

LIMITED RECOGNITION: WOMEN, CULINARY LABOR, AND SOCIAL ESTEEM IN PARIAMAN'S RAMADAN TRADITIONS

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Abstract

This study examines two Ramadan traditions in Pariaman—maanta pabukoan and malamang—as arenas of social recognition for women within a religious matrilineal society. It differs from previous studies, which have focused on social cohesion or the authority of Minangkabau women through ancestral property and lineage. This study examines how everyday religious and culinary practices distribute recognition to women, and whether such recognition aligns with or differs from their matrilineal status. Employing qualitative methods, the research collected data through interviews, observation and documentation. Analytically, this study combines Axel Honneth's theory of recognition (the sphere of social honour) with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital. The findings suggest that both traditions constitute arenas for the distribution of recognition: women gain social legitimacy through their culinary skills, domestic competence, and their role in maintaining family solidarity and the cohesion of the Ramadan community. This study proposes the concept of 'limited recognition'—genuine legitimacy in the public sphere, yet conditional upon normative gender performance and achieved through domestic labour, rather than granted unconditionally. Thus, the status of Minangkabau women is simultaneously empowered by adat and constrained by religious gender expectations.

Keywords: maanta pabukoan; malamang; social recognition; limited recognition; symbolic capital

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji dua tradisi Ramadan di Pariaman—*maanta pabukoan* dan *malamang*—sebagai arena pengakuan sosial bagi perempuan dalam masyarakat matrilineal yang religius. Berbeda dari kajian terdahulu yang menyoroti kohesi sosial atau otoritas perempuan Minangkabau lewat harta pusaka dan garis keturunan. Penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana praktik keagamaan-kuliner sehari-hari mendistribusikan penghargaan bagi perempuan, serta apakah penghargaan tersebut sejalan atau berbeda dengan kedudukan matrilineal mereka. Penelitian yang menggunakan metode kualitatif ini menghimpun data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Secara analitis, penelitian ini menggabungkan teori pengakuan Axel Honneth (ranah penghargaan sosial) dengan konsep modal simbolik Pierre Bourdieu. Temuan menunjukkan kedua tradisi merupakan arena distribusi pengakuan: perempuan memperoleh legitimasi sosial melalui keahlian kuliner, kompetensi domestik, dan perannya menjaga solidaritas keluarga serta kohesi komunitas Ramadan. Penelitian ini mengusulkan konsep "pengakuan terbatas"—legitimasi nyata di ruang publik, namun bersyarat pada performa gender normatif dan diraih lewat dapur, bukan diberikan tanpa syarat. Dengan demikian, kedudukan perempuan Minangkabau sekaligus diberdayakan oleh adat dan dibatasi oleh ekspektasi gender keagamaan.

Kata Kunci: maanta pabukoan; malamang; pengakuan sosial; pengakuan terbatas; modal simbolik

INTRODUCTION

Women in the context of Ramadan remain a significant focus in contemporary Islamic studies because the topic reflects the complex interplay between religion, culture, and the social structures of Muslim societies. Ramadan is understood not only as a month of worship but also as a sociocultural space that shapes collective practices, social solidarity, and the religious identity of Muslim communities (Shalihin et al., 2021, 2023; Shalihin & Sholihin, 2022). In Indonesia, Ramadan is marked by various communal activities, including food sharing, *gotong royong* (mutual assistance), communal iftar gatherings, and cultural celebrations that are legitimised as expressions of local religiosity (Jubba et al., 2018; Royanulloh & Komari, 2019). Different regions maintain distinctive traditions, such as *Megengan* in Surabaya, *Dugderan* in Semarang, *Munggahan* in West Java, *Meugang* in Aceh, *Ziarah Kubro* in Palembang (Shalihin et al., 2023), and *malamang* in West Sumatra, a tradition of cooking glutinous rice in bamboo tubes with coconut milk during Ramadan, typically prepared communally and distributed to neighbours and family members (Yohannes, 2022). These traditions illustrate that Ramadan practices in Indonesia emerge through a dynamic interaction between Islamic teachings and local cultural traditions. Within this process, women play crucial roles, particularly in ritual labour, food preparation, managing family relationships, and participating in collective community activities.

From the perspective of Islamic law, women are granted specific accommodations through the concept of *rukhsah* (dispensation), which permits women who are menstruating, experiencing postpartum bleeding, pregnant, or breastfeeding to postpone fasting and compensate for it later in accordance with religious prescriptions (Mappaware et al., 2020; Rafi, 2018). However, in social practice, women's positions during Ramadan are not always accompanied by equal recognition. Ramadan often becomes a site for reproducing gender norms through the division of domestic labour, consumer culture, and the symbolic representation of women in market and religious media industries (Darmawati, 2023; Kata Data Insight Center, 2020). This situation reveals an ambivalent position for women during Ramadan. On the one hand, they receive religious legitimacy; on the other, they remain embedded within social structures that may reproduce gender subordination (Alaeddine et al., 2024; Muzani, 2014).

