



Initiatives for Religious Moderation in West Sumatra: Preserving the Harmony of Tradition and Islam

Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS-SBK) remains deeply embedded in the idealized worldview of Minangkabau society in West Sumatra, serving as a foundational philosophy that harmonizes tradition and Islam. However, contemporary religious dynamics demand adaptation, particularly concerning religious moderation, as West Sumatra is often perceived as deficient in this aspect due to its strong religious identity. This study explores the strengthening of religious moderation through strategic initiatives based on ABS-SBK in three regencies—Tanah Datar, Agam, and Lima Puluhan Kota—culturally known as *Luhak Nan Tigo*, the historical heartland of the Minangkabau ethnic group. Qualitative interviews reveal that each *luhak* responds to the challenges of modernity through distinct approaches: Tanah Datar relies on traditional authorities and historical sites, Agam reinforces its identity as a *Madani* (civilized) district, while Lima Puluhan Kota emphasizes managing social diversity. This study argues that the Minangkabau people ought to ideally achieve a higher religious harmony index than their current standing. It seeks to position these efforts within the ABS-SBK framework as local wisdom, the identity of Islam as a minority, and its relation to *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

Keywords: Religious moderation, Islam and tradition, West Sumatra.

Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS-SBK) hingga kini hidup dalam idealita masyarakat Minangkabau di Sumatera Barat sebagai filosofi dasar atas keselarasan adat dan Islam. Namun, dinamika keberagamaan kontemporer menuntut adaptasi, terutama terkait moderasi beragama, di mana Sumatera Barat kerap dinilai kurang moderat karena identitas keagamaannya yang kuat. Penelitian ini menelusuri penguatan moderasi agama melalui inisiatif-inisiatif strategis berbasis ABS-SBK di tiga kabupaten—Tanah Datar, Agam, dan Lima Puluhan Kota—yang secara kultural disebut *luhak nan tigo*, wilayah historis etnis Minangkabau. Berdasarkan wawancara kualitatif, ditemukan bahwa setiap *luhak* menghadapi tantangan modernitas dengan pendekatan berbeda: Tanah Datar mengandalkan otoritas adat dan situs sejarah, Agam menegaskan identitas kabupaten madani, sementara Lima Puluhan Kota menitikberatkan pada mengelola keragaman sosial. Ekspektasi yang ditekankan adalah bahwa seharusnya masyarakat Minangkabau memperoleh indeks kerukunan umat beragama lebih tinggi dari pencapaiannya kini. Penelitian ini mencoba menghadirkan diskusi tentang bagaimana menempatkan upaya-upaya tersebut dalam kerangka ABS-SBK sebagai local wisdom, identitas Islam sebagai mayoritas, pun hubungannya dengan *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

Kata kunci: Moderasi beragama, Islam dan adat, Sumatera Barat.

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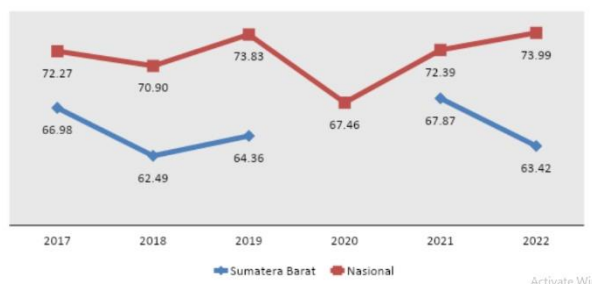
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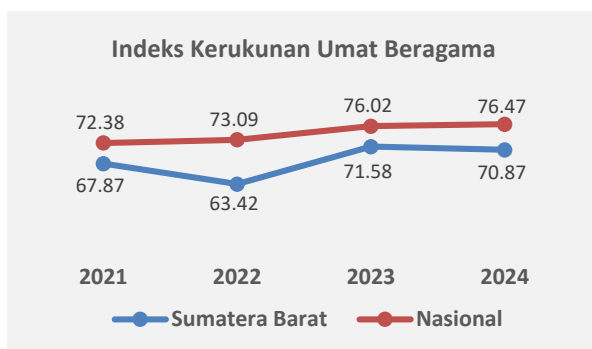


Introduction

The recognition of local culture as a fundamental pillar of religious moderation mainstreaming is a crucial element in the contemporary representation of the Minangkabau ethnic group in West Sumatra. The preservation of the *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK) philosophy has been increasingly scrutinized, particularly as the Religious Harmony Index in West Sumatra has exhibited fluctuations that are deemed suboptimal.



Religious Harmony Index in West Sumatra (2017–2022).
Source: Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kanwil Kemenag), West Sumatra.



Religious Harmony Index in West Sumatra (2021–2024).
Source: <https://balitbangdiklat.kemenag.go.id>.

This philosophy assumes a harmonious alignment between customary traditions (*adat*) and religious teachings as a unified force in addressing the challenges posed by

societal changes.¹ The ongoing tension between tradition-based customs and the dynamics of modern social life remains unresolved. However, the demand for religious moderation encourages efforts to bridge, and ideally integrate, the distinctions between the two.² The pursuit of a harmonious society serves as a strategy to prevent conflicts in a multicultural community.³ Consequently, maintaining ABS-SBK as a distinctive local philosophy has become an integral effort for the Minangkabau people to enhance the religious moderation index in their province, West Sumatra.

Religious Moderation, promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, underscores the state's commitment to strengthening unity in diversity. This initiative was significantly reinforced by former Minister of Religious Affairs, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, with a primary focus on fostering national values, tolerance, non-violence, and respect for local cultures as invaluable national assets. The program aims to provide a future-oriented framework for religious adherents to practice tolerance, mutual respect, and social cohesion, thereby fostering peace in a pluralistic society. As a response to the global challenges of rising intolerance and radicalism, religious moderation in Indonesia is expected to mitigate potential interfaith conflicts. By promoting interreligious dialogue, respect for differences, and awareness of the importance of unity, this movement serves as a new benchmark for maintaining social harmony.⁴

A tangible outcome—or rather a

¹ H. Hafizah et al., "Implementation of ABS SBK Value in Life of Minangkabau People," *European Journal of Education Studies* 8, no. 7 (2021): 225.

