

# Reimagining the Intersection of Minangkabau Custom and Islam in Film *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck (2013)*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the representation of the Malay muslim world in the Indonesian film *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck (2013)* by using cinematic analysis and a narratological approach. The film intricately explores the interrelationships between Malay culture, focuses on Minangkabau customs and religion while highlighting the significant impacts of strict adherence to these customs within the Malay traditional settings on the love stories of the central characters, Zainuddin and Hayati. In this scholarly exposition, contention revolves around the assertion that the convergence of Malay traditional customs and Islam plays a crucial role and serves as a central premise for overcoming the conflicts and challenges encountered by the central characters in the narrative. Set in the Dutch East Indies during the early 20th century, the film follows the journeys of Zainuddin and Hayati as they navigate the complexities of cultural norms, religious beliefs, and societal expectations. Through textual analysis that emphasises cinematic techniques and a narratological approach, this exploration fosters valuable insights into the dynamics within the specific Malay Muslim community, enriching our comprehension of specific cultural identity and societal complexities. Besides serving as an entertainment outlet, the film unveils dramatic

conflicts and social, and religious themes that propagate an insightful representation of the Malay muslim world. It also allows us to explore how cinema shapes and reflects specific cultural representations of the Malay world.

**Keywords:** *Malays, Minangkabau adat, Islam, Film, Narratology*

## INTRODUCTION

This study discusses the treatment of cinematic reading on the representation of the Malay Muslim world in the Indonesian film *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck* (2013) by using cinematic analysis and a narratological approach. The attention predominantly examines the intricate interplay between Malay culture, Minangkabau customs (*adat*), and religion. *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck* (TKVDW) was considered a champion through its narrative and cinematic representation. It illuminates how the unwavering adherence to these customs within traditional Malay Minangkabau settings significantly shapes the romantic narratives of the main protagonist, Zainuddin and his lover Hayati.

In the Southeast Asian film scene, Indonesian cinema has consistently strived to represent diverse ethnic groups since its inception, spanning various genres from horror to romance. One noteworthy exemplification of ethnic representation in Indonesian cinema is the portrayal of Minangkabau's local culture and tradition. Among the earliest Indonesian films to depict Minangkabau culture were *Sitti Noerbaja* (1941), *Harimau Tjampa* (1953), *Malin Kundang* (1971), *Anak Durhaka* (1971), *Salah Asuhan* (1972), and *7 Manusia Harimau* (1986). Subsequently, films such as *Merantau* (2009) (Herry Nur Hidayat et al., 2021), *Di Bawah Lindungan Kaabah* (2011), *Onde Mande* (2013), *Tabula Rasa's* (2014), *Palasik* (2015), *Me vs Mame* (2016), *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijck* (2013), *Surau Silek* (2017), *Liam dan Laila* (2018), *Buya Hamka Vol. 1* (2023), among others, have emerged as cinematic celebrations of the Minangkabau culture.

The three films, *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck*, *Liam dan Laila*, and *Di Bawah Lindungan Kaabah*, depict common themes that revolve around the struggle and hardship encountered by couples who are deeply in love. In this instance, Minangkabau *adat* (Minangkabau customs) and Islam appear as obstacles that distance the couples. TKVDW is a 2013 Indonesian romantic drama, an adapted film that explores the complex intersections between religion, *adat*, and Malay Minangkabau culture. TKVDW is directed by Sunil Soraya and adapted from the novel TKVDW by Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah Muhammad, popularly known as Hamka. The film garnered significant attention upon its release for its portrayal of the cultural intricacies of Minangkabau society and its cinematically striking representation of the Indonesian landscape, in particular the Minangkabau world. The movie has also gained acclaim for its profound emotional portrayal and examination of the conflicts between individual aspirations and societal norms, offering a stimulating and emotionally impactful cinematic journey that subsequently offers an alternative perspective in film studies.

Set in the 1930s, the story depicts the tragic love story between Zainuddin, a man from Makassar, and Hayati, a woman from a wealthy Minangkabau family. Hayati, played by Pevita Pearce, falls deeply in love with Zainuddin, portrayed by Herjunot Ali. Their love story begins when Zainuddin, the main character, decides to learn more about Islam in his father's hometown, Batipuh, Padang, West Sumatra Indonesia. In the film, Padang Panjang is believed to be the first place where Islamization took place. The

land of Padang Panjang serves as a site where Islam intersects with the firm believers of Minangkabau customs. But as the story progresses, the film exposes that Zainuddin has to grapple with his faith and societal pressures when he falls in love with Hayati who is idolised as a *Bapituh* flower by the villagers. The social class differences, family expectations and Minangkabau custom have complicated the couple's romantic journey.

Evidently, within Hamka's novel lies not only a captivating story but also endless possibilities for the reader's imagination. On that note, novels, whether they take on poetic, dramatic, or fictional forms, serve as written communication tools. They consistently convey diverse aspects of human experiences while employing various narrative techniques (Burgess, 2023). With their adept use of language and style, novels do more than simply spark the reader's imagination; they possess the potential to illuminate the intricate complexities of love stories involving the central characters. Nevertheless, the medium of film presents an alternate perspective, achievable through its narration, the deployment of symbolism and semiotics, and the incorporation of cinematic language into the visual realm. Through its vivid visual portrayal, the cinematic adaptation of TKVDW offers the spectator the chance to delve deeper into the realm of cinematic elements. This encompasses visuals, dialogue, and the beauty of filmmaking. It enables us to gain a richer understanding of specific cultures and immerses us in the world of Minangkabau during the 1930s.

