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## **Traditional Mandailing Natal Muslim Women's Clothing: An Analysis of Local Wisdom and the Spirit of Religious Practice According to Islamic Law**

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### ***Abstract***

*Clothing is a personal right and freedom that integrates social and cultural aspects. This issue demonstrates the complexity and sensitivity of the topic of dressing for Muslim women, which often involves the interaction between personal beliefs, religious law, human rights, and social norms. This research is a type of phenomenological study that will reveal the relationship between traditional clothing of Muslim women in Mandailing Natal and how Islam views it. Data was collected through observation and interviews. The data analysis results show that historically, women in Mandailing Natal have maintained traditional clothing both for customary ceremonies and daily wear. Adaptations and the influence of contemporary trends have also impacted the declining interest among young men and women in preserving their traditional clothing. When weighed against the Islamic legal perspective, which emphasizes modesty, gender appropriateness, simplicity, purity and cleanliness, non-tightness, and the absence of haram elements, the traditional attire of Muslim women in Mandailing Natal is appropriate and should be preserved and maintained.*

**Keywords:** *Clothing, Muslim Women, Customs, Islamic Law*

### **Introduction**

Mandailing Natal is one of the regions in North Sumatra, Indonesia, which historically has cultural and historical affinity with the Mandailing ethnic group. In historical terms, Mandailing Natal plays an important role as an area rich in cultural heritage and traditions of the Mandailing community. The history of Mandailing Natal encompasses various periods including the pre-colonial era, Dutch colonialism, and the Indonesian independence era. During the pre-colonial era, Mandailing Natal was part of the Malay kingdoms that thrived in Sumatra. The proximity to these kingdoms influenced the cultural aspects and life of the Mandailing Natal community.

Dutch colonization in the North Sumatra region also had a significant impact on Mandailing Natal. The Dutch introduced a new governance and administrative system that changed the management and social structure of the local community. On the other hand, the presence of the Dutch also brought changes in the fields of economy, education, and religion. During the Indonesian independence period, Mandailing Natal became part of the struggle for independence from colonial rule. The Mandailing Natal community actively participated in the struggle for independence and fought for their rights as part of the newly independent

Indonesia. In the historical context, Mandailing Natal also has strong cultural values and traditions. Various traditional ceremonies, religious rituals, as well as arts and culture of Mandailing Natal are integral parts of the local community's identity. Knowledge of Mandailing Natal's history is important in understanding the development and socio-cultural dynamics that have occurred in the region up to the present day.

Mandailing Natal is an area frequently visited by important figures in this Republic. This is not by coincidence, but due to the significant history carved by great personalities born in Mandailing land. Some of these figures include: General Abdul Haris Nasution from Hutapungkut, Kotanopan District. Currently, there is a project underway to rebuild the monument of General Abdul Haris Nasution, located not far from Mustafawiyah Islamic Boarding School. Willem Iskandar, an education figure and poet known for his poems about homeland. Sutan Soripada Lubis, a constituent assembly member and Indonesian politician. Sheikh Musthafa Husein Nasution Al-Mandili, an Islamic scholar and founder of Nahdlatul Ulama in North Sumatra. Sheikh Abdul Kadir Bin Abdul Mutalib and many other figures who have contributed to the Central Government of the Republic of Indonesia. The presence of these prominent figures brings pride to the Mandailing Natal community, especially to the younger generation. They are inspired to build their homeland and contribute to fulfilling the dreams of their predecessors.

In Mandailing traditional activities, clothing always takes center stage, whether it's during wedding ceremonies (horja siluluton) or mourning ceremonies (horja siriaon), and even in daily wear. Mandailing women often wear attire that is more structured and neat compared to men's clothing in every traditional occasion. Clothing is a product of a culture. Dressing behavior is one of the indicators that show human life as a form of nonverbal communication tool. Ceremonial celebrations and entertainment in a society or social group are important factors in determining dressing styles. Celebrations, entertainment, and recreation provide different time zones and formats from daily life. Therefore, dressing behavior is shaped and varies according to the type of occasion and location.

Clothing is a product of a culture. Dressing behavior is one of the indicators that show human life as a form of nonverbal communication tool. Ceremonial celebrations and entertainment in a society or social group are important factors in determining dressing styles. Celebrations, entertainment, and recreation provide different time zones and formats from daily life. Therefore, dressing behavior is shaped and varies according to the type of occasion and location.<sup>1</sup> It seems that all communities in various parts of the world also have their own characteristics and clothing characteristics, for example in Jordan, for example, there are characteristics of women who use no less than thirty-five models of interaction to exchange objects that show hospitality, generosity and enthusiasm in selling merchandise.<sup>2</sup> In Tuban, East Java Province, Indonesia, for example, apart from being used for clothing, cloth is also

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<sup>1</sup> (Yrd. Doç. Dr. Adem KOÇ, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad A. Badarneh, Kawakib Al-Momani, and Fathi Migdadi, "Between Tradition and Modernity: The Bargaining Genre in Women's Clothing Stores in Jordan," *Journal of Pragmatics* 101 (August 2016): 118–37, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2016.06.005>.

used as a ritual for social status and philosophy in their lives. However, this culture was assimilated along with the arrival of modern culture.<sup>3</sup>

