

MINANGKABAU LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY: Synthesizing Religion, *Adat*, and Intellectuals in the History of Islamic Political Thought

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Abstract: This article explores the Minangkabau leadership philosophy through the perspective of the history of Islamic political thought, focusing on the integration of Islamic values, customary principles, and the role of intellectuals in traditional Minangkabau society. The research problem centers on how this local leadership model rooted in concepts such as *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* and *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* reflects the evolution and localization of Islamic political concepts, particularly concerning authority, justice, and legitimacy. Using a qualitative method and a historical-analytical approach, the study draws on classical Islamic political texts and local Minangkabau sources to trace continuities and adaptations in political thought. The findings indicate that the Minangkabau leadership tradition embodies a contextualized interpretation of Islamic political ideas that has endured across generations. It suggests that this tradition, when revisited with empirical data from relevant contemporary stakeholders, can offer practical frameworks for cultivating integrity-based and sustainable leadership in modern Muslim societies. This study contributes to broadening the discourse on Islamic political thought by emphasizing indigenous contributions and the relevance of local wisdom in contemporary governance.

Keywords: Islamic thought, Al-Mawardi, politics, Minangkabau, Religion, Adat.

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Introduction

West Sumatra is one of the regions in Indonesia known as the centre of the Minangkabau cultural civilisation, a society that combines customs and religion in harmony. Minangkabau custom is rooted in the philosophy of “Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah,” which reflects the integration between local values and Islamic teachings. In this context, the philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* emerges as a key concept that represents a collective leadership system based on three main pillars: *alim ulama* (religious leaders), *ninik mamak* (traditional leaders), and *cadiak pandai* (intellectual leaders). This concept is the socio-cultural foundation that guides the Minangkabau people’s social life.¹

As part of the research, literature review is an important element to understand the philosophical roots and significance of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin*. According to Abdullah², this philosophy serves as an ethical foundation in Minangkabau society, which unites customary and Islamic values through the normative framework of “Adat Basandi Syarak”. Hamka³ asserts that this concept reflects a harmonious blend of tradition and religion that remains relevant today. In Dobbin’s⁴ analysis, the integration of adat and Islam is not only a social foundation but also contributes to cultural resistance to external change. Furthermore, al-Attas⁵ in the study of Islamic philosophy explains that the synthesis between local traditions and religious values creates an epistemic structure that strengthens collective identity. Azwar⁶ highlights how the values of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* remain relevant in the contemporary context, especially in supporting an adaptive leadership system.

The philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* is a representation of local wisdom rooted in Minangkabau culture. *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* means that three main elements support and depend on each other: *tuanku* (leader), *guru* (educator), and *wali* (community or community member). Meanwhile, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* describes the close relationship between three elements that collaborate in maintaining balance and progress, namely *nagari* (community), government, and individuals.⁷

In the context of leadership, this philosophy emphasises the importance of the role of leaders who are not only responsible for policy but must also build strong collaboration with community members and other elements. Leaders in the Minangkabau system act as regulators liaisons and mediators between various parties to achieve mutual prosperity.⁸ Leadership in Minangkabau culture does not only focus on one-way decision-making but rather on the active involvement of multiple parties to achieve consensus and outcomes that benefit all community members. This creates a more inclusive and participatory leadership system, where every element has a vital role in maintaining social harmony.⁹

The *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* philosophy also provides a foundation for building integrity in leadership. In the Minangkabau leadership system, an ideal leader can

maintain a balance between personal, community and natural interests. This reflects the values of justice, responsibility and honesty in carrying out the mandate.¹⁰ Leaders in Minangkabau society must show a good example in terms of morals and ethics, and be able to maintain cultural values that exist in the tradition.

The development of globalization and cultural acculturation on the one hand has an impact on the character of a nation's generation, therefore local wisdom, and the role of community leaders in creating a generation that can maintain good local culture is highly expected. It is feared that this will have an impact on the fading of identity as a Minangkabau character, such as *Sumbang Duo Baleh*, the fading of *Raso jo Pareso*, and the erosion of Minang traditional values. Therefore, as explained by Basri, et al.¹¹, that *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* in educating the morals of generations can be done in various forms, such as giving warnings and customary sanctions, conducting socialization in various places and activities, establishing cooperation between institutions, forming youth wired activities, holding traditional activities.

In contrast to Sitompul, et al.¹², who explained that there was no influence of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* in instilling several aspects of values, both educational and moral values. So, the revitalization of character values is very urgent for *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*. This does not mean that the value no longer exists, but the function of instilling the value has shifted to the role of parents. *Alim ulama*, *ninik mamak*, and *cadiak pandai* must always provide counselling to parents, and local governments, and finally restore the function of *surau* as a forum for religious counselling, mental development, morals and character.