Therefore, by employing textual analysis through a cinematic lens, this paper aims to explore how the Malay Minangkabau traditional adat and Islamic principles collectively converged as a central premise in addressing and surmounting the conflicts and challenges faced by the central characters in the story. It becomes evident that these conflicts and challenges are stylistically depicted and seamlessly woven into the film's narration. The narration derives from the interaction of the style and the *syuzhet* (plot), how do these concepts become crucial cues to the audience's construction of the *fabula* (story)? How is the film put together as a whole? What are the primary techniques used? What patterns emerged from the techniques employed? What functions do the techniques and patterns fulfil?

In doing so, this paper emphasises the capability of cinematic analysis to encapsulate a multifaceted narratological dimension within the framework of Bordwell's theory of narration. Specifically, it harnesses stylistic choices such as colour, lighting, mise-en-scène and dialogues as powerful means to vividly illustrate the intricate issues of Malay culture, Minangkabau *adat*, and religious principles in the *syuzhet*. Additionally, this analytical approach highlights how stringent adherence to cultural norms in traditional Malay settings greatly complicates the love stories of the central characters, and in the end, raptures their hopes of being united hence deepening the audience's emotional engagement to the *fabula*.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, we focus on two pivotal domains within the pertinent field of study. The first section establishes a contextual backdrop concerning the intersection of Indonesian Minangkabau *adat* and Islamic customs, with a particular emphasis on elements depicted in the film. Subsequently, we present substantial research that resonates with earlier investigations. This dual focus not only validates our current study but also situates it within the broader context of academic discourse.

## **Indonesian Adat Minangkabau and Its Islamic Practices**

In the article of Fitriani Uni Ipit (n.d), from an epistemological perspective, the word “Minangkabau” has its origins in the Sanskrit word "tambo" or "tambay," which has been passed down through the oral traditions of the Minangkabau people. In this context, "tambo" can be translated as "to begin" or *bermula*. "*Tambo Minangkabau*" refers to the chronicles of legendary stories of this ethnic group, which were originally written in the Malay language. The word "Minangkabau" itself is a combination of two words: "Minang" and "Kabau." According to the *Tambo Minangkabau*, during ancient times, the Majapahit Empire sought to conquer the territories of the Minang community. In order to avoid being conquered, the Minang community proposed a solution to the Majapahit: a bullfight. In this bullfight, the Majapahit lost, and the Minang people emerged as the victors. As a result of this victory, the Minang people decided to call themselves "*manang kabau*" which can be translated as "the winners of the bullfight" or "those who conquered the bull." This historical event and the name "*manang kabau*" eventually evolved into "*Minangkabau*."

The Minangkabau culture possesses a wealth of distinct characteristics, primarily stemming from its matrilineal system, kinship practices, incorporation of Islamic principles, observance of traditions such as *merantau* (migration), and a strong focus on achieving consensus through *musyawarah* indecision-making. *Merantau*, a key aspect of Minangkabau culture, serves various purposes, including the pursuit of wealth or sustenance, the quest for knowledge through ongoing education, and the acquisition of valuable life experiences. (Ikhwanuddin Nasution et. al., 2023). These cultural components have not only moulded their society but also remain integral to the Minangkabau identity and their way of life. The Minangkabau society follows a matrilineal system, which means that property and possessions are inherited through the mother's lineage. In this system, men typically take on roles related to religion and politics while women have control over family assets. *Sistem Kekerabatan* (Kinship System) refers to the practice of members of the same ethnic groups or clan (*suku*) living together in a communal house called *rumah gadang*. In this setup, male family members from the mother's side called *mamak* holds significant influence and responsibilities within the household. Even though men may hold important positions, particularly among the elders, they are still considered part of the mother's lineage. *Kapalo Paruik* or *Penghulu Andiko* are among the most senior males in the family, their role is to protect and manage family affairs (Ahmad Hakam, 2021; Farel Asyrofil et al., 2023).

As further postulated by Dewi Paramyta (2021), the Minangkabau community strongly upholds customary ceremonies, in accordance with the *petitah* known as *Adat Basandi Syara, Syara' Basandi Kitabullah*. This customary code of law, passed down by Minangkabau ancestors and rooted in the teachings of Sharia, holds significant meaning. *Basandi* signifies a solid foundation, while *syaraq* represents Islamic teachings derived from the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, as well as the natural order (where nature serves as the teacher). Consequently, custom and syar'ak are inherently intertwined; in other words, custom does not contradict *syar'ak*, and Sharia does not contradict custom. This principle should serve as a guiding framework within the Minangkabau community, both in addressing worldly matters and matters pertaining to the afterlife.

