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SURAU WITHOUT BUYA: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MINANGKABAU'S CUSTOMARY PHILOSOPHICAL LANDMARK IN WEST SUMATRA, INDONESIA

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Abstract: This study investigates the disappearance of Surau (mosque), a traditional Minangkabau philosophical landmark in West Sumatra. In-depth interviews with three distinct sources representing ulama, customary figure, and expert in Minangkabau cultural studies were conducted as part of the field study. This research found that historically, Surau came to be without Buya as a result of the rise of various schools promoting change in the Surau-based traditional Islamic education system during Dutch government rule. In the present, the disappearance of Surau as Minangkabau's customary philosophical landmark is influenced by the domination of the local political contestation climate. Accordingly, the present research may have implications on the various multidisciplinary relations between customary philosophy (of Minangkabau), religion, and politics. Philosophical values contained within the customary traditions of an existing culture vanish when confronted with dominant political interests, would be a most interesting topic for future studies.

Keywords: Buya, philosophy, landmark, Minangkabau, surau

Introduction

As an ethnic group with the largest matrilineal society in the world, Minangkabau of West Sumatra, Indonesia has several unique aspects (Muhammed 1978; Kato 1982). One of its uniqueness is the presence of *surau* (traditional mosque) as a cultural landmark containing rich customary philosophy. The customary philosophical content can physically be found in the presence of *surau*, which is inseparable from Minangkabau's traditional house (*rumah gadang* – big house). *Rumah gadang* is a special residence for a clan in Minangkabau where women live in and they are led by a *Bundo Kanduang*. Meanwhile, boys are customarily required to sleep in *surau*. Hence, *rumah gadang* was indeed designed not to have room for boys. That is why, the *surau* is not too far removed from *rumah gadang* because *surau* is an inseparable cultural entity of *rumah gadang* as the cluster of Minangkabau's traditional cultural center (Lukito and Iskandar 2019; Harto 2018).

On the other hand, in terms of its non-physical aspect, *surau* functions as the center of religious activities for Minangkabau boys. A male Minangkabau child who is on his way to becoming an adult (*akil baligh*, around the age of 7 years old) is obligated to sleep and learn religion in the *surau* (Harto 2018). This is meant to educate Minangkabau boys to live independently outside the home. In the *surau* boys of the same clan gather to learn about Islam, Minangkabau customs and philosophy, and silat for self-defense. Since a very young age, Minangkabau boys forge their character in the *surau* until they are adults, when they would then be asked to leave their hometown to wander (*merantau*) on a journey (Siregar et al. 2022; Lukito and Iskandar 2019).

Yet today, *surau* has lost its cultural role as one of the key landmarks of the past Minangkabau philosophy. According to data processed by Budi & Wibowo (2018), there are at least 25 *surau* spread throughout West Sumatra that were constructed in the past within the span of the 16th century to early 19th century.

Table 1. Recapitulative Table of the 25 *Surau* spread throughout West Sumatra

Regency	Name of <i>Surau</i> (Mosque)	Established in
Agam	Bingkudu Grand Mosque	1823
	Taluak Grand Mosque	1860
	Pincuran Gadang Old Mosque	End of 17 th century
	Koto Baru (Al Hikmah) Grand Mosque	1807
	Siti Manggopoh Mosque	1802
	Koto Baru Old Mosque	Early 19 th century
Padang	Ganting Grand Mosque	1805
	Muhammadan Mosque	Early 19 th century
Pariaman	Surau Gadang Bintungan Tinggi	End of 19 th century
	Pakandangan Mosque	1887
	Surau Atap Ijuk Sicincin	1860
	Surau Gadang Syaikh Burhanuddin	Early 17 th century
Pasaman	Bingkudu Grand Mosque	1823
Solok	Kayu Jao Old Mosque	1657
Solok Selatan	60 Kurang Aso Mosque	Approx. 18 th century
Tanah Datar	Surau Nagari Lubuk Bauk	1896
	Limo Kaum Grand Mosque	1710

Regency	Name of <i>Surau</i> (Mosque)	Established in
	Tuanku Pamansiangan Mosque	Approx. 18 th century
	Rao-rao Mosque	1913
	Sa'adah Mosque	1917

In terms of physical structure, some of these *surau* underwent renovations and were turned into and used as mosques or madrasah today while some of its remaining physical structures were kept as part of the *surau*. Although many *surau* buildings can still be found in some remote areas, it is difficult to find a *surau* that serves as a cultural institution with a role as the center for character building of Minangkabau boys. In this perspective, although it retains a similar function as a place of worship, the anthropological understanding of mosque differs to that of *surau*. A mosque is a religious landmark whereas *surau* is a cultural one. As a cultural landmark, *surau* does not only serve as a place of worship but also as a cultural institution for preserving and maintaining Minangkabau's customary philosophy that is passed down from one generation to the next (Firdaus et al. 2019).

