



PADRI MOVEMENT AGAINST ISLAMIZATION IN WEST SUMATRA: THE ROLE OF TUANKU IMAM BONJOL

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Abstract

The Padri Movement played an important role in the process of Islamization in West Sumatra, especially through the leadership of Tuanku Imam Bonjol. Inspired by the Wahabi movement, the Padri Movement sought to purify Islamic teachings and oppose customary practices that were considered contrary to sharia. This study aims to understand more deeply the role of Tuanku Imam Bonjol in the process of Islamization in West Sumatra, especially through his contribution to the Padri Movement. This study uses a library method or literature study, where researchers collect data from various literature sources, both historical documents and previous academic studies. The approach used is qualitative, focusing on the description of words and in-depth analysis related to the role of Tuanku Imam Bonjol in the Padri Movement and its impact on the process of Islamization in West Sumatra.

Keywords: Padri movement; Islamization in West Sumatra; Tuanku Imam Bonjol.

Abstrak

Gerakan Padri memainkan peran penting dalam proses Islamisasi di Sumatera Barat, terutama melalui kepemimpinan Tuanku Imam Bonjol. Terinspirasi oleh gerakan Wahabi, Gerakan Padri berupaya memurnikan ajaran Islam dan menentang praktik-praktik adat yang dianggap bertentangan dengan syariat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami lebih mendalam peran Tuanku Imam Bonjol dalam proses Islamisasi di Sumatera Barat, khususnya melalui kontribusinya dalam Gerakan Padri. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kepustakaan atau studi literatur, di mana peneliti mengumpulkan data dari berbagai sumber literatur, baik dokumen historis maupun kajian akademis sebelumnya. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif, dengan fokus pada deskripsi kata-kata dan analisis mendalam terkait peran Tuanku Imam Bonjol dalam gerakan Padri serta dampaknya terhadap proses Islamisasi di Sumatera Barat.

Kata Kunci: Gerakan padri; Islamisasi di Sumatera Barat; Tuanku Imam Bonjol.

INTRODUCTION

The Padri Movement is one of the significant religious and social movements in the history of Islam in Indonesia, especially in West Sumatra. The Padri Movement itself originated from a movement to fight for religious values or the purification of Islam that had been widely violated by the majority of Minangkabau society dominated by indigenous people. Influenced by the Wahabi ideology, which emerged in Saudi Arabia in the 18th century, emphasizing the purification of Islamic teachings from practices considered heretical or deviant. These ideas spread to various parts of the Islamic world, including Indonesia, and influenced the thinking of Minangkabau scholars who wanted to cleanse Islamic teachings from traditional elements considered inconsistent with *Sharia*.



Before the Islamic renewal at that time, the religious community committed cruel and cruel acts as in the story of the letter of statement of Sheikh Jalaluddin written by Fakih Saghir¹. The Minangkabau community adopted a strong customary system, including in aspects of leadership and social life. Customs are greatly influenced by the understanding and belief of animism and dynamism². The realization of this belief, they believe in spirits who are considered to be able to harm humans, so they must be given offerings and accompanied by the reading of mantras³. The conflict between the Padri, who were supported by the ulama, and the Adat, who maintained their traditions, culminated in the Padri War which lasted from 1803 to 1837.

Tuanku Imam was a warrior figure who led the community's resistance against and expel the Dutch colonialists in Minangkabau, known as the "Paderi war", although in the end it brought disaster to himself (exiled from his homeland, far from his relatives and colleagues from among the ulama)⁴. Tuanku Imam Bonjol's struggle in the Padri Movement had a long-term impact on the process of Islamization in West Sumatra, which until now has left a strong mark on the Islamic identity of the Minangkabau people.

Islamization in West Sumatra through the Padri Movement was not only about the implementation of sharia law, but also about the social transformation that took place in society. During this period, Islam became a driving force for change in the social structure, moral values, and governance of Minangkabau society. Through the Padri Movement, Islam was no longer just an aspect of personal spiritual life, but a movement that influenced the overall order of society. This study aims to understand more deeply the role of Tuanku Imam Bonjol in the process of Islamization in West Sumatra, especially through his contribution to the Padri Movement. The focus of this study is to analyze how the role of leadership and strategies used by Tuanku Imam Bonjol in facing the challenges of customs and Dutch colonial intervention. By understanding the role of Tuanku Imam Bonjol and the Padri Movement, it is hoped that this study can provide new insights into the dynamics of the spread of Islam in West Sumatra and its impact on the lives of the Minangkabau people⁵.

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research used is library research or literature study where researchers rely on various literature to obtain research data and use a qualitative approach because the data produced is in the form of words or descriptions⁶. This method was chosen because the purpose of the study is to examine in depth the role of Tuanku Imam Bonjol in the Padri movement and its impact on the Islamization process in West Sumatra. Literature studies allow researchers to access various relevant historical sources, both from written documents and previous academic studies⁷.