In line with this, in the political field Rhydho and Eriyanti¹³ also said that the existence of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* has not been maximized, it can be seen from the fact that *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* has never been an actor in proposing a draft village regulation, there is still a lack of direct involvement of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* in monitoring the performance of the *Wali Nagari*, for example. Nevertheless, in absorbing the aspirations of the community, *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* has done quite well in utilizing the social capital they have.

This was revealed by Yunanda, and Eriyanti¹⁴ that there were also several cases where the dysfunction of the *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* customary institution in handling cases of early marriage did not run optimally due to the absence of strict sanctions, granting marriage approval, lack of social control, reward propaganda, lack of cooperation, lack of deliberation, and not optimal cultivation of values and norms. Thus, as emphasized by Shalihin¹⁵ *alim ulama*, *ninik mamak*, and *cadiak pandai* who play the role of social leaders in Minangkabau culture need efforts to improve and be adaptive, and in playing their roles, including managing conflict and prioritizing deliberation, religious leaders integrate moral and religious values into their decision-making processes, intellectual leaders rely on cognitive flexibility, and traditional leaders demonstrate

resilient decision-making by balancing emotional strength and cultural wisdom. In addition, it is important to revitalize the function of the *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* customary institution so that it can become a role model, provide attention, appeal, reorientation, maintain social unity, and motivate the younger generation.

Furthermore, Afdhal¹⁶ explained that religious, customary and intellectual leaders have a central role in Minangkabau leadership as moral guidelines and norms, but in the modern era, their role has undergone significant changes due to globalization and socio-economic dynamics. Adaptation and reinterpretation of the three elements to answer contemporary challenges, as well as the relationship between religion, adat and cendekia into modern institutions that create new dynamics. The integration of religion, custom and scholarship in modern policy-making produces a unique framework that maintains a balance between cultural heritage and developmental demands. This allows all three elements to remain relevant in Minangkabau leadership despite the transformation, reflecting the complex interaction between tradition and changing times.

The concept of *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* emphasizes the importance of strong relationships between leaders, communities and government in achieving common goals. In the Minangkabau leadership system, leaders are expected to be able to establish effective communication with the community and government to formulate policies by local values and community needs. By making these three elements an integral part of the decision-making process, a balance between progress and preservation of cultural values is expected.¹⁷ The involvement of the community in the leadership process is very important in the Minangkabau system, as they act as guardians of tradition and implementers of the values taught by the leader. The same goes for the government, which functions as an organizer that ensures policies and programs run well by community expectations.¹⁸

The *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* philosophy also teaches the importance of creativity and innovation in leadership. In Minangkabau culture, leadership is not only seen from the traditional aspect but also must be able to adapt to the times and new challenges. Leaders are expected to integrate local wisdom with new ideas that can bring society to progress without losing cultural identity.¹⁹ For example, the application of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* values in modern leadership can be seen in the Minangkabau local government's efforts to advance the education and tourism sectors while maintaining traditional values.²⁰ This shows that effective leadership in Minangkabau can balance local wisdom and global development to create a more prosperous and harmonious society.

The philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* provides a strong foundation for creating an inclusive, fair and integrity leadership system in Minangkabau society. Collaboration between leaders, communities and government is key to maintaining balance and achieving sustainable progress. The application of this philosophy in the context of leadership teaches the importance of cooperation, effective

communication, and leaders who can combine local wisdom with innovation to face the challenges of the times. In this case, Minangkabau leadership focuses not only on decision-making but also on the active involvement of all parties in creating social welfare and harmony.

However, it is important to examine how the philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* not only acts as a social organizing tool but also reflects the deep principles of Islamic political philosophy. In Islamic political philosophy, al-Mawardi emphasized the importance of integration between religion, morality and community governance in creating social harmony.²¹ This philosophy accommodates these principles through the integration of *alim ulama* (religious leaders), *ninik mamak* (customary leaders) and *cadiak pandai* (intellectual leaders).

This philosophy also reflects al-Mawardi's view of the importance of synergy between religious and government institutions in building a just society.²² In this perspective, the role of *alim ulama* serves as moral and religious guardians, *ninik mamak* emphasizes the importance of customary leadership as guardians of local traditions and values, while *cadiak pandai* are tasked with applying rational wisdom in decision-making. These three elements reflect the ideal structure according to Islamic political philosophy, which demands a balance between moral, traditional and intellectual leadership. Thus, this philosophy is not only relevant in the context of the Minangkabau tradition but also a model that is in line with the views of Islamic political philosophy in building fair and harmonious community governance.

