

The Minangkabau Traditional Architecture on the Roof of the Rao Rao Mosque in the 20th Century AD

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Abstract

The Rao Rao Mosque in Tanah Datar, West Sumatra is an ancient mosque built in the early 20th century AD. The roof of this mosque is *gonjong*, a roof shape commonly found in Minangkabau traditional buildings, both *rumah gadang* (traditional house) and *balai adat* (traditional halls). The shape of the roof is different from the shape of mosque roofs in general, both in Minangkabau and other Islamic countries. This research aims to analyze the influence of traditional Minangkabau architecture on the roof of the Rao Rao Mosque along with its meaning. This research was carried out within the framework of case study research. Physically, the roof of the Rao Rao Mosque is clearly influenced by the roofs of traditional Minangkabau buildings. The use of this roof shape also has a philosophical meaning related to the traditional philosophy and life of the Minangkabau. Apart from that, the Rao Rao Mosque keeps a cultural track record of the Minangkabau people at the beginning of the 20th century which is stored in the form of values in its architecture.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, mosque, Minangkabau architecture, traditional architecture, Islamic architecture

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INTRODUCTION

Mosques are an inseparable part of Minangkabau people's lives. *Adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah* (customs are based on religion, religion is based on the Al-Quran) is the philosophy that guides their lives. Based on this philosophy, everything that is sacred and profane in Islamic teachings is also part of Minangkabau society.

Implementation of the idea of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah* (ABS-SBK) is the entry of mosques into the Minangkabau customary law system. This is included in *Undang-undang Nagari* (*nagari* law) namely *babalai bamusajik* (has a hall and mosque). *Undang-undang Nagari* in Minangkabau contains elements that must be present in a *nagari* (Navis, 1984). A village can be said to be a *nagari* when all the elements contained in the *Undang-undang Nagari* are fulfilled¹.

In Minangkabau, the mosque is one of the traditional buildings apart from the *balai adat* (traditional hall), *rumah gadang* (traditional house) and *surau* (prayer house or small mosque). Its existence is related to Islamic teachings which have become part of people's lives. Every *nagari* in Minangkabau has at least one mosque called the *nagari* mosque.

The Rao Rao Mosque, which was built in the early 20th century, has a different architecture from other mosques built in previous periods. Apart from the use of concrete building materials, the use of a roof that adopts the *gonjong* shape of *rumah gadang* is unique to this mosque. In previous times, mosque roofs were built with a pyramid roof pattern, rectangular in shape with a sharp roof and a steep slope. (Rahmat, 2018a).

The fact that there is an influence of traditional architecture on mosque buildings is related to cultural factors in the mosque environment. From an architectural perspective, this is related to the existence of a creator with ideas influenced by his culture. A building is born from careful consideration, in which there is taste, norms, selection, creativity, trust and confidence of the creator (Prijotomo, 2008).

Meanwhile, from a cultural studies perspective, the phenomenon at the Rao Rao Mosque building is a form of acculturation. In general, acculturation is understood as a social process that arises when a group of people with their own culture are exposed to a foreign culture. Gradually the foreign culture was accepted and adapted to the native culture, without losing the identity of the native culture (Koentjaraningrat, 2000).

¹ *Nagari* is a village-level traditional government

The focus of the problem in this research is how traditional Minangkabau architecture influenced the roof shape of the Rao Rao Mosque at the beginning of the 20th century? Next is the form of cultural acculturation on the roof of the Rao Rao Mosque? Thus, this research aims to identify forms of influence of traditional architecture on the roof of the Rao Rao Mosque and analyze forms of cultural accuracy in the shape of the mosque roof.

There have not been many studies regarding mosque roofs in Minangkabau. Most studies related to ancient mosques in Minangkabau often focus on discussing architectural forms in general. Meanwhile, the Rao Rao Mosque has not been studied much. For historical studies, Sudarman (2014) used the Rao Rao Mosque as one of the samples in his research. The study was published in a book entitled *Arsitektur Masjid di Minangkabau Dari Masa ke Masa* he discussed the development of mosque architecture in Minangkabau. The Rao-Rao Mosque is identified as a mosque built during the transition period. This stems from indications that the Rao-Rao Mosque no longer uses wood as the main material and ornaments which have been influenced by cultures other than Islamic culture and Minangkabau culture.

