

Gender Roles in Traditional and Modern Minangkabau Kaba: An Analysis of Ten Selected Narratives

Abdurahman*

Department of Indonesian Language and Literature, Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

Yenni Hayati

Department of Indonesian Language and Literature, Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

Ngusman Abdul Manaf

Department of Indonesian Language and Literature, Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

Ciptro Handrianto

Department of Nonformal Education, Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

Nurul Fathihah Nor Azhar

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Institute of Teacher Education, International Languages Campus, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract—This research aims to investigate how gender roles are portrayed in Minangkabau kaba, which are traditional folktales from West Sumatra, Indonesia. The study investigates how gender norms are portrayed, perpetuated, and questioned within these cultural texts by qualitatively analyzing ten chosen kaba. These kaba include both traditional and contemporary storylines. This research uses structuralist and semiotic techniques to analyze themes, character roles, and symbolic representations associated with gender. The results of the study demonstrate that there has been a substantial change in the depiction of gender roles from the traditional to the contemporary kaba. Modern kaba, on the other hand, challenges these stereotypes by showing women in important roles who are empowered, in contrast to conventional tales, which often support preexisting gender standards. This study contributes to the knowledge of how folklore reflects and changes social values. It also provides insights into the dynamic interaction between cultural narratives and the debate on gender equality in Minangkabau culture.

Index Terms—gender roles, cultural narratives, gender equality, matrilineal society

I. INTRODUCTION

Providing essential insights into the cultural and socioeconomic norms of a society, the portrayal of gender roles in folklore is a significant source of information (Solbes-Canales et al., 2020; Ajayi et al., 2022). In the Minangkabau civilization, which is one of the biggest matrilineal communities in the world, the traditional folktales that are referred to as kaba provide a rich tapestry for understanding the dynamics of gender among the members of the society. Within these tales, the depiction of gender roles reflects and reinforces the values and ideas responsible for forming the Minangkabau identity (Helmi et al., 2020; Rustiyanti et al., 2023). A comprehension of these depictions is of utmost importance, not only for appreciating the cultural history of the Minangkabau people but also for addressing modern concerns of gender equality and social transformation.

Recent academic research has shed light on the significance of folklore in terms of its role in maintaining cultural norms and its influence on society's conduct (Sears & Flueckiger, 2020; Waty et al., 2024). According to Jones et al. (2023), folklore is a medium through which cultural norms, including gender roles, are conveyed and maintained. In the context of Minangkabau kaba, the tales often portray women in key positions, which reflects the community's matrilineal structure. There is, however, a continuing dispute on the degree to which these depictions either empower women or promote traditional gender stereotypes. Studies conducted by Osman (2021) have revealed that while women are often depicted as prominent people within the home and community, the narratives also emphasize their duties and obligations, which may restrict their ability to exercise agency (Gayatri et al., 2019; Sunarti et al., 2024).

* Corresponding Author. Email: abdurahman.ind@fbs.unp.ac.id

There is still a considerable lack of extensive studies that especially concentrate on Minangkabau kaba, even though there is a growing corpus of scholarship on gender portrayal in Southeast Asian folklore. Previous studies have focused mostly on the more general cultural and religious themes in these stories (Hall & Whitmore, 2020; Al-Shboul et al., 2022), with only a limited amount of emphasis on the complex depictions of gender roles. This void highlights the need to do targeted research that investigates not only the portrayal of male and female characters but also how these depictions reflect and create the notions of gender held by society.

To fill this void, the following research topics have been posed for consideration in this study: (1) How are gender roles depicted in Minangkabau kaba? (2) In what ways do these depictions reflect the matrilineal structure of Minangkabau society? and (3) To what extent do these narratives reinforce or challenge traditional gender stereotypes?

This research is significant because it can contribute to academic scholarship and social debate. This is the reason for its relevance. We will better grasp how folklore acts as a cultural artifact that reflects and influences society's values as a result of this study since it will provide a complete examination of gender roles in Minangkabau kaba. Furthermore, it will provide insights into how traditional narratives might impact modern gender norms, providing information that can be used to influence attempts to promote gender equality (Bardaweel & Rababah, 2022; Ramanova et al., 2024). This research will give a helpful perspective on the historical and cultural underpinnings of these positions within Minangkabau culture. This is because gender roles continue to vary due to social, economic, and political changes.