Studies on women and Islamic rituals present contrasting perspectives. Some scholars view ritual as a space of agency that enables women to construct socio-religious authority through participation in cultural and religious practices (Lin & Chen, 2006; Osim & Eteng, 2021). Others argue that ritual functions as a mechanism for reproducing patriarchal norms because women are frequently confined to domestic and reproductive labour legitimised through tradition and religious morality (Ajayi et al., 2022; Setiyawan et al., 2024). This debate suggests that Muslim women's ritual participation cannot be understood through a simple binary of liberation versus subordination. Rather, it should be viewed as a site of social negotiation shaped by cultural contexts and local power relations.

Studies on women and tradition reveal a tension between women as cultural preservers and women as agents of social change. Many studies position women as inheritors of tradition and guardians of community identity through the transmission of cultural values, ritual symbols, and collective memory (Nurdin, 2020; Suryani, 2023). Women occupy important roles in the *Ngasa Gunung Gandoang* ritual in Central Java (Syahrul et al., 2026), the traditional festival of the Chuvash community (Semenova & Egorova, 2024), the Minangkabau matrilineal system, a social structure in which lineage, property, and customary authority are traced through the female line (Miswardi et al., 2024), the rituals of the Bodo community (Basumatary, 2024; Basumatary, 2022), Vietnamese culinary traditions (Trang et al., 2025), and the transmission of the *Jhuti* ritual art in India (Panda et al., 2025). However, other studies indicate that ritual also serves as an arena through which women negotiate agency, social recognition, and cultural authority (Devi, 2020; Hrytsenko, 2021). This can be observed in the rituals of Ukrainian migrant women in Israel (Prashizky, 2026), menstrual rituals among Assamese women (Das, 2025), Buddhist communities in the Swat Valley (Timme, 2018), the *Shalaluo* ceremony of the *Nuosu* community (Jike, 2025), and the recitation of *Barzanji*; a traditional Islamic devotional poetry recitation praising the Prophet Muhammad, commonly performed during religious celebrations and communal gatherings in various parts of Indonesia; in Bugis Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) (Bakry et al., 2025). In matrilineal and relatively egalitarian societies, women may even occupy more formal

ritual positions, as demonstrated in the *Bonokeling* community in Banyumas (Bakry et al., 2025), Madhubani folk art and Maithili folk songs (Jha, 2024; Singh, 2025), and indigenous women's environmental conservation initiatives in Raja Ampat (Kabes, 2025).

A second cluster of studies examines Ramadan from sociological perspectives. Research by Shalihin et al., (2023) and Shalihin & Sholihin (2022), for example, conceptualises Ramadan as a period for strengthening social solidarity, collective morality, and community integration through food-sharing practices, *gotong royong* (mutual assistance), and communal rituals (Islam, 2026; Shalihin et al., 2021). However, this body of scholarship focuses primarily on social cohesion and pays limited attention to gender relations. Consequently, women often appear only as implicit participants in Ramadan rituals rather than as subjects who gain social recognition through their ritual involvement.

A third cluster of studies employs Axel Honneth's theory of social recognition and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital. Honneth (2012) argues that social recognition constitutes the foundation of legitimacy and respect in social life, while Bourdieu emphasises that honour and cultural legitimacy are generated through everyday practices that acquire symbolic value within a community (Bourdieu, 1994, 2010). In this regard, women's participation in Ramadan traditions can be understood as a form of symbolic capital production through which social legitimacy is obtained by sustaining family solidarity and community cohesion.

Despite these contributions, studies on Ramadan traditions remain relatively limited. Most research has focused on the historical, symbolic, and cultural dimensions of Ramadan traditions without positioning women as the primary subject of analysis. Yuliyani (2022) discusses the meaning of the *Punggahan* tradition, Abdurrahman (2023) examines the implementation of the *Beppa Apang* tradition during Ramadan, and analyse the symbolism embedded in the *Megengan* tradition (Fauziyah et al., 2021). Likewise, Sasnitya et al., (2025) and Iswaratama (2024) focus primarily on the historical dimensions and cultural values of Ramadan traditions in local communities. Although these studies demonstrate that Ramadan traditions constitute important expressions of local Islam, they offer limited discussion of how women participate in, negotiate their roles, and attain social recognition through these practices. In the Minangkabau context, scholarship has largely focused on the matrilineal system, women's position in customary law and cultural preservation (Miswardi et al., 2024; Stark, 2013). Consequently, the intersection among Ramadan temporality, women's ritual practices, and the production of social recognition remains underexplored (Buckley & Carland, 2023; Hussain et al., 2026).

Although the literature has examined women as both cultural preservers and agents of social negotiation (Fu, 2024; Osim & Eteng, 2021), and although studies of Ramadan traditions have conceptualised ritual as a mechanism of social cohesion (Shalihin et al., 2021, 2023; Shalihin & Sholihin, 2022), the question of how social legitimacy for women is produced within Ramadan traditions in Pariaman community remains insufficiently addressed. Furthermore, the concept of social recognition has seldom been elaborated through a combined application of Honneth's theory of recognition (Knieriem, 2024) and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital (Piroddi, 2021). This gap indicates the need for a more comprehensive analysis of how women's social legitimacy is produced through Ramadan cultural practices.