² Ilham and Surya Afdal, "The Urgency of Internalization of Minangkabau Cultural Values At Education Institutions," *Shahih: Journal of Islamicate Multidisciplinary* 8, no. 2 (2024): 64.

³ Asrinaldi Asril and Yoserizal Yoserizal, "Good Governance or Local Wisdom? Dilemma in

Modern Government Practices in West Sumatra, Indonesia," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities, Economics and Law* (EAI, 2019), 4–5.

⁴ Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, *Sambutan Menteri Agama Dalam Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI, 2019), v–vi.





consequence—of the religious moderation mainstreaming is the introduction of the Religious Harmony Index (*Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama* – KUB). Developed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this index functions as a measurement tool to assess the implementation of religious moderation within society. It is typically compiled based on surveys that measure public perceptions regarding interfaith relations, intra-faith interactions, incidents of conflict, and conflict resolution efforts at both local and national levels. The index rankings for each province are publicly accessible online.⁵ As part of the mainstreaming initiative, each province has sought to improve its KUB index, as a higher score reflects a more harmonious society. West Sumatra, as a representation of the Minangkabau ethnic group with its strong Islamic identity, is among the provinces striving to enhance this index.

This study examines the efforts of the Minangkabau community to improve the religious moderation index through the preservation of the ABS-SBK philosophy, focusing on three regencies in West Sumatra: Tanah Datar, Agam, and Lima Puluh Kota. Culturally, these three regencies are collectively referred to as *Luhak nan Tigo* (the three traditional regions). Due to their deep-rooted socio-historical connections, these areas have been regarded as the heart of Minangkabau society, where traditional

customs remain widely practiced. The research discussion will explore how these efforts to strengthen the religious moderation index relate to the ABS-SBK philosophy as a form of local wisdom valued by the Minangkabau community, and how the Islamic majority plays a crucial role in this process. Unlike previous studies, which primarily focused on the practice of religious moderation within educational institutions or within limited regional contexts as case studies⁶, this research takes a broader approach. To address this research focus, qualitative data collection has been applied, primarily through interviews. However, as a qualitative study, the emphasis is not on quantitatively measuring the outcomes of these efforts, but rather on analyzing the ideal framework being constructed through these initiatives. The key informants in this study include government officials, customary leaders, and religious figures.

ABS-SBK in the Context of Minangkabau Islam

The Bukit Marapalam event following the Padri War (1821–1837) is regarded as a historical milestone that gave rise to the agreement based on *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK). The conflict between the religious faction (Padri) and the adat faction was eventually resolved. Since its formal establishment, ABS-SBK has

⁵ “Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama (KUB),” *Badan Litbang Dan Diklat Kementerian Agama*, last modified 2023, accessed July 11, 2024, <https://balitbangdiklat.kemenag.go.id/halaman/dashboard-indeks-kub>.

⁶ Ulfa Khoiriah et al., “Upaya Kanwil Kementerian Agama Sumatera Barat Membumikan Moderasi Beragama,” *Turast: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian* 11, no. 2 (2023): 152–162; Gazali and Endri Yenti, “Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Islam (Penguatan Nilai-Nilai Islam Inklusif Bagi Dai Dan Mubaligh Di Sumatera Barat),” *Turast: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian* 10, no. 2 (2020): 151–169; Martin Kustati et al., “The Effect of National Insight and Religious Moderation on Radical Behavior of Secondary School Students,” ed. Ehsan

Rezvani, *Education Research International* 1 (January 2, 2023): 1–13; Zulfan Taufik, “Extinguishing a Fire in the Husk: Strengthening Religious Moderation for Interfaith Youth in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra,” in *The 4th International Conference on University Community Engagement*, 2022, 700–706; Reza Fahmi and Prima Aswirna, “Building Moderation Islam in Plural Community: Relation Between Social Media and Social Conflicts in Padang, West Sumatera-Indonesia,” *Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2022): 343–354; Andri Ashadi et al., “Community Tolerance: Relationship of Muslim Majority and Christian Minority in The Context of Religious Moderation in Padang Pariaman, West Sumatera,” *Penamas* 35, no. 1 (June 27, 2022): 113–130.





expanded and is regarded as the philosophy or worldview of the Minangkabau people to this day.⁷ However, some argue that ABS-SBK had long existed as a cultural proverb associated with the introduction of Islam to Minangkabau centuries earlier.⁸ The desire to find a 'middle path' between these two contending factions reflects a spirit of moderation—an attempt to harmonize the religious teachings of Islam, governed by *Syarak* (Sharia) as derived from *Kitabullah* (the Qur'an), with customary practices rooted in intergenerational wisdom and social consensus. The Minangkabau society envisions this spirit of moderation as a foundational framework for their way of life, providing a means to resolve various societal challenges. This, in general, constitutes the idealized perception held by the Minangkabau people when referring to ABS-SBK as their distinctive philosophy.⁹

This idealism is often linked to a critical historical moment when the unity between *ulama* and the adat leaders, following their previous conflicts, enabled a collective resistance against Dutch colonial rule.¹⁰ The implication is clear: intra-community discord does not solve problems; rather, compromise and unity provide the most effective resolution. The consensus between *ulama* and adat figures materialized in the phrase *syarak mangato, adat mamakai* (Islamic law prescribes, adat implements), affirming that the legal dictates of *syarak* must be firmly upheld and reinforced by adat. In this framework, adat

functions as the infrastructure that strengthens the implementation of *syarak*. This principle is evident in certain customary practices, such as the prohibition against marriage within the same Minangkabau *suku* (clan), which continues to be observed as long as it does not contradict Islamic tenets.¹¹