In a nutshell, the purpose of this study is to investigate the intricate relationship that exists between gender, culture, and storytelling in Minangkabau kaba in order to address a significant gap in the existing body of research. As a result of conducting a comprehensive structural and semiotic analysis, it will investigate how these tales generate and communicate gender roles. This will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural dynamics that are at play in one of the most distinctive matrilineal civilizations in the world.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Theoretical Frameworks on Gender Roles in Folklore*

Several academic frameworks, including feminist theory, structuralism, and cultural anthropology, are the foundation for studying gender roles in folklore. In particular, feminist theory offers a perspective that may be used to analyze the depiction of gender critically. This analysis shows how narratives reflect and perpetuate gender inequities or inequality. It is possible to apply the concept of "The Second Sex," a seminal work by Simone de Beauvoir, to analyze folktales, where female characters are frequently depicted in their roles within the family and society (De-Beauvoir, 2023). This concept is based on the idea that women have historically been portrayed as the "Other" in literature. A further explanation of how gender is built via repeated performances is provided by Judith Butler's theory of performativity. This concept may be seen in folktales' recurring themes and character archetypes (Butler & Trouble, 1990; Alshbeekat & Jahamah, 2023). These theoretical approaches highlight the significance of analyzing the narratives not just for the substance of the stories but also for how the stories form and maintain gender identities.

An additional helpful framework for understanding folktales is provided by structuralism, which Claude Lévi-Strauss developed. According to Lévi-Strauss's argument (Lévi-Strauss, 2008), the forms of myths and folktales disclose the underlying binary oppositions within a society. These binary oppositions may be discussed in the context of Minangkabau kaba. Some examples of these oppositions are male against female, power versus subservience, and public versus private domains (Rosa, 2020; Arwin et al., 2024). Through deconstructing these oppositions, scholars can get insights into how gender roles are produced and perpetuated within different cultures. In addition, the field of cultural anthropology, which has been elaborated upon by academics such as Clifford Geertz, emphasizes the significance of comprehending folklore within the framework of its cultural background. In Geertz's theory, "thick description" refers to the process of doing an in-depth investigation of cultural activities in order to discover the meanings behind them (Geertz, 1973; Rokhmansyah et al., 2023). Applying this to Minangkabau kaba makes it possible to come up with a sophisticated analysis of how these tales perpetuate gender stereotypes and embed them inside them.

B. *Empirical Studies on Gender Representation in Folklore*

Studies that have been conducted empirically on the portrayal of gender in folklore have yielded significant insights into how tales both create and reflect cultural norms. According to the findings of research conducted by Osman (2021) on Malay folktales, it has been shown that while women are often portrayed in positions related to the home, their depiction also contains indications of strength and perseverance, indicating a complex and varied representation of gender. This research used content analysis to investigate the themes and character roles in the tales. This investigation revealed that portraying female characters combined conventional and progressive components. Because Minangkabau culture is based on matrilineal inheritance, these results are pertinent to the study of Minangkabau kaba, where it is possible to see comparable patterns.

According to the research conducted by Tanusy et al. (2021) that focused exclusively on Indonesian folktales, including Minangkabau narratives, women have a dual role in Indonesian society, serving as both caregivers and active community members. Even though women in these stories usually play key parts, the research discovered that their agency is frequently mediated via their connections with male characters. This was discovered through the application

of narrative analysis (Miftahurrahmi et al., 2024; Setiawati & Handrianto, 2023). This hints at a complex representation in which the strength of women is recognized while at the same time being restrained by conventional gender standards. The significance of investigating the interplay of gender and cultural norms in Minangkabau kaba is highlighted by these results.

C. Gender Roles and Matrilineal Structure in Minangkabau Kaba

How gender roles are portrayed in Kaba is greatly impacted by the distinctive matrilineal structure characteristic of Minangkabau culture. Lineage and inheritance are traced via the female line in matrilineal civilizations. As a result, women are often placed in positions of power and responsibility within the family and society. Research conducted by Blackwood (2000) and Parker (2024) has shown that Minangkabau women have historically had a large influence on managing home resources and promoting societal order. This socioeconomic framework is represented in kaba, which is distinguished by the fact that female characters typically perform important and authoritative positions. However, the degree to which these tales challenge or support existing gender stereotypes is still a crucial subject that has to be answered.

While women are represented as crucial decision-makers and caretakers of traditional values in Minangkabau kaba, their positions are often restricted by social expectations of femininity and domesticity, according to research conducted by Chintia et al. (2024) on the representation of women in Minangkabau kaba. A textual analysis of six important kaba was used in the research, and the results showed that female characters are commonly represented as caring and self-sacrificing, which are characteristics consistent with conventional representations of gender roles. On the other hand, these myths also glorify women's knowledge and leadership, reflecting the dual nature of gender roles in Minangkabau culture.

The research that has been done on Minangkabau kaba demonstrates that there is a complicated relationship between gender roles and cultural values. To study these narratives, theoretical frameworks such as feminist theory and structuralism provide useful tools, while empirical investigations give insights into how gender roles are produced and portrayed. An extra element of intricacy is added by the fact that Minangkabau culture is characterized by its matrilineal structure. This structure has an impact on the way that gender dynamics are shown in kaba. The purpose of this research is to contribute to a more in-depth knowledge of folklore's cultural and social roles in developing and reflecting gender identities via the examination of various representations to achieve this goal.

