

## The Use of Pusako Tinggi to Support Children's Education In Nagari Salingka Muaro, Sungai Aur District, West Pasaman Regency

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### ABSTRACT

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This study was motivated by the use of pusako tinggi to finance children's education in Nagari Salingka Muaro, West Pasaman Regency. Pusako tinggi is an inherited asset from the female side that cannot be sold without the community's consent, because it serves not only as an economic asset but also as a symbol of the family's social continuity. However, in modern society, pusako tinggi is often used or even sold to meet urgent needs, including education. This study uses a qualitative, descriptive approach. The theory used is Herbert Spencer's theory of social change. Informants were purposively selected, and data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The unit of analysis was clans that sold high pusako for their children's education. Data analysis employed Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The results showed that the use of high-purpose savings accounts supported family life, particularly for children's education expenses. This reflects that Minangkabau customs prioritise education, as children are seen as inheritors of family dignity and continuity. However, the practice of utilising high-pusako for education often creates internal dilemmas and conflicts, given its communal rather than private ownership.



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### INTRODUCTION

High inheritance is a hereditary asset passed down through the female line that cannot be sold without the clan's consent, as it serves not only as an economic asset but also as a symbol of continuity and social protection for the family and clan.

However, in the Development of modern society, inheritance is often used, or even sold, to meet urgent needs, including financing children's education (Sembiring, 2023).

The use of pusako tinggi for children's education poses a dilemma between the increasingly urgent need for education and the imperative to preserve pusako as a traditional heritage. On the one hand, the utilisation of pusako tinggi enables children from these clans to access higher education without financial barriers, thereby positively affecting the nuclear family (Rahmat, 2019). On the other hand, this utilisation has the potential to undermine the sustainability of the pusako tinggi itself, thereby affecting the social and economic balance within the Minangkabau traditional community. Additionally, the social and economic changes in Minangkabau society influence the mindset and practices for managing pusako tinggi, including the reinterpretation of customs in light of educational needs and child protection (Yulanda, 2023).

Children's education and the use of high-value heirlooms as a source of financing can create a dilemma between the urgent need for education and the risk of undermining heirlooms' sustainability as cultural heritage. This creates tension within families and communities, especially if there is no explicit agreement on the limits of using high-value heirlooms for this purpose (Arrafi, 2024). The main problems that arise include conflicts over the management of pusako tinggi, the decline of women's role in traditional management, shifts in traditional rules regarding the use of pusako tinggi, disputes between heirs, and dilemmas in the use of pusako tinggi to support children's education, which has the potential to threaten the preservation of pusako itself (Utama, 2024).

Based on the results of observations conducted by researchers in Nagari Salingka Muaro, Sungai Aur District, on July 22, 2024, the following problems were found: differences in understanding and interests among clan or family members in managing pusako tinggi, mainly when it is used for economic needs such as financing children's education; a decline in the number of women as holders and managers of pusako tinggi, a role traditionally entrusted to them, due to the

influence of globalization and social change; disputes between heirs that are difficult to resolve through deliberation and consensus, even leading to resolution through formal legal channels, a shift in customary rules where high-value heirlooms, which used only to be allowed to be pawned for specific reasons and with the consent of the clan, are now often pawned without considering these rules, and an imbalance between the economic needs of the family and the preservation of customs and high-value heirlooms. Conflicts over the management of pusako tinggi also arise when parties outside the community handle it through profit-sharing or rental systems, which sometimes lead to injustice and tension between parties.

According to custom, a high pusako may be pawned under certain conditions, such as for wedding expenses, repairs to the rumah gadang (traditional house), funeral expenses, or the appointment of a penghulu (traditional leader) (Riska, 2019). However, in modern practice, pusako is often used as collateral or pawned to finance education due to limited economic resources, especially in agricultural areas. (Afdillah et al. 2024). This usually leads to disagreements within families, as some consider the use of pusako for personal gain to be contrary to customary principles (Murniwati 2023).

Modernisation has also influenced the Minangkabau people's perspective. Education is seen as a long-term investment, creating a dilemma between preserving traditional values and meeting educational needs in a competitive era (Monita, 2022). Some families seek alternative solutions by leasing communal land or collaborating with external parties to maintain the productive use of ancestral property without selling it.

