

Surau as a Local Educational Institution and Its Extinction in West Sumatra

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Abstract

Surau is the institutional pillar of education on social structure in Minangkabau society. From the beginning, *Surau* has shaped the pattern of learning system in Minangkabau using the culture approach. Since the learning system in Minangkabau adopted the modern school system, the *Surau* as important educational institution in Minangkabau has started to be abandoned and headed to extinction. Now, *Surau* is only used as a place to pray and there is no more learning activity and is not an educational institution.

Key words: *Surau*; Local Educational Institution; *Surau* Extinction

Introduction

Surau is an important local institution in Minangkabau society. R.A. Kern defines it as a chapel, a small mosque, not adapted for Friday services [1]. *Surau* is not only in Minangkabau, *Surau* is also known in Palembang (South Sumatra), North Sumatra (named *Suro*), Penisular (Malaysia), Central and Patani (Southern Tahliland) [1], [2]. Although in many respects in these places *Surau* or *Suro* have similarities, but specifically, the name has a distinction. In Mandahiling, *Suro* is the name used for the mention of a village mosque. In all of Malaya include Pattani in Siamese territory, *Surau* is also the name of the village chapel [1]. In Pontianak, West Kalimantan, during the Pontianak sultanate, *Surau* is a place of learning and teaching of Islamic religious knowledge [3].

In Minangkabau, the term of *Surau* has been known before Islam. *Surau* in the Minangkabau cultural system belongs to the tribe or *kaum* as a complementary *Rumah Gadang* (custom house) that serves as a meeting place, gathering, meeting and bed for boys who have hit puberty and elderly parents [4]–[6].

According to Minangkabau custom rules, *Surau* serves as a gathering place for teenagers, unmarried males or widowers. Minangkabau custom also specifies that men do not have rooms in their parents' homes, therefore they spend the night in *Surau*. This customary provision makes the *Surau* a very important place for Minangkabau young generation for maturation and scientific skills. In addition, *Surau* also serve as a stop over place of male nomads who come from outside the *nagari*. Overall, *Surau* has a socio-cultural function that is as a meeting place for youth, parents and male immigrants and interact and socialize [4], [7].

As a place to gather and socialize, *Surau* became the center of information and contacts about life outside the *nagari*. The flow of information and contact with the outside world took place along with the arrival of traveling people leaving the *nagari* and religious teachers and merchants living in *Surau*

while staying overnight in the area they visited. The youth who are already puberty, sleeping in *Surau* and sharing stories with those who come or return from the *rantau* [8]. After the entry of Islam into Minangkabau, *Surau* function is no different and does not change, however it increases as a place to learn religion. Its function is increasingly important and not only as a place where every child and adolescent gain basic religious knowledge, but later develops into a complete Islamic educational institution. Thus, *Surau* in addition to having customary functions, it also has a religious function, namely as an Islamic educational institution [4], [7].

The function of *Surau* is also important as an educational institution along with the Islamic education ministry in Minangkabau. In the early days of the arrival of Islam, the Minangkabau youths were required to study customs as well as to emphasize the study of religious knowledge. This demand then encouraged every people to establish *Surau* as an educational institution for youth in the *nagari*. So then *Surau* in Minangkabau became the center of education and culture [5], [9]. However, since the development of modern European-style education in the colonial era and the modernization of education in the mid-20th century, the function of *Surau* as an important educational institution in Minangkabau had a shifted. Now, in some villages *Surau* even no longer work and even been closed even though the physical building is still there.

Method

This article was written based on qualitative research conducted in *nagari* in Minangkabau. The process of data collection is done through observation, direct involvement, interviews and document studies. The involvement of authors in *Suriau* activity becomes an important note in writing this article. Field data obtained from over all data collection process is sorted and categorized in accordance with the needs of article writing. The article is written descriptively by emphasizing the narrative plot that describes *Siurau* as an important educational institution in Minangkabau, its transformation into an educational institution and its extinction process as a socio-religious institution.

Surau as an Educational Institution

Minangkabau culture encourages its people to love education and science. Since childhood, Minangkabau youth have been required to seek knowledge through various learning media. This is even implied in the custom proverb, which is "*alam takambang jadi guru*" (all of medium is learning resources). That is, Minangkabau society does not limit itself to learning through any media. In fact, many of the

young people of Minangkabau wander to study. Elizabeth Graves categorizes the *rantau* (wandering) of the Minangkabau people into religious prosecutors and merantau traders [8]. This shows that the Minangkabau people make the *rantau* as a place to gain knowledge and develop knowledge. The urge to wander to young Minangkabau people accompanied by the urge to go home brings something of wealth or knowledge as a symbol of their success in the *rantau* [10].