Minangkabau's customary philosophy is found in values of wisdom embodied within numerous Minangkabau expressions called *petatah petiti* (proverbs), assorted customary practices or various structural landmarks containing symbolic messages of virtue. As a branch of philosophy, the study of value (axiology) has been carried out since the ancient Greek period by philosophers like Plato regarding beauty, virtue, wisdom, and justice (Frondizi 1963). In the Minangkabau context, understanding customary values is crucial as all social relations in Minangkabau are arranged by or based upon values contained within existing customs. Nonetheless, according to Munir et al. (2019) many arguments have been raised regarding the issue of what the most dominant determining factor of values is. According to (Frondizi 1963) and (Bahm 1993), the idea on the nature of value is highly complex because it involves the fact that there are many different kinds of value and that more confusion about value has been caused by wrong ideas.

Given the above background understanding, the present study is not intended to discuss the debate on how Minangkabau customary values are understood and defined. This research is aimed at understanding and describing how Minangkabau customary philosophical values are produced and distributed

from one generation to the next, on account of the fact that the understanding of Minangkabau customary values embodied within *petatah petiti*, customary practices or various landmarks has become common sense for the people of Minangkabau. Given such argument, the current research is focused on the presence of *surau* as a Minangkabau cultural landmark and locus of the production and dissemination of Minangkabau customary values from one generation to the next. While, as elaborated in previous passages, *surau*'s standing as a key Minangkabau customary institution has currently been undergoing a shift in value. Based upon these various relations, this research proposes the following research question: "How did *surau* as Minangkabau's customary philosophical landmark in West Sumatra disappear? This is a highly significant study because it is aimed at confirming that currently *surau* has been neglected by customary and religious leaders in Minangkabau, West Sumatra.

Method

This is a field study conducted to find the essential answer to why *surau* in West Sumatra currently is losing its essence as Minangkabau's customary philosophical landmark. Primary research data were collected from information provided by three selected key informants by means of in-depth interview. The informants were Buya Gusrizal Gazahar (General Chair of the Indonesian Ulema Council West Sumatra region) a prominent ulema who is also a Minangkabau customary leader and caretaker of a *surau* in Bukit Tinggi. The informants were chosen for their competence to provide relevant information required to address the research question. However, the key factor in selecting informants in qualitative research is the availability of researcher's access to the informants (Stokes 2021), because this correlates with the researcher's ability to convince the informants to provide information and subsequently protect them (Riese 2019).

The interviews were done individually in February of 2023 in Padang Municipality and Bukit Tinggi Municipality, in West Sumatra Province. The interviews began by raising several general questions, which are most qualitative in nature, to gain an understanding of *surau* according to their perspectives. For instance, what is your understanding of *surau* in Minangkabau culture? Some of the subsequent questions were specifically designed to understand *surau* as Minangkabau's customary philosophical landmark, such as what Minangkabau customary philosophy is embodied in *surau*? Subsequently, the interviews raised

essential questions such as what caused surau in West Sumatra to lose its essence as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy?

The raw data gathered from the informants were accordingly processed to identify various relations existing within the collected information. These relations were then categorized conceptually to generate themes that are presented as research novelty. The data presentation process by way of thematic categorization was tested for its validity against various relevant theories and literary studies. The entire data presentation is in the form of descriptions and interpretations aimed at addressing the research question formulated above.

The Rise of Surau as a Landmark of Minangkabau Customary Philosophy

A landmark can be defined as a natural structure created naturally due to natural or social processes referring to a certain area such as a square or city park as public spaces or monuments and bridges in a city. However, landmarks can also be defined as residential buildings, meeting halls or human-made places of worship like churches in most European countries, temples in East Asia, or mosques in some Muslim regions (Tuan 1975; Bandarin and Van Oers 2014). Landmarks inform a specific meaning of a place or building in a particular location (Richter et al. 2014). Accordingly, having a good understanding of landmarks is essential as they contain assorted values of history, identity, and philosophy, which influence or are influenced by the surrounding culture.

As a cultural landmark that embodies Minangkabau's customary philosophy, *surau* can be understood by observing its historical presence in three different phases of history. The first phase is the pre-Islamic phase, the second phase is the period of introduction to Islam (*kaum tuo* – old generation), and the third phase is the period of renewal (*kaum mudo* – young generation). Each phase assigned *surau* with distinct functions according to the anthropological scope and period of the Minangkabau people at that particular period of time. Despite each of the phases having differing characteristics, the religiosity factor has been the underlying philosophical value of *surau*. This implies that in any given phase, *surau* has always been closely associated with the religiosity of the Minangkabau people.