In response to this gap, this article analyses how the traditions of *maanta pabukoan*, a Pariaman tradition in which families send food packages to relatives, neighbours, and community members during Ramadan, typically prepared by women and symbolising social solidarity, kinship bonds, and reciprocal obligations – and *malamang* in Pariaman function as spaces of social recognition for women during Ramadan. To address this issue, the study employs Honneth's theory of social recognition and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital. Through this integrated framework, women's participation in Ramadan traditions is examined as a socially valued practice through which recognition, legitimacy, and symbolic authority are produced.

Beyond examining women's participation in Ramadan traditions, this study advances a conceptual understanding of how social legitimacy is generated within communities that integrate Islamic and *adat* values. Drawing on the interaction between recognition and symbolic capital, the study develops the concept of *limited recognition* to explain a condition in which women attain meaningful social recognition and symbolic authority while remaining situated within

culturally prescribed gender expectations.

The concept highlights the ambivalent character of recognition, in which opportunities for legitimacy coexist with normative boundaries that shape the forms of agency deemed socially valuable.

This article argues that Ramadan traditions in Pariaman do not merely reproduce religious and cultural values but also function as arenas for the distribution of gendered social recognition. Within this context, women attain legitimacy not through formal authority but through culturally valued domestic competence and relational labour embedded within the structures of *adat* and local Islam. Accordingly, this study contributes to scholarship on Muslim women, the sociology of Ramadan rituals, and local Islamic studies in Indonesia by demonstrating how cultural-religious practices function as mechanisms for producing women's social recognition within a matrilineal-Islamic community. The following sections discuss the implementation of the *maanta pabukoan* and *malamang* traditions, women's participation in these practices, and their significance as spaces for negotiating identity and social recognition in Pariaman community.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design used to gain an in-depth understanding of contextual socio-cultural practices, particularly how women obtain social recognition through the *maanta pabukoan* and *malamang* traditions during the Ramadan momentum in Pariaman, West Sumatra. Pariaman was selected as the research location due to the strong continuity of these two traditions in community life. This research was conducted in 2024 over a period of 7 days or 1 week, starting from the preparation month through the implementation of Ramadan traditions within the Pariaman community.

The participants or data sources were selected using purposive sampling technique, taking into consideration direct involvement in the *maanta pabukoan* and *malamang* traditions, totaling 4 women. The informant criteria included: (1) women who were actively involved in the preparation and implementation of the traditions; (2) women who had experience participating in the traditions for at least three years; and (3) women who understood the social meaning of the traditions, both as domestic actors and as family members. To expand the variation of perspectives, this study also employed snowball sampling technique through recommendations from initial informants.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participant observation involved direct engagement with the implementation of the *maanta pabukoan* and *malamang* traditions, including the preparation process, ritual activities, and social interactions that occurred throughout the events. Observation sessions generally lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. In-depth interviews were conducted with Pariaman women who actively participated in these traditions, including daughters-in-law, housewives, and other family members who understood their social significance. The number of participants was determined based on the principles of information-rich cases and data saturation. Saturation was considered achieved when additional interviews no longer yielded new themes and recurring narrative patterns emerged, particularly during the final stages of data collection. The interviews explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of their positions and roles within the traditions. Documentation was used to complement the primary data and included field notes, photographs, and cultural materials related to the traditions practiced in the Pariaman community.

Data were analysed using the qualitative analysis framework proposed by Creswell (2013), which consists of four stages: data management, data reduction, data display, and data interpretation. During the data management stage, all interview transcripts, observation records, and documentary materials were organized according to the study's thematic focus. Interview recordings conducted in the Pariaman dialect of Minangkabau were transcribed and translated into Indonesian. The data reduction stage involved selecting and coding information relevant to

the study's focus on women, tradition, and social recognition. The data were subsequently presented narratively to identify patterns and relationships among women, culture, and social practices within Ramadan traditions in Pariaman. In the final stage, the data were interpreted

through the theoretical frameworks of Axel Honneth's (2012) theory of social recognition and Pierre Bourdieu's (1994) concept of symbolic capital to examine how the *maanta pabukoan* and *malamang* traditions function as spaces for negotiating identity, social recognition, and gender relations.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women as Social Mediators in the *Maanta Pabukoan* Tradition

The *maanta pabukoan* tradition is a practice of sharing iftar meals among the Pariaman community during Ramadan, with daughters-in-law delivering food to their mothers-in-law's house. This tradition is understood not merely as a customary activity but also as a socio-religious practice that strengthens family relationships, social respect, and communal solidarity during Ramadan (Waryono, 2021). Within this tradition, women serve as the primary actors responsible for organizing, implementing, and sustaining its continuity.



Figure 2.