III. METHODS

A. Research Design

In order to investigate the depiction of gender roles in Minangkabau kaba, the scientific investigation used a qualitative methodology. This method was selected because it is well-suited for investigating the intricacies and subtleties of gender portrayal in folktales, which necessitates an in-depth comprehension of the dynamics of culture and society (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Following the methodology described by Claude Lévi-Strauss (2008) and Roland Barthes (1977), the research applied structuralist and semiotic analysis to deconstruct the narratives and discover the underlying binary oppositions and gender constructions. Ten kaba were chosen because of their popularity and how they symbolize traditional and modern Minangkabau ideals. This analysis aimed to uncover recurrent themes, character roles, and symbolic representations associated with gender connected to these tales. This technique was justified because it offered insights into how gender roles were established, maintained, and challenged within the cultural framework of Minangkabau culture.

B. Data Collection

Data collection involved several steps to ensure comprehensive and accurate analysis. First, the selected Kaba were based on their cultural significance and representation of gender dynamics in Minangkabau society. The chosen Kaba included both traditional and modern narratives to capture the evolution of gender roles. Table 1 provides details of the selected Kaba, including titles, authors, eras, and descriptions.

TABLE 1
LIST OF KABA STORIES AND THEIR ATTRIBUTES

Title of Kaba	Author	Era	Description
Kaba Malin Kundang	Anonymous	Traditional	A story about a rebellious son
Kaba Cindua Mato	Rustam Sutan	Traditional	A tale of a clever and brave woman
Kaba Sabai Nan Aluih	DT Sati	Traditional	Focuses on a woman's strength
Kaba Siti Zubaidah	Modern	Modern	Contemporary take on gender roles
Kaba Si Umbuik Mudo	Modern	Modern	Modern reinterpretation
Kaba Anggun Nan Tongga	Traditional	Traditional	A story of heroism and virtue
Kaba Pakih Saidi	Traditional	Traditional	Depicts traditional gender roles
Kaba Adityawarman	Modern	Modern	Reflects modern gender perspectives
Kaba Minang Jati	Anonymous	Traditional	Traditional cultural narrative
Kaba Tuanku Rao	Anonymous	Traditional	Classic Minangkabau folklore

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to contextualize the kaba within the broader scope of Minangkabau folklore and gender studies. This review included theoretical frameworks such as feminist theory (Butler & Trouble, 1990), structuralism (Lévi-Strauss, 2008), and cultural anthropology (Geertz, 1973) to guide the analysis. The selected kaba was analyzed to identify intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements included themes, character development, plot structure, and narrative style, while extrinsic elements encompassed cultural, social, and historical contexts. This analysis was guided by the structuralist approach to uncover binary oppositions and underlying cultural messages (Barthes, 1977).

C. Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out in several stages to provide a comprehensive understanding of the gender roles depicted in the Kaba. Thematic analysis was used to identify and analyze recurring themes related to gender roles in the Kaba. This involved coding the text to highlight power dynamics, domestic roles, and societal expectations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes were compared across different kaba to identify patterns and variations, providing a rich understanding of the cultural portrayal of gender roles. The narrative frameworks of the kaba were the primary subject of structural analysis, which scrutinized how gender roles were incorporated into the story's storyline, character arcs, and ultimate resolves. This required mapping out the narrative frameworks and defining binary oppositions, such as male against female and power versus subservience (Lévi-Strauss, 2008). Examples of such oppositions include men and women. Through deconstructing these oppositions, observations were made on how gender roles were established and perpetuated within the community.

Because of their capacity to provide a thorough and complex knowledge of gender roles in Minangkabau kaba, the research design and procedures used in this study were deemed justifiable. Qualitative methodologies, particularly textual and semiotic analyses, proved to be an excellent choice for investigating the intricate relationship between story and culture (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Including both traditional and modern kaba ensured that the study addressed the evolution of gender roles and provided insights into how folklore reflected and shaped societal values. This approach contributed to academic scholarship and social discourse on gender equality and cultural heritage, enhancing our understanding of the cultural dynamics in Minangkabau society.

IV. RESULTS

Based on the research methodology employed, this study's findings illuminate the intricate portrayal of gender roles in Minangkabau kaba. The analysis of the selected kaba reveals significant insights into how gender roles are constructed, maintained, and sometimes challenged within these narratives. The findings are structured around the key research questions, focusing on themes, character roles, and symbolic representations.

A. Gender Roles and Themes in Kaba

Thematic analysis of the selected kaba narratives revealed deeply ingrained gender roles that reflect and reinforce societal expectations within Minangkabau culture. These themes encompass power dynamics, domestic responsibilities, and societal expectations, illustrating distinct aspects of gender construction in Minangkabau folklore.