First, *surau* during the pre-Islamic phase. In this period of time, *surau* as a building had already been recognized by Minangkabau traditional community before Islam was introduced to West Sumatra, even before it was introduced to the current Indonesian archipelago. According to Bowen (1988), during this phase, the physical

structure of *surau* was a construction with hipped roof (*limas*) similar to the pyramid roof (*meru*) of Hindu temples. *Surau* during this phase functioned as a place for worshipping the gods by the pre-Islamic Minangkabau community at the time. This is corroborated with archeological findings of megalithic structures in the form of stepped pyramid (*punden berundak*) and standing stone (*menhir*) around the areas of central Minangkabau, which functioned as centers of spiritual activities for pre-Islamic community in Minangkabau at the time. Additionally, according to Sidi (1971), in 1356 King Adityawarman was reported to have established the Buddhist *Surau* compound around Gombak Valley. At the time, *surau* was used as a customary building that was also utilized for conducting Hindu and Buddhist religious rituals.

In terms of physical structure (architecture-wise), *surau* during the pre-Islamic phase in Minangkabau was influenced by Hindu-Buddhist religious culture. According to Lukito & Iskandar (2019) such influence is apparently indicated by the terraced roofing found at the top of the building depicting a mountain. In Hindu and Buddhist mythology, mountains or *meru* are hold an essential meaning as sacred grounds for the dwellings of the gods. The concept of terraced pyramidal roof on the top part of *surau* symbolizes a religious meaning, and it is combined with horn-like curved roof (*gonjong*) on four sides symbolizing Minangkabau custom. This architecture was the typical features of *surau* during the pre-Islamic period as shown by the structure of *Surau Lubuak Bauak*, in Koto Piliang.

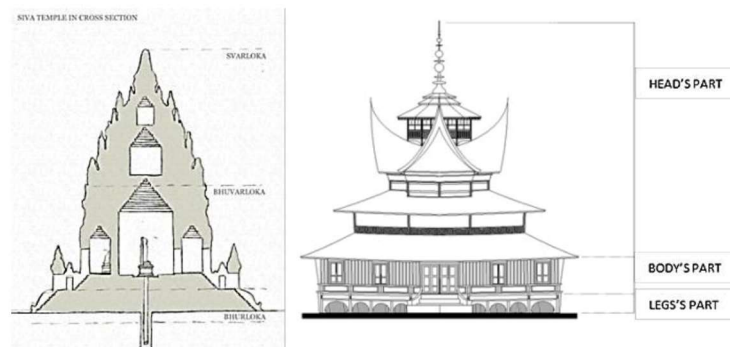


Figure 1. Some segments of *surau* are in line with those of Hindu Pura in Bali. Source: The Concept of *Panca Mahabhuta* in the Manifestation of Bali Traditional Architecture. Source: Lukito & Iskandar (2019)

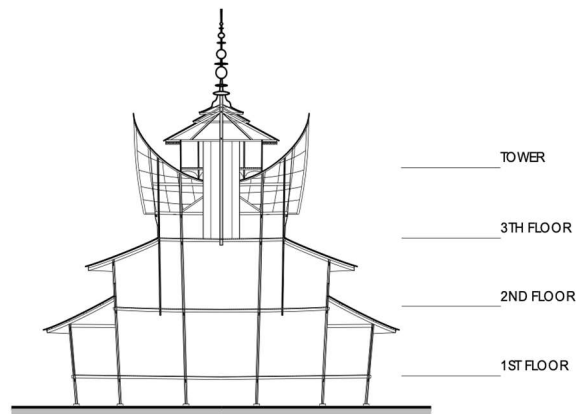


Figure 2. The concept of terraced pyramid on the top segment of *surau* combined with *gonjong* on its four sides. Source: Lukito & Iskandar (2019)



Figure 3. A photo of the structure of Surau Lubuak Bauak in Koto Piliang, Batipuh Baruh District, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra taken from the east side. Source: author's documentation.

Second, *surau* during the initial introduction of Islam by Syekh Burhanuddin (Samad 2003). This was the early period of Islam's introduction and development in Ulakan, Pariaman, West Sumatra during the 16th century, wherein Islam was disseminated by Buya Burhanuddin who had just returned from Aceh to learn about Islam (Van Ronkel 1914). Syekh Burhanuddin was a key figure in the process of *surau*'s transformation into an Islamic place of worship and education institution. Following Buya Burhanuddin, there were three Minangkabau grand ulema who contributed greatly to spreading Islam in West Sumatra, namely Haji Miskin, Haji Piobang, and Haji Sumanik. The return of these three religious figures from their pilgrimage to Mecca had resulted in bringing about Islamic reform throughout West Sumatra with the break out of the Padri War (Cuisinier 1959; Dobbin 1977; A'la 2008).