This research aims to examine the philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* in the framework of Islamic political philosophy, focusing on aspects of integration of religion, custom, and scholarship. This is relevant given the challenges of modernization and globalization that can threaten the harmony between local traditions and Islamic values. In an increasingly complex society, the sustainability of the philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* as a value system and social practice requires deep reflection to ensure its relevance.

Thus, this introduction not only provides an overview of the context and purpose of the research but also explains its relevance and contribution to the discourse of Islamic political philosophy and cultural studies. The philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin*, which represents a synthesis between custom and Islam, has the potential to become an adaptive and sustainable leadership model in facing the challenges of the times. This study is also expected to enrich the understanding of how local values can contribute to the development of holistic and contextual Islamic thought.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research methodology with a library research (literature study) approach, designed to explore and interpret the philosophical and

cultural foundations of the Minangkabau leadership system. The qualitative method is chosen due to its suitability for unpacking meanings, values, and symbolic systems embedded in cultural and philosophical discourses, particularly in the context of Islamic political thought. The research process involves an in-depth review and critical analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include classical texts and manuscripts related to Minangkabau custom, Islamic political thought, and the role of religious and intellectual authority in society. Secondary sources consist of academic journal articles, books, ethnographic studies, and historical analyses that discuss the interrelation between Islam, Minangkabau culture, and leadership traditions. In addition, the study draws upon interviews, speeches, and statements from contemporary Minangkabau figures such as *ninik mamak*, *alim ulama*, and *cadiak pandai* as documented in community forums, scholarly dialogues, or public records. These data provide empirical support for understanding the contemporary relevance of the traditional leadership triad symbolized by *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin*.

The analytical process combines descriptive analysis, which outlines the key elements of the leadership philosophy, with hermeneutical interpretation, which seeks to uncover the underlying meanings and values from an Islamic political thought perspective. The study also uses a comparative approach to analyze how traditional Minangkabau leadership concepts align with or diverge from broader Islamic political thought traditions, particularly in terms of authority, justice, and social contract. By integrating these methodological tools, this research aims to provide a nuanced and systematic understanding of how the Minangkabau model can contribute conceptually and practically to the development of integrity-based and culturally rooted leadership paradigms in contemporary Muslim societies.²³

Results and Discussion

Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin: The Embryo of Minangkabau Leadership Philosophy

The philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* is a Minangkabau cultural heritage that has long historical roots. This concept was born from the community's need to create harmony in their social structure. In Minangkabau society, this philosophy refers to three main elements of leadership: *alim ulama* (religious leaders), *ninik mamak* (traditional leaders), and *cadiak pandai* (intellectual leaders).²⁴ *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, which consists of these three elements, functions as a “furnace” that supports social life, which is likened to a cooking stove that needs three legs to remain stable. Meanwhile, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* is likened to three threads of rope tied together, making it strong.²⁵

Historically, this philosophy began to form along with the Islamization process in West Sumatra in the 14th to 15th centuries. Islamization carried out by scholars came peacefully and integrated with local customary values. The principle of “Adat Basandi

Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah” then became the main foundation that unites Minangkabau customs with Islamic teachings.²⁶ In *Tambo Minangkabau*, which is an oral history record, it is explained that this concept is closely related to the unification between custom and religion in creating a harmonious social order.²⁷

During the Dutch colonial period, this concept became a symbol of resistance to colonial domination, emphasizing the importance of unity between religion, custom and scholarship. The philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* is also recorded in the *Tambo*, which tells the story of the role of *alim ulama*, *ninik mamak*, and *cadiak pandai* in maintaining the honour and sovereignty of Minangkabau society.²⁸ As a matter of fact a very similar leadership structure is also to be found in the adjoining region of the Mandailing that accepted Islam through Minangkabau.²⁹ Post-independence Indonesia, this philosophy remains relevant as a basis for building local leadership structures based on customary and religious values in Minangkabau.³⁰

Although until now many people call the term “Tungku Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Tigo Sapilin” as “Cupak Buatan” (new artificial), in fact, the term that was first recognized and its existence was “Urang Ampek Jinih” (four types of people). In this “Urang Ampek Jinih” institution there are elements of *alim ulama* and *cadiak pandai*. The *alim ulama* in “Urang Ampek Jinih” is called “malin”, while the *cadiak pandai* is *manti*. However, the term “Tungku Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Tigo Sapilin” is not something foreign to the Minangkabau people. Regardless of the notion that it is an “artificial term”, it is clear that this phrase is as popular as the phrase “Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah” (ABS-SBK).³¹