The urge to return home made science seekers to Mecca back home with the science of religion. In Minangkabau they developed it through the process of *halaqah* education as they had in Mecca. The implications, features and system of education in Minangkabau are strongly influenced by the pattern and system of Islamic education in Mecca. The influence of Islam on education in Minangkabau is not only on subjects and curriculum, but also on the overall education system. This is understandable because Islam is an early and powerful religion in Minangkabau. The network of scholars who entered and developed Islam in Minangkabau developed an educational system in the style and repertoire of early Islamic education. Researchers often associate the emergence of Islamic educational activities with the entry of Islam into an area.

Sheikh Burhanuddin is a renowned scholar who is believed to be the founder of the *Surau* or madrasah in Ulakan, where he settled. The *Surau* is believed to be the first *Surau* built in Minangkabau [11]. The *Surau* education system developed by Sheikh Burhanuddin takes place in the form of *halaqah* and recitations groups discussing certain topics such as *fiqh*, *tasawuf*, *tauhid* and other religious sciences. Sheikh Burhanuddin is also believed to be the leading figure in the development of Islamic education in Minangkabau. He had many disciples and three of them - one from Sumanik, Tanah Datar, one from Pandai Brush, and one from Piobang, Lima Puluh Koto - went on a *hajj* in 1803 and lived five years in Mecca. Upon returning home, these three men brought the spirit of Islam that inspired them during their stay in Mecca [11]. The network of these scholars later developed the Islamic religious education in Minangkabau with their own techniques and methods [12].

The Islamic education system developed by these scholars is oriented towards the worldly and *ukhrawi* and makes *Surau* the basis of education. As an educational institution, every *Surau* is closely related to the prestige of a scholar. The fragrance of its name due to the privilege it possesses is a special attraction for students to the college. *Surau* will usually experience a decrease in popularity when the teacher dies, either because there is no substitute that matches the skill of his predecessor and because there is absolutely no one to replace him [8].

As an educational institution *Surau* provides space to young people in Minangkabau widely to learn various things. The lessons start from the provision of life in the world-like martial arts, indigenous knowledge, trade science and so on- until the provision of life in the afterlife, namely the sciences of Islam. Besides as an educational institution, *Surau* also provides memoirs for young Minangkabau children when they leave their hometown and or no longer studying in *Surau*. Nevertheless, Hadler mentioned that none of the early studies on the *Surau* were able to describe just about the circumstances of everyday life of the *Surau* world [13]. This is we argued because each *Surau* has a different style in the practice of learning.

As an institution, the village consists of three classifications, namely *Surau Adat*, *Surau Ulama* and *Surau Dagang*. *Surau Adat* is *Surau* of *kaum*, *suku*, *kampung* or *ninik mamak*. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the traditional *Surau* in Minangkabau had multifunctional use, its use was exclusively for indigenous purposes, teaching nephews of good *mamak* (good manners, speaking beautifully). In addition in the mosque taught religion and martial arts as well as prayer places of the custom. So, *Surau Adat* not only as a special place of worship, but also as a place to sleep and gather to youth and even parents who have been a widow, a place of praying, a place of *musyawarah* (discussion), a place of practice *silat* (self-defense arts) and so forth. *Surau Adat* is dominated and regulated by *niniak mamak* of people. *Surau Ulama* is a place of religious interest. In the beginning *Surau ulama* is a place of study (religion and *tarekat*), then developed into a formal institution of traditional formal education of Islam. In addition, the clerical *Surau* also became the center of *tarekat* study of *tarekat* centers by the *tarekat syekh*. *Surau Dagang* is a *Surau* where stopover traveling traders trade from one market to another market. Trade *Surau* is usually established near the market in the city and in the people's market. The function of trading *Surau* is more as a place to stay for merchants who stop by and travelers who are traveling [9].

Of the three models *Surau* above, based on its function, it can be said that the *Surau Adat* and *Surau ulama* is a *Surau* as an educational institution. What distinguishes is that *Surau ulama* are more synonymous with Islamic educational institutions. third category of *Surau*, was never found by the authors in this study. These trade surplus functions are now being replaced by the inclusion of inns and hotels in markets in various *nagari* in Minangkabau. In addition, the author also found no trace of the last existence of this type of *Surau*.