The second phase is the most pivotal period marking the rise of *surau* as Minangkabau's customary philosophical landmark, because during the early period of this phase *surau* underwent a religious and cultural transformation. *Surau* that previously functioned as a holy place of worship for Hinduism and Buddhism had transformed into a place of worship for Islam. Subsequently, *surau* had developed into a venue for Islamic education, particularly traditional Islamic mysticism (Multatuli 1868) and Sufism (Kato 2020). According to Abdullah (2013), it was recorded that in the 17th century Buya Burhanuddin introduced Tareeqat Shattariyya to Minangkabau, which still thrives to this day. During this phase, *surau* had turned into a socio-religious institution for spreading Islamic teachings in Minangkabau (Azra 1988). This transformation suggests that *surau* was no longer attached to its structural physical form, as it had undergone a shift in religious function from initially being a Hindu and Buddhist house of worship during the pre-Islamic period into a place for Islamic education and worship in Minangkabau. This means that, in terms of its physical structure, *surau*, which was once a place of worship for Hinduism and Buddhism, had turned into a place of worship for Islam, even though the building's structure remained the same. Nonetheless, considering its location, it can also be understood that a new physical structure is established to function as a *surau*, with a novel understanding that *surau* is used as place of Islamic worship and education in Minangkabau. Since the 17th century *surau* had been a place for the community, especially Minang men, to learn about Islam, particularly Sufism. At this stage, *surau* had merely been considered a place to learn about Islam, particularly Sufism, but it had not been considered a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy (Wiryomartono and Wiryomartono 2014).

Furthermore, according to Bowen (1988), the presence of Surau Ulakan founded by Buya Burhanuddin as a place to learn about Islam had permeated throughout the life of Minangkabau community. The matrilineal-based Minangkabau custom served as a cultural context that very specifically encouraged boys to live independently since they were little. The matrilineal culture, which positioned women (mothers) as the production center of Minangkabau culture, fostered an environment that influenced Minangkabau boys' decision to wander (Siregar et al. 2022). Thus, Minangkabau boys had no doubt whatsoever that they are to live outside the home since a very young age. Given such matrilineal culture positioning women as a vital actor in the production of Minangkabau culture, boys were trained and forged to become independent, courageous, dynamic, and responsible in living their life. The context of Minangkabau culture placed *surau* not only as a place for learning about religion, but also as a place where boys who had matured assembled and lived in, it was even a place where wanderers can stay at during their journey (Bowen 1988; Abdullah 2013).

At this stage, *surau* was not only a place to learn about Islam, especially Sufism, but it had also become a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy because it had

been an arena for transfer of noble Minangkabau values and customary philosophy from one generation to the next. According to Dib (1988) and Lukito & Iskandar (2019), *surau* became a place for Minangkabau boys to learn about *Silek* (Minangkabau traditional art of self-defense), and place to exchange various Minangkabau philosophical values known as *petata petitih*, which are proverbs recognized as ancient Malay literature. *Petata petitih* contains advices, views, noble customary values, or guidance for virtuous life, along with guidelines for engaging in social relations.

According to Siregar et al. (2022) *petata petitih* originates from the ancestors of Minangkabau, referring to Datuk Perpatih nan Sabatang and Datuk Katumanggungan. *Petata petitih* proverbs are useful as advices and guiding values in life, they are also considered customary teachings passed down among the people of Minangkabau. Traditional Minangkabau people often use *petata petitih* when given their children advices. These proverbs are characterized as being very concise, deep, and attached to the accuracy of words containing elements of life values and teachings. Each proverb consists of two or more lines.

The matrilineal culture that resulted in the custom of wandering for Minangkabau boys since they were little and the philosophical values contained in *petata petitih* became an intersecting point laying the foundation for *surau* to be considered a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy. According to Kurniasih et al., (2019) some *petata petitih* used as a customary basis for *merantau* (wandering out of one's home/hometown):

*Karatau madang di Ulu, babuah babungo balun,
Marantau Bujang dahulu, di kampuang paguno balun.*

[Karatau grows upstream forth, fruits flowers have yet appeared,

O child do first wander forth, at home remains of no use still]

Petata petitih above explains the fundamental customary philosophy for Minangkabau boys to wander since they were little when they have come of age (*aqil baligh*), at around 7 years old (Wiryomartono and Wiryomartono 2014). From the early age of 7, Minangkabau boys already live in *surau* to learn about Islam, *silek* (traditional self-defense), and Minangkabau customary philosophy. Consequently, *surau* is inseparable as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy.