The conventional expectation that women should represent the values of devotion, patience, and sacrifice is a recurrent motif throughout the story. Female characters are often shown as exemplars of these characteristics, highlighting their roles as nurturers and moral anchors within their families and communities. This expectation is prominently illustrated in "Kaba Sabai Nan Aluih." Sabai, the heroine, demonstrates immense strength and resilience, characteristics that challenge the passive stereotype of women. However, despite her bravery, her ultimate role aligns with traditional female virtues, emphasizing her duty to her family over personal ambition. This is exemplified in the following passage:

By battling fiercely for her family's honor, Sabai showed extraordinary bravery and intelligence. However, in the end, she does not want to deviate from her position as a daughter and instead chooses to sacrifice her wishes to protect her family's reputation. Although Sabai's power is lauded in this story, society's expectations ultimately limit her autonomy. Her sacrifice highlights the cultural narrative that a woman's ultimate responsibility is to protect the dignity and reputation of her family. This story reflects a deeply rooted cultural valorization of women's selflessness and devotion.

On the other hand, the concept of male dominance is shown strikingly via the roles of males as leaders and guardians, respectively. Throughout the story, men are often shown as strong and authoritative people whose actions propel progression. Therefore, this contributes to the perpetuation of conventional gender hierarchies, in which masculinity is linked to attributes such as power, authority, and command. In "Kaba Malin Kundang," the metamorphosis of Malin from a lowly youngster into a strong and affluent man illustrates the expectation that males are expected to attain and retain supremacy in society. It is a credit to his hard work and drive that he has risen to prominence, both of which are characteristics that are admired in culture.

The narrative of Malin acts as a cautionary tale, emphasizing that while males are supposed to strive for achievement and control, they must also adhere to the principles of respect and humility ingrained in society. This tale brings to the forefront the cultural concept that power and leadership come with moral duties, especially toward one's family. The theme of domestic responsibilities further delineates gender roles in these narratives. Women are frequently portrayed

as caregivers, responsible for maintaining the household and nurturing familial relationships. This is evident in "Kaba Cindua Mato," where the female characters, despite their influence, primarily support the male protagonist's journey and endeavors. Their roles are crucial yet often secondary to the male lead's adventures and achievements.

Cindua Mato embarked on his journey, facing numerous challenges with bravery and cunning. His actions determined the course of the story, while the women in his life provided guidance and support, their roles essential yet secondary.

In this kaba, women's contributions, though vital, are framed within the context of support and nurturing, reinforcing traditional domestic roles. This depiction aligns with the cultural expectation that women should prioritize family and household duties over personal pursuits. The thematic analysis also reveals a dichotomy in portraying gender roles between traditional and modern kaba. While traditional narratives emphasize rigid gender norms, modern kaba begin to challenge and reinterpret these roles. In the story "Kaba Siti Zubaidah," the female heroine is shown as both powerful and self-reliant, actively determining her own fate. A current perspective on gender dynamics is presented in this tale, in which women not only play a key part in the plot but also play active roles in influencing the result of the story.

Siti Zubaidah remained unwavering in her choices, and her actions propelled the story forward. Unlike the conventional kaba heroes, she bucked society's expectations by forging her path and illustrating how Minangkabau culture's perspectives on gender roles shift over time. The narrative of Siti Zubaidah illustrates the altering societal views towards gender, bringing to light the growing acceptance of female agency and independence and the appreciation of these qualities. Through providing a story in which female empowerment and autonomy are important elements, this contemporary kaba challenges the conventional limits imposed on women.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis of Minangkabau kaba reveals the complex interplay of traditional and evolving gender roles within the narratives. While traditional kaba reinforces established gender hierarchies and expectations, modern kaba offers a more nuanced and progressive portrayal of gender, reflecting broader social changes and the ongoing discourse on gender equality. These findings provide a rich understanding of how folklore reflects and shapes societal values, contributing to the cultural narrative on gender roles in Minangkabau society.

B. Character Roles and Gender Dynamics

Structural analysis of the kaba narratives reveals the distinct and often dichotomous roles assigned to male and female characters, highlighting the gender dynamics that underpin Minangkabau folklore. Male characters are often shown as active agents who push the story ahead, exhibiting courage, cunning, and leadership characteristics. This is the predominant portrayal of male characters. Traditional gender hierarchies are reflected in the fact that female characters, even though they are sometimes the protagonists of the story, are typically presented in positions that are more submissive and supporting.

In "Kaba Cindua Mato", the male protagonist's journey and adventures take center stage, showcasing the cultural valorization of male agency and heroism. Cindua Mato's voyage is characterized by a multitude of obstacles that he overcomes with courage and cunning, characteristics that are traditionally connected with masculinity in terms of culture. His actions are so important to the advancement of the story that they highlight the fact that he is the driving force behind the course of events.

Cindua Mato embarked on his journey, facing numerous challenges with bravery and cunning. His actions determined the course of the story, while the women in his life provided guidance and support, their roles essential yet secondary.

