythmic delivery of the saying makes it even more captivating and highlights the significance of the Minangkabau culture. The expression *jikok pandai dalam alam, patah tumbuhan hilang baganti* (if you can manage the environment, the damaged will be repaired, and the missing will be replaced) is an interesting phrase that reflects the concerns and values of the Minangkabau people. The first part of the expression, “*jikok pandai dalam alam*” (if you can manage the environment) can be interpreted as a conditional statement that emphasizes the importance of managing the environment wisely. This highlights the Minangkabau people's deep-rooted respect for nature and their belief that human beings should strive to live in harmony with the environment.

The second part of the expression, “*patah tumbuhan hilang baganti*” (“The damaged will be repaired, and the missing will be replaced.”), is a metaphor that can be interpreted in different ways. It is often used to describe the resilience and adaptability of the Minangkabau people in the face of challenges. It can also be seen as a reflection of the cyclical nature of life and the idea that everything in life is temporary and subject to change. As can be seen from the following proverb:

Patah (broken) => *tumbuhan* (grown)
Hilang (lost) => *baganti* (replaced)

The terms “*patah*” and “*hilang*” are commonly used in the Minangkabau language as negative connotations which are often associated with feelings of loss and despair. On the other hand, the words “*tumbuhan*” (grown) and “*baganti*” (replaced) are used to convey a sense of positivity and growth. These words are synonyms for regeneration and replacement. They provide a spark of hope in

challenging times. Much like a wounded tree or plant, a dead tree has the potential to revive if given proper care and attention. Alternatively, it can be replaced by another healthy plant that can flourish in its place. The Minangkabau people of Indonesia have a deep understanding of this natural phenomenon and have captured this concept in various proverbs that illustrate the importance of persistence, determination, and resilience when facing life's challenges. The proverbs serve as a reminder that with the right mindset, even the most difficult obstacles can be overcome, and new life can emerge from what was once considered dead.

The Minangkabau people have a deep connection with their environment, which reflects in their way of living. They inhabit a fertile and strategically located area, situated amidst natural beauty and surrounded by the threat of natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, floods, and earthquakes (Games, 2020; Pradipta, 2020). However, their long history of dealing with these disasters has enabled them to develop a cognitive awareness of how to adapt and survive in such. This awareness is evident in their land allocation, selection of residential locations, and the construction of their traditional gadang houses, which are designed to withstand natural disasters (Damsar & Indrayani, 2018). The Minangkabau people's approach to their environment is not just practical, but also deeply spiritual and cultural, reflecting their resilience and resourcefulness (Febriani & Dani, 2023). The deep understanding of nature and the long interaction between the Minangkabau people and nature has given rise to the cognitive wisdom reflected in the following proverb:

*nan lereng ditanam tabu, nan gurun buek ka parak,
nan bancah jadikan sawah, nan munggu ka pandam
pakuburaran, nan gaung ka tabek ikan, nan lambah
kubangan kabau dan nan padek ka parumahan*

(slope area is for the sugarcane plant, the drylands are suitable for fields, wet soils are for rice fields, small hill for graveyards, watery area for fish ponds, walled areas are suitable for raising buffalos, the solid ground for the residence)

This proverb signifies the deep-rooted understanding and knowledge of the Minangkabau community regarding environmental practices. They firmly believe in treating the environment with utmost respect and care, in accordance with its natural state. Their cognitive awareness towards environmental behavior is reflective of

their reverence for nature and their commitment to preserving it for future generations.

The proverbs mentioned above provide a glimpse into the remarkable wisdom of the traditional Minangkabau people in managing land and forests. They have a deep understanding of the natural world and have learned to adapt to it in a sustainable and harmonious manner. Their land utilization practices are tailored to their specific needs, and they do not alter the existing natural structure. Instead, they work with nature to ensure that it remains intact and functions optimally. The traditional Minangkabau society places great value on maintaining the ecological balance of their surroundings (Utami & Oue, 2021). They avoid collapsing the slopes or filling swamps to build housing, as it can damage the structure and ecosystem of the environment. Their approach to forest utilization is also unique. They recognize the concept of *rimbo larangan* (prohibited forests), which are kept untouched by the community to preserve the natural ecosystem and the living creatures in it (Onrizal & Mansor, 2020). These forests are considered sacred, and magical stories are woven around them to enhance their sanctity. For instance, *inyiak*, an ancestral spirit that transforms into a tiger or other wild animals, is believed to guard the prohibited forest. They are not allowed to cut the tree or hunt the animals in the forbidden forest.