Historically, before the arrival of Islam in the 12th to 13th centuries, the Minangkabau tradition was influenced by Hindu and Buddhist culture. This influence came from the spread of Hinduism and Buddhism in the region, particularly during the time of the Sriwijaya Kingdom, which was a powerful maritime empire that existed in Sumatra. Hindu and Buddhist culture did influence the Minangkabau tradition, it was primarily limited to the aristocracy and royal families. In other words, it was not a pervasive or dominant cultural influence throughout the entire society. The arrival of Islam in the Malay region, including among the Minangkabau people, brought about significant changes. These changes

affected various aspects of society, including philosophy, thought, intelligence, divinity, individual life, social life, education, preaching, sufism (Islamic mysticism), and even art and literature. The Malay identity became closely intertwined with Islamic identity due to the substantial influence of Islam on various aspects of Malay life. In essence, Islam became a fundamental part of Malay culture and identity as well as the development of Malay literature, which was influenced by Islamic scholars such as Abdullah Munshi and Hamzah Fansuri from the 16th century onwards. These scholars contributed to the development of Malay literature, and their works reflected Islamic values and teachings.

Yuangga K. Yahya, Syamsul H. Untung, Hifni Nasif, Muhammad Nurrosyid H. Setiawan and Indra A. Fajari (2020) argue that the process of Islamization in Minangkabau resulted in the blending of Minang and Islamic traditions, with both coexisting in the Indonesian context. The existing political, kinship, and customary systems were not entirely discarded but adapted to accommodate Islamic teachings, particularly Sufi beliefs emphasising moral development and local cultural integration. This integration formed a strong bond between Minangkabau culture and Islam. In this context, Minangkabau identity is inseparable from Islam; leaving Islam is seen as departing from Minangkabau heritage and kinship. The influence of Islam and Islamic law is pervasive in various aspects of Minang life, leading to a harmonious coexistence of customs and Islamic practices, symbolised by the motto "Custom based on Islamic law, Islamic law based on the Qur'an."

### **Past Studies on *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck's* Film (2013)**

Welsi Damanyanti (2020) research centres on the portrayal of the Minangkabau community in the film and posits that it offers an authentic depiction of the real-life Minangkabau people. Notably, it highlights the hierarchical structure within the community, wherein elders hold prominent roles in decision-making for clan affairs, and the clan must uphold a deep respect for their decisions. Furthermore, Damanyanti underscores the linguistic aspects of the film, arguing that the language employed therein serves as a precise reflection of the Minang people's speech patterns and linguistic characteristics. Her study aims to investigate the phenomenon of code-mixing among the characters in the film and assess whether this linguistic blend aligns with the linguistic reality of the Minang community. The findings of her research reveal a total of 137 instances of code-mixing in the Minang language, affirming the film's fidelity in representing the linguistic nuances of the Minang people. Damanyanti's work thus contributes to a deeper understanding of the sociolinguistic dynamics within the film and how it authentically mirrors the linguistic and cultural aspects of the Minangkabau society.

On the other hand, Herry Nur Hidayat et al. (2021) in *Minangkabau Aesthetics in Indonesian Cinema* for example focus on the film as a social process influenced by identity theory, reflecting the incorporation of ethnic elements within Indonesia's diverse Nusantara aesthetic framework. The Minangkabau aesthetic is discerned through a detailed mise en scène analysis, which centres on the portrayal of Minangkabau culture, including its landscapes and traditions in films. Another work produced by the same author is *Tradition and Industry: Representation of the Silek Minangkabau in Cinema* (2021). This article delves into the exploration of three film titles, namely *Harimau Tjampa*, *Merantau*, and *Surau dan Silek*, within the context of Minangkabau culture. Films like these portray Silek as an integral aspect of Minangkabau culture and serve as reflections of societal transformations within these communities. However, it is important to note that this analysis does not delve into the examination of cinematic reading and viewing from a film studies perspective. The analysis reveals a significant evolution in the representation of *Silek* in these three films. Notably, as the author observed, the film *Harimau Tjampa* emerges as a notably accurate portrayal of *Silek* as a longstanding tradition within the

Minangkabau culture. Indeed, the research findings predominantly revolve around the juxtaposition of off-screen and on-screen depictions of *Silek* within Minangkabau culture. This research can be regarded as a noteworthy endeavour to investigate the interplay between traditional *adat* and their cinematic representations.

The study of Riesangaji Wibisena and Moch Iqbal (2021), revealed intriguing findings with regard TKVDW, the researchers endeavour to elucidate the intricate connection between Islam and Minangkabau culture as portrayed in the film. To analyse this relationship, the study draws on Charles Sanders Peirce's theory, which underscores the significance of meaning for human beings. Peirce categorises the primary references that humans use into three categories: *Icons, Indexes, and Symbols*. The primary objectives of this study are twofold: first, to explore and describe the relationship between Islam and Minangkabau culture as depicted in film, and second, to analyse the propaganda messages embedded within the film. The research findings reveal that the connection between Islam and Minangkabau culture within the is symbolically represented through various elements such as language, attire, and customs. These symbols are employed strategically within the film to convey messages and ideas such as the film features symbols like traditional Minangkabau clothing or religious practices, which were prevalent among the Minangkabau people during the 1930s. The finding also showed symbolic imagery, such as scenes depicting young individuals from Batipuh who are deeply engrossed in religious study, serving as powerful representations of the cultural and religious aspects of the Minangkabau community during that era.