Apart from that, I have also researched the historical and architectural aspects of the Rao Rao Mosque. This research uses an anthropological approach using acculturation theory. The research, which is a master's thesis, examines the Rao Rao Mosque comprehensively. The research found that the mosque was influenced by Minangkabau, European, Chinese and Islamic culture (Rahmat, 2018a). The next study was carried out by Junaidi (2004) in a book entitled Rao Rao Grand Mosque. In contrast to the two previous studies, Junaidi focused his study on aspects of mosque architecture which were discussed from an architectural engineering perspective.

METHOD

This research uses a case study approach. In case study research, especially related to cultural heritage, there are a number of steps that researchers must go through. According to Robert K. Yin, the stages of data collection, explanation, and writing a report (Nur'aini, 2020). In the information gathering section the author refers to a number of sources such as books, scientific journals, archives, photos and observations. At the explanation stage, analysis of the data that has been collected is carried out to answer the research questions. At the reporting stage, a chronological approach is used, where in this approach the results of the report are written sequentially, because a case should be in a linear cause and effect sequence.

The Rao Rao Mosque is a historic building, so it is necessary to study the historicity of the mosque using a historical approach. In historical research, there are four stages that must be carried out, namely heuristics,

verification, interpretation and historiography (Daliman, 2012). Heuristics are carried out by collecting data from books, scientific journals, archives and photos. The data is then verified to sort out information that is strong and suitable for use. In the interpretation section, the data is interpreted and then written into a historical narrative.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. History of Rao Rao Mosque

Pembinaan akhlak bagi setiap muslim adalah sebuah kewajiban yang harus dilakukan terus menerus. Baik dengan cara melalui pembinaan orang lain maupun pembinaan diri sendiri tanpa harus dituntun orang lain. Hidup ditengah krisis kehidupan sekarang ini, pembinaan akhlak memang harus lebih gencar dilakukan. Banyak ilmuwan mengatakan bahwa berbagai kerusakan dan kejahatan yang telah terjadi sampai saat ini akibat ulah manusia tidak lagi memegang dan mengamalkan akhlak yang baik. Kapitalisme dan hedonism yang menginvasi kawasan muslim betul-betul telah berdampak buruk. Ditambah lagi kurangnya perhatian masyarakat islam sendiri terhadap pendidikan atau pembinaan akhlak.

The Rao Rao Mosque is located in *Jorong Rao Rao Nagari* Rao Rao, Sungai Tarab District, Tanah Datar Regency, West Sumatra. This mosque is a cultural heritage building with inventory number 40/BCB-TB/A/12/2007 (Syarif, 2017). The Rao Rao Mosque was built on land belonging to Haji Muhammad Thaib, Haji Adam and Siti Reno Lila who came from the Chaniago Kampung Dalam tribe. (Rahmat, 2018a).

The year of construction of the Rao Rao Mosque has several versions. The Batusangkar Cultural Heritage Conservation Center (BPCB) said this mosque was built in 1901 and operational in 1918 (BP3, 2007b). In another report written in 2017, this institution clarified the year of construction of the Rao Rao Mosque to be 1908 which was initiated by Abdurrahman Dt. Indo Marajo (Syarif, 2017). Meanwhile, Sudarman and Sumalyo wrote that this mosque was founded in 1918 (Sudarman, 2014; Sumalyo, 2000).