The form of *maantaan pabukoan* containers for parents in law (Source: Researcher, 2024).

her mother-in-law's house is so that kinship ties are not severed, while also giving charity to the mother-in-law in the middle of the fasting month. This kind of practice has long been done by the Pariaman community."

The quotation illustrates that women are perceived as mediators of family relationships and custodians of social solidarity. Their role extends beyond food preparation to encompass the symbolic responsibility of maintaining harmonious relations between families. This finding supports previous studies that identify women as guardians of cultural continuity and collective memory within their communities (Semenova & Egorova, 2024; Syahrul et al., 2026). The present study extends this literature by demonstrating that, in the context of Ramadan, these responsibilities also confer social recognition on women in Pariaman society.

The implementation of *maanta pabukoan* relies heavily on the collective labor of women within the extended family. The process typically begins with joint food preparation involving sisters-in-law, sisters, cousins, and other female relatives at the daughter-in-law's residence. Various traditional foods are prepared collectively, including *onde-onde*, *lapek bungih*, *lamang*, rice, and side dishes such as *rendang* and *gulai*. Irma Yunita (personal interview, 11 January 2024) said:

For the Pariaman community, *maanta pabukoan* represents both the maintenance of *silaturahmi* (kinship ties) and an act of Ramadan charity closely associated with women's responsibility for preserving family relationships. The tradition is also regarded as a moral obligation and an expression of respect from a daughter-in-law toward her husband's family, as reflected in the following statement (Farida, Personal Interview, 4 January 2024):

"The intention of a wife delivering iftar food to



Figure 1.

Women preparing food for the *maanta pabukoan* menu (Source: Researcher, 2024).

“This woman is very skilled at building closeness with her husband's family, making it easy for them to become close. Since this is a tradition, it is only proper that women here behave in such a way.”

These observations suggest that domestic labour within Ramadan traditions should not be viewed solely as a manifestation of women's subordination. Rather, it constitutes a space for generating social solidarity and relational capital among women. This interpretation resonates with studies by Prashizky (2026) and Das (2025), which conceptualize ritual practices as arenas for female solidarity and the negotiation of social identity.

The preparation and presentation of food constitute important symbolic dimensions of the tradition. Once the dishes are prepared, they are carefully arranged on *dulang* (serving trays) or *rantang* (stacked food containers) before being delivered. Considerable attention is devoted to presentation because it reflects the reputation of the woman's family in the eyes of her husband's relatives. Consequently, food presentation serves not only a practical function but also symbolizes politeness, respect, and family honour. Women's domestic skills, therefore, possess symbolic value capable of generating social legitimacy. This interpretation aligns with Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, which views everyday cultural practices as sources of honour and recognition within a community (Bourdieu, 1994).

The central stage of the tradition involves the daughter-in-law delivering *pabukoan* to the mother-in-law's household. For newly married couples, this procession is commonly accompanied by members of the woman's extended family. Upon receiving the food, the husband's family typically holds a prayer of gratitude and breaks the fast together. The delivery of *pabukoan*, therefore, represents more than the transfer of food; it functions as a social ritual that brings together two-family networks through women's relational labour. This finding demonstrates that women occupy a central position in sustaining social cohesion during Ramadan. While previous sociological studies have generally interpreted iftar traditions as mechanisms of communal solidarity (Shalihin et al., 2021, 2023), the present study reveals that such solidarity is enacted through women's largely invisible relational work.

The final stage of the *maanta pabukoan* tradition is *maisi baban*, the practice of giving a return gift from the mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law after the food has been received. The contents of the *baban* typically include sugar and eggs, while newly married couples may also receive flour, cooking oil, and brown sugar to help them prepare food for Eid al-Fitr. This reciprocal exchange illustrates a system of giving and receiving that strengthens relationships between the woman's family and her husband's family. More importantly, it demonstrates that the *maanta pabukoan* tradition operates through a mechanism of social exchange that generates mutual recognition between families. In this context, women function not only as providers of domestic services but also as actors who facilitate the circulation of respect, reciprocity, and family solidarity. This interpretation is consistent with Honneth's (2012) theory of social recognition, which holds that recognition is the foundation of legitimacy and social esteem within communal life.

The sequence of activities that constitute the *maanta pabukoan* tradition demonstrates that women's domestic practices during Ramadan cannot be reduced to a simple form of gender subordination. Rather, domestic activities, religious rituals, and cultural solidarity intersect to create a social space through which women acquire moral and symbolic legitimacy. Within culturally rich communities such as Pariaman, domestic competence functions as a form of relational capital that generates collective social recognition. This recognition differs from both formal authority and structural power, emerging instead from women's ability to sustain family cohesion, cultural continuity, and communal integration. Consequently, women participating in the *maanta pabukoan* tradition should be understood not merely as executors of tradition but as social mediators whose contributions are essential to maintaining family solidarity, cultural legitimacy, and social cohesion during Ramadan.