From the sociolinguistic principles, Dana Indah et al. (2021) argue that the film serves as a mirror reflecting the realities of society. This assertion finds validation in the film's thematic elements, which unmistakably mirror real-world social dynamics. The authors also underscore the film's potent use of language, particularly its diction, which significantly contributes to the creation of aesthetic effects, most notably through the dialogues. One striking observation relates to the language style employed by Zainuddin, whose words are imbued with poetic qualities, adding depth and richness to his character. Furthermore, the film effectively depicts the coexistence of monolingual and multilingual social groups, exemplified by the dialogue between Zainuddin and Ma'mak Datu. The film's imagery, encompassing visual, auditory, and tactile elements, seamlessly integrates with the social and linguistic fabric of its setting, thus ensuring a comprehensive and immersive experience for the audience. Notably, the authors contend that the film conveys essential moral values through the language used by its characters, further emphasising the intrinsic connection between language and society. In sum, their study underscores the inseparability of language and society within the cinematic context, illuminating how film can serve as a compelling medium for sociolinguistic exploration.

Nonetheless, Muhammad Akmal (2022) conducts a thorough analysis of the film, aiming only to reveal the intricate portrayal of Minangkabau culture within the film's narrative. Akmal reveals how the film prominently conveys Minangkabau cultural values. These values manifest in various aspects, including the display of the Minangkabau flag, traditional architectural structures, traditional clothing, customary marriage ceremonies (such as the ritual of washing the groom's feet), handshakes, and the utilisation of the Minangkabau language. Akmal's study employs Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, digging into significant concepts of connotation and denotation. This analysis reveals several types of semiotics within the film, encompassing the analytic, cultural, and normative dimensions. Each of these semiotic elements uncovered in the film contributes significantly to enhancing our cultural comprehension of Minangkabau *adat* as skillfully represented in the cinematic work.

Interestingly this research offers quite a similar topic with our study however, it focuses on how

cinematographic techniques are employed to depict cultural values within the film using five fundamental elements of cinematography: composition, camera angles, image size, continuity, and editing (Amelia Agnes Cikita et al., 2022). This study adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Data collection involved a combination of observation and literature review. The findings of this investigation reveal that the film employs three distinct camera angles, including objective, subjective, and point of view perspectives. The prevalent camera angle used is eye level. Image sizes frequently range from long shots to medium shots and medium long shots, effectively conveying information about locations and events within the film. Composition techniques are strategically used to emphasise the Minangkabau cultural backdrop, while continuity in editing ensures seamless and coherent storytelling. Notably, there are no abrupt cuts in the film, ensuring that the intended message and values are effectively communicated to the audience.

### **Bordwell Theory of Narration**

In the 1980s, David Bordwell adopted a cognitive and constructivist approach to studying narratives, however, his main focus was to understand how narratives work and their relation to the mental processes of the audience. Bordwell argued that the idea of a cinematic narrator is evident in the activity of narration. Narration is the process of organising cues to construct a story, it involves an active perceiver of the perceptual data. Bordwell (2013) proposed the role of narration in cinema and how the narration gives cues to the audience's comprehension of the film they watch. He defined narrative as the process of choosing, organising, and presenting narrative content in order to create particular temporal impacts on a viewer. Bordwell claimed that the viewer or spectator is an active perceiver. In this context, the term "spectator" does not refer to any specific individual. It also does not imply an "ideal reader." Instead, the terms "viewer" or "spectator" to describe a theoretical entity that engages in the processes necessary for constructing a narrative from the film's portrayal. This entity operates in accordance with the established protocols of comprehending and interpreting a story (p.30).

Film cues could assist the viewer in comprehending the film's story using structures of information which are divided into a narrative system and a stylistic system. Narrative system is the domain of the *fabula* and *syuzhet*, whereas the style is the technical creative choices of the filmmaker. Both systems present the audience with cues, patterns and gaps of information that are crucial to the audience's comprehension activity that will guide the audience to assume, infer and associate the data they perceive. Thus, the film narration is aimed to ensure that the audience perceives and understands the narrative content. Having said that, the experience of film watching in general is important regardless of its narrative discourse. Hence, Bordwell introduced three principles of narration as illustrated in Table 1 below, that are crucial to this study; they are *Fabula*, *Syuzhet* and *Style*.

**Table 1. Principles of Narration**

Principles of Narration	Descriptions
<i>(i) Fabula</i>	The <i>fabula</i> is a story that takes place in chronological cause and effect of events in a specific time and space. More precisely, the <i>fabula</i> represents the narrative as a sequential chain of cause-and-effect events unfolding over a specific period and within a defined spatial context. All narrative events can be organised into a unified framework of time, space, and causality.