From an anthropological perspective, this idealism reinforces Islam as a central identity marker of Minangkabau society. There exists a common perception that to be Minangkabau is to be Muslim.¹² Consequently, the question of what constitutes a representative Minangkabau Islamic identity has given rise to new tensions, particularly in relation to the dynamics between Islam, adat, and modernity. The application of Islamic teachings has been shaped by competing influences—whether through the dominance of certain *mazhab* (jurisprudential schools) or the impact of reformist movements—leading to ongoing debates regarding Islamic identity. A significant historical instance of this tension is the early 20th-century confrontation between *Kaum Tuo* (the Old Faction) and *Kaum Mudo* (the Young Faction). *Kaum Tuo* represented the traditionalist Islamic identity closely aligned with the historical consensus that established ABS-SBK. They identified themselves as adherents of *Ahlusunah wal Jama'ah*, practicing *taqlid* to the four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence, adhering to Ash'ari theology, and engaging in Sufi tariqa practices.¹³ In contrast, *Kaum Mudo* sought to modernize Islamic teachings, challenging the

⁷ Silfia Hanani et al., "The Construction of Negotiation for Social Harmony in Minangkabau West Sumatra Indonesia," *Akademika* 91, no. 3 (2021): 193.

⁸ Zulfan Taufik and Muhammad Taufik, "Nagari Madani: Islamic Favoritism and Religious Freedom in Regional Development in West Sumatera, Indonesia," *Uloomuna* 27, no. 2 (2023): 697.

⁹ Erwati Aziz, Mohammad Dzofir, and Aris Widodo, "The Acculturation of Islam and Customary Law: An Experience of Minangkabau, Indonesia," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 144.

¹⁰ S Sulhati, "Islam and Minangkabau Culture," in *Proceeding International Conference on Language and Literature (IC2LC)*, vol. 9, 2020, 199.

¹¹ Ramza Fatria Maulana, Dede Kania, and Hazar Kusmayanti, "Sapayuang Marriage in Minangkabau from the Perspectives of Mashlahah, 'Urf, and Human Rights," *Al-Ahwal Al-Syakhsyiyah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Peradilan Islam* 5, no. 2 (2024): 116.

¹² Gregory M. Simon, *Caged in on the Outside: Moral Subjectivity, Selfhood, and Islam in Minangkabau Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2014), 39.

¹³ Mami Nofrianti and Jamal Mirdad, "Wacana Religio-Intelektual Abad 20: Dinamika Gerakan Kaum





established traditions. The resulting polemics and open debates extended to include perspectives on customary law, with *Kaum Mudo* critiquing the adat leadership responsible for maintaining the ABS-SBK framework.¹⁴

As an antithesis to *Kaum Tuo*, *Kaum Mudo* also voiced critiques against certain adat practices, particularly the *matrilineal* inheritance system, which they viewed as conflicting with Islamic legal principles. However, over time, these debates subsided, leading to negotiated compromises that allowed for the continued preservation of ABS-SBK. One such compromise was the distinction between *pusako tinggi* (ancestral inheritance), which remained governed by adat, and wealth acquired through personal effort, which was subject to Islamic inheritance law (*faraid*), wherein women receive a smaller share than men. The broader implications of *Kaum Mudo*'s challenge to *Kaum Tuo*'s traditional authority remain intertwined with the broader discourse of modernity.¹⁵ The forces of modernization—driven by national development and Indonesia's progress—have directly confronted the ABS-SBK framework, as adat and Islamic identity now contend with the influence of globalization and contemporary lifestyles.¹⁶

At the micro level, the erosion of moral and aesthetic values due to globalization has increasingly become a concern regarding the sustainability of adat wisdom and Islamic

teachings. Traditional leaders and *ulama* bear the responsibility of ensuring the transmission of Minangkabau identity—rooted in adat and Islam—to future generations.¹⁷ At the macro level, the relationship between adat, Islam, and the state has emerged as a crucial issue, particularly in the post-reformasi era, which has been characterized by increasing regional autonomy. In response, some regions have sought to formally institutionalize their local identity by integrating state authority into the preservation of their cultural heritage. The role of ABS-SBK in this process has become evident through initiatives advocating for regional regulations (*Peraturan Daerah* or *Perda*) in West Sumatra and its subordinate municipalities, with varying degrees of intensity. This regulatory framework has had a significant impact on how the Minangkabau community perceives national discourse, particularly concerning adat preservation and religious issues. For instance, in the post-reformasi era, the heightened focus on counterterrorism has increased state vigilance toward radical Islamic movements. Consequently, the issue of religious tolerance has become particularly sensitive, including within Minangkabau society.¹⁸

This triangular relationship between adat, Islam, and the state is directly linked to the broader discourse on religious moderation as it is received and actualized by the Minangkabau people within the ABS-SBK framework. Religious moderation, particularly in its emphasis on

Tuo Dan Kaum Mudo Di Minangkabau," *Khazanah: Jurnal Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam* 3798 (2018): 45.

¹⁴ Andri Ashadi, "Negotiation of Tradition, Islam, and Modernity in The Movement of The Kaum Mudo Islamic Reform in Minangkabau," *TEOSOFI: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 9, no. 1 (2019): 31–32.

¹⁵ Nofrianti and Mirdad, "Wacana Religio-Intelektual Abad 20: Dinamika Gerakan Kaum Tuo Dan Kaum Mudo Di Minangkabau," 48–49.