Especially since the beginning of the *Orde Baru*, the term “Tungku Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Tigo Sapilin” was seen as an entry point for the government to sit together with the indigenous people, reaching an understanding. This is also considered to be one of the reasons for the establishment of LKAAM (Lembaga Kerapatan Adat Alam Minangkabau), as well as KAN (Kerapatan Adat Nagari) in each *nagari*. These two institutions have a relationship with the government, which is considered to represent the *cadiak pandai* element. This article is not meant to contrast the two concepts. What is clear, when talking about “Urang Ampek Jinih”, it refers to the context of the scope of the people or tribe. Meanwhile, when discussing “Tungku Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Tigo Sapilin”, the discussion is at a higher level, namely “nagari” and “luhak”.³²

That is not the only polemic. The debate over the terms “Tungku Tigo” or “Tigo Tungku” is often discussed. Which is correct? “Tungku Tigo”, or “Tigo Tungku”? “Tali Tigo”, or “Tigo Tali”? If “Tungku Tigo Sajarangan”, means that there are three stones arranged into a furnace. More precisely, it is called “Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan”. On top of it can be placed a pot (*periuk*), cauldron (*kuali*), or *belanga*. If only two stones become a furnace (*tungku*), it is certainly not balanced to support the pot on it. Moreover, if there is only one stone, it clearly cannot be called a furnace, because there is no gap to

put firewood. The phrase “Tungku Tigo Sajarangan” emphasizes the subject meaning of “furnace”, not “tigo”. Therefore, if it is called “Tigo Tungku Sajarangan”, the meaning becomes different, as if there are nine stones (three stoves with nine stones). While “Tali Tigo Sapilin” is a fitting expression. It is more appropriate if it is called “Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin”. The emphasis is on “tali” as the subject. In more depth, what is the meaning of “Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan” and “Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin”.³³

First, the ideal “Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan” means that there is the unity of the three elements: *alim ulama*, *ninik mamak*, and *cadiak pandai*. With that, the pot, cauldron, or *belanga* (which symbolizes society) can stand firmly on it. Everything cooked on it will be perfectly cooked. The pot, cauldron and *belanga* symbolize the *anak kemenakan*, and the community.³⁴ If the *alim ulama*, *ninik mamak*, and *cadiak pandai* carry out their respective duties, then the community will be organized and well-directed.

Secondly, what if the stoves or ropes are cracked, out of line, or even in conflict with each other? If one stove or rope is bigger than the other, perhaps because it feels more powerful, then the position of the *belanga* will be disturbed. Thirdly, there must be some distance between the stoves. Likewise, when twisting a rope, there is always space in between. This means that a stove or a rope can’t be a single unit without gaps. What happens if three stove stones are arranged too tightly? Of course, there will be no room for firewood. It would be useless for a *belanga* to stand on top if there is no fire to cook the coconut milk inside. These are the three philosophical challenges of the stove and rope concept.³⁵ So, from the above philosophical historicity, it can be understood that *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* cannot be separated, and it becomes a complete unity (triad).

Furthermore, the philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* is not only a guide in the leadership structure but also in the daily life of the Minangkabau people. The values contained therein, such as deliberation, justice, and togetherness, become guidelines for resolving conflicts and making decisions. This makes *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* a philosophy that is not only normative but also functional in building social harmony.³⁶ In *Tambo Minangkabau*, it is emphasized that this system maintains a balance between religious, customary and intellectual elements as the main pillars of community life.

In the modern context, this philosophy faces challenges from globalization and rapid social change. However, the principles contained in *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* remain relevant, especially in maintaining cultural identity and local values. Efforts to revitalize this concept are important so that it can continue to adapt to changing times without losing its basic essence.³⁷ This philosophy is not only relevant in the past, but continues to be an important guide in strengthening Minangkabau society in the contemporary era.

Minangkabau is not only known for its matrilineal lineage or *nagari* system of government but also for its unique leadership concept. In the context of leadership in the kingdom of Pagaruyung, the concept of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* is the main framework. This concept includes three elements of leadership, namely: *First*, the leadership of the *ninik mamak*; *Second*, the leadership of the *alim ulama*; and the leadership of the *cadiak pandai*. These three elements emerge from the historical dynamics of Minangkabau society and have different roles in the customary social structure.³⁸

The leadership of *ninik mamak* is traditional and follows existing customary patterns, inherited in the family, tribe and *nagari* lineage. The principle of sustainability is known as “broken and lost,” where a person can only become a *ninik mamak* if they have a family title inherited from their clan. In contrast, the leadership of *alim ulama* and *cerdik pandai* is not tied to origin or descent. They are more inclusive, in that their charisma and influence can extend beyond the boundaries of the indigenous community or *nagari*. These three forms of leadership, known as *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin*, complement and strengthen each other. This philosophy symbolizes harmony and plays an important role in shaping the development of Minangkabau society.³⁹ In Minangkabau custom, the concept of *Tungku Tigo Sajarangan* is also reflected in the expression:

***Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, symbolises the unity of leadership.**

Nan Tinggi Tampak Jauh, Tabarumbun Tampak Hampia, describes a well-organized and interconnected leadership.⁴⁰ The basic meaning of the expression is the importance of unity in a solid and rule-based leadership system. Although there is stratification among these three elements, their roles often merge in certain individuals who can perform more than one function at once, such as a *ninik mamak* who is also a clever scholar and *alim ulama*. Now that the *ninik mamak* who is also a clever person, as well as an *alim ulama*, has resolved the problem, the various elements in the community must be able to see it as a whole. “*jarangan*” basically stands alone, is not mixed up and has its area or field of power, but the three are interrelated.⁴¹

This concept is also analogous to the function of a traditional stove, which consists of three stones or iron in the shape of an equilateral triangle, supporting a container for cooking. This philosophy is reinforced in the traditional rhyme:

Basilang kayu dalam tungku, di sana api mangko hiduik.

This means that through these three supports, the resulting fire becomes stable and strong.⁴² This symbol illustrates the democratic nature of Minangkabau society, where differences of opinion are analogous to crossed firewood in a furnace. Discussions and deliberations result in decisions that benefit the community, just like the food cooked in the pot as a result of the process.⁴³

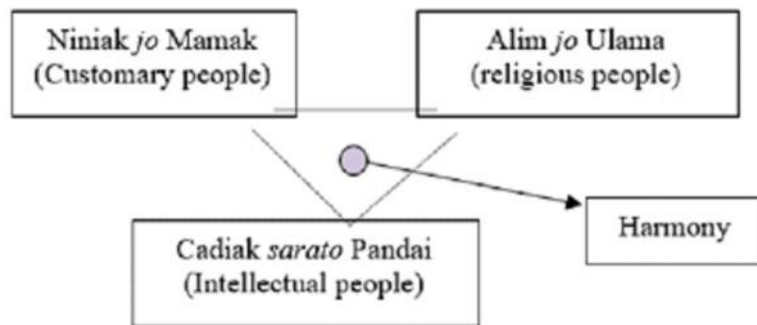


Figure 1. Leadership concept of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin*.

The Philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* in the Perspective of Islamic Political Thought

The Minangkabau leadership philosophy, embodied in the concept of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin*, emphasises the integration between the three main pillars of society, namely religion, custom, and scholarship.⁴⁴ These three elements complement each other and form the foundation of a harmonious social order. This philosophy illustrates a close relationship between traditional structures and religious and intellectual thought in exercising leadership. From the perspective of al-Mawardi's Islamic political thought, there are parallels between the principles put forward by al-Mawardi on leadership, justice and community involvement in decision-making with this Minangkabau philosophy.

Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan describes the three main pillars of leadership that must go hand in hand, namely religion, custom and scholarship. Each of these pillars plays an important role in creating balance in decision-making in Minangkabau society. Religion as a moral and spiritual foundation guide in carrying out obligations as a fair and responsible leader. This is in line with the principle of *Tawhid* in Islamic political philosophy, which states that all power comes from Allah and must be exercised fairly, by religious guidance.⁴⁵ Religion, especially Islam in Minangkabau, acts as a moral guide that cannot be separated from the practice of fair and wise leadership.⁴⁶

Custom in this context functions as a tradition recognised by the community, providing social guidelines in daily life. In al-Mawardi's Islamic political philosophy, the principle of *syura* or deliberation reflects the importance of community participation in decision-making. This is similar to the implementation of Minangkabau custom, which requires important decisions to be taken through deliberation or consensus. Custom in Minangkabau society has a very strong value in influencing political and social decisions and is often considered in the policy-making process to achieve social harmony.⁴⁷ The principle of custom not only shapes the norms and habits of society but also becomes a

medium for leaders to embrace diversity in society. This is in line with al-Mawardi's view of *maslahah 'ammah* (public interest) which is the main objective of Islamic leadership.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, scholarship is a pillar that brings wisdom and rationality to leadership. An intellectual leader not only has religious knowledge but also a broad insight into the social and political issues faced by society. This concept is in line with al-Mawardi's thoughts on the importance of *amanah* (responsibility) owned by a wise leader in carrying out his duties for the benefit of the people. In the Minangkabau perspective, leadership should be based on extensive knowledge and wisdom, not just on power or social status.⁴⁹

Furthermore, the concept of *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* describes the close and interrelated relationship between religion, custom and scholarship. This rope indicates that these three elements must function simultaneously and mutually reinforce each other to create a just and harmonious society. In this regard, there are similarities with the public good in al-Mawardi's Islamic political thought, which emphasises the importance of policies that prioritise the welfare of society as a whole. Leadership based on religion, custom and scholarship is expected to maintain social stability and avoid abuse of power. Harmony between these three elements is key to maintaining social and political balance in Minangkabau society.⁵⁰