*Awrah* signifies the intimate or genital parts of the human body which must not be exposed to anyone other than a *mahram* (marriageable man or woman). Humans need clothing to cover their *awrah* and to protect themselves from heat, cold, as well as wild animals' attacks, all of which can inflict harms to their bodies. Islam regulates how one dresses up to cover his or her *awrah* in accordance with the religious provisions and Sharia. In Islam, covering *awrah* is compulsory both for women and men, with women having more *awrah* to be concealed than men; the whole body of a woman is *awrah*, except her face and palms. Therefore, Muslim women are required to observe the basics of Islamic clothing and cover their *awrah*. Indeed, dress code is a reflection of one's personality, symbolizing his or her social status, taste and appreciation of aesthetics.<sup>4</sup> Islam requires that women conceal her *awrah* from the sight of *non-mahram* men, especially when they are outside of the house. For Muslim women, their dress code has been regulated in such a way that in general it requires them to wear a *hijab* as an obligation they must observe as soon as they have reached the age of puberty since one of the purposes of wearing a *hijab* is to cover their entire body or *awrah*.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, leading scholars such as Imam an-Nawawi described Muslim women's clothing as consisting of a head cover or *khimar*, which functions to cover the head, and an *izar* (loin cloth), which covers the body and limbs.<sup>6</sup> The Prophet SAW specified the clothing rules for women when in one occasion, as narrated by Umm Salamah, a woman inquired about the type of clothing to wear during prayers, i.e. whether it was permissible to perform a prayer in a *Dir'*, a long and wide garment that covers a woman's body down to her feet, and a *khimar* without *izar*. The Prophet answered that it was permissible provided that the garment covered all her body down to the back of her feet.<sup>7</sup> This view is in a stark contrast with the society's accepted norms before the emergence of Islam. If we look at the old practices in our society, especially prior to the arrival of Islam, we will find many historical records showing that women's dress code in that particular period of time was not in accordance with Islamic teachings, especially when the clothing industry had not yet emerged. Only certain body parts were primitively covered with clothes or wrapped with animal hides, foliage, or other types of traditional needlework. However, the advent of Islam and the advances in science and technology have presented to the modern society a new way of dressing that is commonly referred to fashion. One community's culture and educational opportunity also influences the way its people dress. Clothing represents the values and the significance of a society's culture.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Fajar Ciptandi et al., "Identity Shift On Traditional Clothes For Women Tuban, East Java, Indonesia," in *Proceedings of the 4th Bandung Creative Movement International Conference on Creative Industries 2017 (4th BCM 2017)* (Paris, France: Atlantis Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.2991/bcm-17.2018.48>.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmad Fauzi, "Pakaian Wanita Muslimah Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam," 2016, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35897/iqtishodia.v1i1.56>.

<sup>5</sup> Jalaluddin Jalaluddin as-Suyuthi, *Ad-Durr al-Mansur Fi at-Tafsir al-Ma'sur* (Bairut: Darul Kutub Ailmiah, Libanon, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> An-Nawawi, *Al-Majmu S*, n.d.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Nashiruddin Al Albani, *Sahih Abu Dawod* (Riyad: Darussalam, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Abd. Haris, *ETIKA HAMKA ; Konstruksi Etik Berbasis Rasional*, ed. Pres Islami (Yogyakarta: CV. Mandar Maju, 2018), <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=jl1nDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA52&dq=arti+etika+kristen&hl=id&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj9077njMfnAhUE93MBHZ8nBGAQ6AEIMDAB#v=onepage&q=arti etika kristen&f=false>.

Mandailing Natal is one of the regencies in Indonesia with a predominantly Muslim population, with, as the data shows, 95.51% of the population identifying themselves as Muslims.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Mandailing Natal has been well-known as the *veranda of Mecca* with the slogan “*negeri beradat taat beribadat*,” roughly translated “*a cultured country devoted to worship*,” due to the strong influence of Islam on its culture. Visiting Mandailing Natal, one can easily find a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), in which male and female *santris* (disciples) can be seen flocking to the nearby mosques during prayer times. The mosques in Mandailing Natal are within walking distance, making it easier for visitors to find a place to pray when passing by. On Fridays, when the time has come for Friday prayers, stores and all business alike will come to a temporary halt until the prayers are finished. This tradition has become a positive culture passed down across generations.

However, as time goes by, behind the very positive Islamic culture of Mandailing Natal, there are several weaknesses, especially the way teenage girls dress which has been eroded by a way of dressing that is contrary to Islamic teachings. Deviating from the correct Islamic way of dressing, they are seen wearing tight clothes that reveal their curves or wearing loose but see-through clothes.<sup>10</sup> (M Nasir) Some are dressed in a way that does not fully covers their *awrah*, with some parts of their body such as limbs and neck visibly exposed. There are also those who wear a veil but with short sleeves, and there are even those who put on fully-body clothes but fail to wear a veil. It is obligatory for Muslim men and women to cover their *awrah* based on their own awareness rather than just an obligation to fulfill their religious provisions.<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon sparked the writers’ interest in raising their inquiries and researching the women’s dress code in Mandailing Natal from the perspective of Islamic laws.

## Method

This study was a phenomenological qualitative research and was descriptive in nature, analyzing and describing female dress code in Mandailing Natal from the perspective of Islamic laws. The data were collected through the methods of observations and field interviews which involved several related sources.