¹⁶ Abdullah A Afifi and Ferdi Yufriadi, "The Coexistence of Kaum Mudo and Kaum Tuo: The Transformation of Islamic Education in Minangkabau," *Tarikhuna* 6, no. 1 (2024): 124–125.

¹⁷ Sayfri Anwar, Ishak Aziz, and Dessi Susanti, "Preserving the Value of Minangkabau Culture Through Local Wisdom-Based Education," in *Proceedings of the 4th Padang International Conference on Education, Economics, Business and Accounting (PICEEBA-2 2019)* (Paris, France: Atlantis Press, 2020), 496.

¹⁸ Yasrul Huda, *Contesting Sharia: State Law, Decentralization and Minangkabau Custom* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2013), 1–8; Franz von Benda-Beckmann and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, "Identity in Dispute: Law, Religion, and Identity in Minangkabau," *Asian Ethnicity* 13, no. 4 (September 8, 2012): 342–344.





multiculturalism and interfaith appreciation, is often seen as being at odds with the Minangkabau Islamic identity, which tends to be more homogenous. This has led to concerns about its perceived lack of inclusivity. The *Indeks Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama* (Religious Harmony Index), which represents the state's assessment of religious moderation, has been a point of contention, as West Sumatra's scores have consistently fallen below the national average in recent years. Nevertheless, recent improvements—albeit modest—in 2023-2024 offer hope for future progress. This optimism is reinforced by the state-led discourse on religious moderation, which places local cultural values at its core. Within this framework, ABS-SBK is regarded as a significant cultural foundation for the Minangkabau people in fostering religious moderation.¹⁹ Further strengthening this position is the formal recognition of ABS-SBK through the enactment of Law No. 17 of 2022 on West Sumatra Province, which explicitly designates ABS-SBK as the official philosophy of the Minangkabau people.²⁰ The crucial question now is how this recognition can be effectively translated into practical efforts to enhance religious moderation among the Minangkabau community. This question forms the central theme of the present study.

Initiatives to Enhance the Religious Moderation Index in *Luhak nan Tigo*

1. Tanah Datar Regency

Tanah Datar holds significant historical value, not only as the site of the *Bukit Marapalam* agreement but also as the purported birthplace of the Minangkabau ethnic group. It is considered the first place

where their ancestors established civilization, which is why it is traditionally referred to as *Luhak nan Tuo* (the Old *Luhak*).²¹ Consequently, the people of Tanah Datar bear the cultural responsibility of preserving ABS-SBK (*Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah*—Custom Based on Sharia, Sharia Based on the Quran), particularly in their region. This study identifies three key components in maintaining ABS-SBK as a foundation for fostering religious moderation: enhancing the role of customary functionaries through collaboration with government institutions, positioning mosques as communal spaces, and preserving cultural heritage sites through tourism promotion.

First, the role of customary functionaries in transmitting ABS-SBK values as a means of actualizing religious moderation is evident in the dissemination of customary knowledge within strategic institutions. Educational institutions and government agencies such as the Office of Religious Affairs (*Kantor Urusan Agama*, KUA) often serve as venues for knowledge transfer, where community leaders—including *niniak mamak* (traditional elders) and *bundo kanduang* (respected female figures)—directly impart customary teachings. The decision to integrate these values into the KUA curriculum is partly due to the prevalence of religiously motivated violence, often targeting women. Additionally, the family unit, as the smallest social structure, plays a crucial role in cultivating and instilling moderation values by embedding customary principles to prevent the spread of violent ideologies. In schools, customary education emphasizes politeness, hospitality, respect for guests and others, and modest attire,

¹⁹ Yose Hendra, "Indeks Kerukunan Beragama Di Sumbar Meningkatkan," *Media Indonesia*, last modified 2024, accessed September 29, 2024, <https://mediaindonesia.com/nusantara/699405/indeks-kerukunan-beragama-di-sumbar-meningkat>.

²⁰ Zulfan Taufik, "Sharia-Based Custom and the Politics of Religious Freedom in Contemporary West

Sumatra, Indonesia," *Journal of Southeast Asian Human Rights* 8, no. 1 (June 29, 2024): 115–142.

²¹ Jonny Wongso and Syed Zainol Abidin Iddid, "Characters of the Historic Cities in Minangkabau," in *Asset and Facility Management "Resilience and Sustainability Organizations"*, 2014, 2.





including wearing attire that covers the *aurat* in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Beyond knowledge dissemination, community leaders in Tanah Datar also foster religious moderation by promoting nationalism. The commemoration of Indonesia's Independence Day, marked by national holidays for all residents, serves as an avenue to reinforce nationalist values. Activities such as *panjat pinang* (greased pole climbing), *tarik tambang* (tug-of-war), and other communal events promote solidarity, which is a crucial element of religious moderation. Furthermore, the observance of flag-raising ceremonies—where the community collectively remembers the sacrifices of national heroes—indirectly strengthens social harmony. These national events provide a platform for community leaders to instill nationalist values as part of a broader effort to foster religious moderation.

Second, mosques, as places of worship for Muslims, play a crucial role in nurturing interfaith harmony. Religious coexistence in mosques is facilitated by their function as communal spaces. In this context, mosques serve as platforms where different religious groups can engage in dialogue and resolve tensions when they arise. It is common in Tanah Datar for individuals to follow an imam's practices without outright rejecting or condemning them, even if they differ from their own. This openness stems from the local understanding that mosques belong to the *niniak mamak*, meaning that all religious groups must be involved in any mosque-related activities.

"Here, we believe that the mosque belongs to the *niniak mamak*, so every event must involve all religious groups. This is where we discuss our differences—but in a peaceful and friendly manner. We even laugh together while having these conversations. This is what strengthens our relationships, despite our differences."