In al-Mawardi's perspective, leadership must prioritise the principles of justice and trustworthiness. A just leader should be able to carry out their obligations with full responsibility, prioritise the welfare and benefit of the people, and listen to the voice of the people through deliberation or consultation (*syura*).⁵¹ These principles are very relevant to the Minangkabau philosophy that emphasises the importance of consensus in every decision taken for the common good. As explained by al-Mawardi, a just leader is a leader who prioritises deliberation and joint decisions. In addition, al-Mawardi placed a balance between morality, law, and rationality as the main principle of leadership.⁵²

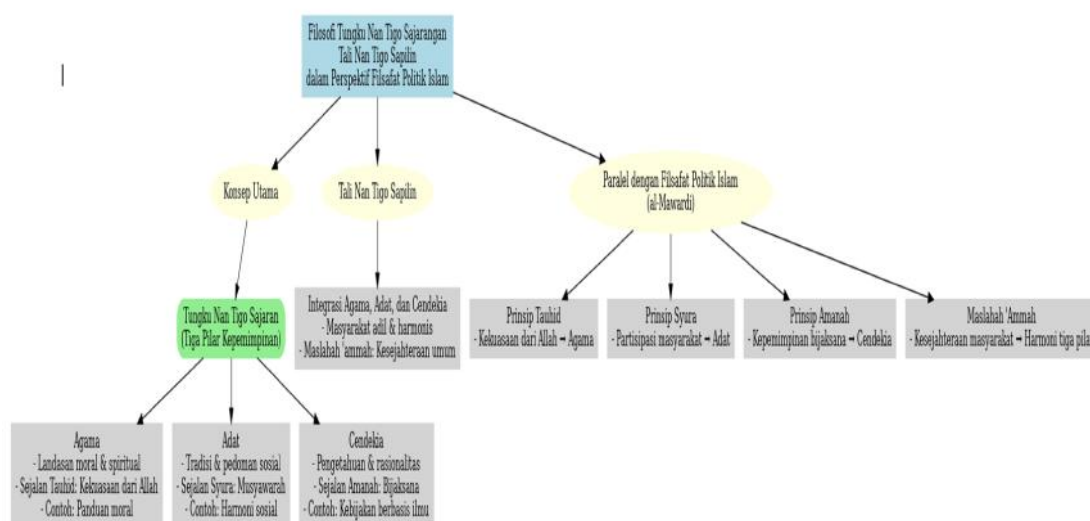


Figure 2. The Philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* in the Perspective of al-Mawardi's Islamic Political Thought.

The Philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* as a Manifestation of Integration of Religion, Custom, and Scholarship

The philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* in Minangkabau reflects the synergy between religion, custom, and scholarship. As a cultural foundation, this concept functions not only as a social structure but also as a reflection of deep integrative values. In it, there is harmony between the teachings of Islam as the main guideline, the customs that have been passed down from generation to generation, and the intellect that is responsive to the challenges of the times. This integration allows Minangkabau society to maintain its identity while remaining adaptive to the dynamics of modernity.⁵³ This philosophy emphasises the importance of synergy between traditional and modern elements in the context of changing times.⁵⁴

Custom (Adat) as the Basis of Cultural Identity

Minangkabau customs, known for their rich values of togetherness, deliberation, and cooperation, serve as the foundation of cultural identity and are embodied in the structure of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* through the role of *ninik mamak*, traditional leaders who maintain social norms. The principle of “Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah” illustrates how custom (adat) is deeply integrated with Islamic values, making custom not separate from religion but a practical expression of religious teachings. This integration is evident in practices such as deliberation in decision-making, reflecting the Islamic principle of *syura* (consensus). Supporting this, Althafullayya and Akbar (2023) analyze the “Batagak Penghulu” ceremony, highlighting how Islamic values of deliberation and consensus play a central role in leadership selection, reinforcing the synergy between custom and faith in Minangkabau society.⁵⁵

Religion as the Primary Guideline

Religion, particularly Islam, is the spiritual and normative foundation of the *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* philosophy. *Alim ulama* plays an important role in maintaining and teaching Islamic values to the community. They ensure that religious teachings are not only understood ritualistically but also applied in daily life.⁵⁶ The integration of religion, customs and culture allows Minangkabau people to live a life in harmony with Islamic principles without compromising their cultural identity. For example, the implementation of a traditional Minangkabau wedding combined with an Islamic procession shows how these two elements go hand in hand. The role of the *alim ulama* in providing spiritual advice and guidance is also evidence that religion is a key pillar in this structure.⁵⁷

Leadership Based on Intellectuality

Leadership in *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* is represented by *cadiak pandai*, the scholars tasked with leading the community towards progress. They play a strategic role in integrating customary and religious values into policies that are relevant to the needs of modern society. The role of *cadiak pandai* is crucial in facing the challenges of globalisation and modernisation.⁵⁸ As agents of change, they need to take a logical, dialectical and dialogical approach to solving social, economic and political problems.⁵⁹ This is in line with Islamic values that emphasise the importance of science and *ijtihad* (intellectual effort) in dealing with the dynamics of life.

