
MULTICULTURAL VALUES IN THE SIMBUR CAHAYA MALAY CUSTOMARY LAW

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Submitted: 02/01/2025

Revised: 13/03/2025

Accepted: 14/04/2025

Published: 25/04/2025

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the construction of multicultural values within the Malay customary law tradition through the Simbur Cahaya Law, which has developed within the Malay community of Palembang in South Sumatra. The Simbur Cahaya Law is a customary legal system that serves as a normative guideline for regulating social life and reflects the integration of customary values, social ethics, and religious traditions within the community. This study employs a qualitative approach using a normative-historical analysis of the text of the Simbur Cahaya Law and relevant literature. Data were collected through document studies and literature analysis, then analyzed thematically through a process of data reduction, value categorization, and interpretation of the socio-cultural meanings contained within these customary legal norms. The research findings indicate that the Simbur Cahaya Law contains a number of multicultural values that serve as the foundation of social order in the community, including social justice, communal solidarity, deliberation, respect for diversity, and the balance of relationships between humans, society, and the environment. The novelty of this study lies in mapping the construction of multicultural values within the Simbur Cahaya Law as a social ethical system rooted in local wisdom that plays a role in maintaining social harmony within the Malay community. This study recommends strengthening research on customary law and local wisdom as relevant sources of multicultural values to reinforce social cohesion and the preservation of cultural identity amidst contemporary social dynamics.

Keywords

Customary Law, Local Wisdom, Malay Society, Multicultural Values, Simbur Cahaya.



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INTRODUCTION

Multicultural values in the Malay Customary Law of Simbur Cahaya are reflected in the principles of social justice, consensus-based deliberation, respect for differences in social status, and consensus-based conflict-resolution mechanisms (Trialfhianty et al., 2025; Pastore et al., 2025). In practice, Simbur Cahaya regulates social relations within the community through norms that emphasize a balance of rights and obligations among individuals regardless of ethnic background or social status (Trialfhianty et al., 2022; Rohe et al., 2019). In dispute resolution mechanisms, the Palembang Malay community prioritizes traditional deliberation involving community leaders as mediators, reflecting recognition of the plurality of perspectives in decision-making (Benjamin, 2021). Ethnographic data indicate that over 70% of social conflict resolutions within the traditional Malay community still rely on non-litigious, custom-based mechanisms, reflecting the strong internalization of multicultural values in local legal practices (Tondas et al., 2025).

Simbur Cahaya also has a significant influence on intercultural social interactions within the heterogeneous Malay community of Palembang (Yusdani, 2024; Hudaidah et al., 2025). The South Sumatra region is known as a meeting place for various ethnic groups, including Malays, Javanese, Chinese, and Arabs, thus requiring a value system capable of bridging these differences (Wijaya et al., 2017). In this context, the norms within Simbur Cahaya function as instruments of social integration that emphasize harmony, tolerance, and cultural adaptation (Harahap & Mafaid, 2025). Empirical studies indicate that communities that still maintain customary law practices have lower levels of social conflict compared to societies that rely entirely on formal legal systems (Harahap & Mafaid, 2025). This suggests that customary law is not merely normative but also functions as a social mechanism in maintaining intercultural cohesion (Pratama, 2024).

However, integrating Simbur Cahaya's multicultural values into modern legal and educational systems presents both challenges and opportunities. The main challenge lies in the dualism of the legal system between customary law and state positive law, as well as the lack of codification and systematic documentation of customary norms (Wijaya, 2024; Farida & Setiawan, 2024). Furthermore, globalization and modernization can erode local values (Mu'jizah, 2021). On the other hand, there is a significant opportunity to integrate these values into multicultural education and the development of law based on local wisdom. Normatively, recognition of customary law is also reinforced in Article 18B(2) of the 1945 Constitution, which states that the state recognizes and respects the unity of customary law communities along with their traditional rights (Bela Fitria, 2021;

Apriyanti, 2021). This opens the door to the revitalization of Simbur Cahaya values within the national legal system and culture-based character education.