This narrative structure reflects the traditional Minangkabau gender dynamics, where men are expected to be the protectors and decision-makers, while women, although influential, are primarily in supportive roles. The female characters in "Kaba Cindua Mato" provide crucial guidance and support, yet their contributions are framed within the context of aiding the male protagonist's endeavors. This portrayal reinforces the cultural expectation that women's roles, while important, are secondary to men's roles.

However, modern kaba narratives show a significant shift towards more nuanced and balanced representations of gender roles. In the story "Kaba Siti Zubaidah," the female heroine is shown as both powerful and self-reliant, which challenges the customary standards that have traditionally limited women's roles in Minangkabau folklore. The character of Siti Zubaidah is not only essential to the narrative but also plays a significant role in determining her fate. She exemplifies qualities of resolve and agency that were usually associated with masculine characters.

Siti Zubaidah stood firm in her decisions, her actions driving the narrative forward. Unlike traditional kaba heroines, she defied societal expectations, carving out her own path and demonstrating the evolving views on gender roles in Minangkabau society.

The character of Siti Zubaidah is a departure from the conventional depiction of women in Kaba, and it reflects greater societal shifts as well as the developing conversation about gender equality. Therefore, she is positioned as an active actor rather than a passive supporter since her actions and choices drive the story. This change in character dynamics indicates an increasing acceptance of female empowerment within Minangkabau society and a celebration of that empowerment. The tale of Siti Zubaidah exemplifies the ability of women to go above the conventional roles that society assigns them and actively build their narratives by defying the expectations of contemporary society.

In addition, the structural analysis sheds light on how these shifting gender relations are portrayed in the story via the interactions between the characters and the storyline. Traditional kaba like "Kaba Cindua Mato" often follows a linear

progression where male protagonists encounter and overcome obstacles, with female characters playing supportive roles that facilitate the male hero's journey. This narrative structure reflects a cultural framework where the male agency is foregrounded, and the female agency is backgrounded.

In contrast, modern kaba like "Kaba Siti Zubaidah" often feature more complex, interwoven narratives where female characters are integral to the plot's progression and resolution. These narratives depict women as supporters and central figures whose decisions and actions are crucial to the storyline. This structural shift reflects a cultural reevaluation of gender roles, recognizing the importance of female agency and women's contributions to shaping cultural and societal outcomes.

In "Kaba Si Umbuik Mudo", the female protagonist's educational and professional achievements are central to the narrative, challenging the traditional domestic roles assigned to women. The modern setting and contemporary language used in this kaba symbolize the changing perceptions of gender roles, where women are depicted as equal participants in societal progress.

Si Umbuik Mudo navigated the challenges of the modern world, her education and career symbolizing the new avenues available to women. Her story, set against the backdrop of a rapidly changing society, redefined traditional gender roles and showcased the potential for gender equality.

This portrayal underscores the narrative shift towards recognizing and celebrating female empowerment and independence, reflecting the broader societal changes in attitudes toward gender equality. In conclusion, the structural analysis of Minangkabau kaba reveals a dynamic interplay of traditional and evolving gender roles. While traditional narratives emphasize male agency and female supportiveness, modern kaba challenge these norms by depicting women as central, active agents. This evolution in character roles and gender dynamics highlights the ongoing cultural discourse on gender equality, offering a richer, more nuanced understanding of how Minangkabau folklore reflects and shapes societal values. These findings contribute to a deeper comprehension of the cultural narratives surrounding gender in Minangkabau society, emphasizing the importance of tradition and progress in shaping contemporary views on gender roles.

C. Symbolic Representations of Gender

Semiotic analysis of the kaba narratives reveals a rich tapestry of symbolic representations that both reinforce and challenge traditional gender roles. The language, imagery, and cultural symbols employed in these stories provide deep insights into the societal values and expectations surrounding gender in Minangkabau culture. In traditional kaba, such as "Kaba Pakih Saidi," language and metaphors reinforce established gender norms. Proverbs and metaphoric expressions are particularly potent in conveying societal expectations. For example, the proverb "Bak maimbau ayam jantan pulang ka kandang" (Like calling the rooster home to the coop) symbolizes the expectation that women should focus on maintaining the home and nurturing familial bonds. This metaphor likens women to caretakers whose primary responsibility is to ensure the smooth functioning and stability of the household.

Bak marimba ayam jantan pulang ka kandang" quietly emphasizes that a woman's place is in the house, where she is responsible for caring for relationships and sustaining the domestic sphere. This metaphor reflects a strongly rooted cultural ethic that prioritizes women's duties as homemakers and caretakers.

