

The Evolution of Minangkabau Elite: Modernization and Cultural Shifts in Nagari Kurai, 19th-20th Century

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Abstract: *The problem addressed in this research focuses on the socio-cultural transformation of the Minangkabau elite during the colonial period, particularly in Nagari Kurai. Using the historical research method, the study traces the evolution of the local elites through archival analysis and ethnographic records. The key finding reveals that the establishment of Bukittinggi as a colonial center and the spread of modernity in the early 20th century prompted the rise of a new urban elite, distinct from traditional authorities. In conclusion, the study suggests that colonial modernity played a pivotal role in reshaping cultural and political hierarchies in Minangkabau society.*

Key words: socio-cultural transformation, Minangkabau elite, new urban elite, traditional authorities, reshaping cultural

Introduction

The opening of Bukittinggi city and the arrival of modernity, encompassing the Western education system, capitalist economy, and the burgeoning intellectual world, have broadened the horizon of progress for the people of Minangkabau. Consequently, they opted to migrate to this city to internalize themselves within the progress of Bukittinggi. The outcome of this internalization became a part of the process in forming new Minangkabau elites at the beginning of the 20th century. This article delineates the onset and the process of transforming the cultural backdrop of Nagari Kurai into a part of the modern cultural space of Bukittinggi city. As a

chronology, this paper is also enriched by exploring the old elites of Minangkabau in Bukittinggi. These old elites were characterized by their strong orientation towards tradition and their mutualistic symbiotic relationship with the colonial government. The core of this research segment encompasses the modernity of Bukittinggi city and the formation of new Minangkabau elites.

The research focuses on the socio-cultural transformation that occurred in Nagari Kurai during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly the shift in the structure of the Minangkabau elite due to the growing influence of colonial modernity. The main problem centers on how this modernization, driven by the

establishment of Bukittinggi as a colonial administrative center, impacted traditional elites in the region. The study seeks to explore how these changes redefined social and political hierarchies within the Minangkabau community, especially as traditional structures were challenged by new forms of power rooted in Western education and economic systems.

The purpose of the research is to trace the historical development of this transformation using historical methods, including archival analysis and ethnographic records. The study aims to demonstrate how the rise of a new urban elite in Bukittinggi emerged from the dynamics of colonial governance, education, and economic progress. This urban elite gradually replaced the old, tradition-bound authorities, leading to significant shifts in local governance and cultural identity. Ultimately, the study intends to illustrate how colonial modernity not only introduced new political actors but also reshaped the entire socio-cultural framework of Minangkabau society.

The appropriate method for this study is the historical research method, which focuses on examining past events to understand their impact on present-day realities. This approach is essential for analyzing the socio-cultural transformations in Nagari Kurai and the development of the Minangkabau

elite during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The historical research method involves a systematic process of collecting, verifying, and interpreting data from primary and secondary sources, such as archival documents, government records, personal letters, and ethnographic observations. The research process begins with identifying the problem: the socio-political changes brought about by the establishment of Bukittinggi as a colonial center. A thorough literature review is conducted to understand the broader historical context of colonial modernity in Sumatra and its impact on local societies. The study then focuses on collecting primary sources from colonial archives, local records, and ethnographic reports detailing the governance, social structure, and daily life in Nagari Kurai. Next, the data is critically evaluated for its authenticity and relevance. By cross-referencing multiple sources, the researcher ensures the reliability of the information. The analysis is then conducted to reconstruct the historical narrative, identifying key shifts in the Minangkabau elite and their role within the changing political landscape. Finally, the findings are interpreted to draw connections between the colonial policies and the evolution of new urban elites in Bukittinggi. This method allows for a nuanced understanding of how modernity and colonialism

reshaped cultural and political hierarchies in Minangkabau society

Cultural Realities of Nagari Kurai

Before the 19th century, the city of Bukittinggi was part of the cultural domain of Nagari Kurai. Culturally, Nagari Kurai falls within the Alam Minangkabau region, located in Luhak Agam. According to historical records, the initial settlements of the Minangkabau people were on the slopes of Mount Sorik Marapi. They subsequently divided themselves to form new communities that spread across valleys, hills, and at the base of Mount Sorik Marapi, Mount Singgalang, Mount Talang, and Mount Sago.¹ These communities then named their living areas as Luhak, which includes Luhak Agam situated north of Mount Sorik Marapi, facing Mount Singgalang. Luhak Tanah Datar is located in the southeastern region of Mount Sorik Marapi, and Luhak 50 Koto is to the north of Mount Sago. Among the early

Minangkabau communities, Luhak Tanah Datar is the oldest, followed by Luhak Agam, and the youngest being Luhak 50 Koto. Historical records describe the characteristics of these regions; Luhak Tanah Datar with its clear water, tame fish, and cool land; Luhak Agam with murky water, wild fish, and warm land; Luhak 50 Koto with sweet water, tame fish, and cool land.² These three Luhak areas are considered the cradle of Minangkabau civilization. These same areas are referred to by Minangkabau people wherever they may be as their ancestral homeland.

Luhak, also known as darek or the original region, consists of autonomous nagaris (villages).³ Each nagari has its own cultural uniqueness. What unites them is the awareness and recognition that they are part of the people and land of Minangkabau. For the Minangkabau people, due to the autonomous nature of each nagari, including in matters of custom, one nagari is not bound by another; customs are distinct yet circle

¹ See H. Datoek Toeah, *Tambo Alam Minangkabau* (Bukittinggi: Pustaka Indonesia, 1989), pp. 55-58.; see also Taufik Abdullah, "Bukan Mambangik Batang Tarandam", *Jurnal Kebudayaan Genta Budaya*, Nomor 1 Tahun 1. Edisi Agustus-Oktober 1995, pp. 6. Culturally, people in Luhak Agam are described as brave, fighting and competitive. See Taufik Abdullah, dkk., *Ekologi Bukittinggi* (Jakarta: Depdikbud, 1983), pp. 2.

² See H. Datoek Toeah, *op.cit.*, pp. 55.

³ Within the nagari, at the lower level there are jorong, and dusun or kampung. A jorong is headed by a penghulu called kepala jorong, a dusun or kampung is called kepala kampung. Detail See A.A. Navis, *Alam Takambang Jadi Guru: Adat dan Kebudayaan Minangkabau* (Jakarta: Grafitipers, 1986), pp. 94-96.

within the same Luhak.⁴ Each nagari has its own cultural uniqueness. What unites them is the awareness and recognition that they are part of the people and land of Minangkabau. For the Minangkabau people, due to the autonomous nature of each nagari, including in matters of custom, one nagari is not bound by another; customs are distinct yet circle within the same Luhak.⁵ The Minangkabau people categorize their customs into four levels. There is the true custom, which is permanent and unchanging, attributed to the laws of nature. There is the customary custom, which are habits that have been elevated to the status of custom. There is the accustomed custom, which is consensus upheld as custom. Lastly, there is the ceremonial custom, which are agreed-upon ritualistic rules. In the context of customs among nagaris, this refers to the ceremonial customs.⁶ The distinct character of each nagari in every Luhak also forms a unique representation of the Minangkabau people geographically; for instance, the people of Luhak 50 Koto tend to be

⁴ See Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatera 1927-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1971), pp. 3.