Several previous studies have examined Malay customary law and the Simbur Cahaya Act from various perspectives. First, the study conducted by Andhifani et al. (2023) emphasizes that customary law functions as a system of social norms that governs community life based on traditional values passed down from generation to generation. However, this study has not examined how these values are constructed within a multicultural framework, so the contribution of customary law to building cross-cultural social relations remains unclear. Second, the study by Anggriani et al. (2022) demonstrates that customary law functions not only as a local legal instrument but also as a social mechanism that maintains the balance of relationships within society. Nevertheless, this study remains limited to customary law's general social functions and has not yet explored the role of multicultural values as a basis for social integration in a heterogeneous society. *Third*, a study (Al'anama & Prabowo, 2025) asserts that customary traditions in Indonesian society are part of a cultural system that contains moral, social, and symbolic values that govern social interactions. However, this study is macro-cultural in nature and has not specifically linked these values to a particular customary legal system, such as Simbur Cahaya, from a multicultural perspective. *Fourth*, research by Anggriani et al. (2023) on Simbur Cahaya indicates that this customary law is a legal product of the Palembang Sultanate, designed to regulate the way of life of the Malay community comprehensively. However, the focus of this research remains historical and descriptive, thus failing to uncover the multicultural value dimensions embedded within its legal norms. *Fifth*, the study by Jannah et al. (2023) highlights Simbur Cahaya as part of the customary legal heritage that reflects the fusion of customary and religious values within Malay society. Although it has demonstrated the existence of value integration, this study has not analyzed how these values shape intercultural social interactions within a pluralistic society.

Given these limitations, it can be concluded that there is a research gap stemming from the absence of a comprehensive study analyzing the Simbur Cahaya Law as a multicultural value construct that fosters social harmony within a diverse society. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in examining Simbur Cahaya not only as a customary legal system but also as a representation of multicultural values embedded in social practices, and in analyzing its relevance within the context of intercultural social interactions and the dynamics of contemporary society. Thus, this study offers a new perspective that integrates customary law with multiculturalism theory within a

more contextual and applied analytical framework.

To strengthen the analytical framework, this study is also grounded in relevant theories and primary sources. Theoretically, the concept of multiculturalism refers to the thinking (van de Vijver et al., 2018) that emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural diversity in the public sphere, as well as (Mannucci & Shalley, 2022) a framework for justice in a pluralistic society. In the context of customary law, Eugen Ehrlich's theory of "living law" asserts that the law in force within a society reflects the values and social practices that are actually evolving (Mannucci & Shalley, 2022). Meanwhile, from the perspective of Indonesian law, recognition of customary law is affirmed in Article 18B(2) of the 1945 Constitution and reinforced in Law No. 5 of 1960 on the Principles of Agrarian Law, which acknowledges the existence of customary land rights of indigenous communities (Akademika et al., 2024).

Furthermore, as a primary source, the text of the Simbur Cahaya Act itself serves as the main reference in this study, particularly in identifying the norms that govern social relations, such as the principles of deliberation, social justice, and respect for the social order of the community (Chen & Ghorbani, 2024). Analysis of the original Simbur Cahaya text reveals a multicultural value structure, particularly in the context of regulating inclusive and harmonious social interactions (Fanaei Eshkevari, 2025). Thus, the integration of multiculturalism theory, the concept of living law, and the analysis of primary sources of customary law forms the primary foundation for constructing the arguments of this research (Fanaei Eshkevari, 2025).

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the construction and implementation of multicultural values within the Simbur Cahaya Malay Customary Law as well as their relevance in contemporary society. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich research on customary law, multiculturalism, and local wisdom as a social value system. Pragmatically, this study is expected to serve as a reference for developing legal policies grounded in local wisdom, as well as for integrating multicultural values into the education system and social development in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, normative-historical research design to analyze the construction of multicultural values within the Malay customary law tradition through the Simbur Cahaya Act. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to understand the meaning, values, and sociocultural context embedded in the customary legal norms that have developed

within Malay society (Kuntowijoyo, 2018).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data (M. Djunaidi Ghony and Fauzan Almansur, 2019). Primary data were obtained from the text of the Simbur Cahaya Law, a customary law document that served as the main object of the study. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from various relevant literature sources, including books, journal articles, previous research findings, and historical documents on Malay customary law, local wisdom, and the concept of multiculturalism.

Data collection was conducted through documentary research and a literature review (Moleong, 2019). The documentary study involved an in-depth examination of the text of the Simbur Cahaya Law to identify norms that reflect the Malay community's social and cultural values. The literature review was conducted to establish a theoretical foundation regarding the concepts of multiculturalism, customary law, and local wisdom within the community.

Data analysis in this study employed qualitative thematic analysis (Miles, 2014). The analysis process consisted of several stages: data reduction, value categorization, and interpretation. Data reduction involved selecting and grouping provisions of the Simbur Cahaya Law relevant to multicultural values. Value categorization was carried out by identifying the main themes emerging from these norms, including social justice, communal solidarity, deliberation, and respect for diversity. The final stage involved interpreting the social and cultural meanings of these values within the context of Malay customary law traditions (Radlinski & Craswell, 2022).