(ii) <i>Syuzhet</i>	The <i>syuzhet</i> is defined as the plot or the arrangement and organisation of events. The <i>syuzhet</i> consists of actions, scenes, turning points and plot twists. It is an abstract construct that represents the way the story is structured and narrated as it unfolds in the film. The <i>syuzhet</i> is considered a system because it arranges the various components, such as story events and the states of affairs, based on specific principles or guidelines.
(iii) <i>Style</i>	The <i>style</i> refers to the technical aspects of the filmmaking which is represented through the cinematic components such as mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing and sound.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, we employed textual analysis as our principal research methodology. Textual analysis is a systematic process of breaking down a film into its basic formal elements, paying particular attention to aspects of narrative and style. Alan McKee (2001) also defines textual analysis as a systematic method for dissecting and comprehending various forms of media and communication texts. It entails a meticulous examination of these 'texts' components, encompassing linguistic elements, visual symbols, narrative structures, and cultural contexts, to uncover latent meanings, ideologies, and portrayals. McKee underscores the significance of considering the broader context, contending that our interpretations are deeply influenced by contextual background related to the selected film and our perspectives. This study aligns with Bordwell's theory of narration, offering a practical framework to explore the intricate stylistic components within the film. The film itself presents a unique blend of cinematic elements and *syuzhet*, rendering it an ideal subject for analysis. Furthermore, given that narration emerges from the dynamic interplay between the filmmaker and the spectator's engagement, it becomes imperative to discern the spectator's roles in this context. Notably, this study does not delve into the filmmaker's intended meaning; instead, its primary focus lies in how the spectator constructs meaning from the *fabula* during the viewing experience, ultimately culminating in the generation of universal meanings, particularly regarding the complex intersections of Malay, *adat*, and Islam in the Minangkabau world. It is important to emphasize that this analysis primarily focuses on the elements within the film's text, while peripheral details are not within its scope. This methodological approach allows researchers to critically dissect the underlying messages conveyed by the film, thereby yielding valuable insights that contribute to our understanding of the *fabula* and enrich our perceptions of the broader societal and global landscape. Consequently, within this study, we assume the role of the spectator, tasked with identifying and interpreting cues and patterns collectively through the film's *syuzhet* and style (cinematic elements) in order to signify that the *fabula* of the film understudy is compelling.

## FINDINGS

A pivotal cinematic element that warrants considerable attention is the use of colour. In the film TKD VW, spanning a duration of three hours, a deliberate division of the narrative occurs through the strategic utilisation of two predominant colours: blue and orange. As Fusco and Hallerman (2023) aptly asserts, colours within film can encapsulate nuanced representations of cultural, gender-related, and sociocultural dimensions. It can be argued that colour might be perceived as a less prominent aspect in the analysis of a



film, especially among those with limited exposure to film critique. Often, the primary focus for such individuals revolves around identifying a film's thematic elements, inadvertently neglecting the potent role that cinematic elements play in the delivery of the *fabula*. However, within the realm of film studies, particularly since the transition from black and white to colour filmmaking in the 1930s, colour has ascended to the status of a paramount symbol and an indispensable component when it comes to interpreting a film. Consequently, it would be remiss to disregard its significance.

In this context, our cinematic analysis will examine the semiotic composition of colour as a prominent stylistic element within the film, illuminating its seamless integration into the *syuzhet*. The film unfolds with a captivating depiction of the Minangkabau realm, engaging the viewers with sweeping vistas of buffalo herds and the architectural grandeur that defines the Minangkabau region. In the first sequence of the film, a deliberate blue colour grading assumes a pivotal role within its cinematic elements. While conventionally associated with notions of majesty and serenity in the Minangkabau cultural context, our interpretation discovers a contrasting visual representation. At this juncture, the *fabula* revolves around Zainuddin, a *perantau* (traveller) embarking on a journey back to his ancestral homeland in the Batipuh region of Padang. This act of *merantau* is propelled by Zainuddin's profound aspiration to strengthen his connection to his Malay Minang identity. Minang traditions place importance on their sons venturing out to explore and acquire new knowledge in distant lands. As elucidated by Franzia et al. (2015), within the Minangkabau tradition, *perantau* individuals actively seek to establish connections with their ethnic communities, nurturing an enduring tie to their cultural roots, which significantly shapes their sense of identity. Consequently, even as they traverse distant horizons, travellers remain emotionally tethered to their native villages and clans, perpetually yearning for the path that leads them back home.

Fueled by an unwavering commitment to deepen his understanding of Islam, Zainuddin's arrival in the village of Batipuh is far from a warm reception, for it is firmly ingrained in local belief that newcomers must wholeheartedly embrace the customs and traditions of the community. Within this village, Zainuddin becomes entangled in a romantic relationship with Hayati, who, intriguingly, is the niece of the *Ketua Adat* and hails from a lineage of *bangsawan* descent. In stark contrast, Zainuddin, an orphan born of a Minang-Padang father and a Bugis-Makassar mother, lacks such esteemed lineage. As Zainuddin immerses himself in Batipuh, he begins to discern that his *merantau*-driven pursuit of Islamic knowledge and his desire to reconnect with his father's hometown inadvertently set him apart from the local villagers. This isolation emanates from the clash between his presence and the longstanding traditional Minangkabau *Adat*. Furthermore, his burgeoning romantic affection for Hayati encounters formidable opposition, primarily stemming from the stark disparity in their *suku* (clan) backgrounds, particularly Zainuddin's lack of affiliation with any specific *suku* hence, the *syuzhet* thickens with dramatic twists and turns. Throughout the film, the recurring presence of the colour blue serves as a symbolic backdrop in every scene, eloquently representing the myriad emotions and experiences encountered by the character Zainuddin. These encompass feelings of coldness, isolation, melancholy, passivity, tranquillity, faith, spirituality, and loyalty.