Women: From *Malamang* to Communal Cohesion

The *malamang* tradition is one of the Ramadan cultural practices of the Pariaman community, positioning women as the principal actors throughout its implementation. Conducted before the start of Ramadan, the tradition involves the collective preparation of *lamang* (lemang),

a traditional food made from glutinous rice cooked in bamboo over hot coals. For the Pariaman community, *malamang* is understood not merely as a culinary activity but also as a socio-religious practice that strengthens kinship ties, welcomes the arrival of Ramadan, and preserves ancestral cultural traditions.

Within the Pariaman community, *malamang* is regarded as a collective Ramadan tradition that reinforces togetherness among extended family members through women's active participation. The tradition provides an opportunity for relatives, including family members returning from *rantau* (migration), to gather, prepare *lamang* collectively, and share meals in anticipation of Ramadan. Women occupy a central position in this tradition because they are primarily responsible for preparing, processing, and implementing the culinary ritual. It is reflected in the following statement (Elmi, Personal Interview, January 5, 2024):

“During the fasting month, *balamang* is usually done before Ramadan begins. Many women certainly participate—perhaps she is the one cooking or at least helping. Once the *lamang* is cooked, then we eat together with family. If there are relatives returning from *merantau*, the house becomes lively with family members.”

The interview excerpt demonstrates that women are widely perceived as the principal custodians of the tradition and as key actors in sustaining family solidarity before Ramadan. Their involvement extends beyond culinary responsibilities to encompass maintaining togetherness and kinship continuity. This finding is consistent with studies by Syahrul et al., (2026) and Semenova & Egorova (2024), which highlight women's roles in preserving cultural transmission and collective memory within local communities.



Figure 3.
The women burning *Lamang*
(Source: Researcher, 2024).

Women's participation becomes evident from the earliest stages of preparation. Although men generally collect bamboo, women dominate the subsequent stages of processing and preparation. They are responsible for cleaning the bamboo, removing fine hairs (*miang*), preparing banana leaves as an inner lining, and adjusting the leaves to fit the bamboo properly so that the *lamang* acquires its distinctive aroma and texture (Feri Satria Nur, Personal Interview, January 10, 2024).

“All Malamang practices are carried out by women, so all related activities involve women. The only exceptions are heavy tasks such as gathering firewood and searching for bamboo in the forest. The tasks prepared by women include finding and preparing banana leaves, glutinous rice, bananas, and the tools used during *Malamang*.”

These activities demonstrate that women possess cultural authority grounded in domestic knowledge transmitted across generations within the Pariaman community. Such knowledge represents more than practical expertise; it constitutes a form of cultural competence embedded in women's social identities. This interpretation corresponds with studies by Panda et al., (2025) on the transmission of women's ritual arts in India and Basumatary (2024) on women as custodians of ritual knowledge within the Bodo community.

Women are also responsible for washing and drying glutinous rice, preparing coconut milk, and determining the appropriate ingredient composition to ensure the *lamang* meets local standards of taste and quality. In addition to glutinous rice, some families prepare variations using bananas, cassava, or pumpkin. These culinary practices possess symbolic significance that extends beyond routine domestic responsibilities. The ability to produce high-quality *lamang* is closely associated with family honour and the preservation of Ramadan cultural traditions. This finding reinforces the work of Trang et al., (2025), who demonstrate that traditional food practices serve as important vehicles for the transmission of cultural identity.

Women's involvement continues throughout the cooking process. Firewood is arranged collectively to create a stable bed of hot coals, after which the bamboo tubes filled with glutinous rice are carefully positioned and rotated to ensure even cooking. Women collectively monitor the fire, assess the cooking process, and prevent the *lamang* from burning. Farida (personal interview, January 4, 2024) said:

“For example, if there are sisters within the family, they will be invited to participate in the *malamang* tradition when the family carries it out. There is a proverb that is still used: *given precedence one step ahead, elevated one level higher*, signifying respect for seniority and hierarchy within the family structure. If a woman is a newcomer to the extended family, she will be invited to learn the *malamang* tradition and will be taught by those older than her. Nevertheless, mutual respect is maintained, and the younger members are always accompanied and guided.”

This stage requires patience, precision, and extensive cooperation among female family members. As a result, *malamang* functions not only as a traditional cooking activity but also as a form of collective social labour that strengthens solidarity and relational bonds among women.

Viewed analytically, the entire sequence of the *malamang* tradition demonstrates that women's cultural practices during Ramadan cannot be understood solely as subordinate domestic activities. Rather, culinary work, collective ritual, and family solidarity intersect to create a social space through which women acquire symbolic recognition. Within the cultural context of Pariaman, domestic competencies function as forms of relational and symbolic capital that generate collective legitimacy through ritual participation (Saidung et al., 2025). Women, therefore, contribute not only to the preservation of cultural traditions but also to the maintenance of family cohesion, the continuity of *adat*, and the integration of Islamic values with local cultural practices.