⁵ Detail you can read Taufik Abdullah, "Adat and Islam: an Examination of Conflict in Minangkabau", *Indonesia*, Vol. 2, October, 1966., pp. 10.

⁶ See H. Datuk Toeah, *op.cit.*, pp. 261-2.

traders and devout Muslims due to the region's proximity to the trade centers in the eastern part of Sumatra Island, and the prevalence of traditional Sufi centers. Meanwhile, residents of Luhak Agam, including those in Nagari Kurai, are characterized as pragmatic and dynamic. They are open to interaction and negotiation when it benefits them economically.⁷

The Minangkabau people residing in nagaris (villages) adhere to a matrilineal system of life, tracing lineage through females. According to the matrilineal tradition within the nagari, the Minangkabau society operates within three major levels, encompassing *saparuik*, *sapayuang*, and *sasuku*.⁸ *Saparuik*, literally translating to 'one stomach,' denotes a group of individuals residing in a single *Rumah Gadang* (traditional communal house), with reference to a common grandmother. The inhabitants of the *Rumah Gadang* are women and boys who are not yet considered adults by religious and customary standards. Married adult men live in their wife's *Rumah Gadang* at night, while those who are of age but unmarried

⁷ See E.E. Graves, *Asal Usul Elite Minangkabau Modern: Respon Terhadap Kolonial Belanda Abad XIX/XX* (Jakarta: YOI, 2007), pp. 6.

⁸ See Tsuyoshi Kato, *Adat Minangkabau dan Merantau dalam Perspektif Sejarah* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2005), pp. 29.

choose to migrate out of their native nagari. Sapayuang, or under one umbrella, refers to the grouping of Rumah Gadang and its occupants under the influence of a penghulu (traditional leader). The position of penghulu is bestowed or inherited in a matrilineal line from the Mamak (maternal uncle), or the eldest male child to his nephew. On a personal level, the household life within saparuik and sapayuang in the Rumah Gadang falls under the authority of a mamak, not a father, who is considered an outsider.

Meanwhile, sasuku, or belonging to the same lineage, refers to a collection of saparuik sharing a common maternal ancestress, whose name is no longer known.⁹ At the level of social interaction within the nagari, the clan represents personal identity, and every Minangkabau individual belongs to a clan.¹⁰ Those who are part of the daily life hierarchy in the nagari include ordinary people, descendants of urang asa (matrilineal pioneers of the nagari), customary officials, and penghulus.¹¹ There are two patterns of daily interaction among them: the relationship between urang asa or descendants of the matrilineal pioneers of the nagari and newcomers, and between

customary officials and the ordinary people or majority.¹² However, of greater significance is that individuals bearing the title of datuk adat (customary leader) are the most respected, and their opinions are highly valued in the nagari, especially in adjudicating customary matters at the Balai Adat (Customary Hall).¹³

Prior to the colonial period, the people of Nagari Kurai were part of the Minangkabau community society. Within the organizational structure of the Minangkabau realm, the customary law known as "adat salingka nagari" dictated that the indigenous society of Nagari Kurai was divided into clans based on matrilineal lines, inhabiting various hamlets within the area. Nine clans resided across five hamlets in Nagari Kurai, namely the Guci, Pisang, Sikumbang, Jambak, Tanjung, Salayan, Simabua, Koto, and Malayu clans. The hamlets in Nagari Kurai include Mandiangin, Guguakpanjang, Kotosalayan,

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30.

¹⁰ See See Zulqayyim, *Boekittinggi Tempo Doeloe*, (Padang: Andalas University Press, 2006), pp. 19.

¹¹ Tsuyoshi Kato, *op.cit.*, pp. 30.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 59.

¹³ Ordinary people in nagari life also have titles, according to the customary rule that those who are married must have a title. However, the post-marriage title of a Minangkabau man in the nagari cannot be considered equal to that of a traditional leader or penghulu. They are usually given a title of one or two words but without the word datuk, such as Sutan Bandaro, Mangkuto Rajo, Rajo Bonsu, and many more. See in detail in A.A. Navis, *op.cit.*, pp. 132-133.

Tigobaleh, and Aurbirugo.¹⁴ The clans of Kurai are derivatives of the four major clans in the Minangkabau society, which are Bodi, Chaniago, Koto, and Piliang, with the clans within Nagari Kurai being offshoots of the Piliang Clan.¹⁵

In the context of adhering to the values of the Piliang Clan, the people of Nagari Kurai lived daily within a strict hierarchical relationship, particularly in terms of the inheritance of the chieftaincy and the limited role of fathers. According to the customary values of Nagari Kurai, the position of chieftain is an inheritance passed down from maternal uncles to their nephews directly (children of their sisters), termed as "warih bajawek" (answerable heir). Individuals not directly related by blood, or not being a nephew under the direct lineage of a maternal uncle holding a traditional chieftaincy, would never inherit a traditional chieftain position in Nagari Kurai.¹⁶ Meanwhile, fathers within the Rumah Gadang (traditional communal house) are metaphorically described as ashes on a stove, which quickly scatter when the wind blows (indicating separation).¹⁷

In a matrilineal society, the position of a husband or father is

precarious. They are expected to be the "stallions" that produce outstanding children within their wife's family, but on the other hand, they must also compete for social space in the Rumah Gadang and influence over their immediate family life. The maternal uncle holds the position of the head of the Rumah Gadang family. The diminished role of a father or husband in the Rumah Gadang is partly due to the fact that their basic needs as a family are guaranteed and provided by their wife's matrilineal family, which controls the ancestral land as an economic resource.¹⁸ The management and allocation of ancestral land are under the authority of the maternal uncle. As long as the ancestral land continues to provide for the basic needs of the family, and the maternal uncle is capable of providing for the secondary needs of his nephews and nieces, the father or husband and the nuclear family system play a minimal role in the Minangkabau community's life, including in Nagari Kurai. However, this condition began to change when modern values shifted the role of Minangkabau customs in the villages, including Nagari Kurai, which became part of the city of Bukittinggi by the end of the 19th century.

Entering the third decade of the 19th century, phenomena

¹⁴ See Zulqayyim, *op.cit.*, pp. 19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ See this concept in A.A. Navis, *op.cit.*, pp. 144.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 215.

¹⁸ See Tsuyoshi Kato, *op.cit.*, 62.

indicating shifts in the customary and power structures of Nagari Kurai began to surface, aligning with its cultural value of "sakali aia gadang sakali tapian barubah" (once a great water, once a changing bank). These changes can be traced back to three significant developments: the establishment of Fort de Kock in 1821, the emergence of Bukittinggi as a representation of colonial government by the end of the 19th century, and the consolidation of colonial modernity at the beginning of the 20th century. These events collectively altered the cultural setting of Nagari Kurai, especially as it became part of the city of Bukittinggi, rendering the people of Kurai as urban emigrants in their ancestral land during the early decades of 20th-century modernity consolidation. These three elements also symbolize the cultural emblem of "aia gadang," referred to as the adat adegium of Nagari Kurai, leading to the transformation of its cultural landscape. Due to these developments, Nagari Kurai and its societal structure were irrevocably changed, particularly with the migration of people from other regions or foreigners during and after the development of Bukittinggi at the end of the 19th century. The Kurai people integrated and became part of the urban population of Bukittinggi, along with other urban migrants from surrounding nagaris and

foreign settlers since the early 20th century. Together, they grew and evolved as the new Minangkabau elite of Bukittinggi.