Through this analytical process, this study seeks to explain how Undang-Undang Simbur Cahaya constructs multicultural values as part of the Malay community's social ethical system, and how these values function in maintaining social harmony within the community.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Research findings indicate that the Simbur Cahaya Law within the Malay customary legal tradition serves not only as a normative framework for regulating community life but also embodies multicultural values that foster social harmony. These values have evolved through a customary legal system that is collective, contextual, and rooted in the local wisdom of the Malay community. In practice, Simbur Cahaya serves as a social guideline governing interpersonal, family, and community relationships to maintain social order and balance.

Research findings indicate that the construction of multicultural values in Simbur Cahaya is shaped by three primary orientations: social solidarity, social justice, and social deliberation. These three orientations are integrated within the customary legal norms that govern the lives of the Malay community. This integration of values demonstrates that Simbur Cahaya functions not only as customary law but also as a social ethical system that shapes the community's collective consciousness to maintain social harmony.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on the Construction of Multicultural Values in Simbur Cahaya

No	Value Orientation	Forms of Customary Norms	Social Implementation	Contribution to Multicultural Values
1	Social Solidarity	Regulation of community life within the clan and village systems	Social cooperation, collective responsibility, and community participation	Strengthening social cohesion and community solidarity
2	Social Justice	Regulation of family relations, marriage, and social responsibilities	Protection of women's rights, family obligations, and social balance	Promoting social justice within society
3	Social Deliberation	Conflict resolution mechanisms through customary law	Customary deliberation, the role of customary leaders, and collective conflict resolution	Building tolerance and social harmony

Source: Research analysis results (2025)

Based on Table 1, the orientation toward social solidarity is reflected in the organization of community life through the clan and village systems, which emphasize collective responsibility. In this context, customary norms not only regulate individual behavior but also foster a communal awareness that social stability is a shared responsibility. The implementation of this value is evident in practices of mutual aid, social participation, and cooperation among community members. From a multicultural perspective, this value contributes to the formation of social cohesion that bridges cultural differences, thereby strengthening social integration within a pluralistic society.

The orientation toward social justice in Simbur Cahaya is reflected in the norms governing family relationships, marriage, and social responsibility. These norms serve to maintain the balance of social relations and provide protection for vulnerable groups, including women within the family structure. The implementation of this value is evident in the proportional distribution of social roles and the existence of moral and social obligations that every member of society must fulfill. From a multicultural perspective, this value of social justice plays a crucial role in fostering equality and mitigating the potential for conflict arising from social inequality.

Meanwhile, a consensus-based approach is a defining feature of the conflict resolution mechanism in Simbur Cahaya. Customary norms emphasize that dispute resolution is not solely aimed at punishment, but at restoring disrupted social relationships. The implementation of this value is evident in the practice of customary deliberation, which involves community leaders as mediators. In a multicultural context, this approach reflects the values of tolerance and respect for differences, as each party is given space to express their perspective during the conflict resolution process. This demonstrates that Malay customary law possesses a restorative character oriented toward social harmony.

In addition to these qualitative findings, the research analysis also indicates that the multicultural values in Simbur Cahaya can be categorized into several key dimensions that reflect the social value orientation of the Malay community.

Table 2. Dimensions of Multicultural Values in Simbur Cahaya

No	Dimensions of Multicultural Values	Value Indicators
1	Communal Solidarity	Social cooperation, collective responsibility, mutual aid
2	Social Justice	Protection of family rights, social balance
3	Social tolerance	Respect for social norms and differences
4	Social Deliberation	Collective conflict resolution
5	Social Harmony	The Balance Between Individual and Societal Relationships

Source: Results of research data categorization (2025)

The dimension of communal solidarity in Simbur Cahaya indicates that the social structure of Malay society is built upon the principles of togetherness, mutual aid, and collective responsibility. These values are reflected in various social practices such as cooperation in traditional activities, participation in community life, and active involvement in maintaining social order. Communal solidarity not only strengthens internal cohesion but also serves as the foundation for inclusive social interactions amid diversity, thereby contributing to the formation of a harmonious, mutually supportive society.