**Figure 1. The low-angle frame, depicting Hayati's confinement in Rumah Gadang**

*(Source: Soraya, 2013)*



**Figure 2. The low-angle frame: Rumah Gadang serves as a visual confirmation of the traditional customs upheld by Hayati's family.**

*(Source: Soraya, 2013)*

In the opening scene of the film, the recurring use of the colour blue is intertwined with the frequent employment of low-angle cinematography techniques. This deliberate cinematic choice serves a dual purpose: firstly, it unveils the overarching dominance of Minangkabau *adat*, and secondly, it significantly amplifies the importance of the *Rumah Gadang*. The calculated use of low-angle shots, primarily through the perspective of the character Zainuddin, plays a pivotal role in accentuating the emotions of vulnerability and isolation. These shots plunge the audience into Zainuddin's psyche, effectively immersing them in his feelings of unease and detachment within an unfamiliar environment. This pivotal cinematic moment becomes a cornerstone in capturing Zainuddin's anxieties and heightening his overwhelming sense of vulnerability. Furthermore, this event cues as the *syuzhet's* benchmark, setting the tone for the unfolding *fabula* and establishing the thematic undercurrents that will reverberate throughout the film.

Within the rich tapestry of Minangkabau culture, it is imperative to reinforce the distinctive architectural design of *Rumah Gadang*. Characterised by its gracefully sweeping curved roof, reminiscent of the formidable buffalo horns (*gonjong*), this architectural marvel symbolises the intricate web of symbiotic relationships among the custodians of *adat* traditions. Using low-angle shots as a cinematic device, the director meticulously emphasises the significance of Minangkabau culture and its inherent values through the grandeur of the traditional *Rumah Gadang*. This iconic house transcends mere architecture; it serves as the hallowed grounds where families not only reside but also congregate for

crucial meetings and celebrate momentous occasions. Scholarly literature corroborates the notion that, owing to the matrilineal system, the ownership of the *Rumah gadang* is vested in the hands of mothers and passed down through generations to their daughters (Wiemar et al., 2022). In stark contrast, *Mamak Datu* emerges as *Ketua Adat*, assuming firm authority over the *Rumah Gadang* with resolute determination. Throughout the film, his influence remains unshaken, and his decisions stand as pillars of strength that shape the course of the unfolding *fabula*. The presence of *Mamak Datu* further complicates the *syuzhet* of the central characters, when they are constantly advised and reminded of the importance of *suku*, an integral component of their familial traditions that should never be compromised.

As previously mentioned, *adat* has been strategically employed by those in authority to subjugate Hayati in Zainudin, and this manipulation is symbolically manifested in the film's architectural elements. Through the incorporation of architectural symbolism drawn from Minangkabau house designs, the film effectively conveys the underlying tension between Hayati and Zainuddin right from the beginning of the *syuzhet*. In Figure 3, titled the low-angle frame, Zainuddin's uncle elucidates how the house's architecture symbolises the commitment of the household to Minangkabau tradition. This visual allegory serves as a prologue, offering a glimpse into the forthcoming challenges in their relationship. Importantly, this scene also hints at the potential conflicts and resolutions in their romantic journey, all rooted in the principles of the *adat* doctrine.



**Figure 3. The low-angle frame: Zainuddin's uncle elucidates how the house's architecture symbolises the commitment of the household to Minangkabau tradition.**

(Source: Soraya, 2013)

In the household of *Rumah Gadang*, women were consistently relegated to second-class status, their voices suppressed and unheard. The film illustrates the patriarch's dominion over matters of *adat* through a seemingly innocuous act – smoking. His self-assured cigar-puffing during decisions concerning Hayati and Zainuddin unmistakably underscores his overbearing arrogance. While the film refrains from portraying him as a physically aggressive villain, he unmistakably emerges as the disruptive force in the path of Hayati's relationship. The recurrent smoking scenes, especially when discussing Hayati and Zainuddin's relationship, serve as a stark reminder of the leader's pronounced self-centeredness. It is worth acknowledging that on-screen smoking can carry various connotations and meanings. In the context of the film, however, our interpretation shows that Mamak Datu's decisions are based primarily not on religious or customary law concerns, but on his determination to assert his authority as *Ketua Adat*. The rejection of Zainuddin merely serves as a symbolic gesture affirming his position as the traditional leader, thereby reaffirming his enduring influence in the Batipuh region. Interestingly, *Mamak Datu's* acceptance of Aziz's proposal, an individual who significantly deviates from traditional customs, serves as a poignant illustration of how traditions can be wielded as political tools to achieve specific goals and objectives.