This symbolic image emphasizes the traditional belief that women's qualities reside in their patience, obedience, and loyalty to their families. The recurring use of such proverbs in traditional kaba narratives perpetuates these gender norms, embedding them deeply within the cultural consciousness. Imagery in traditional kaba further accentuates these roles. In "Kaba Pakih Saidi," scenes depicting women engaged in domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children are common. These images not only reflect the daily realities of many women in Minangkabau society but also reinforce the expectation that these are women's rightful duties.

In contrast, modern kaba narratives use symbols to challenge and reinterpret these traditional roles. In "Kaba Si Umbuik Mudo," modern settings and contemporary language reflect the evolving perceptions of gender roles. The narrative incorporates symbols such as education and professional achievements to depict women as equal participants in societal progress.

Si Umbuik Mudo navigated the challenges of the modern world, her education and career symbolizing the new avenues available to women. Her story, set against the backdrop of a rapidly changing society, redefined traditional gender roles and showcased the potential for gender equality.

The modern condition of the environment itself is a potent representation of transformation. The tale highlights the topic of gender equality in today's society by situating the narrative inside a modern setting, which highlights the issue's significance. As a symbol of the chances that are now open to women, the protagonist's educational and professional accomplishments subvert the conventional notion that women's main job is to care for their families.

In conclusion, the semiotic analysis of Minangkabau kaba reveals a dual narrative of reinforcement and challenge to traditional gender roles. Traditional kaba employ language, imagery, and cultural symbols to uphold established norms, emphasizing women's roles in the domestic sphere and men's roles as leaders and protectors. Conversely, modern kaba utilizes contemporary symbols and settings to challenge these norms, promoting a narrative of gender equality and female empowerment. These findings highlight the dynamic nature of gender representations in Minangkabau folklore, reflecting both the persistence of traditional values and the influence of modern, progressive ideals. This nuanced

understanding of symbolic representations in kaba provides valuable insights into the cultural discourse on gender roles in Minangkabau society.

D. Cultural Context and Gender Evolution

A comparative analysis of traditional and modern kaba reveals significant insights into the evolution of gender roles within Minangkabau society. This analysis underscores how kaba, as cultural artifacts, mirrors and shapes societal values, reflecting the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity.

Traditional kaba and reinforcement of gender norms

Traditional kaba, such as "Kaba Pakih Saidi" and "Kaba Cindua Mato", predominantly reinforce rigid gender norms, reflecting the entrenched cultural values of Minangkabau society. These narratives often emphasize the preservation of established gender roles, where men are depicted as protectors, leaders, and active agents, while women are portrayed in supportive and domestic roles. For instance, in "Kaba Cindua Mato", the male protagonist's journey and adventures are central to the narrative. His bravery and cunning are highlighted as key virtues, positioning him as the primary driver of the plot. In contrast, female characters provide guidance and support, their roles essential yet secondary. This portrayal reflects traditional gender hierarchies where male agency is foregrounded. Table 2 summarizes the gender roles in traditional kaba, illustrating how these narratives reinforce societal expectations.

TABLE 2
GENDER ROLES IN TRADITIONAL KABA STORIES

Traditional Kaba	Male Roles	Female Roles
Kaba Pakih Saidi	Leaders, protectors, active agents	Caregivers, obedient, supportive roles
Kaba Cindua Mato	Adventurers, brave, cunning	Supportive, nurturing, essential yet secondary

Modern kaba and the shift toward egalitarian views

Modern kaba, such as "Kaba Si Umbuik Mudo" and "Kaba Siti Zubaidah," reflect a gradual shift towards more egalitarian views on gender roles. These narratives challenge traditional norms by depicting women as central figures with agency, independence, and the ability to shape their destinies. In "Kaba Si Umbuik Mudo," the female protagonist navigates modern challenges, symbolizing the new avenues available to women through education and professional achievements. This shift indicates broader social changes and the influence of contemporary gender discourse on cultural narratives.

TABLE 3
GENDER ROLES IN MODERN KABA STORIES

Modern Kaba	Male Roles	Female Roles
Kaba Si Umbuik Mudo	Equal participants, supporters	Central figures, independent, empowered
Kaba Siti Zubaidah	Supportive, sometimes central but equal	Decision-makers, active agents, challenging norms

Table 3 above contrasts the gender roles in modern kaba, highlighting the evolving representation of women as equal participants in societal progress. The thematic and structural analysis of both traditional and modern kaba underscores the dynamic nature of these narratives as reflections of societal values. Traditional kaba emphasize the preservation of cultural norms, with clear delineations of male and female roles that reinforce gender hierarchies. The frequent use of proverbs and metaphors in these narratives reinforces the virtues expected of women, such as patience and obedience.

Bak maimbau ayam jantan pulang ka kandang" (Like calling the rooster home to the coop) metaphorically represents the societal expectation for women to maintain the home and nurture familial bonds.