¹ Syadah Khusniawati et al., "Kaum Padri Dalam Pembaharuan Islam Dan Muhammadiyah Di Minangkabau," *Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Kemuhimmadiyah (JASIKA)* 1, no. 1 (2021): 29–38, <https://doi.org/10.18196/jasika.v1i1.3>; Jurnal Pemikiran et al., "Ahsana Media" 9, no. 2 (2023): 1–11.

² Alexander Stark, "The Padri Movement and The Adat: A Comparative Analysis," *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)* 8, no. 3 (March 29, 2023): e002155, <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v8i3.2155>.

³ Bukhari, "Akulturasi Adat Dan Agama Islam Di Minangkabau," *Al-Munir* 1, no. 1 (2009): 49–63.

⁴ Muhapril Musri, "Memori Sejarah Tuanku Imam Bonjol, Ulama Dan Pejuang Karismatik," *Diskusi Komunitas Pemerhati Sejarah Lokal Sumatera Barat*, no. April 2021 (2021); Jeffrey Hadler, "A Historiography of Violence and the Secular State in Indonesia: Tuanku Imam Bondjol and the Uses of History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 03 (August 23, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911808001228>.

⁵ Amril Amril and Vici Ramananda, "Tuanku Imam Bonjol's Intellectual Contribution through the Padri Movement," *Jurnal Fuaduna; Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 7, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30983/fuaduna.v7i2.8358>.

⁶ Amir Hamzah, "Metode Penelitian," *Repositori IAIN Kudus*, 2019, 2–3.

⁷ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D*. (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Padri Movement in West Sumatra

The Padri Movement in Minangkabau, which lasted from 1803 to 1821, was an effort to renew the religious and social life of the community. This movement was influenced by the spirit of the Wahabi movement taught by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). In addition to inviting people to return to the teachings of Allah, Wahabi also encouraged people to follow the guidance of the Prophet and his companions. Like many other local movements in the archipelago during the struggle against the Dutch, Portuguese, and British colonialists, the Padri Movement became an important part of the milestones of Indonesian history⁸.

Tuanku Haji Miskin and several scholars from West Sumatra such as Tuanku nan Tuo, Tuanku Mensiangan, Tuanku nan Renceh, and Datuk Bandaro were inspired to spread religious reform in Minangkabau. In Mecca, they became acquainted with the Wahabi movement which encouraged the purification of Islam by returning to the Qur'an and sharia, which was then implemented in their homeland. They carried the idea of religious puritanism calling for full obedience to sharia, including the five daily prayers, avoiding the habit of smoking, and stopping cockfighting. Tuanku Haji Miskin himself learned about this purer Islamic teaching while in Mecca, especially from his experience of the hajj pilgrimage in 1803. When he returned, he conveyed the idea of reform based on the teachings of the Qur'an, with the aim of forming a Minangkabau society that was more in accordance with Islamic values. In his sermons, Tuanku Haji Miskin encouraged the community to reject all forms of evil that were contrary to religious teachings. However, Dutch colonial historians often misinterpreted this movement as a form of Wahabi extremism.

These Islamic reformist figures played a central role in the process of Islamization in Minangkabau, including Haji Miskin, Tuanku nan Tuo, and Tuanku Imam Bonjol, who would later become widely known as the leader of the Padri Movement. They proposed reforms to customs that were not in line with Islam, such as in the distribution of inheritance according to sharia: heirloom property was given to relatives according to tradition, while property earned was passed on to children in order to improve family welfare⁹.

The Padri Movement led by these figures, including Tuanku Imam Bonjol, became part of the Islamization process in West Sumatra, with the mission of returning society to purer Islamic teachings and minimizing the influence of customs that were considered contrary to religion. Tuanku Imam Bonjol's central role in this movement not only strengthened the influence of Islam in West Sumatra, but also strengthened the social reform movement which was later faced with resistance from indigenous peoples and colonial intervention. This movement became an important milestone in the history of the spread of Islam in West Sumatra¹⁰.

According to van Ronkel's, the term "Padri" is believed to originate from the word "Pedir," an area thought to be the first place where Islam entered before spreading to Minangkabau. People who spread Islam perfectly were then called "Padri." Meanwhile, another opinion states that the term "Padri" comes from the Portuguese "*Padre*" (Catholic priest), which was commonly used in the Indies, England, and the Dutch East Indies, both by foreigners and by local residents. Therefore,

⁸ Sabilla Hidayani Br. Tarigan, "Kaum Modernis Di Nusantara: Gerakan Paderi," *Islamijah: Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 3, no. 3 (2024): 205, <https://doi.org/10.30821/islamijah.v3i3.17046>.

