Jeffrey Hadler, *Muslims and Matriarchs: Cultural Resilience in Indonesia through Jihad and Colonialism*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2008, pp. 211, ISBN 978-0-8014-4697-9 (Hbk). Available in Australia from Footprint Books. Review doi: 10.1558/arsr.v24i1.101.

Muslims and Matriarchs, as its subtitle suggests, is an ethnographic study of the indigenous Minangkabau culture situated in West Sumatra, Indonesia. The author wishes to know how the three-dimensional dialectic taking place in the Southeast Asian Minangkabau culture shaped later events, especially the emergence of some renowned leaders in Indonesian history who had been raised in that culture. The intersection was one of Minangkabau cultural practices, the Islamic ideals upheld by religious scholars (*Ulama*), and colonization. The author argues that the earlier antagonism between the local Minangkabau culture, that was predominantly matriarchal in its form, and the neo-orthodox Islamic movement in the early twentieth century, set a stage for later developments within the Indonesian social, intellectual and political landscape.

The Padri war ensued over the debate of local customs or *adat* versus Shariah or the Islamic law. The war was fought by reform-minded individuals who, according to the author, had been influenced by 'Wahhabi' teachings during the course of their stay in Mecca and, on their return, wanted to implement the same set of rulings on local people. The main issue that was controversial in the opinion of those Islamist reformists was the matrifocal or mother-based houses, the longhouses, which were the focal point of Minangkabau culture (as is evident from the author's recourse to those longhouses, and the values and code of conduct attached to those longhouses, throughout the book). Individuals were born amongst a maternal family of aunts and uncles and taken care of by them. The women-oriented household was not just a matter of domestic setting but also influenced the inheritance laws of the Minangkabau society, where daughters and wives were given shares that were not in accordance with the Islamic inheritance laws. These cultural oddities were not acceptable to the Padri leaders, and this led to the war which they later lost due to the intervention of Dutch colonizers who, during that time, sided with the traditional conservationists of local customs and norms.

The author believes that the Padri experience and constant struggle with the neo-Wahhabis made the matriarchal Minangkabau culture not weak but strong from within. This cultural resilience was manifested throughout later decades in the culture's constant encounters with the Shariah-oriented reformists and the Dutch rulers. The matriarchate form of social network was not only unacceptable to reformist leaders who preferred nuclear families to maintain Islamic principles of chastity, but did not fit well with ideas of modernity which were also patriarchal. The discussion of women's role in Minangkabau culture, and their later participation in political debates and discourses on women's rights and egalitarian gender roles, is a theme running throughout the book. This is understandable and in keeping with the central theme of the book; that is, how a matriarchal culture existed and flourished in the midst of threats from both modern Western colonizers and local orthodox elements.

The author uses the term 'Wahhabi' in a rather loose sense, with the negative connotations that are commonplace among academics who take the standard version of Wahhabis as a counter-traditional force, and do not develop a dynamic understanding of the Wahhabi (although the term is also heavily loaded and subject to misunderstanding) set of beliefs and practices from within the Islamic historical context, treating 'Wahhabism' as a phenomenon in its own right. Although the author's area of scholarship is Southeast

Asian studies, a better understanding and narration of Wahhabi orthodoxy is necessary because the book's central argument is woven around the reform movement and its repercussions, both early and later, for the Minangkabau culture and Indonesian socio-political climate.

The book is well researched and the author does a good job in bringing out the structure of Minangkabau culture with a good amount of detail about the architecture of longhouses and customs of weddings and childbirth, creating a vivid picture for a reader sitting far away from that cultural setting. This is to be anticipated since the subject is close to the author's dissertation. The two central questions that he ventured to answer, however, he does not satisfactorily argue for. Those were, why Minangkabau culture produced so many dynamic individuals among the first-generation Indonesian leaders, and what led to the survival of the matriarchate in an era that was otherwise unfavorable for its survival. The author tries to relate both the answers to the cultural identity of the Minangkabau people and the political events of twentieth-century Indonesia. Although a reader would not expect a one-to-one correspondence of the factors and their resultant effects, it appears at times that the argument runs in circles with the cultural factor both the cause and effect of events.

Amana Raquib
University of Queensland