As a landmark and in terms of physical structure, *surau* is a single symbolic unity along with *rumah gadang*, *rangkiang*, and *balai adat*, which are the three other vernacular

3 buildings of Minangkabau. According to Ackerman & Oates (2013), vernacular buildings are authentic architecture present at a particular time or place and it is not of foreign origin. Accordingly, vernacular structures are symbolically full of local cultural and traditional philosophical contents since they are designed based on the local community's cultural and customary traditions and rules. *Rumah gadang* (big house) serves as a residence for one Minangkabau clan and only girls/women live in it. Meanwhile, boys are required to sleep in *surau* (Lukito and Iskandar 2019; Wiryomartono and Wiryomartono 2014). As for *rangkiang*, it is a vernacular building similar to *rumah gadang* but smaller in size, it is located in front of *rumah gadang* and functions as a granary (Wiryomartono and Wiryomartono 2014). As such, *rumah gadang*, *surau*, *rangkiang*, and *balai adat* (Customary Hall) are considered a unitary group for a single clan in Minangkabau. Each clan in Minangkabau has one *rumah gadang*, one *surau*, one *rangkiang*, and one *balai adat* located close to one another (Widiastuti and Kurniati 2019).

The Sinking of *Surau* Trilogy as an Arena for the Customary Education of Minangkabau Boys

18 As an inseparable physical part of Minangkabau's three customary landmark (including *rumah gadang* and *balai adat*), *surau* also culturally holds a philosophical meaning. According to Mawangir (2015), *surau* is not only defined as a place where worship is conducted, it is also a center for exchanging Minangkabau cultural and customary values from the *mamak* (uncle) to his nephews. In the *surau* children not only learn how to read and recite the Qur'an, they also learn *silek* (self-defense), speeches, oratorical skills, and other things. The philosophical function of *surau* is dubbed by Yulizal Yunus as the *surau trilogy*, referring to it as an arena of customary education for Minangkabau boys.

"In surau, there is a trilogy of education, which are: first learning to recite the Qur'an or about Islam, particularly Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and tauhid, this is main one. Second, teaching of Minangkabau customs starting from story of origin, ethnicity, Minangkabau historical literature, and customary norms as guidance and clothe for life. Third, learning self-defense or silat. These three are a single unity considered a trilogy."

As an education institution, *surau* has no classroom, no formal bureaucracy, and no curriculum. The learning methods employed in *surau* included practicing speech delivery, reading and memorizing using the *halaqah* model, which is a learning model in which students sit cross-legged around the instructor. The education materials taught in

2 *surau* encompassed education on customs, literature, music, dance along with *petatah petitih* and *silat* self-defense (I. F. Mursal 2018). Education pertaining to religion, customs and culture as well as self-defense given to Minangkabau boys was a single inseparable unity of *surau* trilogy. Accordingly, *surau* was an inseparable part of the collective memory of Minangkabau people as a whole (Suriani et al. 2019). In this process, *surau* transitioned into a cultural institution.

According to Buya Gusrizal Gazahar, initially, *surau* in Minangkabau was indeed a mere place of worship. But subsequently, in line with the habitual practice of the Prophet PBUH when he founded the Nabawi Mosque in Madinah, *surau* did not only develop as a means for worshipping, it also served as a social, economic, political, and cultural institution.

“Surau is not merely a means, it is an institution. It is an institution that had developed socially and culturally although initially there might not have been a comprehensive conceptual understanding of surau as a cultural institution in Minangkabau.”

Eventually, *surau* had become an institution that was passed on from one generation to the next as an Islamic traditional heritage in Minangkabau (Satria 2019). This process was done through the understanding of *Nasr*, i.e., continuous maintenance of Islamic tradition from one period to the next without being limited to a certain period (Nasr 1994). *Surau* became an Islamic historical legacy where transmission of religious and customary experiences to Minangkabau boys occurred (Azra 1988). Education of religion and customs in *surau* since a very young age is a single learning entity to transform the middle way of peace from the tension that occurred when religion (Islam) intersected with Minangkabau custom. It is meant to provide Minangkabau boys a good understanding of the foundation of Islamic faith as a basis for Minangkabau customary practices.

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1 This perspective is a basic philosophy that regulates all cultural customary social relations in Minangkabau, manifested in the philosophy of *Adaik Bersandi Syarak, Syarak Bersandi Kitabullah* (ABS/SBK - customs based on sharia, sharia based on the Qur'an). According to Ramayulis (2011), ABS/SBK is the pinnacle of contact, clash, adjustment, and combination between Minangkabau customs that have existed since the time of the founding ancestors of Minangkabau and Islam, which came later. ABS/SBK served as Minangkabau's social consensus in the early period of Islam's introduction to West Sumatra. This monumental consensus is known as “Traktat Marapalam” (Marapalam Treaty), as it took place in Marapalam Valley, Tanah Datar Regency, West

1 Sumatra in the 19th century (N. Mursal 2017). ABS/SBK became a moderate middle path agreed upon by religious leaders and customary leaders in order to maintain Minangkabau culture and customary traditions side by side with Islamic sharia (Hadler 2010).