Although the Minangkabau people do not use the forest extensively, they have terms such as communal forest and community forest in their land use system. These customary forests are usually owned by a nagari (regional administration) and maintained for the benefit of the community and the nagari. Members of the community may use the communal forest to make a living by collecting forest products and hunting. However, commercial use of customary forests requires a fee called *bungo*, such as *bungo kayu* (for logging) and *bungo aleh* (for non-logging, such as rosin and rattan) (Navis, 1984). The *penghulu* (leaders) collect this fee, which is used by the nagari to construct facilities and infrastructure. Additionally, there are tribe forests (*hutan kaum*) that are used by members of a particular tribe for their personal and tribal interests. Members of the tribe may cultivate the tribe forest for farming, and the proceeds are used for the benefit of the *penghulu* and members of the tribe.

The Minangkabau believe in utilizing natural resources responsibly and sustainably while being guided by their customary laws. These laws form an integral part of their culture and govern their interaction with the environment. The Minangkabau community values the harmony between humans and nature, and they strive to maintain this balance through their customs and practices.

Ka rimbo, kayu tak buliah ditabang, rotan tak buliah dirangguik, manau tak buliah di pancuang

(In the forest, do not cut the tree, do not snatch the rattan, do not cut the palm tree)

Kabatang Aie, Aie tak buliah di karuah, batu tak buliah di baliak, tabiang tak buliah diruntuah

(In the river, do not spoil the water, do not move the stones, do not overthrow the cliff)

The proverb mentioned above is an important guideline that reflects the deep-rooted values of Minangkabau customary rules, emphasizing the need to maintain the delicate balance of nature by not destructing or changing the existing order. This has been a crucial aspect of their culture since time immemorial. Wood, rattan, palm tree, water, stone, and cliff are symbolic representations of all entities that exist within the environment, and they are valued for their unique properties. Forests, rivers, and other natural resources are used only as per the necessities and in a sustainable manner that does not cause any damage to the existing ecosystem. This age-old wisdom has helped Minangkabau communities live in harmony with nature for generations.

Economic pillars

In the Minangkabau tribe, the economic aspect holds great significance to ensure the tribe's sustainability. The tribe has established a custom to regulate the inheritance system of their ancestral property, which is called heirloom property. This property is considered invaluable and cannot be divided among the family members. The ancestral property must be kept intact to ensure the family's welfare, and it is passed on to the daughters. However, the sons are given the right to manage this property (Navis, 1984). The economic aspect of this custom is based on the communal system, which implies that the outcomes are used for the entire family's benefit. The men of the family are responsible for managing the ancestral property with utmost care to ensure their sisters and the descendants' decent livelihoods. This custom has an old saying that reflects the values of the

Minangkabau tribe, emphasizing the importance of preserving the ancestral property for the family's prosperity:

*Apo guno kabau batali
Lapeh ka rimbo jadi jalang
Pauikkan sajo di pematang
Apo guno badan mancari
Iyo pamagang sawah jo ladang
Nak mambela sanak kanduang*

Why did you tied the bull
If it goes to the jungle it becomes wild
Tied to the bund
Why did you earn money
Cultivating the rice field
To feed the family

Rice cultivation in the traditional Minangkabau society is an integral part of their way of life. The rice fields hold immense value as they serve not only as a source of income but also as a means to ensure the well-being of the extended family (Sukmawati, 2019). For men in Minangkabau, especially the eldest son in a family, called *mamak*, the family is not only his wife and biological children, but also his sisters and children of his sisters (*anak kemenakan*). A *mamak* is responsible for the welfare and survival of his kinsmen (Navis, 1984; Sukmawati, 2019). The Minang proverb states, "*Anak dipangku, kamanakan dibimbiang*" (Children are raised, *kamanakan* are guided). Therefore, a *Mamak* in the family will be given the right to manage the heirloom property, regulate who is entitled to cultivate rice fields and farms, and also provide social rights for his *kemenakan*. As a father, *mamak* of course also has to fulfil the needs of his wife and children, but he must not forget his nephews and must also guide them to become better individuals. The results of rice fields and fields from this inheritance are the economic provisions for a traditional Minangkabau community to be able to survive and fulfil their needs communally, pay for education, open a business, or other needs (Syahrizal & Meiyenti, 2022). So that widows and orphans in traditional Minangkabau society are not neglected because they get their economic rights and livelihoods from inherited property that is managed for the benefit of the family (Rahmadanil & Zuwanda, 2021).