The role of mosques in fostering interfaith harmony is further reinforced through community-driven initiatives. These initiatives build solidarity by encouraging cooperation in organizing and executing events. Many of these mosque-based programs also serve to preserve local culture, often culminating in annual festivals that showcase Minangkabau artistic expressions such as *randai* (traditional theater), *saluang* (bamboo flute music), *silek* (martial arts), as well as Minangkabau dances and songs. These cultural festivals within mosques foster a deep appreciation for ancestral traditions and ethical values, particularly *ABS-SBK*. Thus, mosques serve as vital institutions in promoting *ABS-SBK* principles in harmony with religious moderation.

Third, the preservation of cultural heritage sites through tourism promotion serves as an essential strategy for maintaining *ABS-SBK* and fostering religious moderation. This initiative has two primary implications. First, it reinforces *ABS-SBK* values within the Tanah Datar community. Second, it reshapes public perceptions of the Minangkabau people as an ethnic group committed to religious moderation. These efforts are driven in part by Indonesia's Religious Harmony Index, which has recorded low scores for the region according to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs.

One example of cultural heritage preservation through tourism promotion is the maintenance of traditional Minangkabau houses (*rumah gadang*), such as the *Istana Pagaruyung* (Pagaruyung Palace). Preserving these traditional houses allows visitors to explore historical artifacts, including *mamangan* (wise sayings), *petatah petitih* (proverbs), and other cultural expressions. Exposure to such proverbs, which embody ethical wisdom aligned with religious moderation, helps shape a community mindset that discourages intolerance and judgmental attitudes. Simultaneously, this





initiative fosters external perceptions that Minangkabau ancestral wisdom aligns, at least to some extent, with religious moderation values.

2. Agam Regency

In recent developments, initiatives to preserve *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK) in Agam have increasingly demonstrated two key aspects: the active involvement of the government and its institutions, as well as the strengthening of Islamic identity. The government's active participation is philosophically framed within an integral partnership known as *tungku tigo sajarangan* (the three supporting pillars) or *tigo tali sapilin* (the three intertwined threads), which signifies the collaboration between *niniak mamak* (traditional leaders), *alim ulama* (Islamic scholars), and *cerdik pandai* (intellectuals). In this structure, the government assumes the role of the *cerdik pandai*. In 2016, the Agam government officially introduced a vision aimed at creating a *madani* (civilized) society, with a mission statement: "Realizing a progressive Agam Regency, a prosperous community, towards a *madani* and accomplished Agam." The term *madani* (civilized) was deliberately chosen to represent a strong religious identity, drawing inspiration from the historical context of Medina during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which is regarded as the model of an ideal civilization.²²

As a consequence of this vision, the Agam government has declared its commitment to ensuring that future governance agendas remain responsive to religious issues. It also seeks to align its policies with the philosophy of *tungku tigo sajarangan*. The enactment of the ABS-SBK Law is seen as reinforcing this strategic approach. Several figures from the Indonesian Ulama Council (*Majelis Ulama*

Indonesia—MUI) in Agam Regency whom we interviewed shared similar views, highlighting efforts to mainstream religious identity in synergy with local wisdom. They emphasized that the ABS-SBK framework serves as the primary reference for this mainstreaming effort. One of them stated:

"As a religious institution closely linked to the government, MUI continuously strives to build synergy with governmental bodies and traditional institutions. We frequently engage in discussions with government officials and traditional leaders to address various issues, particularly those related to religion. For us, religious moderation can be achieved through the unity of scholars, the government, and traditional leaders. We also actively participate in various activities, such as seminars, to strengthen religious moderation within society."

Madani vision is also closely tied to efforts to foster interfaith harmony. This has been confirmed by MUI leaders we interviewed. Despite being predominantly Muslim, Agam Regency is home to non-Muslim communities, primarily migrants from North Sumatra and Nias, who reside in areas such as *Perumahan Simbolon* and *Talao* and are predominantly Christian. According to the Agam government, no reports of interreligious conflicts have ever been recorded in the region. The relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim communities is considered harmonious. The principle of multiculturalism, as a fundamental aspect of national unity, serves as the foundation for this harmony, as articulated by local government officials. This foundation is further linked to the *madani* vision, which refers back to the context of Medina, where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplified

²² Zikri Alhadi et al., "Nagari Madani Movement: A Social Policy-Based Islamic Values In Agam Regency," in *Proceedings of the International*

Conference On Social Studies, Globalisation And Technology (ICSSGT 2019) (Paris, France: Atlantis Press, 2020), 421–429.





coexistence with non-Muslims, including Jews and Christians, within a shared civilization.

The government also acknowledges that maintaining this foundation requires continuous efforts. The *madani* vision is inseparable from the discourse on national unity. Nationalism should not be overshadowed by the strengthening Islamic identity but should instead become an integral aspect of this effort. Similar to Tanah Datar Regency, Agam's government believes that reinforcing nationalism is crucial for instilling patriotism, particularly among the younger generation. In addition to national ceremonies such as flag-raising events, Independence Day celebrations, and other national commemorations, they have specifically emphasized naming major roads in the regency after national heroes, such as Sudirman Street, Agus Salim Street, and Soekarno-Hatta Street, as a form of nationalistic symbolism. Furthermore, the preservation and renovation of national heritage sites, such as the House of Buya Hamka and the Hatta Museum, are also part of these efforts. The issue of nationalism is deemed highly significant, as the *madani* vision—explicitly recognized as a reinforcement of Islamic identity—often faces challenges or is even associated with concerns related to terrorism.