In the meantime, Silat, self-defense education, is provided to equip boys who were raised in a matrilineal culture, so that they are ready to go out of their hometown and wander out into the world once they have matured. According to M. Sayuti Datuk Rajo Penghulu as cited by (Siregar et al. 2022), silat is one of the 10 basic skills that Minangkabau boys need to have before wandering out of their hometown. Accordingly, silat (also known as *Silek Minangkabau*) in Minangkabau culture is considered by Mason (2012), Cordes (1992) and Pätzold (2000) a local culture and bounded entity that is an integral part of Minangkabau's identity building. *Silek Minang* is a generic name that varies and it is organized locally and has been shaped through various kinship, political, and social processes. Each kinship community in Minangkabau boasts their respective school of *Silek Minangkabau* that they preserve and pass down to any man who is a distinguished member of the clan who had been chosen meticulously and received the skills by following various cultural codes.

According to Yulizal Yunus, the *surau* trilogy as an arena for the customary education of boys in Minangkabau had different Gurus in charge. However, the *surau* trilogy could also be found in and taught by a single Guru.

Each [element of the] trilogy has a special and different guru. There was a guru for religion, guru for customs, and guru for silat. But there were also cases of one guru who mastered the trilogy. This is a classic and authentic understanding of surau that is not understood in Minangkabau.

Unlike Yunus, Gazahar in fact argues that a *surau* in Minangkabau should have one guru who serves as a caretaker or leader known as Buya. With such a position, a Buya is a religious leader of the people in Minangkabau. However, a Buya (as a religious leader) is also a person who should have a good understanding of customs. Accordingly, a Buya can also hold a position as a Datuk, a customary leader. Since a Buya is also required to be a person of knowledge, in addition to being a Datuk, a Buya is also a scholar.

10 *Most Buya are also Datuk who hold customary standing in their clan. To the people of Minangkabau, it is not right if there is an institution of *Tungku nan Tigo**

Sajaringan or *Tali nan Tigo Sapilin* being symbolized only by an individual. Within each Minangkabau individual, there should be 3 cultural threads. Essentially, the thread of religion is held by Buya, the thread of custom is held by Ninik Mamak (customary elder based on matrilineal lineage-Researcher), the thread of government is held by scholars. Accordingly, the self of a Buya, leading the surau, should be knowledgeable about religious, customary tradition, and a scholar as well.

Gazahar perspective in the context of *surau* leadership as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy differs to various past perspectives. In the past, *Tungku nan Tigo Sajaringan* or *Tali nan Tigo Sapilin* have been used to describe leadership in Minangkabau community in terms of power distribution and decision making (Munir 2018; Amri et al. 2021; Putra and Bedriati Ibrahim, n.d.; Ardiansyah et al. 2020). Although indicating a different function, *Tungku nan Tigo Sajaringan* or *Tali nan Tigo Sapilin* is one unitary system of leadership under the Ninik Mamak (custom), Ulama (religion), and Intellectuals (scholars/government). The *Tungku Tigo Sajaringan, Tali Tigo Sapilin* system also serves as a philosophy in the leadership of the Minangkabau community (Gani 2010).

Tungku nan Tigo Sajaringan can be understood through a literal illustration of a container or pan sitting on top of three stones, while *Tali nan Tigo Sapilin* can be defined literally as three ropes tied into one. According to (Gani 2010) this expression was inspired from cooking activities in the Minangkabau culture. Traditionally speaking, the cooking utensils used by the Minangkabau community included three stones arranged in the shape of a triangle or delta sign as a strong and balanced base for placing a container or pan. The arrangement of these three stones is considered a hearth. Meanwhile, a bundle of firewood is stacked in a crisscross pattern between the three stones as a source of fire with a container or pan placed right on top of it for cooking. This hearth provides an analogy of the three elements of leadership above, where the wood represents ideas and opinions, while the flame serves as a discussion media. The pan containing the cooked materials symbolizes results of decisions made through discussions (Suarman 2000). Such description shows that cultural manifestation sourced from the customs of Minangkabau's ancestors can serve as Minangkabau's culture and customary philosophy.