After Zainuddin's departure from the Batipuh region, a striking shift takes place in the film's color palette. It transitions from the predominant blue tones to warmer hues, particularly various shades of orange. During this sequence, the Muluk family's adherence to Islamic traditions becomes conspicuously prominent, injecting Zainuddin's life with a heightened sense of tranquillity and joy.



**Figure 4. In Padang Panjang, the dominant colours of warmth and orange symbolise the harmonious coexistence of Islam and *adat* in the lives of Zainuddin the villagers.**

*(Source: Soraya, 2013)*

The use of warm lighting in these scenes significantly amplifies the overall comfort and joyful atmosphere, effectively signalling to the audience Zainuddin's transformative journey toward a brighter future. Throughout this second sequence, Zainuddin receives support from the Muluk family, particularly when they urge him to submit his work for publication in the newspaper. The presence of the warm orange hues continues to permeate Zainuddin's life. However, there are specific moments that transpire in Batipuh, where the colour palette shifts from orange back to blue. In these instances, the directors deliberately establish a stark contrast between the two distinct worlds of Batipuh and Padang Panjang, serving as a visual cue to the audience, and effectively illustrating the contrasting dynamics of *Adat* and Islam within Minangkabau culture.

Furthermore, we notice an intriguing pattern emanated in the style, even though the film strategically use of Islam and *Adat* as the central issues, potentially as instruments of political influence in the milieu, as seen in Figure 4 and 5, the directors employ contrasting colours to delineate the disparities between Batipuh and Padang Panjang in practice. However, the film also adeptly captures the intrinsic beauty of Padang as a quintessential Minangkabau world. Looking at it from an alternative perspective, this same allure has evolved into a captivating backdrop that accentuates the challenges endured by the two lovers throughout the progression of the syuzhet. This cinematic portrayal could be seen as an attempt to symbolically convey the intense love between Hayati and Zainuddin while simultaneously establishing a romantic ambiance for the film.

## **Dialogues**

As part of the textual analysis, dialogues play a powerful role as a narrative tool, enabling characters to express their emotions and actions while advancing the plot. The subsequent analysis delves into how the dialogues within the film generate tension between the Minangkabau world and Islam. Within the Islamic framework of relationships, particularly between men and women, both parties

encounter hurdles that necessitate their mutual efforts to surmount. In one of the scenes in the *syuzhet*, Zainuddin, marked by his strong faith in Islam, finds inspiration to dig deeper into his faith in Kampung Batipuh, his father's hometown, marking the commencement of his quest to uncover his true identity. Nonetheless, Mak Cik Jamilah has advised Zainuddin to consult with the *Ketua Adat*, as per Minangkabau tradition, a gesture of respect particularly expected from newcomers to the village. Mak Cik Jamilah unmistakably places a high priority on preserving the traditions of *adat*, while Zainuddin remains steadfast in his original pursuit of deepening his understanding of Islam.

**Zainuddin**

*"Tiada, Mak cik. Saya hanya ingin menyambung ikatan silaturrahim. Saya berhajat untuk melawat saudara mara ayah di kampung Batipuh ini."*

(No, Auntie. I just want to maintain family ties. I intend to visit my father's relatives in Kampong Batipuh.)

**Mak Cik Jamilah**

*"Jika begitu, kamu akan tinggal lama di sini? Adalah lebih baik untuk kamu berbincang dengan ketua adat di sini. Itu adalah adat kami untuk menerima tetamu di sini."*

(If that's the case, will you be staying here for a long time? It's better for you to discuss with the tribal chief here. It's our custom to welcome guests here.)

**Zainuddin**

*"Terus terang... saya bukan---saya... mungkin boleh membantu, mak cik. Asalkan saya boleh tinggal di sini. Saya ingin melihat kecantikan tempat kelahiran bapa saya. Saya juga ingin mendalami Islam."*

(Frankly speaking... I'm not---I... maybe I can help, auntie. As long as I can stay here. I want to explore the beauty of my father's birthplace. I also want to learn more about Islam.)

Zainuddin initiates contact with Mak Cik Jamilah with the intention of preserving the bonds of kinship, recognizing that human relationships are an integral facet of Islam, fostering harmonious unity among people. The link between humans and Allah mirrors the initial steps in building closer human relationships, eventually leading to a deeper connection with Allah. Mak Cik Jamilah wisely advises Zainuddin to seek guidance from the *Ketua Adat* of the area to maintain harmony in human relations while upholding Islamic practices. The depiction of *adat* Minangkabau in this film accurately portrays its essence, as it adheres to the adage "*Adaik basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*," signifying that *adat* is rooted in Islamic laws and ultimately aligns with the Quran and Allah's teachings. In the film, Zainuddin does not outright rejecting *adat* but subtly elevating Islam as the foundation for spiritual growth, evident in his respectful demeanour during interactions with other characters. This scene remains consistent with Zainuddin's original intent to migrate for the purpose of deepening his understanding of Islam, a commitment further underscored by his subsequent move to Muluk's house.

**Mak Cik**

*"Ini Zainuddin. Dia akan menyambungkan pelajaran di sini.*

*Dia berhajat untuk belajar Islam dengan pak cik kamu."*

(This is Zainuddin, He will continue his studies here.

He intends to learn more about Islam with your uncle.)