The Synergy between Religion, Custom and Scholarship

Asniah explores the peaceful acculturation between Minangkabau customs and Islamic teachings since the 8th century, highlighting how traditional values have been harmoniously integrated with Islamic principles.⁶⁰ This integration forms the foundation of the philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* and *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin*, which emphasizes the synergy between religion, custom, and scholarship in creating a harmonious and stable society. In this philosophy, custom provides the cultural framework, religion offers the moral and spiritual foundation, and intellectual leadership brings vision and innovation. Together, these elements complement each other to help Minangkabau society maintain its identity and adapt to changing times. For instance, in resolving conflicts, *alim ulama*, *ninik mamak*, and *cadiak pandai* collaborate through deliberation to find fair and wise solutions.

Integrates of Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin in the Contemporary Era

In the contemporary context, the Minangkabau leadership philosophy embodied in *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan*, *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* continues to be a living tradition that integrates Islamic values, customary principles, and intellectual roles in maintaining social cohesion and shaping moral leadership. Empirical insights from key stakeholders across West Sumatra demonstrate how this traditional triad remains not only symbolically important but also functionally active in navigating modern challenges.

From the religious dimension, *alim ulama* play an essential role in making Islamic teachings accessible and relevant to the younger generation. For instance, Ustadz Yunus, a respected cleric in Bukittinggi, emphasized the need to contextualize Islamic values through local wisdom. According to him, "We cannot merely teach Islam textually. Today's Minangkabau youth are more critical. We must show that cultural values such as deliberation, shame, and mutual help are also living parts of Islam."⁶¹ His statement reflects a broader effort by religious leaders to align universal Islamic ethics with deeply rooted Minangkabau values, reinforcing religious identity without alienating the cultural one.

Meanwhile, *ninik mamak* the customary leaders which is continue to uphold and adapt adat traditions in response to contemporary societal developments. Datuk Marajo, a *ninik mamak* from Tanah Datar, noted that “Custom should not be seen as outdated. In our village, we still resolve social issues through consensus. Even regarding the internet, we set collective rules. This is *adat* adapting to the times.”⁶² His remarks underscore the continued relevance of collective decision-making and moral guardianship in the face of digital disruption and cultural shifts.

The *cadiak pandai*, or intellectuals, also play a transformative role, especially in education. Safitri, a curriculum developer in Padang, described how local values are systematically infused into formal education. “The local curriculum we’re developing in West Sumatran schools includes Minang values like ‘reclaiming what’s been left’ and ‘reviving what’s been submerged’ to build students’ character and cultural pride.”⁶³ Her effort demonstrates how intellectual leadership ensures that the younger generation is not only academically competent but also grounded in cultural and ethical consciousness.

These individual testimonies were further echoed in a community forum held in Nagari Lintau Utara, where leaders from all three components namely *alim ulama*, *ninik mamak*, and *cadiak pandai* is collaborated on initiatives related to village development, youth morality, and economic empowerment. This active collaboration is a clear demonstration of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajaringan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* not merely as a cultural symbol,⁶⁴ but as a structural and participatory model of ethical and sustainable leadership.⁶⁵ Thus, the Minangkabau leadership philosophy remains a vital framework for maintaining identity, promoting social harmony, and cultivating leaders who are just, wise, and rooted in both local wisdom and universal values.

Opportunities and Challenges in the Contemporary Era the Philosophy of Tungku Nan Tigo Sajaringan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin

Opportunities

Community Empowerment through Active Participation

In the contemporary era, the philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajaringan, Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* provides great opportunities for community empowerment through active participation in decision-making.⁶⁶ The advent of information and communication technology paves the way for more communities to engage in discussions and leadership processes. By utilising social media and other digital platforms, communities can provide input, express aspirations, and engage in a more inclusive development process. This is highly relevant to the *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* principle, which emphasises the harmonious relationship between communities, leaders and government in maintaining sustainable development.⁶⁷

Collaboration between Tradition and Innovation

The philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* offers a valuable framework for integrating local wisdom with modern innovation, enabling leaders who understand Minangkabau cultural values to develop policies that remain relevant in contemporary times without abandoning tradition. This approach is particularly evident in sectors such as education and the creative economy, where applying local values fosters creativity, strengthens cultural identity, and enhances competitiveness in the global market. Innovation grounded in *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* principles facilitates the creation of new solutions tailored to the needs of the Minangkabau people. Supporting this, Ilham and Afdal⁶⁸ emphasize the importance of internalizing Minangkabau cultural values within educational institutions to preserve local wisdom and promote multicultural understanding, while Febriani et al.⁶⁹ demonstrate how *surau*-based education centers are transforming to meet the demands of 21st-century learning without losing their traditional religious foundations.