Buya the Pillar of Surau

Buya is a religious actor who understands traditional custom and knowledgeable, and serves as the center or pillar of *surau*'s existence as a landmark of Minangkabau's customary philosophy. Accordingly, the essence of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau's customary philosophy is personified in the figure of the Buya who looks

after the *surau*. *Surau* and *Buya* is a single entity establishing the landmark of Minangkabau's customary philosophy. This understanding suggests that *surau* should have a *Buya*, and a *Buya* should also have a *surau*. This description is based on Gazahar's following opinion:

So, surau must have a buya, and Buya must have a surau. That is why in the past there's this Minangkabau proverb "No Surau without buya and no Buya without surau." So, if you want to know the source of a person's knowledge, you would ask, "Dima Suraunyo?" [Where is your surau?]. If they respond, "Surau tepi sungai." [The surau by the river]. The follow up question would then be, "Siapa Buya di Surau itu?" [who is the Buya at that surau?]. Surau and Buya is an inseparable duality.

9 Subsequently, the current research found that the disappearance of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy shall be dependent upon the presence (or lack) of a *Buya* as the *surau* caretaker. This suggests that *surau* has lost its function as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy because it has been deserted by *Buya* as the pillar of *surau*'s existence. The key figure in *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy is the figure of *Buya* who in Minangkabau's socio-cultural structure functions as a religious leader, a figure with good understanding of Minangkabau culture and custom, and a scholar. We have positioned this perspective as an internal factor in Minangkabau custom. This means that *Buya* as the pillar of *surau* and *surau* without *Buya* is a process of cultural dialectics internally unfolding within Minangkabau culture that may lead to the disappearance of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy. Nonetheless, there are also external factors in play within the scope of varying contemporary conditions that may contribute to the disappearance of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy.

Various past research (see Graves, 2007; Hadler, 2010; Kahin, 2005) explain that *surau*'s function as an education institution in Minangkabau has declined since the start of the 19th century. This was a phase when Minangkabau Muslims were in an arduous situation brought about by pressures from Dutch colonial government's politics and economy as well as the idea of religious reform through the policy of *ethischepolitiek* by establishing schools with modern education system. The Dutch government's policy was issued in early 1840 with the main objective of political interest for Dutch occupation in Minangkabau (Graves 2007).

The establishment of schools with modern education system had subsequently brought in people in Minangkabau to learn in Dutch schools from an early age in order to be accepted to work as part of the bureaucracy in Dutch business offices. At the time, the Dutch developed a bureaucracy to support the coffee forced cultivation system and other business needs in Minangkabau. According to Firdaus & Wekke (2018), native Minangkabau children were beginning to choose to go and study at schools established by the Dutch government. In these schools, indigenous children were introduced to social sciences and natural sciences without any emphasis whatsoever on religious knowledge and Minangkabau customs, which were taught in *surau*. In the Dutch schools students learned to use tables and chairs and experience tiered learning (Kahin 2005).

The rise of public schools established by the Dutch at the time did not immediately end the presence of *surau* as one of the education media in Minangkabau. *Surau* during the time of the Dutch government served as an institution for Sufism study and a distinct place for the community to disseminate information (Izfanna and Hisyam 2012). Eventually, during the Dutch government rule, after the establishment of public schools, *surau* functioned as a cultural center, a complementary structure to Minangkabau's *rumah gadang*, a center for information dissemination, and an institution for traditional Islamic education (Sumardi 2012; Perdana 2015). This phase indicates the influence of external factors in Minangkabau culture that led to the marginalization of *surau* brought about by various Dutch government policies in the field of education, economy, and religion (H. Ramayulis 2011).

However, the effect of external factors in Minangkabau culture did not necessarily have a negative impact on the presence of *surau*. These external conditions had led to change in the *surau*-based traditional Islamic education system, and it underwent transformation along with the Islamic reform that occurred in Minangkabau. According to Noer (1996), the Islamic reform that transpired in Minangkabau played a key role in spreading the aspiration of reform to other regions. Syekh Ahmad Khatib Al - Minangkabawi held a significant role in the process of Islamic reform in Minangkabau, although he did not live in Minangkabau at the time. He was a Minang who took up residence in Mecca and was the Imam of Masjidil Haram. His influence had extended to Minangkabau through his students who were also Minang, i.e., Syekh Muhammad Jamil Jambek in Bukittinggi, Abdullah Ahmad in Padang Panjang and Padang, Syekh Muhammad Thalib Umar in Batu Sangkar, and H. Abdul Karim Amrullah in Maninjau, Syekh Sulaiman Ar-Rasuli, Zainuddin Labay el-Yunusi and Rahmah el-Yunusiah who were also key figures in the reform of Islamic education in Minangkabau (Azra 1988; Rahman 2015). *Surau* then became a long-standing Islamic education institution up to early 20th century. Within that period of time, this unique education institution had generated figures who held substantial roles in the field of education, politics, and economy in Indonesia. Among these figures were Mohammad Hatta, who was

1 Indonesia's proclamatory and first vice-president, and Agus Salim, a diplomat from Minangkabau during the early period of Indonesia's independence (Widiastuti and Kurniati 2019).