The subjects of this research meet the following criteria: (a) traditional leaders, (b) married individuals, and (c) religious leaders. The informants in this study include the head of the MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) of Mandailing Natal Regency, traditional leaders, and members of the community who are married. The total number of informants is 5, selected based on their roles and positions relevant to the main theme of the research. The research data also includes both written and non-written documents to provide additional information. Data collection techniques involve observation, interviews, and documentation.

The data analysis was conducted using the following procedures for data analysis and interpretation:

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<sup>9</sup> Pembuatan RPI2JM Keciaptakaryaan and Kabupaten Mandailing Natal, Profil Kabupaten Mandailing Natal, issued 2021.

<sup>10</sup> H. Muhammad Nasir Nasution, *Religious figures in Mandailing leader of the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia or MUI) in the Mandailing Natal Regency*. Interviewed by the author, 20 Oct 2023

<sup>11</sup> Fauzi, “Pakaian Wanita Muslimah Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam.”

- a. Starting with a description of the researcher's experience of the phenomenon.
- b. Formulating interview questions to understand how the subjects experience the phenomenon and developing a list of statements.
- c. Grouping the statements into meaning units, listing these units, and writing a textual description of the experience.
- d. Reflecting based on their own descriptions using structural descriptions, seeking all possible meanings and divergent perspectives, enriching the framework of understanding of the phenomenon, and creating a description of the phenomenon.
- e. Creating an overall description of the meaning and essence of the experience.
- f. Developing a composite textual-structural description of the meanings and essence of the experience, and then integrating all individual structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience that represents the respondents as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

## Discussion

Mandailing Natal is an area located in the North Sumatra Province, with the dominant ethnic group being Mandailing. While most people classify Mandailing as part of the Batak ethnic group, the native Mandailing people themselves reject this classification. They assert that Mandailing is distinct from Batak, particularly because Batak is commonly associated with non-Muslims (Christians), whereas the entire Mandailing community is Muslim.<sup>13</sup>

Local community leaders explain that this rejection is related to their different religious and cultural identities. Over its history, Mandailing Natal (abbreviated as Madina) celebrated its 25th anniversary in March 2024. Throughout its journey, Madina has undergone many changes, especially in the sectors of development and the shift in traditional values. Examples of these shifting values include the prohibition of marriage within the same clan, the prohibition of younger siblings marrying before older ones, and prohibitions in traditional ceremonies such as horja sililuton and siriaon.<sup>14</sup>

In societal life, the term "pakaian keadatan" (traditional attire) emerges as a manifestation of the rich and diverse cultural heritage possessed by various communities. Traditional attire functions as a symbol of cultural identity, reflecting the roots of traditions and values passed down through generations. This attire is often used in ceremonies and traditional rituals such as weddings, religious ceremonies, and cultural festivals, adding an air of grandeur and solemnity to these events. The elements of traditional attire, such as colors, motifs, and accessories, carry deep symbolic meanings, representing social status, roles within the community, and esteemed cultural values. Furthermore, the use of traditional attire serves as an important means of cultural preservation, helping to maintain the continuity of local traditions amid the strong currents of globalization.

Traditional attire also becomes an expression of cultural diversity in multicultural societies, allowing each ethnic group to display and celebrate their cultural identity. This strengthens mutual respect and understanding among groups, reinforcing communal identity and a sense of togetherness. When community members wear traditional attire at collective

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<sup>12</sup> clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (California: SAGE Publication, Inc., 1994).

<sup>13</sup> Dipertuan Ayah na lom-lom, *Traditional Figure/community figure*, Interviewed by the author, 14 Oct 2023

<sup>14</sup> H. Monang Pulungan, M.Pd, *Traditional Figure/community figure*, Interviewed by the author, 20 May 2023



events, it fosters a sense of unity and solidarity. The long history of a society is often reflected in the design, materials, and craftsmanship of traditional attire, illustrating historical influences, trade, and cultural interactions that have taken place. Besides its symbolic values, traditional attire also has practical functions suited to the geographical environment and local climate, with materials and designs adapted for comfort and everyday activities. Therefore, the term "pakaian keadatan" does not merely refer to clothing, but also embodies the identity, values, and cultural history of a society, emphasizing the importance of respecting and celebrating valuable cultural heritage.

Mandailing customs refer to a series of traditions, norms, and cultural values held by the Mandailing community. The Mandailing people are one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia originating from the Tapanuli region, Mandailing Natal, North Sumatra. Mandailing customs are rich and diverse, covering various aspects of life such as marriage customs, religious customs, kinship systems, consultation procedures, and much more.

One distinctive feature of Mandailing customs is its complex kinship system, with a clear separation between matrilineal families (clan) and patrilineal families (household). This is reflected in marriage customs, where the selection of life partners often takes into account family lineage and clan. Moreover, Mandailing customs also include protocols for communication and social interaction that are strictly regulated based on age hierarchy and social status.