The Minangkabau matrilineal system also influences education, particularly given the high rate of male migration, which places greater responsibility on women (Firdawaty, 2018). Previous studies show that mortgaging communal land for educational costs often gives rise to legal and customary issues (Sari, 2024). Therefore, this study focuses on the use of high pusako to support children's education in Nagari Salingka Muaro, Sungai Aur District, West Pasaman Regency. The researcher emphasises the importance of high inheritance because it is heritable,

whereas low inheritance results from parental effort. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the use of high inheritance to support children's education in Nagari Salingka Muaro, Sungai Aur District, West Pasaman Regency.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Herbert Spencer's theory of social change is applied to analyze the shifting values and practices regarding the use of pusako tinggi in children's education. Research informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in decision-making regarding the management and sale of *pusako tinggi*. The informants included *ninik mamak* (traditional clan leaders), mothers as the matrilineal heirs of pusako tinggi, clan members who approved the use of inherited assets, and local customary leaders (*penghulu adat*) who understood Minangkabau inheritance norms. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. The unit of analysis in this study was a group, namely those who sold heirlooms for children's education. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive data analysis model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1992).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Overview of High-Value Heirlooms

Based on field observations, high-value ancestral properties, such as rice fields, farms, gardens, or traditional houses, continue to play an essential role in supporting the livelihoods of the Minangkabau people, including their children's education. In some families, the proceeds from pusako tinggi, such as rice, garden produce, or land rental, are used to finance their children's schooling, covering school supplies, tuition fees, and daily necessities that support the learning process. This is in line with the customary principle that pusako tinggi is "harto kaum" (community property) intended for the common good, especially for the next generation. However, the utilisation of high inheritance faces various obstacles. Not all high-value inheritances can be used immediately, as customary rules prohibit sale

and permit pawning only in urgent circumstances. As a result, when children's educational needs become more urgent, such as continuing their education in college, families often consult *ninik mamak* (community leaders) for a solution.

On the other hand, there are internal family conflicts, such as disagreements among clan members over whether the high *pusako* can be used for educational expenses. This situation sometimes allows the use of *pusako tinggi* to proceed smoothly, but it can also lead to disputes within the extended family. Nevertheless, the community continues to strive to preserve *pusako tinggi* as a customary identity while adapting its use to provide tangible benefits, particularly for children's future through education.

In Minangkabau customary law, high inheritance is passed down only to women through the maternal line. Meanwhile, men only have the right to use the land for gardening, and the proceeds are divided equally among family members. Minangkabau women have an essential position in the customary system. They are the heirs to the family fortune, bearers of the family name, and owners of the *rumah gadang*, adorned with carvings typical of Minangkabau. Lineage is traced through the mother (matrilineal), not the father. In addition, women play a role in the kinship system, the management of *pusako* and *rumah gadang*, and the organisation of marriages. This system is strengthened by economic support sourced from *pusako tinggi* and *rumah gadang* dwellings.

Based on interviews with the community, it can be explained that high *pusako* is divided into two forms: (1) *Sako*, which is a title inherited from *ninik mamak* to *mamak*, then passed on to male nephews. (2) *Pusako*, which is property in the form of land, rice fields, and farms that are inherited through the maternal lineage. Thus, those entitled to inherit the high inheritance (3) are women of the maternal line, including daughters and granddaughters. Meanwhile, a *mamak* serves only as a manager and guardian of the inheritance, without the right to own it.

**Table 1. Forms and Lineage of *Pusako Tinggi***

Form	Inheritance Type	Object/Asset	Recipient Lineage	Role of Mamak
Sako	Title	Clan title	Male nephews (patriline)	Title

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Form	Inheritance Type	Object/Asset (gelar adat)	Recipient Lineage	Role of Mamak transfer authority
Pusako	Property/land	Land, rice fields, farms	Daughters/granddaughters	Asset manager, not owner

Source: *Murniwati, 2023*

In Nagari Salingka Muaro, the pusako land is managed by a mamak and jointly owned by a clan. Mamak may enjoy the fruits of the land used for gardening, but they do not have the right to own it. However, the reality on the ground indicates that some pusako tinggi are no longer intact because they have changed hands or been sold, even though, under customary law, pusako tinggi cannot be sold except in cases of urgent need.

The facts on the ground also indicate that the practice of selling pusako tinggi in Nagari Salingka Muaro has persisted for approximately the past 6 years. Although it clearly violates custom, some people continue to do so for economic reasons. In fact, some nephews are dishonest about the purpose of the sale, leading to lies during the signing of the statement letter. This often becomes a source of conflict within the extended family. According to several customary leaders, this situation has forced the ninik mamak, or KAN (Kerapatan Adat Nagari), to grant their approval to avoid prolonged conflict. The village head also added that when there are no more items to sell to meet daily needs, pusako tinggi becomes the only option for families experiencing economic hardship.