⁹ Mhd Ilham and Khilal Syauqi, "The History of Islamic Education in Minangkabau: The Impact of the Paderi Movement on the Shift in Scholarly Orientation of Minangkabau Ulama," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 3 (June 27, 2025): 637–52, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v6i3.1826>.

¹⁰ Muhammad Yusuf, *Sejarah Intelektual Islam*, 1989.

this movement is actually based on religious motives rooted in Wahhabism in Mecca, as a response to customs that are considered contrary to Islamic law. As conveyed by Taufik Abdullah, this movement is an effort to strengthen the process of Islamization in Minangkabau as a response to social changes in society¹¹. Overall, the Padri Movement was not only motivated by the spirit of religious reform, but also by social conflict and external pressure from the Dutch colonialists. The Padri leaders, especially Tuanku Imam Bonjol, attempted to return the Minangkabau people to pure Islamic teachings and rejected customary practices that were not in line with sharia. This ideological clash between custom and religion, which was later exacerbated by colonial intervention, became the main background for the establishment of the Padri movement and made this movement an important milestone in the history of Islamization in West Sumatra.

The Role of Tuanku Imam Bonjol

Tuanku Imam Bonjol, also known as Peto Syarif, was one of the main leaders of the Padri Movement in West Sumatra in the early 19th century. Born into a religious family, he was raised in an environment with strong Islamic values, where his father, Khatib Rajamuddin, played an important role as a religious educator. The early education he received instilled a deep understanding of the Qur'an and sunnah, which later formed the foundation of his thinking and spirit in fighting for Islamic values. Tuanku Imam Bonjol grew up in a situation where customary practices in Minangkabau were often contrary to Islamic teachings, such as gambling, cockfighting, and drinking alcohol. It was in this context that he realized the need for religious reform in his homeland.

At that time, religious leaders in Minangkabau, including Tuanku nan Tuo, Tuanku nan Renceh, and Haji Miskin, who had just returned from Mecca, tried to spread the Wahabi teachings that encouraged the purification of Islam or the purification of religious teachings. Inspired by this teaching, Tuanku Imam Bonjol together with other figures tried to invite the community to return to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, by eliminating the influence of customs that conflicted with Islam. He also joined the Padri Movement, which carried a great mission to purify the religious practices of the community. His role in this movement was not only as a cleric, but also as a leader who dared to take a firm stance in facing the challenges that came, both from the Adat community and the Dutch colonialists who began to show their interests in the region.

Tuanku Imam Bonjol's leadership in the Padri Movement can also be seen from his strategic steps in establishing Bonjol fort. This fort not only functioned as a center for physical defense from attacks by the Adat community and the Dutch colonialists, but also became a center for the spread of Islam and religious education. In this fort, he taught pure Islamic values to the community and his followers, which further strengthened his role as a religious figure and influential leader. Bonjol Fort became a symbol of strong resistance, a place where Islamic teachings were applied in real terms, as well as a defensive fortress to protect the area from those who tried to stop the religious reforms he carried out.

Tuanku Imam Bonjol was also known for his firm and bold approach in enforcing Islamic law in Minangkabau. Together with the leaders of the Padri Movement, he called on the community to stay away from acts that were considered immoral, such as gambling, cockfighting, and smoking, which were contrary to Islamic principles. This call directly changed many aspects of the lives of the Minangkabau people, and formed a stronger Islamic identity in the region. In his sermons, he emphasized the importance of full submission to religious teachings and rejecting customary customs that were not in line with Islam. The changes brought by the Padri Movement, under the leadership of Imam Bonjol, had a wide impact on the Minangkabau community, so that

¹¹ Pemikiran et al., "Ahsana Media."

gradually the community began to adopt a more Islamic lifestyle, making religious teachings a guideline in everyday life¹².

However, Tuanku Imam Bonjol's struggle to purify Islamic teachings in West Sumatra was not without obstacles. A major conflict broke out between the Padri and the Adat, who saw the reforms brought by the Padri as a threat to the long-rooted Minangkabau traditions. The Adat felt that their practices were an integral part of their cultural identity, and the changes proposed by the Padri were considered too harsh and radical. The conflict escalated when the Dutch colonials intervened in the dispute, seeing it as an opportunity to expand their influence in the West Sumatra region. The Dutch offered support to the Adat in an effort to weaken the Padri Movement and control the strategic Minangkabau region.

Bonjol Fortress witnessed the long war between the Padri Movement and the Dutch colonialists. Although Tuanku Imam Bonjol and his followers put up a fierce resistance, the Dutch eventually managed to conquer the fort, and Tuanku Imam Bonjol was captured and exiled. However, the impact of his struggle to spread Islamic teachings remains a major influence in Minangkabau. Tuanku Imam Bonjol is remembered as a hero who fought not only to protect his homeland, but also to strengthen Islamic values among his people.