In addition to the above classification, *surau* is also classified into *Surau gadang* (large) and *Surau ketek* (small) [14] [15]. *Surau Gadang* can accommodate 80 to 100 students, or more. *Surau Gadang* deliberately established as a place of religious education in the broad sense. *Surau Gadang* not only serves as a house of worship and study, but is the center of activity (central activity) of Islamic education wider in various aspects taught to the students. In a broader sense the *Surau gadang* can be likened to the *pesantren* that became the center of religious learning in Java. But of course it has some differences based on the culture that magnifies it. While *Surau ketek* (small), is a *Surau* that only holds 20 students. This *Surau ketek* can be equated with *langgar* or *mushalla*. In general, *Surau ketek* only serves as a place of worship and recitation [15]. In various *nagari* in West Sumatra, *Surau ketek* is where the teachers and *murabbi* teach *tariqat* to their students. In the flow of *Naqsabandi tariqat*, in *Surau ketek* held *suluk* during the month of Ramadan.

Some of the *Surau gadang* then transformed to become Madrasah. *Surau Jembatan Besi* (Iron Bridge) that developed into Madrasah Sumatera Thawalib Padang Panjang, *Surau Alin Tagak* became Alin Tagak Islamic Boarding School in Pasaman Barat [5] is an example where the *Surau* then transformed into a religious school. The transformation process of the *Surau* into the religious school took place along with the renewal of the educational system in Minangkabau which was initiated by the great Meccan scholar from Minangkabau, namely Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Al-Minangkabau. Renewal is done because the education system *Surau* assessed already left

behind from the secular education system developed by the Dutch.

Change of Education System & Change of *Surau* Function in Minangkabau

The policy of coffee planting made the Dutch East Indies government must prepare people who are good at writing to work on their coffee plantations. For that purpose, the Dutch built secular schools in the 1840s in various nagari in the Highlands of West Sumatra. The first Resident of Dataran Tinggi Padang, Carel Philip Conrad Steinmetz at that time began to establish secular low schools with little colonial guidance. The schools were set up to be managed and financed locally. Schools were originally built in regional administrative centers in the highlands and in the center of coffee production in the hills. The purpose of school establishment is more important for the colonial interests than the reason for education itself. The interest is for the development of the bureaucratic system required in the system of forced cultivation of coffee. By 1847, scribes had been produced-trained scribes capable of managing coffee warehouses. Schools are held at a coffee hall or barn. There are four distinctly separate classrooms and all students are accepted as long as they are willing to use Malay and wear officially recognized "native" clothing [8], [13].

After establishing schools in the coffee planting era, the Dutch government also built more schools as part of *ethische politiek* politics. In the early 1850s nagari schools were established in the towns of the *Padangsche Benedenlanden* (lowland coastal) area, including in the central administrative regions such as *Painan* (1855), *Pariaman* (1854), *Padang* (1853) and *Air Bangis* (1854). At the same time the school opened in the northern hinterland of the central government in *Lubuk Sikaping* and the villages of *Panti* and *Talu*. In the late 1850s schools were opened in two nagaris in the coastal area *Asam Kumbang* (1859) and *Palangki* (1858) [8].

The *Bukittinggi Normal School* was established by government decree on April 1, 1856 in *Bukittinggi*. Normal school is a school of teachers, which is a school that provides education to prepare teachers who will teach in schools nagari scattered in *Minangkabau*. To get into this school the students do not have to complete the nagari school, but they must be at least 14 years old and already able to read and write in Malay language, have basic arithmetic skills. The curriculum for three years of study includes writing and reading in Malay (Arabic-Malay and Latin), geography, geometry, bookkeeping, writing letters (correspondents) and writing official reports in the correct format. The subjects will prepare students to teach at the nagari schools and train the children to be competent and professional heads and civil servants [8].

In school the *Minang* people are taught to read Latin letters and to count. Then school graduates were appointed as an employee of the Dutch East Indies [8]. More broadly the *Minangkabau* community was introduced to public schools that taught social and natural sciences. The education system in the Dutch colonial era, is very contradictory to the traditional Islamic education system in various aspects of religion. Their educational goal is to meet the needs of the Dutch government as its government employees [6]. In addition to educational goals, their learning methods are also different. In Dutch

schools, students learn by using tables and chairs, and grade levels. While traditional *Minangkabau* schools are transformed from the *Surau*, using the *halaqah* method and not using the class system.