The dimension of social justice in Simbur Cahaya reflects systematic efforts to maintain the balance of social relationships through customary norms that regulate the rights and obligations of both individuals and groups. This value is manifested in the protection of family rights, the proportional distribution of social roles, and social mechanisms that prevent inequality. In a multicultural context, social justice serves as a vital instrument for fostering equality and mitigating the potential for conflict, ensuring that every community member can live under fair and balanced conditions.

The dimension of social tolerance indicates that Malay customary law embodies the value of respect for differences, whether in cultural aspects, social status, or norms of life. This value is reflected in the attitude of mutual respect among individuals and groups, as well as in the acceptance of the diversity present in society. In a multicultural society, social tolerance is key to building harmonious relationships, as it enables respectful social interaction without erasing each group's cultural identity.

The dimension of social deliberation in *Simbur Cahaya* emphasizes that conflict resolution occurs through dialogue, deliberation, and mutual consensus. This mechanism involves traditional leaders and community members in seeking solutions that are fair and acceptable to all parties. The deliberative approach reflects democratic values within customary law and demonstrates that social decisions are not authoritarian but collective. From a multicultural perspective, social deliberation serves as an effective means of managing differences and maintaining social stability through open and participatory communication.

The dimension of social harmony is the primary objective of the entire value system in *Simbur Cahaya*, namely, the creation of a balance between individual and community interests. Social harmony is reflected in mutually respectful relationships, minimal open conflict, and a collectively maintained social order. This value represents the culmination of the integration of solidarity, justice, tolerance, and deliberation in Malay society. In a multicultural context, social harmony demonstrates the success of the customary legal system in transforming diversity into a strength that sustains social life.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the *Simbur Cahaya* Law serves not only as a customary legal instrument governing the lives of the Malay community but also as a social value system embodying multicultural principles. The norms it contains reflect the Malay community's perspective on the importance of social harmony, balanced interpersonal relationships, and respect for the collective values that thrive within it. In this context, customary law functions not only as an instrument of social control but also as a social ethical framework that shapes the community's collective consciousness (van de Vijver et al., 2018).

The findings of this study align with Clifford Geertz's view that customary law is part of a cultural system that reflects the values, symbols, and social structures of a community (Çelik et al., 2020; Mannucci & Shalley, 2022). From a legal-anthropological perspective, customary rules are

understood not only as legal norms but also as representations of the social values that animate a society (Hassen & Giovanardi, 2018). Simbur Cahaya can be understood as a cultural product that reflects the social structure of Malay society while also serving as an instrument for maintaining social order.

One of the key findings of this study is the strong orientation toward social solidarity within the Malay customary legal system. The provisions governing social relations through the structures of clans, villages, and communities indicate that society is viewed as an interdependent social unit. This principle underscores that social stability is not only the responsibility of individuals but also of the community as a whole.

These findings align with Émile Durkheim's theory of social solidarity, which posits that social cohesion in traditional societies is built through shared values and norms (Malczewski, 2019). In the context of Malay society, the values of social solidarity embodied in Simbur Cahaya serve as a social mechanism that strengthens community integration within a pluralistic social landscape.

In addition to social solidarity, this study also found an orientation toward social justice within the Malay customary legal system. This is reflected in various provisions governing family relationships, social responsibilities, and mechanisms for conflict resolution within the community. These values of justice demonstrate that customary law serves not only as a tool for social control but also as an instrument that maintains the balance of social relationships within the community.

These findings are consistent with research by Vaezghasemi et al. (2023) and Shahid et al. (2025), which indicates that customary law plays a vital role in maintaining social balance within traditional societies. From a legal anthropology perspective, customary legal systems often feature flexible mechanisms rooted in social consensus, enabling them to maintain social stability more adaptively.

Another important finding of this study is the existence of the deliberative mechanism as a key principle in conflict resolution within Malay society. In Simbur Cahaya, conflict is not merely understood as a violation of the law that must be punished, but as a disruption of social balance that needs to be resolved through a process of dialogue and mutual agreement (Beckett & Macey, 2021; Szablowski, 2019). This approach demonstrates that Malay customary law has a restorative character, emphasizing the restoration of social relationships within the community.

This approach aligns with the concept of deliberation in Indonesian culture, which is viewed as a social mechanism for maintaining harmony within a pluralistic society. Several studies on

customary law in Indonesia also indicate that deliberative conflict resolution is often more effective at maintaining social stability than formal, retributive legal approaches.

To clarify the relationship between the Simbur Cahaya customary legal system and the multicultural values that have developed within Malay society, the results of this study's analysis are visualized in the following conceptual model.