In the realm of religion, Mandailing customs also encompass religious traditions that influence daily life. For example, during major Islamic celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha, the Mandailing community has unique rituals and traditions performed collectively as a form of respect for religious teachings. Mandailing customs also include a rich arts and cultural heritage, including music, dance, wood carving, and oral literature. These artistic works often contain meanings and cultural values passed down from generation to generation, becoming an integral part of Mandailing people's identity and pride. It is important to note that Mandailing customs continue to evolve and change over time, but the fundamental values and traditions remain preserved and cherished by the Mandailing community as an inseparable part of their identity and cultural heritage.<sup>15</sup>

Dressing or clothing serve several purposes. In general, people dress to cover their *awrah*. From the aesthetic point of view, clothing is oriented to the artistic value of the wearer in a specific context and at a particular period of time and place. According to the Islamic viewpoint, dressing according to the teachings of Sharia aims not only to cover one's *awrah*, but also to worship and seek the blessings of Allah SWT.<sup>16</sup> The way of dressing has been prescribed in Islam for both Muslim men and women. A Muslim woman is required to cover all parts of her body and to stretch her clothes to the soles of her feet, revealing only her face and palms. As for men, the clothes they wear should not stick out past the soles of their feet. This practice was as described in a hadith narrated by Ibn Umar, in which The Prophet SAW said, "He who trailed his lower garment with no other intention but pride will never be looked upon by Allah on the Day of Resurrection." Umm Salamah then asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what should the women do with the hem of their clothes?" The Prophet replied,

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<sup>15</sup> H.Syamsir Batubara, *Religious figures in Mandailing Natal include members of the Fatwa Commission of the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia or MUI) in the Mandailing Natal Regency*. Interviewed by the author, 20 Oct 2023

<sup>16</sup> Hadas Hirsch, "Clothing and Colours in Early Islam," *Anthropology of the Middle East* 15, no. 1 (June 1, 2020): 99–114, <https://doi.org/10.3167/ame.2020.150108>.

“Lower it by a hand’s length.” Umm Salamah again asked, “What if their feet are uncovered?” The Prophet said, “Lower it by an arm’s length but no more than that”.<sup>17</sup>

Dressing based on the teachings of Islam can protect a Muslim woman from the crimes that can be incited by choosing wrong attires. In Islam, a woman is highly respected, protected and privileged. She constitutes a piece of jewelry that must be guarded and cared for, and therefore, a Muslim woman should dress in accordance with the teachings of Islam.<sup>18</sup> The way a woman dresses can lead to a man’s sexual arousal. If the man is a *non-mahram*, it will cause a grave sin for the woman. Imam as-Sa’di in his commentary stated that people who cover their *awrah* will be more difficult to tempt, and women who expose their *awrah* are often suspected of being women who fail to fully guarded their dignity, thus inviting others to behave disrespectfully towards them and to denigrate them.<sup>19</sup> Among the obligations upon every Muslim woman who has reached the age of puberty and reasoning are performing prayers and covering their *awrah*. *Awrah* denotes parts of the body of a Muslim men and women that must be concealed and must not be exposed to any *non-mahram* (marriageable) man or woman. Concealing one’s *awrah* is obligatory, as Allah SWT said in Surah An-Nur, Ayah 31 (24:31)

Allah Almighty commanded the Prophet SAW to order the believers to restrain their gaze and to protect their chastity from any forbidden act. This instruction aims to maintain their honor and to prevent them from sinning. Women believers should lower their sights, protect and conceal their *awrah* and cloak their chests from the sight of a *non-mahram*.<sup>20</sup> In Surah al-A’raf Ayah 31 (7:31).

The verse above asserts that Allah SWT instructed his believers to dress up politely and to cover their private parts when they are about to face Him.<sup>21</sup> According to scholars, this verse was revealed because in the age of *Jahiliyah*, the Arab women performed *tawaf* around the *Ka’bah* by exposing their *awrah*. This verse was then unveiled to The Prophet SAW to order them dress up their best clothes (covering their *awrah*) every time they entered the mosque, since, as the Prophet SAW mentioned in a hadith, by covering their *awrah*, a woman will be sheltered from all kinds of atrocities.<sup>22</sup> Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Ahzab, Verse 59 (33:59).

The verse above points out that Allah SWT commands the women believers to protect and cover their aurat by wearing a veil that covers their chest, head and entire body, because then they will not be harassed and safeguarded from crime. Many Muslim women already wear a *hijab*, but choose not to extend it so as to reveal parts of their head and chest. This way of dressing is erroneous and contrary to the statement of Allah SWT above. Rasulullah SAW, in a hadith which was narrated by Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi, also ordered the believers to guard their *awrah* except towards their spouses and slaves.<sup>23</sup> In fact, in another narration it was mentioned that the Prophet SAW warned that every woman who exposed their *awrah* on purpose will not enter *jannah* nor perceive its fragrance. In a hadith narrated by Abu

<sup>17</sup> Albani, *Sahih abu dawod*, Riyad: Daar Al-Ma’arif, 2008, p 241

<sup>18</sup> Sayyid Sabiq, *Fikih Sunnah, Jilid 12* (Cairo-Mesir: Daar Ar-Risalah, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Syaikh Abdurrahman bin Nashir As-Sa’di, *Tafsir As-Sa’di*, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Abu Muhammad al-Husain bin Mas’ud al-Farra’ Al-Baghawi, *Mukhtashar Tafsir Al-Baghawi* (Mesir: Dar al-Ma’rifah, 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Muhammad Nasib ar-Rifa’i, *Ringkasan Tafsir Ibnu Katsir Jilid IV*, 1999.

