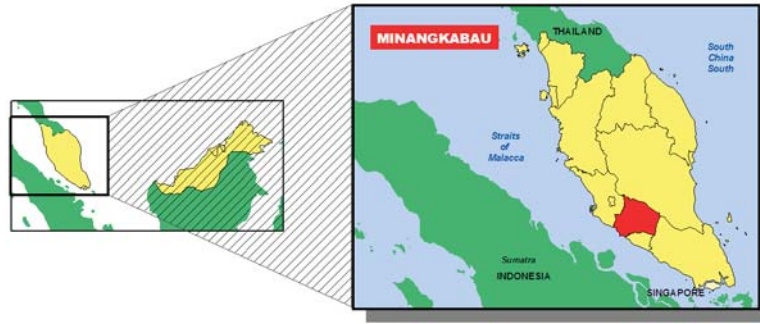


MINANGKABAU



Population	Major Religion	Language
800,000	Islam	Bahasa Malaysia

Who are the Minangkabau?

The Minangkabau, or Minang, comprise a majority of the state of Negeri Sembilan in Peninsular Malaysia. As descendants from the Minangkabau people from West Sumatra, Indonesia, the Minang of Malaysia have a distinct culture and their own royal line that dates back several centuries. The Minang speak the national language of Malaysia, but they have their own dialect that reflects lingual roots in the language of their Indonesian heritage. Within Malaysia, the Minang refer to themselves as Orang Negeri or person from Negeri.

What are their lives like?

The Minang are most noted for their adherence to *adat pepatih* (matrilineal inheritance). Certain areas of Negeri Sembilan have moved away from this tradition due to the complexities of the matrimonial ceremonies and the blending of communities with peoples from different Malay groups who use traditional male inheritance. However, the areas of Kuala Pilah, Tampin, Seri Menanti, and Jelebu are still strong in their unique culture and consistently practice this tradition.

The Minang place great emphasis on their women. In order to protect the rights of the female, the name and property are passed down through the line of the mother. Daughters are strongly encouraged to marry within the same people group or else they are not allowed to live on family land. Sons are allowed to marry outside of the people group, but they, too, forfeit their right to live on family land since the wife would have no land inheritance of her own. Newlyweds either live on their own or with the family of the bride.

Clan leaders within the Minang estimate that there are approximately 35,000 square kilometers of clan land in the region. This land is in the name of the female, but male clan leaders balance the scales of power. Clan leaders have their own titles within their *suku* (clan group) and

strict hierarchy designates how many leaders each clan group is allowed.

Housing and architecture for the Minang have become more modern over the past generation though older, more traditional homes are still being occupied. The roof of a traditional home is peeked at both ends to represent the horns of a water buffalo. These roofs along with spicy food are two trademarks of the Minangkabau.

What do they believe?

The Minang are devout Muslims in spite of their matrilineal heritage. Polygamy is rare within the Minang culture because it conflicts with a pure inheritance line. The aspect of female inheritance and men being unable to take a second wife draws criticism from more fundamental Islamic people groups.

The Minang practice the five pillars of Islam and wear Muslim clothing that is consistent with other Malay groups throughout Malaysia. A large majority of Minang women wear a head covering and the percentage that do not are of the younger generation.

Marriage ceremonies and funerals are in keeping with Islamic tradition and both male and female children are circumcised: boys when they are twelve years old and girls when they are still babies. Only the circumcision of the male is celebrated.

What are their needs?

The Minang feel the need to protect their culture from future assimilation. As other areas of Negeri Sembilan have shown, mixing with other Malay groups results in a loss of their unique matrilineal customs. As a result, the Minang feel a sense of loss of identity.

May the unique culture of the Minang be preserved and blessed as a culture designed by the All-Compassionate One.