Minangkabau's Old Elites

According to the historical narratives known as Tambo, the inception of the Minangkabau realm was marked by the existence of only the frontier lands. The earliest migrants were led by Sri Maharaja Diraja and his followers, who ventured eastward from the land of Ruhum, eventually settling at the peak of Mount Sorik Marapi. At that time, as recorded in the Tambo, Mount Sorik Marapi was merely the size of a duck egg, its lower reaches enveloped by water. As the waters receded and the land became visible, Sri Maharaja Diraja and his entourage descended and established a settlement, organizing their new life therein.¹⁹

To govern the burgeoning community following the demise of

¹⁹ It is a classic story that is often told by parents to their children, or teachers to their students, without knowing where they quoted it. However, most books on Tambo Minangkabau first include the story of Sri Maharaja Diraja's arrival from the Ruhum Continent to Alam Minangkabau, which at the time was the size of a duck egg. One of the sources of that information is Taufik Abdullah, "Modernization in the Minangkabau World: West Sumatera in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century", dalam Claire Holt (ed.), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 184.

Sri Maharaja Diraja, the prime minister, Tjati Bilang Pandai, appointed the early family elders who had initially accompanied the first king as leaders of the now expansive groups. A new king was then anointed as the supreme leader of the federation of clans, alongside the clan chiefs, to administer the increasingly flourishing Minangkabau Realm.²⁰ Further delving into the Tambo reveals that the king had a son named Datuk Ketemanggungan. Following the king's death, his widow remarried and bore a son named Datuk Parpatiah Nan Sabatang. These two figures are considered foundational in the establishment of Minangkabau customs, yet they also bequeathed two distinct systems. The divergence arose regarding genealogical aspects, experiences, and perspectives on customary practices.

Datuk Katemanggungan, being the son of a king, shaped a set of customs reflective of his aristocracy, known as Koto-Piliang. Conversely, Datuk Parpatiah Nan Sabatang, descending from a non-noble father, developed a relatively democratic customary system, termed Bodi-Chaniago. Various accounts recount a conflict between the two, significantly influencing the governance structure of the community and the allegiance of

their followers.²¹ This discord between the two paramount chiefs also stemmed from their youthful experiences. Reportedly, Datuk Katemanggungan never left the village of his residence, serving as its chief elder. In contrast, his half-brother was a wanderer who ventured far, even to China, according to some accounts. Observing the rigid aristocratic system of his brother, Datuk Parpatiah Nan Sabatang sought to implement a democratic lineage of village chief titles. Whereas Datuk Katemanggungan had established a hierarchical, nepotistic system for appointing the village chief, typically passed to the eldest son of the chief's sister through direct nomination, Datuk Parpatiah Nan Sabatang advocated for a system where any male family member within the same lineage could inherit the title, based on familial consensus.²² Despite both acquiring relatively balanced followings in

²¹ One of these stories concerns the existence of Batu Batikam in the Batusangkar archaeological site, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra. According to local stories, Batu Batikam is the culmination and solution of Datuk Parpatiah Nan Sabatang, who was angry with his brother Datuk Katemanggungan. According to Datuk Parpatiah Nan Sabatang, instead of stabbing his dagger into his brother's chest, let it go to the stone so that the dispute between the two is over.

²² See Taufik Abdullah, "Adat and Islam: an Examination of Conflict in Minangkabau", *Indonesia*, Vol. 2, October, 1966, pp. 6-7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 185.

their communities, the cultural consolidation process among their followers facilitated the solidification of the Minangkabau Realm concept, simultaneously inspiring the emergence of cultural dialectics between the native and migratory domains. Datuk Katemanggungan epitomized the traditional, sedentary village customs, whereas Datuk Parpatiah Nan Sabatang represented the migratory push for renewal. Hence, based on the legacies of these two pivotal figures, subsequent generations of migrants from Mount Sorik Marapi established new villages guided by the narratives contained in the Tambo.

In everyday life prior to the colonial period, the villages (nagari) operated under a clear social stratification, although there was a mythologization of classical Minangkabau democracy in the post-colonial era. The social stratification in the daily life of the nagari was determined by two factors: the presence of the initial paruik group as pioneers versus newcomers, and the traditional leaders (adat holders) with their heirs.²³ The descendants of the nagari pioneers typically constituted the ruling class of the nagari. They controlled the rice fields, land, and plantations that were the assets of the nagari. The eldest male from these descendants simultaneously held the highest

customary leader position. Based on the matrilineal system, he would pass on the chieftaincy to his nephew through appointment or deliberation. These heirs, the nephews, according to Minangkabau custom, consist of nephews 'under the chin,' 'under the navel,' and 'under the knee.'²⁴ The nephews 'under the chin' are the primary candidates for the inheritance of the chieftaincy position. However, due to the development and openness of the nagari, families of nephews 'under the navel' have eventually been allowed to appoint their own chiefs, even being considered as part of the nagari customary system.

Nagari Kurai, the initial area of what is now Bukittinggi before the colonial period, was also a newly explored territory. According to oral history from the people of Kurai, they originated from Nagari Pariangan, in Padangpanjang. Initially, Nagari Kurai was explored by thirteen families, and they established the first hamlet named Tigobaleh, in accordance

²³ See Tsuyoshi Kato, *op.cit.*, pp. 50.

²⁴ Nephews below the chin include those related by blood to the first successor; nephews below the navel include immigrants; and nephews below the knee include slaves or prisoners of war who settled by paying the asa or successor a sum of money or gold. See Tsuyoshi Kato, *Ibid.*, pp. 51. Navis, on the other hand, points out that under the chin there is the type of kemenkan under the chest, i.e. those who are of the same tribe, but have a different leader. See A.A. Navis, *op.cit.*, pp. 136.

with the number of people who came. As the need for dwellings increased, the thirteen large families spread out, opening up new residential and agricultural areas, thus scattering into three hamlets, namely Mandiingin, Aurabirugo, and Kotosalayan. The assembly of these four hamlets eventually formed a single nagari named Nagari Kurai.²⁵

In the nascent village of Nagari Kurai, the socio-political organization adheres to the traditional Koto-Piliang system, characterized by a symbolic monarch, the Raja Alam, who presides over the Minangkabau domain.²⁶ This system is integral to the village's daily governance, particularly in the application of adat (customary law), which is

implemented by a cadre of traditional leaders known as penghulu. The hierarchical structure within the Koto-Piliang system is epitomized by the adat aphorism 'bajanjang naik batangga turun, berjenjang naik bertangga turun,' signifying a progression that is methodical and deliberate, akin to ascending by steps and descending by stairs.²⁷

Within Nagari Kurai, the penghulu are bifurcated into two principal groups that steer the community's policies and development in alignment with Minangkabau traditions. The foremost group, the penghulu pucuak (chief penghulu), comprises twenty-six members under the leadership of Datuk Bandaro.²⁸ This group is regarded as the progenitors of the initial migrants from Pariangan Padangpanjang to Kurai, establishing the foundational settlement.²⁹ The penghulu pucuak are further stratified into three tiers, with the first tier known as the 'panghulu nan limo,' encompassing pivotal figures such as Datuk Bandaharo of the Guci clan, alongside Datuk Yang Pituan of the Pisang clan, Datuk Sati of the Sikumbang clan, Datuk Rajo Mantari of the Jambak clan, and Datuk Rajo Endah of the Tanjuang clan, collectively referred to as the principal penghulu.