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Shahih Al-Bukhari* (Damaskus-Beirut: Dar Ibnu Katsir, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Al Albani, *Sahih Abu Dawod*.

Hurairah, the Prophet SAW said that one of the the two classes of residents of hell is women who are clothed yet naked, walking with an enticing gait, with something on their heads that looks like the humps of camels. It is forbidden for women of this type to enter *jannah* even though its fragrance can be detected from such a long distance.<sup>24</sup> The issue of *awrah* is very closely related to one's dress code, i.e., what a Muslim man or woman wears will determine whether he or she has covered his or her *awrah* or has revealed it instead.<sup>25</sup> Clothing contains significantly meaningful symbols as a means of non-verbal communication. Clothes for a Muslim woman resembles her crown and beauty, and it functions like jewelry to her.

In Mandailing traditional attire, there are at least five types of Mandailing traditional attire: *First*: Baju godang, commonly worn by the groom during Mandailing traditional wedding ceremonies. This attire is made of velvet fabric and is typically black or red in color. The community also refers to this attire as pakaian godang or baju kebersaran, paired with pants of the same color. *Second*: Bobar or a golden-colored side cloth, also known as kaon songket Mandailing by the Mandailing community. *Third*: Ampu or a black crown wrapped in gold. Originally, only royal family members were allowed to wear the ampu during traditional ceremonies, but now it is worn during wedding ceremonies because the bride and groom are considered king and queen. The golden ampu symbolizes patience and resilience. *Fourth*: Bulang is the attire worn by Mandailing women during traditional ceremonies. It consists of a black or red velvet blouse paired with a bobar or songket as a skirt, with an anak jilbab as a head covering. The name "bilang" is closely related to the title of an animal whose blood is shed during the traditional ceremony. Bulang not only represents traditional attire but also reflects dignity, status, and social status in the community, categorized into three levels: barbo with three tiers known as the buffalo's head, bilang bambeng with two tiers, and bilang without tiers. *Fifth*: A crisscrossed selendang. This signifies that a woman who has undergone traditional engagement adheres to the norms and binding customary laws from life to death.(ayah monang)

In order to be respected by their elders, esteemed by the community, and hold a significant position in determining the status of their descendants, all Mandailing women should adhere to customary rules and traditions, including attire during traditional ceremonies.<sup>26</sup> Traditional attire for indigenous communities refers to the traditional clothing or attire worn by a group or community that has a distinct cultural heritage and traditions.<sup>27</sup> This traditional attire often carries deep symbolic meanings and represents the identity and important values of the community. Traditional attire is typically made from locally available materials and is often adorned with unique traditional motifs or decorations. Every detail of traditional attire can carry specific meanings, such as colors, patterns, and types of accessories used. Moreover, traditional attire is often worn during various traditional events and important ceremonies, such as weddings, traditional art performances, religious ceremonies, or other cultural events. This plays a significant role in preserving and honoring the cultural heritage and identity of an indigenous community.

The law of every affair related the *mu'amalah* in Islam is originally permissible until later arguments confirm an obligation or contain its prohibitions. Accordingly, all dresses are

<sup>24</sup> Syaikh Abu Bakar Jabir Al-Jaza'iri, *Minhajul Muslim*, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Aisha Wood Boulanouar, "The Notion of Modesty in Muslim Women's Clothing: An Islamic Point of View," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 8, 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Permata Sari Siregar, *Interviewed by the author*, 16 May 2023

<sup>27</sup> Zaki Parma Nasution, *Interviewed by the author*, 16 May 2023.



permissible for both men and women, but it is forbidden for men to wear garments made of silk or woven silk, gold ornaments, any impure clothing dipped or soaked in *najis*, and any garment made of leather or hair of animals whose meat and skin are not edible. The style of dress should also reflect one's identity as a Muslim. For instance, clothes should not display one's body curves and not be ragged. One must also wear occasionally- and sizably-suited clothes so as to avoid inconveniences and harassment. The change of time has continuously born many changes to the lifestyle of the people, and as such, many fashion products have been emerging. One must be able to sort out proper clothing for him or her to put on because Islam guarantees freedoms to choose whatever convenient for a Muslim man or woman to wear provided that it is in accordance with the provisions of Sharia.

Nowadays, the term *Islamic fashion* has emerged and become such a trend for the younger generation of Muslim women that even wearing a *hijab* will not stand in their way of performing their daily routines. They believe that every woman has an equal right and opportunity to innovate, to work, and to pursue a brighter future without exposing their *awrah* or dressing arousingly. A *hijab* has now become a trend with a variety of styles along with the development of the fashion world. Not surprisingly, Indonesian fashion industries has seen an increase in demand for *hijab*.<sup>28</sup> Muslim clothing will reflect the identity of every Muslim woman and serve as a distinct characteristic that distinguish them from others. Indeed, Islam always offers convenience for its adherents by staying true to the Islamic teachings stipulated in the Koran and the hadiths. Nevertheless, a Muslim woman who wears a *hijab* should also lower her gaze. A Muslim woman who is unable to restrain her gaze and heart from sinful acts of disobedience will bring about a disaster for herself and male counterparts.<sup>29</sup>