The lush green rice paddies and vast fields that stretch out as far as the eye can see hold great emotional significance for families, and are often treasured as heirlooms that are passed down from generation to generation. These agricultural lands

are more than just a means of earning a living - they are a symbol of a family's prosperity and stability, and represent the very essence of their cultural heritage. The value of these fertile lands goes beyond monetary worth, and their loss can result in profound financial instability and jeopardize the sustainability of the family. Such lands are a testament to the hard work and dedication of the families who have devoted themselves to cultivating them, and their loss could have a far-reaching impact on the community and the environment. These verdant fields are an integral part of the family's legacy and are deeply intertwined with their culture and way of life, making them an irreplaceable part of their heritage and identity. As the Minangkabau proverb goes:

*Ka ateh indak bapucuk, ka bawah indak baurek,
ditengah-tengah dilariak kumbang*

Upward without tip, downward without roots, in the
centre hollowed out by beetles

The Minangkabau society is known to hold a profound cognitive awareness and emotional attachment to nature, particularly to their rice fields and farms. As a result, the preservation of heirlooms in the form of rice fields and farms is highly valued and considered a matter of great significance (Kahn, 1980; Nelisa et al., 2021; Novianti et al., 2013). The proverb mentioned above serves as a poignant reminder that a family's lack of heirlooms equates to a lack of pride, just like a tree that bears no shoots at the top, which signifies the absence of any future signs of life. Similarly, a tree that lacks roots at the bottom symbolizes a lack of strength, and one that has a hole in the middle has no support to lean on. This analogy highlights the importance of heritage for a family in Minangkabau, as those who possess no inheritance are deemed to have no future, no strength, and no protection. In contrast, a family that can preserve and even enhance their heirlooms is like a tree with robust roots that sink deep into the ground, shoots that soar high, and a sturdy trunk that can provide protection and become a reliable backrest.

The concept of economic resilience in traditional Minangkabau society is intricately intertwined with their relationship with nature. Specifically, the control of their land - primarily paddy fields and fields - is of utmost importance. Rice fields are considered economic entities that can provide livelihoods to the community, but only if they are managed and utilized properly. For this

reason, they cannot be converted into different types of economic entities, as this would remove their essence as a symbol of economic protection within a family and tribe. This system ensures that outsiders cannot easily acquire Minangkabau land for individual or corporate interests, preserving the land and the nature surrounding it (Fahmi & Aswirna, 2020). This is not just an economic concern but a cultural one as well, as the land is seen as heirloom property that symbolizes the economic protection of the community and social status (Iqbal, 2020; Kosmaryandi, 2005). The system ensures that land is used wisely, and thus nature is preserved. However, the degradation of Minangkabau cultural values over time has led to the selling and transformation of many rice fields and heirloom properties (Anwar et al., 2020). As a result, they are no longer able to provide economic protection for the community, and the relationship with nature has been disrupted. The consequences are not only economic but also environmental, as the land is no longer being used in a sustainable way. This highlights the importance of preserving cultural values to ensure that economic and environmental sustainability remain in balance (Hoang, 2021).

The Minangkabau proverb emphasizes the remarkable ability of their society to live in harmony with the natural environment. Their spatial arrangement is unique and allows them to work closely with nature while preserving the ecosystem. The proverb portrays the rich cultural heritage of the Minangkabau people, who have been passing down their collective consciousness from one generation to another through the medium of language creativity. These proverbs are a testament to the cognitive process of the community, which is deeply rooted in their relationship with nature. Through these proverbs, the Minangkabau people have managed to preserve their cultural identity and pass on their values, beliefs, and traditions to the younger generations. These practices are focused on sustainable land and forest management, which not only benefits the environment but also enables the community to thrive. Their approach serves as a model for other societies seeking to achieve a similar balance between humans and nature.

IV. CONCLUSION

Proverbs are a fascinating form of expression that can be found in cultures all around the world. They are more than just a mode of communication

or creative expression - they are often a reflection of cultural perspectives, social customs, and humanity's relationship with the natural world. This is particularly true of the proverbs used by the Minangkabau people, a community that resides in the highlands of West Sumatra, Indonesia. The Minangkabau people's proverbs are a form of expression that reflects the way in which they perceive and interact with the natural world. These wise sayings encapsulate the cognitive processes and belief systems of the community regarding nature. They are often based on observations of the environment, and they convey a deep understanding of the natural world and the importance of living in harmony with it. Through proverbs, the

Minangkabau people pass on their cultural heritage and wisdom to future generations. These sayings have been passed down orally for centuries, and they continue to be an important part of the community's cultural identity. They help to reinforce the community's connection to the environment and to maintain a sense of continuity and tradition. The existing research on sustainability in Minangkabau proverbs has only scratched the surface, focusing primarily on its conceptual framework. However, to gain a deeper understanding of the Minangkabau people's perceptions, it is vital to conduct further research. Specifically, exploring how their cultural values, as reflected in their proverbs, intersect with their current stance on environmental sustainability would be invaluable.

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