Consequently, women in the *malamang* tradition should be understood not merely as cultural practitioners but also as social mediators whose activities sustain communal cohesion and cultural continuity during Ramadan. Their contributions illustrate how everyday domestic practices can become socially valued forms of cultural labour, generating recognition, legitimacy, and symbolic authority within the community.

Symbolic Capital and Limited Recognition in the Traditions of Pariaman Women

The findings of this study reveal that the traditions of *maanta pabukoan* and *malamang* are not merely cultural practices embedded within the month of Ramadan, but also constitute arenas for the production and distribution of social recognition, through which women in Pariaman attain honour, legitimacy, and symbolic authority within their communities. Through their engagement in both traditions, women do not merely perform domestic activities and religious rituals; they also produce reputation, respect, and specific social positions within society.

Within the Minangkabau social structure, women occupy a relatively strong structural position as heirs of the matrilineal lineage, holders of rights over ancestral property (*harta pusaka*), and markers of clan continuity (Husna & Wahyuni, 2024; Munir, 2016). This position normatively situates women as actors possessing certain authority within the customary (*adat*) structure (Cantika & Rafiqah, 2024). Thus, theoretically, Minangkabau women have access to sources of structural power that women in patrilineal systems do not possess. However, does this structural position automatically guarantee unconditional social recognition? Or is the recognition that women receive instead contingent upon their ability to fulfil roles deemed congruent with gender expectations within the community?

To understand this tension, this study employs Bourdieu's (1994) perspective on symbolic capital. For Bourdieu, daily practices are never neutral, as they always contain symbolic dimensions that enable individuals to accumulate honour, prestige, and social legitimacy (Bakti & Situmorang, 2024). Symbolic capital is formed when a particular ability, knowledge, or practice is recognized and valued by the community as something worthwhile (Makmun, 2016). Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, first introduced in his essay "*The Forms of Capital*" (Bourdieu, 1986), essentially refers to a form of capital that is perpetually at stake in contexts of power relations,

where recognition and legitimation from others constitute prerequisites for such capital to remain socially meaningful (Locock et al., 2017). In modern contexts, the intellectualization of labour has likewise prompted the emergence of new forms of symbolic capital, although interpretations of this concept vary, thereby giving rise to challenges in understanding the phenomenon of symbolic capital and the attendant dynamics of social interaction (Demidova, 2024). Professionalism, for instance, constitutes one form of symbolic capital whose substance is continuously contested

within professional arenas, which in turn is embedded in objective relations with other arenas within what Bourdieu terms the field of power (Noordegraaf & Schinkel, 2011). An important characteristic of symbolic capital is its instability; it depends on recognition and legitimation from others to remain socially meaningful (Locock et al., 2017).

In the context of this study, women's capacity to maintain kinship ties, organize collective work, preserve traditional culinary knowledge, and ensure the continuity of Ramadan rituals becomes a source of symbolic capital that acquires social legitimation. When women prepare iftar meals, process *lamang*, organize collective labour, and maintain kinship relationships, they are in fact performing symbolic work that transcends the practical functions of these activities. These activities become means for women to demonstrate social and cultural competence that is valued in the eyes of the community. Consequently, women do not merely produce food and organize Ramadan rituals; they also produce meaning and recognition that determine their social position. The greater a woman's capacity to sustain social relations and ensure the continuity of tradition, the greater the honor and legitimacy she obtains. Ramadan traditions, therefore, become arenas in which women accumulate symbolic capital, which is subsequently converted into respect and social recognition within the community.

However, Bourdieu's perspective alone is insufficient to explain why the recognition that women obtain is selective and conditional. It is at this juncture that Axel Honneth's (2012) theory of recognition becomes important to complement the analysis. Honneth argues that individuals require social recognition to build self-esteem, self-respect, and a positive social identity (Meitikasari & Drianus, 2021). Recognition enables individuals to feel that their existence and contributions are valuable to the community in which they live (Edeh, 2026). In the context of this study, appreciation for women's ability to process *lamang*, organize Ramadan rituals, maintain kinship relationships, and sustain social solidarity constitutes an important foundation for the formation of honor and the meaningfulness of women's social existence in Pariaman.

The trilogy of recognition, love, solidarity, and rights, forms a framework for understanding the formation of public space, both physical and virtual, in which interacting subjects strive to achieve mutual recognition (Capitani & Rinaldini, 2024). Through a normative reconstruction based on the intersubjective dimensions of recognitional institutions, social freedom presupposes access to such institutions. The realization of freedom then develops as a pattern expressed in plural forms and extended from the "we" in personal relationships, within the market domain, and in relation to the state through democratic will-formation (Salman, 2024). For Honneth, the struggle for recognition constitutes an intersubjective negotiation undertaken by subjects to obtain consideration for their identity claims (Pilapil, 2026). Within this framework, recognition shifts the meaning of justice from its traditional understanding as material redistribution toward the notion of a satisfactory life (Kretz, 2021).