*Hijab* and clothes are products of culture and religious and moral demands. Culture is the result of thoughts, intellect, as well as customs and traditions.<sup>30</sup> It is culture that brings about the creation of traditional or regional clothing, and different regions with different cultures will result in the birth of different ways of dressing. Indonesia as an archipelagic country consisting of hundreds of tribes, customs and cultures possess a countless variety of traditional clothes and regional dresscodes. It is undeniable that one people's way of dressing is much influenced by the local culture. Mandailing Natal as a region and a tribe in North Sumatra Province also has a unique dresscode. The customs and tradition of the people of Mandailing Natal in observing Muslim dress code are quite interesting. The way its Muslim women wear veils or headscarves is also unique. Looking into the history of Mandailing Natal in 1980s and 1990s, one will find Muslim women who simply covered their head with a skull-cap-like clothing item with their necks still visibly exposed.<sup>31</sup> This custom, however, is still common especially Mandailing Natal's rural communities.<sup>32</sup> Quraish Shihab argued that some of the Islamic provisions originate from the culture and conditions of the people at that

<sup>28</sup> Azam Sarwar and Hong Zeng, "Breaking Free from Patriarchal Appropriation of Sacred Texts: An Islamic Feminist Critique of *Bol*," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 27, no. 4 (October 2, 2021): 465–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2021.1981526>.

<sup>29</sup> Irma Riyani, "THE SILENT DESIRE: ISLAM, WOMEN'S SEXUALITY AND THE POLITICS OF PATRIARCHY IN INDONESIA," 2016.

<sup>30</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah, Journal of Materials Processing Technology*, vol. 2, 2005, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cirp.2016.06.001> <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.powtec.2016.12.055> <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijfatigue.2019.02.006> <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.matlet.2019.04.024> <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.matlet.2019.127252> <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.matlet.2019.127252>

<sup>31</sup> Yopi Karaman, *Interviewed by the author*, 16 May 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Erwin Siregar, S Pd, and M Pd, "SEJARAH DAN MOTIF BUDAYA MANDAILING NATAL," n.d.

time, and they are practicable inasmuch as the customary values do not conflict with the religious values. Hence, the term “*al- ‘adat al-muhakkamah*” as proposed by Islamic scholars and experts, plays its role.<sup>33</sup>

In the 2000s, Mandailing Muslim women began to take an interest in *hijab* of varying styles, and Muslim women began to gradually abandon the culture of skull-capping, tying their veils around their necks, or putting a cloth on their heads. This change was in large part due to the influence of local religious figures who constantly provided advice and teachings on acceptable religious practices. However, fashion and lifestyles have continued to change along with the increase creativity of the fashion industries in exploring the market of Muslim community. This change is not without a reason. It is triggered by the creation of many new and attractive *hijab* styles. The use of *hijab* in everyday lives reached its peak in early 2015 when national artists began to wear *hijab* openly in their routines, affecting the dress code across the society nationally.

Mandailing Natal, with its majority Muslim population, takes pride in the slogan “*a cultured country devoted to worship*”. Indeed, one of the oldest Islamic boarding schools in the island of Sumatra established in 1912, namely Mustafawiyah Purba Baru, is located in Mandailing Natal. Formerly, the majority of Muslim women in Mandailing Natal were reluctant to wear headscarves; only female *santris* showed their observance to the teaching. It was later this *pesantren* which produced scholars, religious teachers, clerics and preachers who later spread all over Mandailing Natal disseminating the Islamic teachings and culture of wearing a headscarf for Muslim women. With the passage of time and growing world of *fashion*, as well as the establishment of a state Islamic college in the region, scores of Muslim women in Mandailing Natal have been consistently wearing *hijab* or headscarves.

Judging from the current phenomenon, despite the fact that the majority of the population in Mandailing Natal are Muslim and there have been many Islamic boarding schools in the region, the people still show little interest in enrolling their children in Islamic boarding schools. To put this into perspective, the data suggest that there are around twenty-one *pesantrens* with approximately 21,874 students and 533 public schools with 93,624 students in the region.<sup>34</sup> It means that there are more students in public schools than in *pesantrens*. This reality becomes one of the factors that contribute to the low number of *hijab* wearers in Mandailing Natal. Culture and education undeniably influence the way women dress in Mandailing Natal. Women in Islam are required to cover their *awrah* when traveling outdoors. This obligation can only be fulfilled by wearing Muslim clothing and a headscarf<sup>35</sup>. Indeed, dress code gives value and meaning to a culture and the people who are part of the

<sup>33</sup> Abdul Wahab Khalaf, *Ilmu Ushul Fiqh: Kaidah Hukum Islam*, Jakarta: Pustaka Amani, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> Dedisyah Putra, “Tradisi Markobar Dalam Pernikahan Adat Mandailing Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam,” *El-Ahli : Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 1, no. 2 (2021): 18–34, <https://doi.org/10.56874/el-ahli.v1i2.311>.