### **The Process of Selling High-Value Heirlooms**

In every region, including Nagari Salingka Muaro, people sell harto pusako tinggi to meet their daily needs, including education. However, the sale cannot be done carelessly; all family members, the ninik mamak, must approve it, and it must then be reported to the KAN (the jorong head) and the nagari guardian. The process usually begins with a family meeting. Once an agreement has been reached, a statement letter is drafted and signed by all clan members, accompanied by photocopies of their identity cards, and then submitted to the jorong head for

processing and approval by the village chief. According to informants, obstacles often arise when family members' signatures do not match, necessitating identity documents to verify their identities. Several informants, including the village chief and members of the KAN, emphasised that customary rules require tiered approval: from female heirs, *mamak*, and *ninik mamak* to the KAN. The community generally complies with these rules, though sales practices sometimes cause conflicts.

Interviews with female informants also revealed that before selling valuable heirlooms, they always sought the consent of the entire family. Only when everyone agreed would the sale proceed with the necessary paperwork. This indicates that, despite strict customary rules, the community continues to adapt to the family's economic needs, particularly to ensure the survival of the next generation.

That *pusako tinggi* is increasingly pawned or sold to finance children's education, which can be interpreted through Herbert Spencer's theory of social change, which emphasises that social institutions adapt to shifting material conditions and changing values. Spencer's framework helps explain how customary norms that once strictly prohibited the commodification of *pusako tinggi* are now under pressure from new economic demands and changing life-course expectations within families. However, to deepen the analytical power of the discussion, Spencer's macro-level perspective should be complemented by mid-range and micro-theoretical lenses that account for agency, capital conversion, and value negotiation within kinship groups. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of capital conversion, for example, the practice of pawning *pusako tinggi* can be read as a strategic transformation of inherited cultural and symbolic capital (ancestral land, titles, and prestige) into economic capital to secure educational mobility for the next generation. Parents and kin do not simply violate custom out of ignorance; instead, they make calculated choices to convert long-term collective assets into immediate investments in children's human capital. This interpretation foregrounds the agency of female heirs and *mamak* as actors who negotiate between customary obligations and pragmatic household needs.

At the same time, modernization and cultural-materialist perspectives clarify why education emerges as a particularly salient expenditure priority: rising returns to formal education (employment opportunities, social mobility) increase the perceived utility of allocating scarce resources to schooling. Spencer's idea of social evolution—coupled with modernization theory—thus explains both the normative shift (changes in attitudes toward selling pusako tinggi) and the structural pressures (higher educational costs, unstable agricultural incomes) that produce the observed behavior.

The theory used in this study is Herbert Spencer's theory of social change. This theory was chosen because, historically, heirlooms in Minangkabau were not tradable. However, as times and lifestyles changed, pusako tinggi began to be traded within the community to meet their increasing needs. This condition also occurred in Nagari Salingka Muaro, Sungai Aur District, where a pusako tinggi was pawned to finance children's college education.

Field research indicates that high purses are pawned primarily to continue children's education. Each family in the nagari has its own reasons, but, in general, these reasons contradict the customary principle that prohibits the sale of high-pusako. The high cost of education is a major factor. Education today requires significant financial resources, from uniforms, books, and school fees to college tuition. Often, income from rice fields, gardens, or rumah gadang (traditional houses), which are considered pusako tinggi, is insufficient to meet these needs, forcing people to sell or pawn some of their pusako to ensure their children can continue attending school.

In addition, limited livelihoods are also a reason. Most of the indigenous population depends solely on the produce of their high-value pusako farms or gardens. When the harvest fails or crop prices fall, they have no other source of income; therefore, pawning their high-value pusako is the only option. Informants also revealed that economic hardship is a dominant factor. Most are homemakers or self-employed with limited income, while their husbands are unemployed, employed as farmers without permanent positions, or deceased. As a result, the family income



is insufficient to cover daily needs and children's education costs, so pusako tinggi is used as a solution.

Harto pusako itself is an inherited trait from ancestors. In the context of education, proceeds from managing pusako can help parents send their children to school, even under conditions of limited economic resources. This aligns with the Minangkabau custom of viewing education as an investment in the futures of children and grandchildren. One of the important duties of a mamak is to educate and care for the welfare of their grandchildren. A traditional proverb says, "Children are carried, grandchildren are guided, and villagers are cared for." This means that a mamak is not only responsible for their own children but also for their grandchildren, including with respect to education.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the use of harto pusako tinggi in Minangkabau society primarily serves to support family life, including for the benefit of future generations. One use is to support children's educational costs. The use of pusako tinggi in education indicates that Minangkabau customs prioritise education, as children are regarded as heirs to the family's dignity and continuity. However, the practice of using harto pusako for educational purposes often gives rise to internal dilemmas and conflicts because pusako tinggi is communal (belonging to the clan/extended family) rather than personal property.

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