The Agam government is also taking a more active role in fostering cohesion among different societal groups. ABS-SBK is understood as an embodiment of values such as mutual cooperation, courtesy, consensus-based decision-making, and collaboration. One of the most frequently highlighted aspects is the promotion of harmony between Islamic organizations, particularly *Perti* and *Muhammadiyah*. These organizations have substantial followings and are thus regarded as key players in maintaining communal harmony. While advocating for the *madani* vision as a form of religious democratization

rooted in Islamic teachings and local wisdom, the government sees the necessity of establishing practical synergies with social forces represented by religious organizations. To this end, they aim to create more platforms that bring these entities together through collaborative efforts, such as participation in social activism, disaster relief, and various other cooperative initiatives across different sectors.

Another key initiative involves equipping religious counselors with knowledge of religious moderation and establishing discussion forums to enhance understanding of this issue. On various occasions, the Regent of Agam has consistently emphasized the importance of fostering a high level of tolerance within the regency. This message is frequently conveyed in his speeches, particularly in events related to strengthening religious moderation. This commitment is also evident in numerous reports highlighting his active participation in significant gatherings, such as interfaith dialogues, national seminars, and religious celebrations that involve diverse stakeholders. This approach not only aims to cultivate harmony within a pluralistic society but also seeks to build collective awareness of the importance of respecting differences. Thus, in the context of Agam, the local government's efforts play a crucial role in maintaining social stability and promoting diversity as a collective strength.

3. Lima Puluhan Kota Regency

Culturally recognized as *luhak nan bungsu* (the youngest *luhak* in Minangkabau), Lima Puluhan Kota holds a unique position among the three regencies discussed. It exhibits a greater level of social diversity compared to the other two. The Muslim community, comprising 98.82% of the total population, coexists with minority groups, including adherents of Christianity, Catholicism, and even Buddhism. This diversity is further enriched by the presence of various ethnic groups beyond the





Minangkabau, such as Javanese, Batak, and Chinese communities. Within the Muslim majority itself, society is divided into various religious affiliations, both formally and culturally, including *Muhammadiyah*, *Tarbiyah*, and *Tarekat* groups.²³ As the dominant religious community, Muslims perceive themselves as the guardians of social diversity. Given that the *ABS-SBK* (Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah) philosophy is rooted in collective agreement, the Muslim majority is expected not only to serve as protectors but also as role models and initiators in maintaining these shared values. The Chairman of MUI in Lima Puluh Kota shared his perspective on the matter:

“Interfaith and intra-religious harmony in Lima Puluh Kota, in our assessment, has been well preserved. Any disputes or conflicts are resolved peacefully through dialogue. The MUI plays a key role in mediating and fostering social cohesion, ensuring that decisions align with the common good. Thus, MUI does not only respond to harmony among Muslims but also extends its role to non-Muslims. Islam must set an example, as it is the majority faith. The emphasis on peaceful resolution and respect for diversity highlights the strength of religious moderation in Lima Puluh Kota, shaping a harmonious and multicultural society while upholding the *ABS-SBK* philosophy as a manifestation of shared values.”

The role of *ninik mamak* (traditional elders) and *bundo kanduang* (women custodians of Minangkabau heritage) continues to be reinforced in preserving traditional values, particularly in fostering social harmony amid diversity. However, strengthening the role of traditional figures presents significant challenges. Since the 1990s, the influence of

modernity has eroded their once-dominant roles, such as the function of *bundo kanduang* in educating their nieces. In response, contemporary efforts focus on promoting moral and ethical values rather than merely transmitting customary systems to younger generations. Traditional leaders recognize the need to adapt to modern developments so they can serve as role models for the youth. A recurring concern highlighted in our interviews is the challenge of filtering external influences that inevitably arise due to social diversity, particularly in the digital era, which has transformed the landscape of social interactions.

To address these challenges, *KAN* (Kerapatan Adat Nagari) and *LKAAM* (Lembaga Kerapatan Adat Alam Minangkabau), as traditional customary institutions, actively strive to preserve ancestral traditions through key activities such as the conferral of traditional titles, officiating marriages, and sustaining the *malakok* tradition (a cultural bond between ethnic groups). Cultural and artistic traditions are also promoted through events such as annual traditional arts competitions, Minangkabau cultural festivals, culinary programs, and the *Puti Bungsu* initiative, which aims to empower young women in preserving Minangkabau heritage. Women play a particularly significant role, as they are regarded as the backbone of Minangkabau cultural continuity. Beyond cultural preservation, these activities serve as platforms for strengthening the community’s cultural identity. These initiatives align with the ideal of *ABS-SBK*, which seeks not only to safeguard ancestral values but also to foster communal solidarity within a diverse society. Through this approach, Minangkabau traditions and arts remain relevant amidst the challenges of modernity, while reinforcing

²³ Siti Fathimah, Eka Yuliana Rahman, and Romi Mesra, “Social Solidarity of Luhak Community

Lima Puluh Kota,” in *Proceedings of the International Joined Conference on Social Science*, 2021, 303–308.





cultural identity as a cornerstone of dynamic social life.

Traditional leaders also recognize the importance of collaborating with religious figures in managing diversity while involving the government, particularly in areas that require structured management, such as economic development. Economic resilience is increasingly viewed as a strategic concern amid modern challenges, as societal well-being is deemed essential for sustaining the role of traditional institutions. Economic stability is expected to facilitate the transmission of cultural values to younger generations, as youth free from economic concerns are more likely to embrace and internalize these traditions. In this context, the *ABS-SBK* legislation is considered crucial, with the hope that it will enhance the contribution of traditional leaders while

strengthening synergy between customary institutions, religion, and the government. This collaboration not only ensures the continuity of traditions but also helps keep customary values relevant amid changing times.