<sup>35</sup> Desy Ayu Pirmasari, “To Veil or Not to Veil? Islamic Dress and Control over Women’s Public Appearance,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 30, no. 2 (February 17, 2021): 136–49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1863199>.

culture.<sup>36</sup> Culture is a human creation, and humans are part of a culture. In other words, it is humans who develop cultures and then live in the midst of the culture they have created.<sup>37</sup>

Although many Muslim women can be seen wearing Islamic clothing nowadays, their way of dressing is still not in accordance with the Sharia, which stipulates that they wear loose-fitting and opaque materials along with *hijab* or headscarves. This fact is due to a growing trend within a society which is then adopted and over time turns into a culture for themselves. This is where the role of *ulama* and local customary figures is needed in filtering the existing and prevailing culture in the community so that it remains within the corridor of “*al- ‘adat al-muhakkimah*”, rather than contradicting the teachings of Islam. This must be taken into account in the culture and dress code of Muslim women at Mandailing Natal since it is culture that draws a distinction between humans and animals. It is also culture that teaches humans how to behave in accordance with the provisions of Sharia laws.<sup>38</sup>

Islamic teachings on clothing encompass several principles and guidelines based on the Qur'an and Hadith. Here are some key points of Islamic teachings on clothing: Modesty, Covering Aurat; In Islam, both men and women are required to cover their aurat. For men, the aurat is the part of the body from the navel to the knees. For women, the entire body except for the face and hands is considered aurat that must be covered.

Avoiding Conspicuousness; Clothing should not be too flashy or excessive, attracting unwanted attention. Gender Appropriateness. Gender-Specific Clothing in Islam advocates that clothing should be appropriate for one's gender. Men and women are encouraged not to wear clothing that resembles that of the opposite sex.

Simplicity. Avoiding Luxurious Clothing, in Islam teaches simplicity in clothing and advises against wearing overly luxurious clothes that show off wealth excessively. Cleanliness and Neatness, Islam places great importance on cleanliness and neatness in dressing. The clothing worn should be clean and tidy. Non-Transparent or Tight Clothing, Material of Clothing, Clothing should not be made of transparent or overly tight materials that clearly reveal the shape of the body. Prohibition of Clothing Containing Haram Elements. Materials and Symbols, Clothing should not be made of prohibited materials, such as silk for men, or contain symbols that contradict Islamic teachings.

Evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith:

Qur'an: Surah An-Nur (24:31): "And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts and not to display their adornment except what is apparent of it."<sup>39</sup> Surah Al-Ahzab (33:59): "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of

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<sup>36</sup> Meena Rambocas and Jon Marc Mahabir, “The Effects of Consumers’ Cultural Sensitivity, Ethnocentrism and Demographical Characteristics on Attitude toward Luxury Fashion Brands in Trinidad and Tobago,” *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal* 25, no. 4 (August 6, 2021): 644–64, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-03-2020-0049>.

<sup>37</sup> Laode Monto Bauto and Jurusan Sosiologi FISIP Universitas Haluoleo Kendari, “PERSPEKTIF AGAMA DAN KEBUDAYAAN DALAM KEHIDUPAN MASYARAKAT INDONESIA (Suatu Tinjauan Sosiologi Agama),” *Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial*, vol. 23, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Rizal Mubit, “PERAN AGAMA DALAM MULTIKULTURALISME MASYARAKAT INDONESIA,” *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (June 9, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2016.11.1.163-184>.

<sup>39</sup> RI Departemen Agama, *Alquran Dan Terjemahan, Al-Qur'an Terjemahan*, 2007.

the believers to bring down over themselves part of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused."<sup>40</sup>

Hadith Narrated by Abu Dawud: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: 'Whoever imitates a people is one of them.'" Hadith Narrated by Bukhari: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) cursed men who imitate women and women who imitate men."<sup>41</sup>

Implementation in Daily Life: Hijab and Jilbab for Women, Muslim women generally wear a hijab (head covering) and loose clothing that covers the body. Modest Clothing for Men. Muslim men wear modest and non-flashy clothing, such as a baju koko, gamis, or robe. Social and Cultural Context, Dressing styles may vary according to social and cultural contexts, as long as the fundamental Islamic principles of modesty and decency are maintained. Islamic teachings on clothing emphasize values of modesty, simplicity, and cleanliness, all of which aim to uphold the dignity and identity of Muslims.

Muslim women in Islam are required to be submit to the Islamic provisions, including that of wearing a *hijab*, dress properly, and cover their *awrah*. If they fail to observe such provisions, they cannot identify themselves as people of faith because the actual people of faith demonstrate agreement between their words, heart and deeds in every conduct.<sup>42</sup> The sincerity and determination of Muslim women in observing the rules of Allah SWT have been stated in Surah Al-Ahzab, Verse 36 (33:36).

The verse above explains that when Allah SWT and the apostles have regulated a provision, men and women believers should always observe it. Otherwise, they do not deserve to be referred to as the believers, and in fact, they have gone astray. Along with the flow of time and globalization, headscarves and *hijab* have experienced rapid development with a variety of styles and variations. Limited understanding and knowledge of the rules of wearing a headscarf within a society may result in a mismatch between what has been prescribed in Islamic teachings and what is actually performed. The current principle of *hijab* is covering one's head, although the practice is not always in accordance with the Sharia. In fact, some women wear a headscarf made from see-through materials, still exposing their necks and hair. There are 03 harassment because one's aurat, when exposed, will bring about shame and arouse men sexually, encouraging them to do things forbidden by Sharia with their *non-mahram*.<sup>43</sup>

Among the provisions that a Muslim woman must observe in dressing includes not exposing their bodily beauty (by exposing their face, neck, or curves) in the presence of marriageable men, not walking alluringly, and not wearing tight-fitting or see-through clothes. Wearing thin, tight-fitting clothes and exposing one's curves is in essence the same as being naked. Clothing made from thin and transparent materials that reveal the skin and curves of the wearer is a grave sin. When a woman is about to leave the house, she should dress politely and properly in Islamic clothing. She should not dress to gain popularity and attention of

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<sup>40</sup> Departemen Agama.