In contrast, modern kaba narratives utilize contemporary symbols and settings to challenge and reinterpret these gender roles. The depiction of women as central, empowered figures in modern kaba reflects the changing perceptions of gender roles influenced by broader societal shifts toward gender equality.

Si Umbuik Mudo navigated the challenges of the modern world, her education and career symbolizing the new avenues available to women. Her story, set against the backdrop of a rapidly changing society, redefined traditional gender roles and showcased the potential for gender equality.

These findings highlight the evolving nature of Minangkabau society, where traditional values coexist with modern ideals. The gradual shift towards more balanced and egalitarian representations of gender in kaba signifies the ongoing discourse on gender equality and the redefinition of cultural norms.

This study's findings provide a comprehensive understanding of gender roles in Minangkabau kaba. By analyzing themes, character roles, and symbolic representations, the research highlights the persistence of traditional gender norms and the emerging narratives that challenge these norms. Traditional kaba reinforces established gender roles, while modern kaba reflects a shift towards more progressive views on gender equality. This evolution is crucial for understanding the cultural context of Minangkabau society and the broader discourse on gender equality. The comparative analysis between traditional and modern kaba illustrates the dynamic nature of folklore as a reflection of societal values and a platform for cultural discourse. These insights contribute to the broader understanding of the intersection of folklore and societal values, offering valuable perspectives on the role of cultural narratives in shaping and reflecting gender roles.

V. DISCUSSION

This study's results give valuable insights into the history of gender roles within Minangkabau kaba. These findings demonstrate the continued existence of conventional standards and the introduction of more progressive narratives. Previous research has emphasized the cultural relevance of kaba as a mirror of social values and norms, and our study aligns that significance with those findings (Fendi et al., 2020; Moeis et al., 2022; Muhardis, 2023). This research, however, dives more deeply into the comparative examination of traditional and contemporary kaba, providing a more nuanced view of how gender roles are represented and how they have developed throughout history.

Recent studies have emphasized the many ways in which gender is portrayed in cultural narratives. These studies have also highlighted the influence that modern gender discourse has on more conventional forms of storytelling. For example, Nurfaidah (2022) researched the altering gender dynamics in Indonesian folklore. The authors draw attention to how contemporary retellings contain themes of gender equality and empowerment. This aligns with our findings in modern kaba, such as "Kaba Si Umbuik Mudo" and "Kaba Siti Zubaidah," in which female characters are depicted as central figures with agency and independence, challenging traditional gender norms and illustrating the evolving views on gender equality within Minangkabau society. Specifically, these kaba depict female characters as having agency and independence.

Moreover, a study by Dewi et al. (2021) examines the role of cultural narratives in promoting gender equality, arguing that modern adaptations of traditional stories can serve as powerful tools for social change. This perspective supports our findings that modern kaba narratives utilize contemporary symbols and settings to challenge and reinterpret traditional gender roles. By depicting women as equal participants in societal progress, these narratives reflect broader social changes and the influence of contemporary gender discourse.

In contrast, research by Cameron (2023) highlights the ongoing challenges in shifting deeply ingrained cultural norms, particularly in rural and conservative communities. Their study suggests that while modern narratives are making strides in promoting gender equality, traditional narratives still hold significant sway in reinforcing established gender roles. This finding is echoed in our analysis of traditional kaba, such as "Kaba Pakih Saidi" and "Kaba Cindua Mato", where male characters are depicted as active agents driving the plot, while female characters occupy supportive roles.

One unique element of this study is its comprehensive approach to analyzing both traditional and modern kaba. This provides a clear comparative framework that highlights the dynamic nature of gender representations in Minangkabau folklore. This dual analysis allows a deeper understanding of how cultural narratives reflect and shape societal values (Freistein & Gadinger, 2020; Morgan, 2021). Furthermore, the detailed semiotic analysis of language and symbols in these narratives offers new insights into how gender roles are reinforced or challenged.

The new contribution of this study lies in its identification of the evolving nature of gender roles in Minangkabau kaba, highlighting the influence of modern societal changes on cultural narratives. By documenting the shift towards more egalitarian representations of gender, this research provides valuable evidence of the impact of contemporary gender discourse on traditional cultural forms (Bonvillain, 2020; Makoni, 2023). Researchers in the fields of folklore, gender studies, and cultural anthropology will find this work to be valuable since it provides fresh insights into the dynamic relationship that exists between cultural tales and societal values.

Putting these discoveries into practice in the actual world involves several different kinds of implementation. In the first place, these findings may be used by educators and cultural practitioners to create a more inclusive and equitable understanding of gender roles within the Minangkabau community. They can challenge established standards and contribute to the continuing conversation about gender equality by adding contemporary kaba into educational curricula and cultural initiatives (Clavero & Galligan, 2021). These kaba feature female characters who are empowered. Furthermore, policymakers and campaigners for gender equality may utilize this study to emphasize the significance of cultural narratives in molding public views toward gender (Baqtayan et al., 2021; Yoshida, 2023). They can also use this data to argue for efforts that promote more balanced and equitable depictions of men and women.