Apart from the figure of Abdurrahman Dt. Marajo Indo, actually there was another figure who was the initiator of the construction of the mosque, namely Kajo Inan Parmato Lelo who at that time served as *Lareh* Rao Rao. The construction of the Rao Rao Mosque involved all traditional leaders in the Rao Rao village. These figures come from four main tribes, namely Patapang Kutianya, Bendang Mandahiliang, Koto Piliang and Bodi Chaniago. Meanwhile, traditional figures involved in development occupy positions as Imam Adat, Imam Jum'at, Bilal Adat, Bilal Jum'at, Khatib Adat, Kadi Nagari, Manti Adat, and serta Hakim Lumbuang of the four tribes (*Arsip Kesepakatan Tokoh Masyarakat Rao Rao Dalam Mendirikan Masjid*, 1917).

Like ancient mosques in general, the Rao Rao Mosque was built independently by the community. Not only the people who live in Rao Rao, but also the immigrants from Nagari Rao Rao who are overseas. The construction of this mosque is said to have cost up to $\text{f}40,000$ which was collected from the Rao Rao community (Pandji Poestaka, 1924)



Figure 1. Rao Rao Mosque in 1924 (Pandji Poestaka, 1924)

The Rao Rao Mosque has undergone several restorations. In the last century, it has been recorded that restoration has occurred 6 times, namely in 1926, 1975, 1981, 1992, 2007, 2012 (BP3, 2007b, 2007a; Rahmat, 2018a; Suryadi, 2015). A number of these restorations were caused by natural disasters, such as those carried out in 1926 (BP3, 2007a; Suryadi, 2015). Even though it has undergone restoration, the original shape of the Rao Rao Mosque has not changed.

2. The Influence of Minangkabau Traditional Architecture on the Roof of the Rao Rao Mosque

In general, mosques in the Islamic world use domes. Domes have been used in the Islamic world since the beginning of the 8th century AD. This can be found at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. This mosque was founded during the reign of the Umayyad Dynasty under the leadership of caliph Al-Walid (705-715 AD). Al-Walid is also recorded as having built a number of other mosques, such as the Kuffah Grand Mosque and the Damascus Grand Mosque (Sumalyo, 2000).

Dome roofs can also be found on mosques built during the Ottoman era. Mosques during this period were influenced by the Byzantine architectural style. Apart from that, during the Mughal Dynasty there were also a number of buildings that used domes. The construction of domes during this dynasty combined Persian style with local styles to create a new dome shape. The dome shape can be seen in the Pearl Mosque which was built by Sultan Aurangzeb (1658-1707 AD) (Sumalyo, 2000).

However, the roof of the Rao Rao Mosque does not adopt the shape of mosque roofs in the Islamic world, especially the Arab region, Egypt or India. This mosque has a stepped roof like traditional mosques in Minangkabau or mosques in the Nusantara in general. The roof of this mosque has three levels and at the top there is a tower. The tower is rectangular in shape with a *gonjong* roof.

The roof of the Rao Rao Mosque has four *gonjongs* facing the four directions. This *gonjong* roof pattern is according to Navis (1984) is the influence of one of the *kelarasan* in Minangkabau. According to him, the roof of the mosque which has a *gonjong* indicates that the community adheres to *kelarasan* Koto Piliang. Meanwhile, for mosques that do not have *gonjong rumah gadang* and only have terraced roofs, the people adhere to *kelarasan* Bodi Chaniago².

The four *gonjong* roofs on the Rao Rao Mosque have a philosophical meaning related to the culture of the local community. The four *gonjong* roofs are a philosophical representation of the existence of the four tribes in the *nagari* Rao Rao. These tribes are Bodi Chaniago, Koto Piliang, Patapang Kutianya and Bendang Mandahiliang.

The *gonjong* roof pattern which is placed at the highest position in this building also has a philosophical meaning. This philosophy is reflected in the saying *tinggi adat dek agama, indak dikatoan baradaik kalau indak tau agama*. This proverb explains that customs are high because there is religion, a person from the perspective of Minangkabau customs is called uncivilized if he does not know religion (Rahmat, 2018a).

At the end of the *gonjong* there is an ornament in the shape of a crescent moon and star. On the roof of this mosque there are five decorations on each roof, four decorations on the *gonjong* roof and one in the middle (between the four *gonjong* roofs). The decoration on the roof is the same, made of zinc. This ornament is still complete on every roof, except for the highest peak which has been damaged. These ornaments are similar to the ornaments used on the roofs of *rumah gadang*.