Recognition theory is important for accounting for the processes of denying the value and rights of certain social groups, as well as the struggles of historically marginalized communities to obtain recognition (Hettli, 2026) in the service of social justice (Fuller & Gassner, 2026). The inability to determine oneself collectively, identified as a fundamental social obstacle to self-development and moral recognition, can trigger experiences of social injustice, particularly within the realm of work. Recognition itself is grounded in socially mediated processes of perception, which can either enable or inhibit the recognition of a person (Petherbridge, 2021). In this context, social invisibility becomes misrecognition, characterized by a lack of attention and deliberate disregard for others. Therefore, the struggle for recognition must occur, inter alia, through efforts to render previously invisible subjects socially visible.

However, as Honneth (2012) explains, recognition is not always distributed equitably. In societies still marked by asymmetrical gender relations, recognition tends to be granted to individuals who successfully fulfill particular normative expectations (Syahrul et al., 2026).

The findings of this study indicate that respect for women in Pariaman constitutes recognition that is real and socially meaningful, yet simultaneously constrained by social structures that determine which forms of action are deemed worthy of recognition.

This is precisely where the debate that this study seeks to advance lies: do Ramadan traditions truly serve as spaces of empowerment for women, or do they instead function as mechanisms for the reproduction of gender subordination? The intersection of Bourdieu's and Honneth's perspectives becomes crucial for answering this question. While Bourdieu helps us to see how symbolic capital is accumulated through daily practices within social arenas, Honneth enriches the analysis by demonstrating that the recognition obtained through such symbolic capital is never neutral, it is always shaped by normative structures that determine who is worthy of recognition and under what conditions recognition is granted. In other words, the symbolic capital that women accumulate through Ramadan traditions holds value only insofar as it aligns with prevailing gender expectations, and it is here that the mechanism of conditional recognition operates. What Bourdieu terms the field of power encompasses not only struggles between different arenas but also struggles within the arena itself over what constitutes practices worthy of recognition, a struggle in which Pariaman women are actively engaged yet simultaneously constrained by pre-established rules of the game.

On the one hand, these findings demonstrate that Ramadan traditions provide space for women to obtain honour, symbolic authority, and tangible improvements in social status. Women who successfully perform domestic and ritual roles receive recognition that strengthens their social positions within the family and community. In this sense, Ramadan traditions can be read as arenas of empowerment, spaces in which women can demonstrate their agency, competence, and socially valuable contributions. The symbolic capital they accumulate through participation in these traditions becomes a source of genuine legitimacy and honour. From Honneth's perspective, the recognition that women obtain through these traditions makes an important contribution to the formation of positive social identity and self-esteem. When the community appreciates women's ability to preserve traditions and sustain social solidarity, this affirms the value and meaningfulness of their social existence.

On the other hand, however, such respect can only be obtained through compliance with a set of normative expectations regarding how women ought to act. Women are respected primarily because they are perceived as successful guardians of social relations, preservers of tradition, and performers of ritual labour that sustains community life. Conversely, forms of action that fall outside the framework of normative femininity do not necessarily attain an equivalent degree of legitimation (Porter & Barry, 2014). In other words, the recognition that women receive is not universal recognition; recognition granted solely by virtue of their existence as autonomous social subjects, but rather conditional recognition. Recognition is granted only if women successfully fulfil roles that have been culturally predetermined as appropriate for women. It is here that a tension emerges between what Honneth terms the struggle for recognition and the social reality in which such recognition is only available through compliance with prevailing gender norms. The struggle for recognition that Honneth idealizes as an intersubjective negotiation to obtain consideration for identity claims, in the context of this study, turns out to unfold within strict normative boundaries. Women do indeed obtain recognition, but such recognition is only available to those who are willing and able to fulfil culturally predetermined roles.

This debate becomes increasingly compelling when situated within the Minangkabau matrilineal context. Within the matrilineal system, women structurally occupy a relatively strong position, as heirs of the lineage, holders of rights over ancestral property, and markers of clan continuity. However, this structural position does not automatically liberate women from normative gender constraints (Syah et al., 2026). Rather, recognition of women remains constructed through their ability to perform roles deemed consistent with religious ethics and cultural expectations of the ideal woman. This means that women possess certain structural power, in this case, as *bundo kanduang*, yet their social legitimation continues to be obtained through the fulfilment of normatively determined social roles.

Herein lies the irony: on the one hand, the matrilineal system affords women structural power that women in patrilineal systems do not possess; on the other hand, such power does not automatically yield equitable and unconditional social recognition. Drawing on Honneth's framework, this tension demonstrates that access to recognitional institutions, as noted by Salman, (2024) does not always guarantee the full realization of freedom, because these institutions themselves operate within a normative framework laden with gendered assumptions. The social freedom presupposed by access to recognitional institutions, in practice, remains constrained by normative structures that determine which forms of recognition are legitimate and valuable.