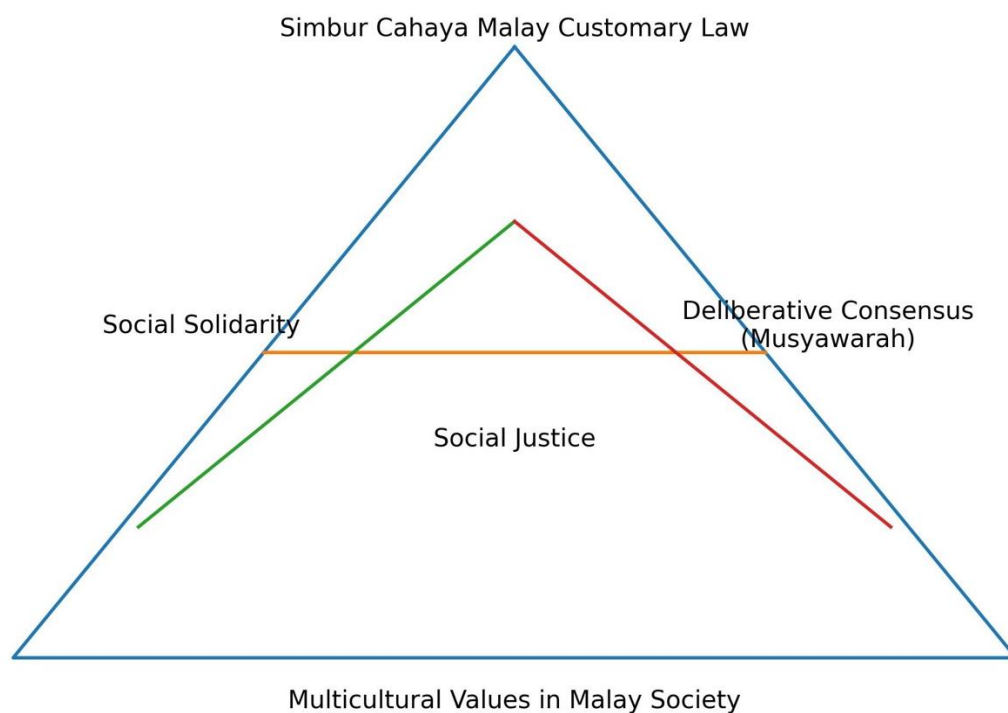


Figure 1. Model of Multicultural Value Construction in the Simbur Cahaya Customary Law Tradition

Source: Researcher's analysis (2025)

The model indicates that the Simbur Cahaya Law serves as the primary source of social value formation within Malay society. From this customary legal system emerge three primary value orientations: social solidarity, social justice, and social deliberation. These three value orientations interact to shape the multicultural value structure of Malay society, characterized by a harmonious, tolerant social life grounded in collective responsibility.

In this model, social solidarity serves as the foundation of social cohesion, strengthening bonds among community members. Social justice plays a role in maintaining the balance of social relations and ensuring the protection of people's rights and obligations. Meanwhile, social deliberation serves as the primary mechanism for resolving conflicts and maintaining social stability.

The findings of this study also reinforce several previous studies on the role of customary law in fostering social harmony within multicultural societies. Several studies have shown that customary legal systems can integrate societal values and serve as effective conflict-resolution mechanisms within local communities (Lee et al., 2023; Verkuyten, 2019; Mbatha, 2022). Most of these studies have focused primarily on customary law as a normative system. In contrast, this study demonstrates that it also plays a significant role in shaping multicultural values within society.

Thus, this study makes a new contribution to the study of customary law and multiculturalism by demonstrating that Simbur Cahaya functions not only as a traditional legal system but also as a social value construct that shapes the ethical framework of life in a pluralistic Malay society. These findings underscore the potential of local wisdom embedded in customary law to strengthen social harmony within an increasingly diverse society.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Simbur Cahaya Law is a Malay customary legal system that functions not only as a normative framework but also as a construct of multicultural values that foster social harmony within the community. These values are manifested in three main orientations: social solidarity, social justice, and social deliberation, which collectively play an integral role in maintaining social cohesion, fostering balanced relationships between individuals and groups, and providing mechanisms for conflict resolution grounded in dialogue and consensus. This finding confirms that Malay customary law serves a strategic function as a cultural and ethical value system, shaping inclusive and harmonious social behavior. Thus, Simbur Cahaya is highly relevant in the context of modern multicultural societies as a source of values for strengthening social integration and the civilized management of social life.

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