In the *rumah gadang* building, the peak of the *gonjong* is also called *ujung turang*.³ The ornament at the top of the roof consists of 2 *labu-labu* at the bottom, 1 *belimbing* on top of the *labu-labu*, 1 *anting-anting*

² There are two meanings of the words *lareh* or *laras*. In the Minangkabau language, the word *lareh* means law, specifically customary law. Therefore, the terms *Lareh* Koto Piliang and *Lareh* Bodi Chaniago became known, which are the customary laws of Koto Piliang and Bodi Chaniago. Apart from that, the term *lareh* is also known, which means area, as is the case with *Lareh Nan Panjang*, namely the Pariangan and Padangpanjang areas. Furthermore, during the Dutch era, the Minangkabau region was divided into *kelarasan* headed by a *Laras* or *Regent*. However, this division of harmony ended with the Dutch leaving Minangkabau (Manggis, 1971; Navis, 1984).

³ *Turang* is the part below the *gonjong* to the straight line of the upper leadership ridge (Abrar, 2017)

above the *belimbing* and 1 sharp tip above the *anting-anting*. *Labu-labu*, *belimbing* and *anting-anting* are built in the direction of the tip or peak of the ornament (Abrar, 2017).



Figure 2. The *gonjong* roof of the Rao Rao Mosque
(Author's Document, 2018)



Figure 3. the *gonjong* roof of the *rangkiang* building in the courtyard of Pagaruyuang Palace
(Author's Document, 2017)



Figure 4. Ornament of the peak of the *gonjong* roof of the Rao Rao Mosque
(Author's Document, 2018)

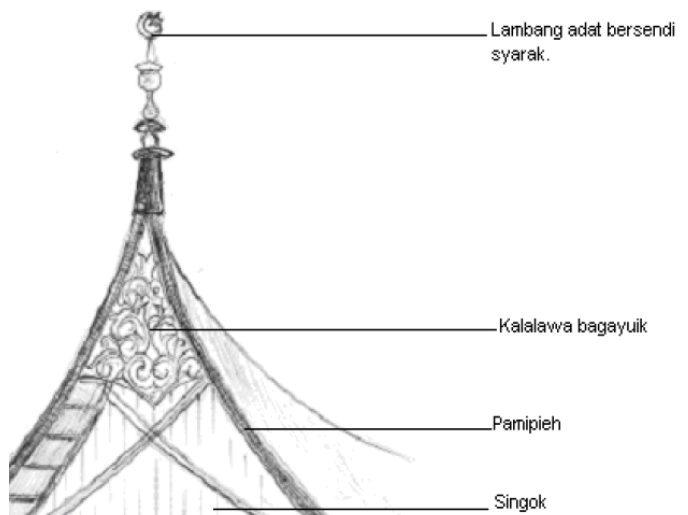


Figure 5. Ornaments and elements of the roof of a *rumah gadang* (Marthala, 2013)

The crescent moon and star ornament on the top of the roof of the Rao Rao Mosque has a traditional philosophy, which is reflected in a proverb *adat basisampiang, syarak batilanjang*. This traditional proverb has a Minangkabau traditional meaning conveyed figuratively, while religion is conveyed openly (Rahmat, 2018a). In Minangkabau culture, customary teachings are conveyed figuratively. Meanwhile, religious teachings must be conveyed clearly, so that there are no misunderstandings in society. Apart from that, this ornament also means that the Islamic religion in Minangkabau is surrounded by custom. The existence of both is in a position to complement and protect each other. Another philosophical aspect of this ornament is the actualization of the traditional concept of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah* (Marthala, 2013)

Furthermore, the use of *gonjong* roofs in ancient houses of worship in Minangkabau can also be found in other houses of worship. A number of *surau* used by followers of the Syatariah order also use *gonjong* roofs.⁴ This form can be found in *Surau Gadang* Syekh Burhanudin Ulakan Pariaman which was built in 1680 AD and *Surau* Ngalau Nagari Balimbiang Tanah Datar which was built around the beginning of the 19th century AD (Ningsih, 2019; Rahmat & Ikbal, 2021). It's just that the shape of the *gonjong* used is different from the *gonjong* in the Rao Rao Mosque. If the Rao Rao Mosque has four *gonjongs* facing the four corners, then the *surau* of Syatariah order only uses two *gonjongs*. This shape is exactly the same as the roof of a gadang house (Rahmat & Ikbal, 2021).