²⁵ See Zulqayyim, *op.cit.*, pp. 17-18.

²⁶ The king of nature is part of the concept of Tigo Rajo Selo in Tambo Minangkabau. Rajo Tigo Selo means three kings in the same position, namely the King of Nature, who controls the world residing in Nagari Pagaruyung; the King of Adat, who rules over customs residing in Nagari Buo; and the King of Worship as the ruler of religion residing in Nagari Sumpur Kudus. The three of them are assisted by ministers called Basa Ampek Balai, four great men, namely Datuk Bandaharo in Nagari Sungai Tarab, Tuan Kadhi in Nagari Padanggantiang, Tuan Indomo in Nagari Suroaso, and Tuan Machudum in Nagari Sumanik. Minangkabau people in darek and overseas recognize them as Yang Dipertuan Agung. Details of their cultural or symbolic duties and authority, see MD. Mansoer, dkk, *Sedjarah Minangkabau* (Jakarta: Bhratara, 1970), pp. 64-64.

²⁷ See A.A. Navis, *op.cit.*, pp. 54-55.

²⁸ See Zulqayyim, *op.cit.*, pp. 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17.

The second tier is constituted by the ministers, initially termed 'manti nan sambilan' (the nine ministers), subsequently recognized as 'panghulu nan sambilan' due to their burgeoning influence. This echelon includes Datuk Pangulu Sati of the Tanjuang clan as its head, with Datuk Maharajo of the Guci clan, Datuk Batuah of the Sikumbang clan, Datuk Kayo of the Jambak clan, Datuk Sinaro of the Simabua clan, Datuk Putiah of the Pisang clan, Datuk Nan Baranam of the Salayan clan, Datuk Bagindo Basa of the Koto clan, and Datuk Rajo Mulia of the Pisang clan as members.

The tertiary level, the 'dubalang nan duobaleh' (the twelve warriors), includes Datuk Malaka of the Guci clan, Datuk Pangulu Basa of the Sikumbang clan, Datuk Simajo Nan Panjang of the Tanjuang clan, Datuk Rangkayo Nan Basa of the Jambak clan, Datuk Garang of the Koto clan, Datuk Bagindo of the Pisang clan, Datuk Tan Muhamad of the Salayan clan, Datuk Nan Angek of the Pisang clan, Datuk Panjang Lidah of the Simabua clan, Datuk nan Labiah of the Pisang clan, Datuk Palimo Bajau of the Tanjuang clan, and Datuk Tumbaliak of the Guci clan.³⁰

³⁰ See St. Batuah, "Tambo (Sejarah) Kurai Limo Jorong", *published in* http://www.angelfire.com/id2/adyan/minang/Tambo_Rang_Kurai.html, terakhir diakses 16/3/2015; 09.36 wib.; See juga

The second significant contingent of panghulu in Nagari Kurai is identified as the 'panghulu nan duopuluah ampek' (the twenty-four panghulu), who assume more circumscribed roles within their respective clans.³¹ Beyond these two groups, the village's societal fabric includes religious scholars (ulama),³² and the laity, comprising in-laws (sumando) and bachelors. The commoners' role in Nagari Kurai is constrained, and migrants lacking notable achievements do not confer strategic advantage to their kin or themselves within the nagari. The metaphor of a husband or father as a migrant being likened to ashes on a stove, easily dispersed by the

Zulqayyim, *Boekittinggi Tempo Doeloe, op.cit.*, pp. 18.

³¹ See Zulqayyim, *Ibid.*, pp. 18.

³² The clerics were one of the elements of the old Minangkabau elite in the nagari, especially the sheikhs who owned large surau. But they do not pay much attention to the political life of the nagari, except in certain cases concerning religious rituals. Therefore, the ulama are often not considered as elites in the Minangkabau traditional order. Therefore, the elite, according to Minangkabau custom, is not born from an educational institution such as a large surau because it is considered an external value, at least that was seen until the beginning of the Paderi period. In the post-Paderi period, the composition of the elite in the nagari changed with the addition of ulama and cerdik pandai who were grouped into the conception of tungku tigo sajarangan, three parallel positions in the nagari. But in reality, in the daily life of the nagari, this is not the way the relationship between the three.

wind without trace, encapsulates this predicament.³³

The elite composition of the Kurai clan in Bukittinggi began to evolve in the mid-19th century, coinciding with Bukittinggi's ascendance as the colonial administration's nexus in West Sumatra's highlands.³⁴ Concurrently, the colonial regime modified the socio-political dynamics of inland nagari, incorporating Nagari Kurai into the Bukittinggi administrative domain by the late 19th century. To facilitate these transformations, the colonial authorities instituted a new echelon of elites, the 'schakel elite,' who, unlike their predecessors, did not trace their lineage to Nagari Kurai's original founders. Attaining elite status through political and bureaucratic appointments as 'laras,' 'demang,' 'penghulu kepala,' and 'penghulu kopi,' these figures were designated by the colonial administration.

This schakel elite, emerging from the colonial superstructure, operated outside the purview of Kurai adat regulations. Their inability to bequeath positions to their nephews, in accordance with the Minangkabau matrilineal tradition, further delineates their deviation from traditional norms.

³³ See H. Datoek Toeah, *op.cit.*, pp. 192.

³⁴ See Gusti Asnan, *Pemerintahan Daerah Sumatera Barat dari VOC Hingga Reformasi* (Yogyakarta: Citra Pustaka, 2006), pp. 67.

Moreover, the schakel elite's orientation towards the colonial apparatus, as opposed to Minangkabau adat, facilitated the perpetuation of colonial governance in Bukittinggi and, by extension, West Sumatra at large. This elite cadre diverged from the nascent Minangkabau elite, which emerged from urban migrants of penghulu and commoner origins in the early 20th century. The latter group's ascendancy paralleled their embracement of modernity through educational pursuits, marking a distinct epoch in the socio-political landscape of Bukittinggi.

The modernity of the city of Bukittinggi

The modernity of the city of Bukittinggi encompasses three main spheres: political, social, and cultural. Emerging as new values stemming from the Enlightenment era in 18th century Europe, Bukittinggi's modernity is closely linked to the development of colonialism and capitalism by the colonial government in West Sumatra. Politically, the colonial development as part of Bukittinggi's modernity reflects the policy of citizens serving the interests of colonial state exploitation, which was enforced repressively. The colonial government implemented a subordinate power system by placing the chiefs of the Nagari Kurai tribe as an extension of colonial power in Bukittinggi

society. Through this power relation pattern, the colonial government established supranagari authority in the mid-19th century, with Nagari Kurai being one of them.