The ever-evolving depiction of gender roles in kaba has the potential to motivate people to adopt more progressive perspectives on gender equality and to question the conventional conventions that have been established in their lives (Korolczuk, 2020; Sheydaei, 2021). Young girls and women may be inspired to seek education and professional accomplishments by reading the tales of strong female heroines like Si Umbuik Mudo, who can serve as role models for them. In a similar vein, the portrayal of men in positions that are supportive and egalitarian may contribute to the redefining of masculinity, contributing to the promotion of a more inclusive concept of gender that is beneficial to both men and women (Dewi et al., 2019; Hiltrimartin et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the results of this research illustrate the dynamic nature of gender roles in Minangkabau kaba and its implications for current gender discourse and practice. In general, the findings of this study highlight the significance of cultural narratives in reflecting and developing social values. This research contributes significantly to the continuing discussion about gender and culture by presenting a comprehensive and up-to-date analysis that bridges the gap between conventional and contemporary points of view. It also provides vital insights that can be used in academic and practical settings.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this research, a complete examination of gender roles in Minangkabau kaba is presented. The study sheds light on the intricate relationship between traditional norms and the ever-evolving ethical standards of society. Specifically, the study illustrates how these cultural narratives act as both mirrors of the gender relations that are already in place and potential drivers for significant societal change. By comparing traditional and modern kaba, the study highlights a gradual shift towards more egalitarian representations of gender, particularly in contemporary narratives. However, the persistence of traditional gender norms in older kaba underscores the ongoing challenges in shifting deeply ingrained cultural attitudes. Limitations of this study include its focus on a selected number of kaba, which may not fully represent the entire corpus of Minangkabau folklore. Future research could benefit from a broader sample size, including more diverse narratives and exploring regional variations within Minangkabau society. Furthermore, research investigating the reception and interpretation of these tales across multiple generations of Minangkabau people might give useful insights into the influence these developing representations have experienced in the actual world. The consequences of this study go beyond the realm of academic discourse, providing practical applications for educators, politicians, and cultural practitioners in achieving gender equality via the reinterpretation and production of cultural narratives. In conclusion, this research contributes to a more comprehensive knowledge of folklore's function in forming and reflecting society's ideals, especially about gender roles and equality.

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Abdurahman was born in Indonesia, April 23rd 1965. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Indonesian Language Education from IKIP Padang (Indonesia) in 1989, then he obtained a master's degree (M. Pd.) in 1995 and a doctorate in Language Education (Dr.) from Jakarta State University (Indonesia) in 2011. He is currently serving as a lecturer and researcher at the Department of Indonesian Language and Literature, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang. He is actively involved in some research related to Indonesian literature and regional literature, language and literature learning, and cultural and educational issues. He has written several books and articles on literature and Indonesian language and literature learning.



Yenni Hayati is a doctor of literature who is a lecturer in the Indonesian Literature Study Program, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang. She is a researcher in the fields of learning literature, children's literature, oral literature, gender, and feminism. Research related to academic learning has been carried out since 2015 until now. She can be contacted by e-mail at yennihayati@fbs.unp.ac.id



Ngusman Abdul Manaf was born in Indonesia, October 19, 1966. He earned his bachelor's degree from IKIP Padang (Indonesia) in 1991, then earned his master's degree in 1997 and doctorate in 2005 from the University of Indonesia. He is currently a lecturer and researcher at the Indonesian Literature Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Padang State University. He researches in the fields of language and language learning, pragmatics, semantics, humanities and education. He has written several books and articles on linguistics and its learning. Research related to academic learning has been conducted since 2005 until now.



Ciptro Handrianto is currently a lecturer in Department of Nonformal Education, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia. In 2013, he received his bachelor degree in the field of Nonformal Education at Universitas Negeri Padang. He continued his master`s and Ph.D. programs in Pedagogy at Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia and graduated November 2023. During his PhD program he worked as Graduate Research Assistant in his campus and was actively involved in learning community, teacher`s self-efficacy and teaching competency. He has written some books and articles in the international journals.



Nurul Fathihah Nor Azhar is a Counsellor Educator at Institute of Teacher Education, International Languages Campus, Kuala Lumpur. She has contributed to various action research projects, articles, and short stories, including Needs Analysis: Academic Enhancement Psychoeducation Module Based on Guidance & Counselling Teachers and Subject Teachers Review (2023) and Group Guidance Module Based on Choice Theory and Reality Therapy in Addressing Student Achievement Issues (2023, 2024), and has received accolades such as the Silver Medal at the 2023 International Conference of KPM Educational Counsellor, the Silver Award at the Edu@Inovate UPSI International Conference, and the Gold Medal at I-Mind Pamer IPG 2024.