ABS-SBK as Local Wisdom: The Potential to Enhance the Religious Moderation Index

From the findings presented above, it is evident that despite having a strong historical and cultural ties, and being recognized as the main custodian of Minangkabau cultural values, the three regencies, in their initiatives to sustain *ABS-SBK*, exhibit distinctive characteristics in some aspects. This variation is influenced by the challenges they deem most critical to address. The summary is as follows:

Table 1. Initiatives of Three Luhak to Preserve *ABS-SBK*

Regency	Cultural and Religious Identity	Challenges and Initiatives
Tanah Datar	Known as the cultural center of Minangkabau (Luhak nan Tuo). The majority of the population is Muslim. A critical point for the spread of <i>ABS-SBK</i> .	The main challenge is maintaining the relevance of traditional figures such as <i>ninik mamak</i> and <i>bundo kanduang</i> in the face of modernity. Initiatives include promoting traditional values, preserving traditions such as ceremonial rites, <i>malewakan gala</i> , and cultural festivals. Collaboration with religious leaders and the government is emphasized to strengthen the role of tradition.
Agam	Part of Luhak nan Tangah. The majority of the population is Muslim. Has a <i>madani</i> vision.	The challenge lies in balancing tradition and religion amidst changing times. Strengthening the role of tradition is carried out through cultural activities, such as art festivals, <i>aleg-aleg adat</i> , and revitalization of local traditions. Education in cultural values for the younger generation and synergy between government, tradition, and religion are central to ensuring social harmony.
Lima Puluh Kota	Known as Luhak nan Bungsu. Higher social diversity compared to Tanah Datar and Agam. The majority of the population is Muslim (98.82%) living alongside minorities of Christians, Catholics, and Buddhists. Ethnic communities include Minangkabau, Javanese, Batak, and Chinese.	The biggest challenge is maintaining the relevance of traditional roles in the face of modernity, including the impact of digital technology. Initiatives are made through strengthening the roles of KAN and LKAAM in preserving traditions, such as conferring traditional titles and maintaining the <i>malakok</i> cultural bond. Collaboration between tradition, religion, and the government is deemed essential to preserving the relevance of tradition while addressing economic challenges.





The presented table indicates that modernity is a dominant factor posing challenges in the preservation of ABS-SBK. The summarized points, such as “maintaining relevance amidst the influence of modernity,” “balancing tradition and religion in the face of changing times,” and “the advancement of digital technology,” highlight the pressing concerns at stake. The logic behind this, in relation to improving the religious harmony index, is that the success of initiatives to preserve ABS-SBK in facing modernity is expected to contribute to the achievement of a harmonious life.

ABS-SBK, as a philosophy derived from a concise yet profound slogan, allows flexibility in its application, making it relevant to various discourses. The religious moderation index, which seeks to achieve a harmonious society guided by local wisdom, aligns well with initiatives to preserve ABS-SBK. On the other hand, this flexibility opens the door for broader discussions on establishing standards for widely applicable practices to Minangkabau society. The discovery of such standards is part of the modern logic, while local wisdom follows the logic of tradition because it is inherently tied to culture. Culture always refers to the legacy of the past, which is specific and context-dependent. Therefore, ABS-SBK as local wisdom is rooted in a tradition deeply embedded in society, passed down through generations as “the artistic heritage of a particular culture.”²⁴

This implies that the above findings can serve as potential material for preserving ABS-SBK while maintaining its roots in

tradition. Practically, this must be built upon cultural awareness fostered by the daily initiatives of community leaders. This is the essence of local wisdom, which remains alive only when it flows through the most fundamental activities of life.²⁵ Thus, ABS-SBK as local wisdom should not be trapped in mere formalities, serving only as a symbol of pride without resonating with the actual lived experiences of the Minangkabau people. Community leaders, who directly engage with societal realities, are the cornerstones for enhancing the religious moderation index.²⁶ This index is not merely a measure of success in fostering harmonious living, but also an instrument for mapping, predicting, and detecting issues.²⁷ Therefore, it is only fitting that ABS-SBK remains firmly rooted in its origin, as local wisdom.

The Role of Islam as the Majority

Since Islamic identity is inherently tied to ABS-SBK, efforts to strengthen religious moderation, with a dominant focus on the dynamics of the Muslim community, are undoubtedly appropriate. This culturally accepted reason suggests that a healthy relationship between majority and minority can create greater opportunities for the practical realization of shared values. Although, ideally, consensus on these shared values should always be based on the perspectives of all societal elements, the majority's stance ultimately plays a significant role in the continuity of ABS-SBK. Religious and cultural leaders bear this responsibility, requiring collaborative efforts to effectively

²⁴ G Adekola and Nwoye Charles Egbo, “Traditions and Customs in Community Development: The Case of Nkanu West and Nkanu East Local Government Areas of Enugu State, Nigeria,” *Journal of Education and Practice* 7, no. 18 (2016): 120–127.

²⁵ Nicholas M. Hobson et al., “The Psychology of Rituals: An Integrative Review and Process-Based Framework,” *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 22, no. 3 (2018): 261–262.

²⁶ Hadi Pajariantio, Imam Pribadi, and Puspa Sari, “Tolerance between Religions through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation,” *HTS Theologese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022): 6–7.

²⁷ Dewi Indah Ayu, “Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama Tahun 2021 Masuk Kategori Baik,” *Kementerian Agama RI*, last modified 2021, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://kemenag.go.id/nasional/indeks-kerukunan-umat-beragama-tahun-2021-masuk-kategori-baik-latuic>.





manage this potential while avoiding the pitfalls of 'majority ego,' which can resurface at any time.

The declaration of a *madani* vision in Agam Regency risks being perceived as a monolithic representation of majority ego. The government must continuously adapt not only to internal religious issues in Agam but also to national and global issues—a process closely linked to improving the moderation index.²⁸ Interfaith dialogue, as well as collaboration between religious organizations, must remain a priority. Minority resistance may sometimes be silent as they choose to “play it safe,” but it can intensify when their sense of minority is heightened by strong external ties, prompting them to identify with a broader cause and assert their identity publicly as a representative of a region.²⁹

Similarly, the establishment of ABS-SBK as a guiding philosophy for West Sumatra society, as reflected by the interview data in this study, further reinforces efforts to pass on cultural and religious values, and more broadly, Minangkabau identity, based on ABS-SBK.