During the mid-19th century, Nagari Kurai was merged by the colonial government with Nagari Banuhampu, appointing a headman to govern both Nagaris.³⁵ At a lower level, the government unified the five jorongs of Nagari Kurai into two jorongs, each headed by a chief appointed by official appointment letters.³⁶ However, the colonial government abolished the position of headman and the Kelarasan of Nagari Kurai-Banuhampu in 1913. The colonial government replaced the Kelarasan with a district system headed by a district head. However, the district system did not last long and was eventually replaced by a "kedemangan" system, where Nagari Kurai became part of the Bukittinggi Kedemangan region.³⁷ The position of "demang" was held by a traditional chief appointed by the colonial government, and below him were appointed assistant "demangs" and village heads.

Before the new supranagari reform in 1918, Bukittinggi operated under two subordinate political systems. First, a power system governing the Nagari federation within the "kedemangan" system, with its seat in Bukittinggi. Second, a colonial residency system, which included the "kedemangan" under the control of an assistant resident also based in Bukittinggi. Prior to the 20th century, Bukittinggi, as a district, comprised several nagaris headed by a native headman. However, as part of the Padangsche Bovenlanden residency, the assistant resident, as the ruler of the residency, also held the position of acting mayor of Bukittinggi and acted as the superior of the native headmen.³⁸ This model was changed by the colonial government in 1918 through Staadblad No. 310, which designated Bukittinggi as a "kotapraja" with a city council, "gemeenteraad," consisting of 5 Europeans, 3 natives, and 1 Easterners.³⁹ This change strengthened the exploitative, segregative, and repressive nature of Bukittinggi's modernity. This was evident in the appointment of new headmen and the arbitrary acquisition of the Nagari Kurai ulayat land by the colonial government.

The placement of the Kurai tribe headmen as part of the

³⁵ See Taufik Abdullah, dkk, *Ekologi Kota Bukittinggi* (Jakarta: Depdikbud, 1983), pp. 7.; See juga Zulqayyim, *op.cit.*, pp. 46.

³⁶ See Taufik Abdullah, dkk, *op.cit.*, pp. 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

colonial bureaucracy made it easy for the colonial government to obtain concessions for managing the rights to ulayat land, including the Kurai market, which was well-known in Luhak Agam and its surroundings. Therefore, in 1858, the colonial government requested the use of ulayat land near Fort de Kock from the Kurai tribal headmen for the construction of government offices. In mid-1861, the colonial government officially purchased the Kurai ulayat land to build a prison, officer residences, and military training grounds. By the end of 1887, the government again requested the use of ulayat land from the Kurai tribal headmen to establish a military hospital, protective fort, and military training grounds.⁴⁰ Overall, the city of Bukittinggi, which was initially based on a few square meters of Fort de Kock and its surroundings in the ulayat land of Nagari Kurai in the mid-19th century, eventually expanded to 51/2Km² in the early 20th century. These concessions not only led to the end of the traditional Nagari Kurai system but also paved the way for the exploitation and domination of the colonial government, prompting resistance from the Kurai community, especially the "mamaks" and ordinary people. This resistance grew stronger when Bukittinggi became a "gemeente," allowing the

purchase of land and settlement by outsiders without the consent of the Nagari Kurai headmen, who had been the rightful owners since ancient times.

Furthermore, in the early 20th century, the segregative and repressive nature of Bukittinggi became increasingly apparent in the daily lives of its residents. The Kurai people and the Minangkabau community living in Bukittinggi were restricted in their access to main roads, and their villages became increasingly isolated from city life. Through an article, a Kurai headman using the pseudonym "Datuk Minang" criticized the segregation and repressive nature of Bukittinggi, which became more pronounced at the turn of the century.

“Salahkah anak negeri, kalau mereka bertambah² pertjaja djoega bahasa hanja djalan jang dikoeasai Gemeente? Sekarang manakah jang betoel. Djalan sadjakah jang dikoeasai Gemeente strook jang 100 meter kiri kanan djalan itoe masoek djoegakah atau lipoet dengan kampoeng²nja sekali? Pabilakah disjahkan pemasoekan kampoeng itu masoek Gemeente? Tjoekoepkah Penghoeloe dan Ninik Mamak menekan (menandatangani) tanda soeka? Pebilakah dan dimanakah beliaoe itoe

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 55.

mengadakan rapat setjara 'adat? Dan dimanakah soerat penjerahan kampoeng2 itoe kedalam Gemeente diboeat? Bahagian manakah jang diserahkan itoe?"⁴¹

The passage discusses the dissatisfaction expressed by the Kurai chiefs towards the authority of Gemeente Bukittinggi, a colonial bureaucracy. Their discontent is evidenced in their objection to the colonial court's jurisdiction over a case involving the construction of houses by the Kurai chiefs in the city of Bukittinggi. Prior to the court proceedings, the Kurai chiefs considered themselves legitimate owners of the lands within the city, which they could sell or donate to incoming settlers. The Minangkabau settlers, seeking to utilize the Kurai communal lands within Bukittinggi for their residence, frequently faced the dilemma of whether to obtain permission from the colonial government through land transactions or to seek approval from the Kurai chiefs. With the city's progression as a center for trade and culture, an increasing number of Minangkabau people migrated to Bukittinggi. They aspired to establish their own homes but were uncertain whether to acquire authorization from the colonial government through land transactions or to seek approval

from the Kurai chiefs. Although many newcomers sought permission from the Kurai chiefs, such approvals were deemed unlawful by the colonial authorities.

A specific case emerged when a Minangkabau settler obtained approval from the Kurai chiefs to construct a house. However, the Gemeente authorities labeled the house as unauthorized (*bauwvergunning*) and imposed a penalty on its owner, Sutan Radjo Alam, either in the form of a fine or a 20-day imprisonment. This incident deeply troubled the Kurai community, particularly as it was not the first instance of the colonial government disregarding Kurai customs. In another case, the colonial government penalized a Kurai chief, Datuk Tan Mangindo, in 1938 for building a house for his nephew in Tangahsawah, an area considered within the administrative jurisdiction of Bukittinggi, without obtaining permission from Gemeente. The Kurai chiefs protested the court's decision, asserting Tan Mangindo's right to construct a house for his nephew on the communal lands of Nagari Kurai, despite being within the administrative boundaries of Bukittinggi. The court's treatment of one of the influential Kurai chiefs further fueled the community's outrage, as Tan Mangindo was reprimanded by the judge for objecting to his status as a suspect.

⁴¹ See *Berita Koerai*, Th. No. 4, Juli 1938, pp. 1-3.

“Perkataan mana oleh pihak ninik mamak jang mendengar merasa tidak bersenang hati, sebab merendahkan deradjat seorang penghoeloe ‘adat.”⁴²

The colonial court remained unmoved as it sentenced Datuk Tan Mangindo to a fine of 15 guilders or 30 days in prison.⁴³ Despite the exploitative and repressive nature of the political and sociological modernity of the city of Bukittinggi, the Minangkabau people who were its residents continued to be the main supporters of the colonial government. This was evident when the Minangkabau people joyously welcomed the celebration of the marriage between Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard in 1937, as well as the commemoration of Queen Wilhelmina's 40 years of reign in 1938. This support is illustrated through the photo below.