**Zainuddin**

*“Assalamualaikum. Saya disuruh tinggal di bilik kamu.”*  
(Assalamualaikum. I was told to stay in your room.)

**Muluk**

*Oh, tidak mengapa. Saya pun selalu tiada di rumah.*  
(Oh, it's ok. I'm usually not at home either.)

Zainuddin's earnest desire, as exemplified in the scene, shows his commitment to prioritise Islam as the foundation for embarking on a fresh chapter in life. Migration, a practice endorsed both by Islam and popularised through the Minangkabau *adat - merantau*, a concept defined to seek one's own identity. Identity, in essence, is the ongoing journey of self-discovery—a process encompassing formation, maintenance, and transformation of an individual. Upon close examination of Zainuddin's character, his interpretation of identity centres on the quest for spiritual self-discovery, aligning his inner strengths with the intent of *merantau*. This journey symbolises the pursuit of a spiritual identity that resonates deeply with the core principles he embodies. His spiritual desires are not only portrayed through the dialogues, but they were further enhanced through cinematic elements as stylized by the filmmaker discussed earlier.

The following scene vividly portrays the immense pressure on Hayati's father, Datuk Garang due to Zainuddin's unwavering pursuit of his daughter's love. He scolds Limah for failing to advise Hayati not to mingle with Zainuddin. Datuk Garang struggles to contain his anger, driven by his need to preserve his honour and avoid ridicule within the Minangkabau community, where taking decisive action is expected.

**Datuk Garang (Penghulu Adat)**

*Limah, itu tanggungjawab kau Limah!*

*Kau bilang sama mande Jamilah, anak makassar itu tidak boleh lagi dekat si Ati. Aku penghulu Adat!*

*Aku tidak suka dipandang leceh oleh orang di desa ini!*

*Jangan sampai aku berlaku kasar dengan anak pisang itu!*

(Limah, that's your responsibility Limah!

You tell mother Jamilah that the child from Makassar shouldn't be close to Ati anymore. I'm the tribal chief!

I don't like being looked down upon by the people in this Kampong! Don't let me act harshly towards that innocent child!)

As a result, Datuk Garang finds himself compelled to turn to Mamak Datu for counsel and enlightenment. The term *anak pisang* mentioned in the dialogue specifically refers to Zainuddin. In this context, the elders in the narrative are resolute in the need for swift decisions to prevent any further damage to their reputation. In his role as the traditional leader, Mamak Datu firmly opposes the notion of taking Zainuddin's life, as it goes against Minangkabau traditions. Instead, he advocates for the more peaceful and consensus-driven approach of *musyawarah*, seen as the ideal solution.

**Orang Kampung (Villagers)**

*“Kita harus bertindak cepat Datuk, Anak pisang itu berani mencemar suku kita.”*

(We must act fast Datuk, that innocent child dares to smear our reputation.)

***Datuk Garang (Penghulu Adat)***

*“Datuk, telinga saya serasa terbakar mendengar kata-kata orang di luar sana!  
Mereka berdua di pondok itu, Datuk!  
Kalau perlu kita pakai cara kasar!  
Kita suruh para preman untuk menghabisinya!”*  
(Datuk, my ears hurt upon hearing the rumours out there!  
They’re alone in that hut, Datuk!  
If necessary, we can use force!  
We’ll send thugs to finish them off!”)

***Mamak Datu***

*“Datuk Garang, tidak begitu cara orang Minang, tidak kasar!  
Memikat burung harus dengan burung!  
Saya akan ajak dia berunding dari hati ke hati!”*  
(Datuk Garang, that’s not how Minang people do things, not harshly!  
To catch a bird, you must use another bird!  
I will invite him to negotiate from heart to heart!”)

As our findings demonstrate, this study has conducted a comprehensive analysis of how the Indonesian film *Tenggelamnya Kapal van Der Wijck* (2013) portrays the Malay-Muslim world. Through a cinematic lens, our research unveils how the intersection of Minangkabau customs and the profound influence of Islam in this traditional backdrop serves as a central element in the challenges faced by the main characters, Zainuddin and Hayati. This study not only enriches our comprehension of the Malay-Muslim community but also deepens our insight into the representation of cultural identity and social complexity on the silver screen.

## CONCLUSION

This study has adeptly employed cinematic techniques and narratological approaches to unveil the intricate dynamics of the Malay Minangkabau Muslim community during a historical epoch. Our study transcends the superficial perception of film as mere entertainment, delving into the depths of conflicts and multifaceted cultural, social, and religious themes, particularly within the realm of the romantic genre. We have meticulously examined how Minangkabau customs and religious influences inform the romantic narratives of our central characters, Zainuddin and Hayati. Throughout this treatise, it is emphasised that the conflicts of Hayati and Zainuddin are shaped by the adat of the Minangkabau, Islamic principles, and Western modernization. Significantly, this study also has proffered a perspective that illuminates the reciprocal relationship between cinema and cultural representation, thus enriching our comprehension of the specific Malay milieu, notably within the context of West Sumatra during the 1930s. In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the role of film as an effective lens through which we can examine the intricacies of cultural norms, religious beliefs, and societal expectations within the context of socio-religious culture.

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