Today, external factors within the scope of contemporary conditions that affect the loss of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy caused by Buya's abandonment are impacted by the climate of political party contestation. According to Gazahar, politicians in Minangkabau are one of the key factors resulting in the disappearance of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy.

Buya are now abandoning surau due to political unease. Because politicians feel uneasy with the presence of ulama who possesses a significant number of supporters and influence among the community. That is why politicians or politics is considered one of the factors that killed surau. So, these politicians are happy to take Buya along on their travels to keep them away from surau, and, importantly, so that ulama has no influence in the community.

11 Gazahar's statement leads to a duality. Buya abandoning *surau* because of their discomfort with the political activities of politicians who are pulling ulama into the world of politics, or ulama are enticed to offer their charisma to legitimize the political activities of politicians. According to (Mighfar 2019), ulama offer their political legitimacy to support politicians by using their charisma or appeal before their congregation. The relationship between ulama and the community has long been institutionalized through the norm of patron-client in West Sumatra. Accordingly, ulama and the government (politics) possess power in their relationship with the community (Wanto, 2012). In the political history of Indonesia and Minangkabau, ulama indeed played a vital role in the struggle for Indonesia's independence and they were key actors in the nation's political, social, and cultural life (Faridl, 2007; Hasan, 2019; Safradji, 2020).

15 Nonetheless, according to Abrar et al. (2022), political parties or politicians initiated to persuade ulamas by conducting numerous honorary visits or also commonly known as political safaris to ulama. The research suggests that political parties and politicians in Minangkabau hold audiences with Buya because they believe that ulama are individuals who possess greater capacity than commoners. Buya are considered closer to God on account of the various activities they do in the *surau*. Buya are even believed, through their spiritual ability, to be capable of predicting political wins or obstacles that may hinder politicians' political efforts. In fact, in terms of relations between ulama and politics in Minangkabau West Sumatra, Wanto (2012) considers Buya as a political mastermind capable of controlling social behavior during general elections. This may occur when an ulama is committed to supporting a certain party, the congregation will surely follow, this is shown by the case of the well-known Syattariyah Islamic Boarding

School in Padang Pariaman Regency, during the election Syattariyah members from all corners of West Sumatra followed the bidding of their leader.

Conclusion

Surau is a cultural landmark containing the customary philosophy of Minangkabau from its initial rise in history. *Surau* started out as a religious site for Hindus. Then, it transformed into a landmark of Minangkabau custom as a point of juncture between religion and culture. The matrilineal-based Minangkabau custom functioned as a very specific cultural context encouraging boys to live independently since a very young age. Through the matrilineal culture that positions women as a key actor in the production of Minangkabau culture, boys are trained and forged to become independent, courageous, dynamic, and responsible in living their life. In this period, *surau* served as a place where Minangkabau boys learned *Silek* (Minangkabau's traditional art of self-defense), and exchanged various philosophical values of Minangkabau known as *petata petitih*. *Petata petitih* are proverbs recognized as ancient Malay literature. As a physical landmark, *surau* became a single symbolic entity along with *rumah gadang*, *rangkiang*, and *balai adat*, which are the other three vernacular structures of Minangkabau.

A *surau* has a Buya as a religious figure who understands traditional customs and possess extraordinary level of religious knowledge. Consequently, the essence of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy can be personified in the figure of a Buya. The disappearance of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy depends on the presence or absence of Buya as a caretaker of the *surau*. This implies that the disappearance of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy is dependent on the Buya as the pillar of *surau*'s presence. *Surau* without Buya is a process of cultural dialectics occurring internally within the Minangkabau culture that may lead to the loss of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy.

This might have been caused by the rise of several schools established by the Dutch government attracting the interest of parents and children alike during the time of Dutch rule. Such external conditions had driven change in the *surau*-based traditional Islamic education system to undergo reform in line with the Islamic reform happening in Minangkabau at the time. Today, the disappearance of *surau* as a landmark of Minangkabau customary philosophy is the result of abandonment by Buya who are influenced by the climate of local political party contestations, which consider Buya a figure who has great influence on the people's political choices in the current era of political contestation. This research may have implications on various studies with multidisciplinary approach between (Minangkabau) customary philosophy, religion, and politics. A very interesting question for future

study may include, can philosophical values inherent within the traditional customs of an existing culture be lost when coming into contact with a dominant political interest.

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