⁴² See *Berita Koerai*, Th. 1, No. 4, Juli 1938, pp. 19.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Photo 1
The Procession of the Wedding Celebration of Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard in 1937



Source: Repro from Pusat Dokumentasi, Informasi, dan Kebudayaan Minangkabau (PDIKM), Padangpanjang

Upon reviewing the photograph above, it is evident that the celebration lasted for five days, from January 7th to 11th, 1937. The wedding of Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard was joyously welcomed by the Minangkabau people in the city of Bukittinggi. Women were adorned in traditional attire, including intricately patterned cloth, shawls, long-sleeved tops, and headscarves or horn-shaped buffalo-horn headdresses as a symbol of Minangkabau culture. The men, on the other hand, wore modern attire, including leather shoes,

trousers, tailored jackets, and destar head coverings. Their laughter reflected their joy. Additionally, two men, wearing parewa headgear, were seen carrying a tricolor flag. The presence of Minangkabau women celebrating Princess Juliana's wedding on the streets was extraordinary, as married Minangkabau women were known to seldom leave their Rumah Gadang. Their presence indicated that the Dutch colonial government was part of their social life. Similarly, the men displayed their happiness by wearing their best and finest attire. The relatively long celebration suggested that the Minangkabau people were celebrating the wedding of their own family members.

In the August 1938 edition, the Koerai newspaper dedicated a special page to commemorate the 40 years of Queen Wilhelmina's reign at that time. The newspaper praised the queen's success in facing the global crisis, which allowed the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies to weather the storm of destruction. The editorial also recounted the history of the Netherlands' independence from Spanish rule as a blessing for the Dutch East Indies. In conclusion, the editor stated that the progress and security of the country were inseparable from the involvement of the Minangkabau community in colonial governance.

“Oleh sebab itoe dalam perajaan 40 tahoen diatas tachtta keradjaan jang akan diramaikan kira2 permoeaan September ini kita jakin segala lapis pendoedoek akan bersama2 memperSeekan soeka rajanja dan Berita Koerai tidak poela ketinggalan mengoetjapkan selamat dan do’a, moedah2an pandjanglah oesia Baginda Seri Ratoe Wilhemina, Koningin her Nederlanden, berbahagialah keloearga Oranje seteroesnja, soepaja terlimpah djoega ni’matnja kenegeri2 ini, ketanah jang diseboetkan: Overzes Gewesten ini. Amin.”⁴⁴

In the context of Bukittinggi City's socio-political environment during the modern period, it is characterized by exploitative, segregative, and repressive dynamics. However, the cultural sphere within this setting has facilitated the Minangkabau populace's acquisition of notions concerning progress, mobility, and contemporary lifestyle adaptations. The infusion of modernity into Bukittinggi City's cultural landscape has precipitated significant advancements for the Minangkabau inhabitants through the introduction of modern educational frameworks, an innovative economic system, and

⁴⁴ See “Pagina Jubileum”, *Berita Koerai*, Th. 1, No. 5, September, 1938.

the proliferation of journalism. Nonetheless, these elements of modern cultural space in Bukittinggi City are indelibly linked to the colonial agenda perpetuated by the colonial administration.

The evolution of the cultural aspect of modernity in Bukittinggi City progressed concurrently with the Ethical Policy implemented by the Dutch East Indies government. This policy encompassed a broad spectrum of initiatives, including agricultural expansion, improvements in irrigation, railway construction, enhancements in healthcare, the provision of bank credit, and educational reforms, commencing in the early 20th century. The advent of modernity,⁴⁵ established a paradigm that integrated the residents of Minangkabau city into the colonial regime's consolidation efforts from 1905 onwards. Despite this, the Minangkabau migrants, who started to settle in Bukittinggi City in the early 20th century, were predominantly drawn to the allure of modernity, perceiving it as a vehicle for societal status transformation and economic prosperity. Culturally, they readily embraced the colonial state, viewing it as their new environment. This acceptance was

⁴⁵ See Henk Schulte Nordholt, "Modernity and Cultural Citizenship in the Netherlands Indies: an illustrated hypothesis", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, Issue 03, October 2011, pp. 438.

underscored by their keen participation in colonial educational institutions that offered instruction in Dutch language, Latin script, and commercial arithmetic, thereby facilitating entry into the modern economic sphere. However, the educational infrastructure and methodologies deployed by the colonial government, including curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and regulatory policies, were deeply entwined with the colonial mission.

The establishment of Western educational institutions by the colonial government spurred private entities, including alumni, traditional collectives, and religious factions, to establish analogous educational structures. Religious organizations transitioned from the traditional halaqah educational model, characterized by students seated in a circle around the educator, to a systematized classroom setting with the instructor delivering lectures from the front. This educational transformation was spearheaded by reformist religious entities under the auspices of three eminent scholars: Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah, Sheikh Muhammad Djamil Djambek, and Haji Abdullah Ahmad.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Modern colonial-style schools replaced the role of the old surau-surau as formal and informal educational institutions for Minangkabau youth. Small surau - near Rumah Gadang, and large

The concurrent emergence of Western educational platforms and the designation of Bukittinggi City as a colonial administrative hub

ones like pesantren in Java - have their own specialties of teaching. The small surau near Rumah Gadang is a non-formal educational institution for Minangkabau youth. They learn the basics of Islam, martial arts and adat in the small surau. Their teachers are usually pious people who live in their nagari, and pandekar who are experts in martial arts. The big surau teach only the broader sciences of Islam, such as fiqh, mantiq, Arabic and so on. The large surau that do exist are famous not only for the calibre of their sheikhs, but also for the specialization of their teaching. It can be said that there are very few surau that teach many religious sciences. But around the end of the 18th century, the great surau began to experience a crisis when a wave of renewal of Islamic thought swept through the Minangkabau highlands culminating in the Paderi period of the early 19th century. In addition, the Dutch colonial entry and annexation of the Minangkabau highlands changed the role of small and large surau educational institutions, including the Minangkabau world. Young Minangkabau children and their parents were no longer so enthusiastic about studying in the big surau to become pious. The money economy, colonial policies in government administration that required new bureaucrats, and the city became irresistible attractions. Working as a clerk, or warehouse keeper, or orderly, or doctor, prosecutor, and other colonial bureaucratic positions were considered to bring more benefits than praying or teaching the Quran to small children in the village. Furthermore, this study of surau see Azyumardi Azra, *Surau: Pendidikan Islam Tradisional dalam Transisi dan Modernisasi* (Jakarta: Logos, 2003).

engendered a literacy movement and modern consciousness among the Minangkabau settlers in the early 20th century. This era marked a proliferation of newspapers,⁴⁷ books, and privately owned printing enterprises by the Minangkabau community.