The entry of the colonial system of education does not necessarily alter the *Minangkabau's* lack of respect for education. Some *Minangkabau* still hold the view that religious education is more important as a capital to live the world and the hereafter. Many of the *Minangkabau* youths spent years studying Arabic religious books in *Surau* with their scholars who became their teachers. But there are some *Minangkabau* who are interested in secular education; they first learn by private apprenticeship in government trade offices or in bureaucracy [8]. They then gradually become the actors bringing changes to the *Minang* people's view of education because of their appointment as employees in the colonial government.

The educational system developed by the Dutch colonialists continued to change the pattern and system of Islamic education in *Minangkabau*. With the development of school education system that teaches students to write, read, count and think critically, traditional Islamic education system with *halaqah* system that emphasizes the memorization of knowledge began to be abandoned by young people in *Minangkabau*. In addition to the education system, pragmatism also contributes to the abandonment of the traditional Islamic education system in *Surau*. At that time, young men who went to school in many colonial schools were appointed Dutch employees.

Seeing the development of the modern colonial education system and the inadequacy of the *Surau* education system, *Sheikh Ahmad Khatib* undertook the education reform *Surau* through his students who studied directly with him to Mecca. Among them were *Muhammad Thaib Umar*, *Abdul Latif Syakur*, *Abbad Abdullah*, *Ibrahim Musa Parabek*, *Agus Salim*, *Abdul Karim Amrullah*, *Daud Rashidin*, and *Sultan Darap Pariaman*. All returned to the archipelago and took part in the world of education to reform and *Surau* modernization that has been backward and left behind by the presence of secular schools founded by the Dutch East Indies. The process of modernizing education is done in two ways; First, through Injection, motivation, and second through the think tank revolution. In *Minangkabau*, modernization in educational institutions is strongly influenced by the outer education system especially Mecca and Egypt. This system was brought by *Minangkabau* scholars and applied in the local Islamic education system. Finally, there is renewal in educational institutions *Surau* become *madrrasah*, the classical and no longer idols, and there are reforms in the curriculum of education [16].

Of the several educational institutes offered there are several different characteristics, it can be grouped into three shades; first, a pattern that more adopted the pattern of Dutch Colonial education, represented by *Abdullah Ahmad*; establishing a modern school-style education. Second, the style that retains the *Surau's* characteristic by carrying out a reform / modernization oriented to the Middle East, represented by *Sheikh Abdul Karim Amrullah*; they established a modern education ala *madrrasah*. Third, social-oriented education reforms are represented by *Zainuddin Labay el-Yunusi* and *Rahmah el-Yunusiah*; they established a modern school-style vocational education (*takhasus*), although not yet fully [16].

Modernized pesantren educational institutions continue to grow along with the modernization of boarding schools, both institutionally, management and curriculum [17].

Portrait of *Surau* and its Powerlessness Nowadays

The transformation of *Surau* into a more complex educational institution made the *Surau* begin to expand into a more complex educational institution. However, in the *Surau* education system, a student may study in more than one *Surau* and a different teacher at the same time. That is, a student is not tied to studying only in a *Surau* like a schooling system that allows students to study in only one school. The development has positive implications for the *Surau* as a religious education institution. In addition to the initial function, the *Surau* evolved into a more complete learning vantage point than its original function. However, the *Surau* that transformed into this educational institution majority is *Surau* gadang. While *Surau* ketek, still survive as a place to study religion and tarikat traditionally. In addition, *Surau* Adat still serves as a place to learn custom and silat and bed for males in Minangkabau.

The entry of the colonial education system and the adoption of modern school systems such as curriculum containing public (non-religious) lessons, using tables and chairs, and the class level had a major impact on the education system in Minangkabau. In addition to teaching religious teachings, these schools also provide general lessons such as history, geography, foreign languages and mathematics tailored to the needs of the community [18] making the *Surau* increasingly abandoned as an educational institution.

In the 1900s indigenous children had started attending school at the Dutch school [7]. After independence of Indonesia, Dutch schools were taken over by the Indonesian government with an unchanging system of study. Education curriculum policies developed by the Indonesian government nationwide since the 1980s made the students (SD-SLTA) spend more of their time studying in school and *Surau* did not serve as an informal education institution in Minangkabau. Some *Surau* only serves as a place to learn to read and write al-Quran.