Tuanku Imam Bonjol's role in Islamization through the Padri Movement had a long-term impact on the social and cultural structure of the Minangkabau people. The movement he led not only strengthened the Islamic identity in West Sumatra, but also laid the foundation for the implementation of purer Islamic teachings in the region. Despite facing major challenges, both internally and externally, Tuanku Imam Bonjol's struggle to implement Islam as the foundation of Minangkabau social and cultural life left an important legacy that is still respected today and is part of the history of Islamization in Indonesia.

The impact of the Padri Movement on Minangkabau Society

The Padri Movement led by Tuanku Imam Bonjol brought about major changes in Minangkabau society, both in religious, social, and cultural aspects. This movement had a main mission to purify Islamic teachings in West Sumatra by eliminating customary practices that were contrary to Islamic law, such as gambling, cockfighting, and consumption of alcoholic beverages. According to Faqih Saghir in his manuscript, this movement was influenced by the teachings of scholars such as Tuanku Haji Miskin and Tuanku Nan Tuo, who taught the need to cleanse customary values that were not in line with Islamic teachings. In this Islamization effort, they established various surau as centers of Islamic education that spread religious knowledge, such as fiqh and tafsir, which ultimately became the basis for an Islamic solidarity network in Minangkabau. The changes brought about by the Padri Movement also had an impact on the social and structural order of Minangkabau society (Faqih Saghir. (n.d.).

As explained by Roslyana and Hasanah in the Moderasi journal, this movement caused polarization among the people, especially between the Padri who supported religious reform and the Adat who maintained local traditions. This conflict reached its peak in the Padri War, which was initially a civil war but later involved the Dutch colonialists. Despite the tension, the Padri Movement eventually managed to reach a compromise with the Adat through the consensus "*Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah*" (adat is based on sharia, and sharia is based on the Qur'an), which combined Islamic values with Minangkabau customs. This consensus strengthened the

¹² Abdur Rahim, Sutrimo Sumarlan, and Arief Rachman, "Strategy of Universal War: Padri War in The Face of the Netherlands in Minangkabau in 1803-1838," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* 6, no. 1 (2022).

Islamic identity of the Minangkabau people, while maintaining the continuity of local traditions¹³. In addition, the Padri movement also had an impact on the education system in Minangkabau. The surau built by Padri figures became centers of religious education that replaced the traditional education system. Education in these surau introduces the community to a deeper and more disciplined understanding of Islam, encouraging the creation of a more religious generation. Islamic education in *surau* is not only limited to fiqh teachings, but also includes lessons in Islamic morals and ethics that shape the mindset of the community to be more Islamic and disciplined.

However, the impact of the Padri Movement was not limited to the religious aspect. This movement also introduced the concept of resistance against colonialism which later inspired subsequent struggles in the archipelago. Although the Padri Movement was eventually defeated by the Dutch and Tuanku Imam Bonjol was exiled, the spirit of resistance and Islamic principles taught during this movement remained alive and continued in the struggle for Indonesian independence¹⁴. The impact of the Padri Movement shows that this movement succeeded in strengthening Islamic values in Minangkabau society and forming a mindset that opposed all forms of foreign oppression, making Tuanku Imam Bonjol a hero who is respected to this day. Overall, the Padri Movement not only had a profound religious impact on Minangkabau, but also influenced the social structure, education, and spirit of resistance of the community. This movement marked a major change in religious and cultural identity in Minangkabau.

CONCLUSION

The Padri Movement in West Sumatra had a significant impact on the process of Islamization in the region. Led by Tuanku Imam Bonjol and inspired by the Wahabi movement, the Padri Movement aimed to purify Islamic teachings from customary practices that were considered deviant. Tuanku Imam Bonjol, as a central figure in this movement, played an active role in facing challenges from the Adat community and the Dutch colonial resistance. Under his leadership, the Padri Movement became not only a religious movement, but also a social transformation that changed the value system, education, and social structure of Minangkabau. The conflict between the Padri and Adat communities reached its peak in the Padri War, which continued until the Dutch intervened, but then resulted in the consensus "*Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah*" which combined adat and Islamic law. Through efforts of Islamization and education in the surau, the Padri Movement succeeded in strengthening Islamic values in society and providing inspiration for resistance that went beyond the colonial era. Although in the end this movement was conquered by the Dutch and Tuanku Imam Bonjol was exiled, its influence continues to be felt in the Islamic identity and fighting spirit of the Minangkabau people.

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¹³ Afreiza Octaguna A et al., "23-Moderasi-0101-464 (1)," 2023, 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.11111/nusantara.xxxxxxx>.

¹⁴ Aisya Hanum et al., "The Development of Indonesian Islamic Civilization during the Dutch Occupation," *JSI: Jurnal Sejarah Islam* 2, no. 2 (2023).

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