Moreover, the cultural modernity experienced in Bukittinggi City fostered a recognition of progress, as evidenced in the evolved lifestyles of the educated populace and the newly affluent, who thrived in the modern trading environment of the city. This modernity was reflected in domestic life through the adoption of nuclear family structures over communal living arrangements, the architectural design of modern residences, and

⁴⁷ During the colonial period, there were 209 newspapers published in West Sumatra. These newspapers were not published at the same time. Generally, few of these newspapers had a long life. Sometimes, they were published once and then died, or two or three editions and then no longer appeared. Financial difficulties, relying on funds from subscriptions, and lack of human resources are the reasons why magazines of this era have closed or appeared under other names even though some of the editors remain old people. More about the history of the press in West Sumatra, see Ahmat Adam, *Suara Minangkabau: Sejarah dan Bibliografi Akhbar dan Majalah di Sumatra Barat* (Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Malaya, 2012).; also in Hendranaldi, *Booming Surat Kabar di Sumatra's Westkust* (Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2008).

contemporary fashion choices.⁴⁸ The affluence associated with modernity was exemplified by the acquisition of sewing machines, electrification, piped water access, and the use of modern musical devices such as gramophones or “talking machines” within the households of the new rich, traditional elite, and colonial officials alike.⁴⁹

Although on the surface, the Minangkabau people residing in Bukittinggi City seem to reinforce the colonial system, at a deeper level, the colonial and its colony relations within the cultural space of modernity are negotiative. This negotiation indirectly occurs due to

⁴⁸ About this talking machine, here's See more Suryadi, “The Talking Machine’ comes to The Dutch East Indies: The Arrival of Western media Technology in Southeast Asia”, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Vol. 162, No. 2/3, 2006, pp. 269-305.

⁴⁹ *Interview* with Datuk Baranam in Bukittinggi, May 16, 2013. Datuk Baranam remembers stories from his parents, one of the families who owned a gramophone or talking machine was the family of Datuk Malako. He is said to be related to Syech Mohammad Djamil Djambek, and used to go to Radja School. Usually, when Datuk Malako's family turned on their “talking machine”, many Kurai residents sat at the foot of their family's Rumah Gadang while listening to the music being played. One of the things that Datuk Baranam's father criticized about the behavior of the Kurai people was that sometimes they did not know that what was playing on the “talking machine” were love songs in Arabic, but they seemed to consider it a recitation too, so they listened to it solemnly.

the rejection of the authentication of modernity by the urban Minangkabau people in Bukittinggi City by the European modernity tradition, which is considered authentic. Meanwhile, on the other hand, these urban Minangkabau modernists cannot be accepted as part of the Minangkabau customary order, as it would undermine the dominance of the panghulu (traditional leaders) in the nagari (village). Therefore, the cultural space of modernity for the urban Minangkabau people in Bukittinggi City is inclusive, open, and creates their own limited and personal conceptions of darek (homeland) and rantau (overseas). Darek undergoes spatial and cultural domestication within the individual and family identity, so that anything outside of it, such as modernity values, is considered rantau and perantauan (migrant values). This domestication of darek and rantau relations as a dialectical process has given birth to new cultural forms and values for the urban Minangkabau people in Bukittinggi City since the early 20th century.

Cultural synthesis as a cultural dialectic of modernity for the urban Minangkabau people is the result of their critical reading and negotiation of, first, the reality of colonial cultural citizenship that limits their cultural orientation in practicing modernity values; second, rigid social segregation, where they are placed in a low

position within the colonial society structure in Bukittinggi City; third, the restrictions on progress by the colonial government. Negotiation has given birth to a cultural dialectic that is also evident in the efforts made by various local organizations, such as Studiefonds Koerai, and in the family life of educated or wealthy traders, as seen in the socio-cultural functions of their homes in Bukittinggi City.

The Formation of a New Elite

The onset of modernity in the city of Bukittinggi in the early 20th century, up until the end of the Dutch colonial government in West Sumatra, has brought about significant changes in the free choices made by the Minangkabau migrants, including in their new cultural life. A new identity, progressive thinking, and a new culture are the consequences of the choices made by the Minangkabau people who settled as urban migrants in Bukittinggi. These consequences are the result of their acceptance of the symbols of modernity offered by the city of Bukittinggi.

The success of Bukittinggi in modernizing the Kurai Market, which opened up broader economic opportunities for the indigenous people, as an administrative city and colonial power center in Darek, as well as the presence of Western educational institutions, made the Minangkabau migration at the end of the 19th century closer, thus

forming the city of Bukittinggi at the end of the 19th century into a new region; an urban region. The urban migrants are the forerunners of the new Minangkabau elite born from the cultural womb of Bukittinggi's modernity in the early 20th century. They show a strong desire to advance as a new social class seeking a place in society. Some of them came from ordinary people, as well as the old elite who were no longer oriented towards the colonial traditional cosmology. The cultural orientation of this new type of elite tradition includes the enrichment of Minangkabau customs through modernity. Some of them devoted themselves to the colonial state system in Bukittinggi, but culturally, not to the continuity of the Dutch colonial government's mission. Instead, they chose a new path as a means to strengthen their identity as modern Minangkabau people. Meanwhile, other new elite groups came from ordinary people, without traditional or bureaucratic positions, who settled in Bukittinggi because of symbolic (education), economic, and new media (journalism) orientations. They became urban migrants in the sense of migrating with a motivation for progress and engaged in intellectual exploration. The new elite, from the ranks of modernist leaders and ordinary people, underwent a transformation of their identity

when they viewed Bukittinggi as an urban region.⁵⁰

The Minangkabau people became urban migrants, positioning the city of Bukittinggi as their urban destination, even though it is located in their homeland (darek) since the mid-19th century. Their acceptance as citizens of Bukittinggi has shifted the location, motivation, and orientation of migration as part of traditional values, particularly in the highlands.⁵¹ Their migration up

⁵⁰ In addition to these two types of urban migrants, there was also a Minangkabau elite formed by the colonial government through the establishment of supranagari positions. They were appointed by the colonial government as *laras*, *demangs*, assistant *demangs*, *penghulu* heads, and *nagari* heads to serve the interests of the colonial government in Bukittinggi City. They included the fortunate, though not the top, *penghulu* of the Kurai tribe, and were also known as the *schakel* elite, as Taufik Abdullah put it, who emerged in 1905. See Taufik Abdullah, "The Making of a Schakel Society: The Minangkabau Region in the Late Nineteenth Century", *Papers*, Conference on Modern Indonesian History (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1975), pp. 13-25.