In Nagari Lasi, Canduang District, Agam District, in the early 1990s, *Surau* began to be abandoned as a place to learn to read al-Qur'an along with the establishment of a Koran Education Park (TPA) with learning systems such as schools as a place to learn to read and write Al-Quran. Although some *Surau* are still used as a place to learn to read and write Al-Quran, but children are more interested in learning to read and write Al-Quran to TPA. *Surau* Laia-Laia, *Surau* Pulai and *Surau* Katimbuang are usually used as a place to read and write Al-Quran with halaqah system has begun to lose its devotees. *Surau* Lurah last held Khatam Al-Quran in 1999, and after that there is no more learning activities to read and write Al-Quran. Other *Surau*, such as *Surau* Katimbuang, *Surau* batu Jolang, the last is still a place to study religious books such as nahwu, sharaf, fiqh and others. But along with the establishment of a boarding school in 1992 that teaches the same subjects, *Surau* no longer teaches the holy books [19].

Finally, the *Surau* function in the village of Lasi is as a place of believer of Naqshabandiyah tariqat in the holy month of Ramadhan. The *Surau*s that do this *suluk* include *Surau* Pulai, *Surau* Batu jolang, *Surau* Katimbuang, *Surau* Lurah and *Surau* Laia-Laia. *Surau* Pulai is the first closing *Surau* (2006) along

with the death of murabah, followed by *Surau* Batu Jolang (2012) and *Surau* Katimbuang (2016). Now, the *Surau* who still holds a *suluk* is only *Surau* Laia-Laia. Meanwhile, *Surau* Lurah, has long held no *suluk* because his *murabbi* is the same as *Surau* Laia-Laia. *Murabbi* had long since died, long before *Pulai Surau* closed. Now the *Surau* that was closed was only opened occasionally by the students who come to visit for pilgrimage. Only *Surau* Lurah did not close because left by the teacher because the status and function changed as a mushalla and managed by the board as a mosque. However, routine activities are only congregational prayers and monthly religious lectures by teachers who are brought in by administrators.

In Nagari Sicincin, Kab. Padang Pariaman, *Surau* belongs to the kaum, it no longer functions as an informal educational institution. They are no longer a gathering place and beds of young men in one clan. The *Surau* became a gathering place for old people in the afternoon, or just as a place to leave and change clothes when people bathe into the shower. The function of the *Surau* as a place of worship was replaced by a mushalla built jointly by some tribes.

Another factor which is also the cause of the retreat of *Surau* function as an educational institution is the influx of outsiders to Minangkabau who have an effect on the pattern of care system in Minangkabau. If initially young men in Minangkabau are required to sleep in *Surau* under the responsibility of mamak, the subsequent development of children is entirely the responsibility of biological fathers who provide shelter for their children. In homes built by his parents, minangkabau boys are provided special rooms. The implication, Minangkabau youth no longer sleep in *Surau*, but sleeping in their parents' homes.

Surau that once had an important function in the Minangkabau education system, has now been powerless. Its function as an educational institution is replaced by government-built and private schools with a rigorous and formal education and curriculum system. Its function as a religious institution, does not go completely. Its function as a place to learn to read and write Al-Quran was replaced by TPA and MDA with learning system like in school. As a place of worship, its function was replaced by mushalla built side by side with *Surau*. Finally, *Surau* is more dominantly used as a place of tariqat believer, but some *Surau*s are no longer working because the teachers or the *murabbis* have died and there is no substitute. *Surau* is now only a physical building and some have even collapsed.

Conclusion

The shifting of *Surau* function as an important social and religious institution in Minangkabau is macroinfluenced by changes in other institutions affecting it. In macro terms, *Surau* functions as an educational institution are changing and even destroyed along with the dynamics and changes in education system in Minangkabau. The dynamics and changes are from the entry of the colonial system of education, the reform of religious education by the Minangkabau community, and the national education system since the 1980s. Then, in meso, that change occurs because of the change of small family structure and extended family in Minangkabau which is influenced by the acculturation of outside culture which gives dynamic space to the kinship system in Minangkabau. The process is seen from how families treat their boys by providing them with

special rooms.

This change at the macro and meso levels is, of course, part of the dynamics of institutionalization of the Minangkabau society that is inevitable. Because after all, the various systems that enter Minangkabau will always be adapted by the Minangkabau cultural system that adheres to the principle *sakali aia gadang, sakali tapian barubah* (once the flood comes, the edge will change). It is just a *Surau* function that has been replaced by various institutions has not received an optimal shift, its function as a place of custom and silat learning. Importantly, this function for the foresight is a record in answering the various dynamics and changes. Thus, custom and minangkabau culture can continue to be inherited and custom leaders in Minangkabau really are those who understand custom and religion.

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