The enactment of regional regulations or government policies can provide a clear direction for improving the moderation index. This represents undeniable progress in ensuring that ABS-SBK is widely accepted by society, including future generations. However, such a regulation can also be perceived as diminishing ABS-SBK's cultural authority. Why? Because when an effort to gain societal acceptance is regulated through formal mechanisms like government decrees, the subject loses its authoritative role and

becomes coercive.³⁰ Fortunately, in this study, such efforts are counterbalanced by cultural initiatives, as seen in the strengthening roles of *ninik mamak* and *bundo kanduang* in Tanah Datar and Lima Puluh Kota through *pepatah-petitih* and adat meetings, allowing ABS-SBK's philosophy to be transmitted in a more organic manner, rather than just a formal instruction from the government.³¹

In the context of religious harmony and the strengthening of Islam's identity as the majority in regions like West Sumatra, it is important to emphasize that this status should not only function as a dominant social control, but more importantly, as a driver of civilization. This approach aligns with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* principles, particularly the concept of *maqāṣid al-kullīyyah* proposed by Ibn 'Āshūr, which stresses comprehensive goals in the development of human civilization. In this regard, values such as *al-musāwāh* (equality), *al-ta'āwun* (cooperation), *al-taḍāmun* (mutual support), and *al-takāful* (mutual responsibility) can form a strong foundation for interfaith harmony. These values should not only be conveyed through formal instructions or regulations but also through cultural mechanisms that carry greater legitimacy and deeper roots. The effectiveness of this process depends on how local scholars interpret and apply these principles in everyday life.³² Since *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is primarily based on sacred texts, its practical application falls under the responsibility of scholars. As mentioned, while collaboration with the government is crucial, cultural work that prioritizes dialogue, understanding, and shared values should be

²⁸ Taufik and Taufik, “Nagari Madani: Islamic Favoritism and Religious Freedom in Regional Development in West Sumatera, Indonesia.”

²⁹ Bernd Simon, “The Self in Minority–Majority Contexts,” *European Review of Social Psychology* 9, no. 1 (January 1998): 6–10.

³⁰ David A. Lake, “Authority, Coercion, and Power in International Relations,” in *Back to Basics: State Power in a Contemporary World*, ed. Martha Finnemore

and Judith Goldstein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 57.

³¹ William Graham Sumner, *Folkways: A Study of Mores, Manners, Customs and Morals* (New York: Cosmo Classics, 2007), 4.

³² Muhammad Munir and Muhammad Tayyeb Nadeem, “Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah Between Classical and Postmodern Periods: An Advanced Islamic Juridical Context,” *MEI: Ma'ārif-e-Islāmī* 22, no. 2 (2023): 6–7.





further encouraged.³³ Such collaboration not only avoids coercive enforcement but also strengthens the legitimacy of Islam as the majority by solidifying the roles of religious, cultural leaders, and the broader community in preserving social harmony.

Muslims should exemplify peace and harmony as part of implementing *al-musāwāh* and *al-ta'āwun*. In this framework, both majority and minority groups are recognized as having equal rights and responsibilities to work together in maintaining social harmony. Respecting differences and safeguarding social harmony is part of practicing *maqāṣid principles*, which ultimately aims to achieve human welfare, as stated in the Qur'anic verses such as QS. al-Ḥujurāt: 13 and QS. al-Mā'idah: 2.³⁴ Thus, Islam's role as the majority is not solely based on ideological or structural strength but rather on collective awareness to achieve a common goal in building a civilized society rooted in universal human values. This requires continuous intergenerational efforts to ensure that this vision remains preserved and realized, especially in response to the ever-evolving dynamics of society.

Conclusion

The three regencies in West Sumatra, culturally recognized as the primary custodians of the continuity and sustainability of Minangkabau traditions due to their strong socio-historical ties with the ethnic group's origins, place great importance on preserving *Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK) as their main foundation in maintaining social harmony. In the contemporary context, fostering harmony is also an effort to enhance the religious moderation index. After collecting qualitative data, it is evident that the three regencies share

a common commitment: to further promote ABS-SBK in addressing emerging challenges. However, each regency maintains distinct characteristics based on its unique local context: Tanah Datar with its historical sites, Agam with its *madani* identity, and Lima Pulu Kota with its social diversity.

ABS-SBK, as local wisdom, offers a broad interpretation when translated into practical efforts. Islamic identity, as an integral part of Minangkabau ethnic identity within this philosophy, must be strategically managed to effectively contribute to improving the moderation index. Given the complexities of contemporary Indonesian society, approaches to both local wisdom and Islamic identity must be carefully considered. This study is limited to qualitative data exploration, and therefore requires corroboration with quantitative research for a more comprehensive analysis. Future research is expected to address this limitation and further explore the development of the religious moderation discourse, particularly its intersections with politics and public policy. These aspects are crucial, especially considering the increasing role of the state in launching and overseeing religious moderation initiatives.

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³³ Alfina Hidayah, Nadia Rizky Fauziyah, and Waskito Wibowo, "The Role of the State in Fostering Religious Harmony in Indonesia: A Historical Review, Challenges, and Policy Towards Moderation," *Academic*

Journal of Islamic Principles and Philosophy 5, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 1–36.

³⁴ Ulul Umami and Abdul Ghofur, "Human Rights in Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah Al-Āmmah: A Perspective of Ibn 'Āshūr," *Al-Ahkam* 32, no. 1 (2022): 284.





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