⁵¹ Prior to the colonial period, Minangkabau people left their original *nagari* for areas including Indragiri, Kampar Kiri, Kampar Kanan, Rokan, Batanghari, Sungai Pagu, Pasaman, Rao, Siak, Kerinci, Jambi and Pekanbaru (Riau) to trade. See H. Datuk Toeah, *op.cit.*, pp. 109-153. These and other *rantau* such as Padang, Pariaman, Painan, and Bengkulu had emerged during the 14th and 15th centuries. See detailed description Edwin M. Loeb, *Sumatra: Its History and People* (Vienna:

to the mid-19th century was still a part of their traditional obligations, and it involved relatively few people. With guaranteed security following the Padri War and the physical development of Bukittinggi in the highlands of West Sumatra from the late 19th to the early 20th century, the Minangkabau people began migrating to this city, bringing new motivations and orientations by settling down and seizing economic, cultural, and Western knowledge opportunities. The change in motivation and orientation has made the spatial boundaries of migration increasingly unclear, especially as Bukittinggi began to grow and develop in the early 20th century as a center of colonial government administration, trade, education, and Western culture (modernity). The presence of Fort de Kock in the third decade of the 19th century began to revise the spatial concept of migration according to Minangkabau custom. The Fort de Kock, located within the homeland area, posed a cultural challenge to the strong spatial concept of migration; whether going to Fort de Kock constituted migrating. However, considering that the fundamental value of migration includes leaving one's native village, and there was a motivation driving Minangkabau boys to try their luck at Fort de Kock, which later became

The Institute fur Volkerkunde, 1935), pp. 97-98.

Bukittinggi, a new urban migration destination gradually emerged.⁵²

As an urban destination and a primary, appealing target for Minangkabau people living nearby for various motivations, including women, Bukittinggi offered them promising, advanced, and open life opportunities, including freedom from the constraints of traditional rules. In its presence as an urban migration destination, the Minangkabau migrants did not view Bukittinggi as a representation or part of the colonial nation's colonialism project but as a space for the growth of a new identity while also advancing through the acceptance of offers of modernity and intellectualism.⁵³

Conclusion

Despite the early establishment of colonial power, another important factor contributing to the sustainability of the colonial state was the emergence and growth of a new class in Minangkabau society in the city of Bukittinggi in the late 19th century. This new class is referred to by some researchers as the urban middle class, but in this writing, they are referred to as a new elite without political goals. Their identity was shaped in Bukittinggi due to their embrace of

modernity and a progressive lifestyle. However, unlike the new urban middle class, as mentioned by Nordholt,⁵⁴ Sutherland,⁵⁵ and Van Niel, some of the new elite in Bukittinggi showed interest in modernity not because they wanted to work in the colonial government to become bureaucratic elites, and some did not come from the old elite. Some of them were ordinary individuals drawn to modern living and from the beginning, they sought to construct their identity based on colonial modernity in Bukittinggi.

The first group is the new elite from the urban migrants and common people in Bukittinggi, including teachers, students in government schools, traders, and unmarried young men of Minangkabau descent. They emerged as a new middle class due to their success in Western education. Most of them came from Nagari Kurai and surrounding Nagaris, such as Banuhampu, Ampekkoto, Kamang, and other Nagaris outside Luhak Agam. They started arriving in Bukittinggi around the late 19th century and decided to settle as urban citizens in the early 20th century.⁵⁶ They

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ See Heather Sutherland, *Terbentuknya Sebuah Elite Birokrasi* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1983).

⁵⁶ Given the strength of the matrilineal tradition in daily life at Rumah Gadang, it is likely that relatively few, if any, young Minangkabau women migrated to Bukittinggi in the late 19th century.

⁵² Also see this term in Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics...op.cit.*, pp. 10.

⁵³ This was also addressed E.E. Graves, *op.cit.*

became influential teachers, successful and respected traders, and esteemed intellectuals.

One of the prominent centers for educating the educated class was the Radja School in the city of Bukittinggi. Until its bankruptcy in 1932, the Radja School was the most prestigious institution for producing modern educated individuals in the highlands of Minangkabau. Nearly all renowned teachers in the highlands of Minangkabau were graduates of the Radja School, and so were the educated individuals or its alumni, at least having studied here, such as Nawawi Soetan Ma'moer, who later became a teacher at his alma mater. The prosecutors, doctors, legal experts (Mr.), and other professionals, mainly from Nagari Kotogadang, not far from Bukittinggi, were graduates of this school who then continued their studies to Betawi or the Netherlands.⁵⁷ The modern education process was considered superior to the surau besar method because it enabled its students to think rationally, its teachers to be creative, and its graduates to be considered advanced and knowledgeable in various modern sciences.

However, signs that they began to migrate and settle as city residents can be estimated in the early 20th century.

⁵⁷ About Nagari Kotogadang's see Azizah Etek, Mursjid A.M, dan Arfan B.R, *Kotogadang Masa Kolonial* (Yogyakarta: LKis, 2007).

Overall, their acceptance of colonial development and the education system, as well as their massive presence in social life, especially in Bukittinggi, and generally in West Sumatra, made this group relatively influential in Minangkabau society and the city of Bukittinggi. However, their cultural presence was squeezed between two established cultural structures, the Minangkabau adat and the West. Both established cultures questioned the authenticity of the modernity of these new elites, considering them pseudo-modern, and their "Malin Kundang-like" status as Minangkabau people. They have tried to wholly adopt Western values through cultural accessories including modern clothing and houses, yet they are still considered by the lower class like Hanafi in Salah Asuhan. The social segregation policy of the colonial government still placed this group at the lowest level. On the other hand, the traditional-oriented adat groups, as well as the modernists, viewed this new elite's lifestyle with suspicion. These new elites are no longer considered to adhere to Minangkabau customs because their lifestyle tends to be very Dutch-oriented. The choice of modernity and cultural prejudice placed these new elites in the common people's dilemma of favoring their new identity. Their new identity, it turns out, has given birth to cultural ironies.

At the same time, Minangkabau chieftains began migrating to the city of Bukittinggi in the early 20th century. The chieftains were the representation of the nagari. They were always associated with the greatness of the nagari and their tribe. Their migration to the city of Bukittinggi in the early 20th century did not entirely mean a physical relocation from their nagari, settling as city dwellers. The migration of the chieftains to the city of Bukittinggi held the significance of venturing into the realm of modernity. They left behind their old cultural assumptions and perspectives, seeking new things in the colonial modernity of Bukittinggi. Their motivations included enriching the Minangkabau customs as modern values. They were also not in a suppressed condition seeking a "middle path" like the priyayi group mentioned by Sutherland, and experiencing cultural awkwardness like the schakel group revealed by Taufik Abdullah. The new elite from the chieftain class generally included chieftains who became part of the colonial bureaucracy. Those who held positions in the colonial bureaucracy had to leave their nagari and their people because

they were transferred to Bukittinggi. However, amidst their affairs as colonial bureaucrats, they still thought about and sought ways to modernize customs, even proposing the concept of Minangkabaunization of West Sumatra as a new Minangkabau realm. This effort was evident in the modernist elite chieftain group within the Datuk Sanggoeno Diradjo group in the city of Bukittinggi. Nevertheless, their orientation tended to be suspected and did not receive strong responses from the old elite in Bukittinggi, especially from the Kurai Tribe elite. On the other hand, the colonial government also seemed to be cautious in supporting the Datuk Sanggoeno Diradjo group. The colonial government certainly did not want to repeat the events of the Batipuh rebellion, Kali Radjo, after the defeat of the Paderi. The enthusiasm to modernize Minangkabau customs eventually became a dilemmatic effort in its relationship with the chieftains of Bukittinggi, dominated by the Kurai Tribe and the caution of the colonial government in Bukittinggi, which tended to be suspicious.

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