It is within this context that the intersection of Minangkabau matrilineal custom (*adat*), Islamic values, and Ramadan cultural practices becomes important to read as a politics of recognition. This study demonstrates that the existence of a matrilineal system does not automatically liberate women from normative gender constraints. Rather, recognition of women is constructed through their ability to perform roles deemed consistent with religious ethics and cultural expectations of the ideal woman. This tension, between the structural power that women possess through *adat* and the normative conditions governing how social respect can be obtained, constitutes the central finding of this study. Thus, what Bourdieu terms the field of power encompasses not only struggles between different arenas but also struggles within the arena itself over what constitutes practices worthy of recognition, a struggle in which Pariaman women are actively engaged yet simultaneously constrained by pre-established rules of the game.

On the basis of this debate, this study proposes the concept of *limited recognition* to explain the form of social legitimation that Pariaman women obtain through Ramadan traditions. Limited recognition refers to a condition in which women obtain social recognition that is real and carries significant implications for their honour and social position, yet such recognition remains contingent, dependent on their success in performing roles that align with normative constructions of femininity (Porter & Barry, 2014). In other words, women obtain legitimation not merely by virtue of their existence as autonomous social subjects, but because they successfully fulfil cultural expectations regarding how women ought to act within the community. This concept enriches the discussion of Bourdieu's symbolic capital by demonstrating that the accumulation of symbolic capital depends not only on recognition from others, but also on the extent to which the practices performed are congruent with the dominant normative structure. The symbolic capital that Pariaman women obtain is thus "bound" capital, it holds value only insofar as it is produced through practices that have been designated as legitimate by the community.

The concept of limited recognition demonstrates that the relationship between agency and structure cannot be understood dichotomously (Porter & Barry, 2014). Pariaman women are neither passive objects of subordination nor entirely free agents without social constraints surrounding them. They possess the capacity to accumulate symbolic capital, build honor, and obtain social recognition through their engagement with traditions. However, this entire process unfolds within normative boundaries that determine which forms of action are deemed legitimate and valuable. Thus, limited recognition contains an inherent tension (Leeuwen, 2007). On the one hand, it enables women to obtain symbolic authority and strengthen their social positions within the family and community. On the other hand, it simultaneously reproduces the gender order that constrains the forms of legitimation available to women. The recognition that women receive, therefore, cannot be understood merely as a form of subordination, nor can it be regarded as an expression of emancipation entirely free from structure. Within Honneth's framework, this concept demonstrates that the struggle for recognition does not always culminate in liberation; it can culminate in *limited recognition*, recognition that is granted yet simultaneously circumscribes the forms of subjectivity deemed legitimate.

The primary theoretical contribution of this study lies in its endeavour to demonstrate that women's social recognition in Islamic-Minangkabau society operates through a bounded mechanism. Amid women's relatively strong structural position within the matrilineal system, social respect continues to be granted conditionally through the fulfilment of particular gender expectations. The concept of limited recognition thus offers an analytical lens for understanding that social recognition is not always synonymous with liberation, just as subordination does not always negate agency.

Rather, recognition, power, and identity are continuously produced through ongoing negotiation between symbolic capital, normative structures, and daily practices (Malik et al., 2025). It is in this sense that Pariaman women emerge as agents who actively utilize Ramadan traditions to build their social authority, while simultaneously confronting normative boundaries that regulate the forms of legitimation they can obtain.

Thus, the debate that this study seeks to address is that Ramadan traditions in Pariaman constitute arenas in which women's social recognition is produced through mechanisms that are simultaneously empowering and constraining. Women obtain tangible honour and legitimation, yet only within a normatively predetermined cultural framework.

Limited recognition, as the central argument, becomes the key concept that explains this ambivalent condition, a condition in which opportunities for obtaining recognition and legitimation coexist with structural constraints that shape the forms of agency deemed socially valuable. This concept not only enriches the discourse on women and ritual in contemporary Islamic studies, but also offers an analytical framework for understanding gender dynamics in matrilineal-Muslim societies in a more nuanced and contextual manner.

CONCLUSION

Empirically, this study demonstrates that the *maanta pabukoan* and *malamang* traditions in Pariaman society function as mechanisms of social recognition embedded within the cultural structure of Ramadan. Women attain social legitimacy through domestic and culinary competencies that are collectively valued within the systems of social exchange and family solidarity. In this context, the recognition of women does not depend on formal authority or individual charisma, but is shaped through cultural contributions that are continuously reproduced in the traditional practices of Pariaman society.

In accordance with the 2026 policy framework of the West Sumatra Department of Culture, which emphasizes “*Merawat Tradisi, Menjaga Jati Diri*” this study offers a recommendation for the department to conduct an inventory and re-examine the local traditions of Minangkabau. Such cultural revitalization endeavors are directed not merely at safeguarding the ancestral legacy, but also at reinstating the strategic role of women and advancing gender equality across the diverse cultural practices embedded within Minang society.

This study has limitations as it was conducted qualitatively in a single location and within a specific time period, thus its findings cannot be generalized to the entire Pariaman community, other Minangkabau sub-groups, nor diaspora communities. Therefore, subsequent research needs to examine the concept of “limited recognition” in other Minangkabau Ramadan traditions and in different local Muslim community contexts.

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