<sup>41</sup> Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Ensiklopedia Hadis; Sahih Bukhari 1, Terj. Masyar dan Suhadi*, Jakarta: Al-Mahira, 2011, p.341

<sup>42</sup> Syek Zainuddin ibn Abd Aziz Al-Malibary, *Fathul Mu'in*, Kairo: Maktabah Daar al-Turats, Juz 1, 2002, p.172

<sup>43</sup> Zulkifli Abd. Latiff and Fatin Nur Sofia Zainol Alam, "The Roles of Media in Influencing Women Wearing Hijab: An Analysis," *Journal of Image and Graphics* 1, no. 1 (2013): 50–54, <https://doi.org/10.12720/joig.1.1.50-54>.

others especially those of her *non-mahram*. A *hijab* should be able to protect women from the views of men who have no rights to look at them. Instead of making them feel depressed and tormented, *hijab* will safeguard the honor of Muslim women.<sup>44</sup> Decent Muslim women are those who have a sense of shame if it turns out that the clothes they are wearing are against the Islamic provisions because shame is a part of faith, as the Prophet Muhammad SAW said in a hadith narrated by Ibn ‘Umar, “Every religion teaches morality, and among praiseworthy moralities in Islam is shame”.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, every Muslim woman should always guard her *awrah* and be ashamed if she fails to do so in the presence of marriageable men.

Customs and traditions play a profound role in regulating clothing as they reflect and preserve the cultural identity of a society. By regulating clothing, customs and traditions provide clear guidelines on how individuals should present themselves in various social, ritual, and religious contexts. Traditional clothing serves not only as everyday attire but also as a symbol of identity, social status, and role within the community. Through traditional clothing, values and traditions passed down from generation to generation can be continuously preserved and respected.

The regulation of clothing by customs and traditions also helps strengthen community bonds and a sense of togetherness. When members of society wear traditional clothing during ceremonies and celebrations, they feel connected to their ancestors and fellow community members. This creates a sense of unity and solidarity, reinforcing communal identity that is a crucial foundation in facing the challenges of modernity and globalization. Moreover, traditional clothing often contains deep symbolic elements such as colors, patterns, and accessories that hold special meaning within the cultural context. These elements depict the history, beliefs, and values cherished by the community, making wearing traditional clothing a way to honor and celebrate cultural heritage.

Customs and traditions also play a significant role in maintaining propriety and ethics in dressing. By establishing norms of proper attire, customs and traditions help uphold the dignity of individuals and society as a whole. These norms ensure that clothing reflects respect for oneself and others, as well as for the social and cultural environment one is in. Additionally, customs and traditions ensure that clothing worn is suitable for the local geographic and climatic conditions, providing comfort and ease for wearers in their daily lives.

Furthermore, by regulating clothing, customs and traditions act as protectors against external influences that may erode local values and traditions. In the era of globalization, where foreign fashion trends and cultures easily permeate and influence society, clothing regulation by customs and traditions helps preserve the authenticity of local culture. This enables communities to maintain their identity and not lose their cultural roots amidst changing times. Therefore, the importance of customs and traditions in regulating clothing is crucial as it involves not only aesthetic and functional aspects but also encompasses aspects of identity, values, and the sustainability of culture, which are the foundations of the existence and strength of a society.

## Conclusion

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<sup>44</sup> Rachel Anderson Droogsma, “Redefining Hijab: American Muslim Women’s Standpoints on Veiling,” *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 35, no. 3 (August 2007): 294–319, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909880701434299>.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Jaza’iri, *Minhajul Muslim*.



Traditional attire that complies with Islamic law is clothing that adheres to the principles of Sharia in dressing. This includes guidelines such as covering the aurah appropriately for both men and women. For women, the aurah covers the entire body except the face and hands, while for men, it extends from the navel to the knees. Traditional attire should also not be too flashy or excessive to avoid unwanted attention, in line with the concept of decency and appropriateness in Islamic dress.

Furthermore, traditional attire should respect gender differences. Men and women should wear clothing appropriate to their gender, avoiding attire that resembles that of the opposite sex. This also encompasses maintaining purity and decency in dressing according to Islamic teachings. Simplicity is also an important principle in traditional attire. Clothing should be simple and not overly luxurious or ostentatious, emphasizing the values of simplicity in dressing as emphasized in Islamic teachings. Traditional attire that complies with Islamic law should also be free from prohibited elements. This includes fabrics that are forbidden, such as silk for men, and symbols that contradict Islamic teachings. Additionally, clothing should not be too transparent or tight, revealing the body too clearly, as this goes against the values of decency in Islam.

In the context of culture and tradition, traditional attire that complies with Islamic law may also consider cultural values that do not contradict Sharia principles. However, it is important to note that the proper use of traditional attire that complies with Islamic law should be consulted with scholars or Sharia experts who can provide more specific guidance tailored to the individual's or Muslim community's context and social environment.

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