Participatory Leadership Development

One of the great opportunities that can be taken from the *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* philosophy is the development of more participatory and democratic leadership. This philosophy provides space for each party leader, community, and institution to collaborate more fairly and equally.⁷⁰ The contemporary era, with all its social dynamics, demands leadership that is able to embrace various groups and unite visions and missions to achieve common goals. Leadership that is able to integrate all elements of society in the decision-making process will be the key to successful development.⁷¹

Challenges

Social Change and Globalisation

One of the biggest challenges faced by the *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* philosophy in the contemporary era is the impact of globalisation that accelerates social and cultural change. In the Minangkabau context, technological advances and globalisation often lead to the disruption of long-established traditional values.⁷² Some may feel that this philosophy is no longer relevant to the times, and assume that more modern or centralised leadership is more efficient. This can lead to shifts in long-established social structures, where relationships between leaders, teachers and communities may begin to weaken.⁷³

The Complexity of Economic and Social Challenges

The contemporary era also presents more complex economic and social challenges. Social inequality, poverty and dependence on technology may threaten the sustainability of the *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* philosophy that relies on collaboration between different elements of society. Leaders who adhere to this principle may face difficulties in maintaining equality and balance in relationships between elements, especially amidst

increasing economic pressures. In this case, smart adaptation is needed so that local values are maintained despite the structural changes that occur.⁷⁴

The Role of Technological and Information Advances in the Leadership Process

Another significant challenge is how advances in technology and information can affect the relationship between leaders and communities. In the *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* philosophy, the close relationship between leaders, represented by *alim ulama*, *ninik mamak*, and *cadiak pandai*, and teachers, including information media, creates an inclusive public space for direct communication and personal interaction. However, in the digital era, these interactions can be distorted by the dominance of virtual communication which often reduces the emotional closeness and deep understanding between the parties involved. Therefore, leaders who want to maintain the values of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* need to ensure that technology is used as a tool to strengthen communication and community participation, rather than undermine them.⁷⁵

Facing Polarisation in Society

The increasingly sharp social polarisation in modern society is also a major challenge in applying this philosophy. In the contemporary era, society is often divided based on various factors, such as politics, economics, and culture. The *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* philosophy requires cooperation and unity between the various elements of society. Therefore, leaders must be able to overcome these differences and create space for constructive dialogue and collaboration. This requires wise leadership and mediation skills to maintain harmonious relationships.⁷⁶

Conclusion

This research set out to examine how the philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajarangan* and *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* integrates religion, custom, and scholarship in Minangkabau leadership and how this integration shapes just and sustainable governance. The findings confirm the hypothesis that the synergy of these three pillars provides a foundational framework for leadership that balances traditional values with universal moral principles, as reflected in al-Mawardi's Islamic political thought. Specifically, the study answers the research questions by demonstrating that Minangkabau leadership rooted in this philosophy successfully harmonizes social cohesion, religious ethics, and intellectual guidance, fostering inclusive decision-making and community well-being.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the discourse on Islamic political thought by highlighting a localized model of leadership that goes beyond conventional state-centered frameworks, emphasizing the dynamic interplay of custom (*adat*), Islamic values, and scholarly authority. This expands the understanding of how Islamic leadership philosophies can adapt and remain relevant within diverse cultural contexts.

Practically, the findings provide a valuable foundation for policymakers and community leaders seeking to strengthen governance based on local wisdom and integrity. The demonstrated role of *alim ulama*, *ninik mamak*, and *cadiak pandai* in decision-making and resource management illustrates how these traditional institutions can be incorporated into contemporary governance to promote sustainability, justice, and social harmony. Moreover, in the face of globalization and modernization pressures, this philosophy offers a blueprint for balancing innovation with preservation of cultural identity, ensuring that leadership remains both adaptive and rooted in community values.

Ultimately, the philosophy of *Tungku Nan Tigo Sajaringan* and *Tali Nan Tigo Sapilin* holds significant potential for fostering inclusive, participatory leadership that addresses the complexities of modern society while maintaining the rich heritage of the Minangkabau people. Future leadership in Minangkabau should continue to cultivate collaboration between tradition and innovation to achieve sustainable progress and social justice.

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