Apart from that, the Rao Rao Mosque not only has a roof that is influenced by traditional architecture. In other parts of this building there is a gable roof pattern that can be found in European and Chinese buildings. At the Rao-Rao mosque there are three gable roofs which consist of two types, namely step gables and crown gables (Rahmat, 2018b). These three gable roofs can be found on the east side of the mosque.

3. Cultural Acculturation in the Architecture of the Rao Rao Mosque: From the Past to the Present

Long before the arrival of Islam, the Minangkabau people lived according to their customs. From a cultural perspective, the arrival and development of Islam in Minangkabau resulted in a new form of culture.

⁴ In Minangkabau there are two types of worship buildings, namely mosques and surau. Surau is smaller in size than a mosque. In general, a surau is almost the same as a *mushala* (prayer room), only in the Minangkabau cultural context the surau has a complex function and role. Selain sebagai sarana peribadatan, surau juga menjadi sarana pendidikan agama dan adat Minang, tempat suluk bagai pengikut tarekat, dan tempat berlangsung interaksi sosial masyarakat. Surau biasanya dimiliki oleh suku atau pengikut tarekat (Azra, 2003; Nur, 1991; Rahmat, 2018a)

Therefore, Islamic culture in Minangkabau, or the Nusantara region in general has a different Islamic style from the Middle East, where Islam first developed.

The Rao Rao Mosque is one of the objects that represents the Minangkabau people at the beginning of the 20th century who lived with their own culture. Even though Islam has become part of the life of the Minangkabau people, Minangkabau cultural values are still firmly adhered to. This is symbolized by the building of a mosque as a means of worship that connects humans with Allah SWT.

According to Geertz (1983), culture is a pattern of meanings or ideas that are actualized in the form of symbols. Through these symbols, people then express their ideas consciously. In the Rao Rao Mosque building, this cultural awareness is stored in the ideas of the people involved in building the mosque.

The Minangkabau cultural symbols found in the Rao Rao Mosque building explain the relationship between culture and religion. Through symbols, there is a continuous relationship between the two. The use of the gonjong roof pattern at the Rao Rao Mosque is a form of using symbols as a medium for conveying ideas.

In the case of the roof of the Rao Rao Mosque, the creator has imitated the shape of the roof of a *rumah gadang*. In architectural studies, this is one of the considerations made by the creator when constructing a building. This is known as copy style, namely copying the style of a culture (Priyotomo, 2008).

Natural and cultural influences are factors that greatly influence the presence of a building. The buildings that were built as a result of the influence of these two things later became the forerunners of the birth of vernacular buildings (Widodo, 2009). The Rao Rao Mosque is present as a worship building with a unique shape. The use of *gonjong* roofs can only be found in the Minangkabau region, so the Rao Rao Mosque building is a vernacular Minangkabau building at the beginning of the 20th century.

The acculturation process at the Rao Rao Mosque is not only physical. Refers to culture which has three forms, namely ideas, actions and objects (Koentjaraningrat, 2000), So acculturation at the Rao Rao Mosque accommodates these three forms. The physical form of a mosque building is the final form of the cultural actualization process which started from ideas in Minangkabau society.

Rao Rao Mosque, Tanah Datar records traces of Minangkabau culture in the early 20th century. Through the symbols and ornaments of the mosque, it is known that at the beginning of the 20th century local culture and Islam went hand in hand. Islam and Minang culture complement each other, this can be seen in the physical shape of the mosque roof and the philosophy contained in every part of the building.

Historical and cultural traces are stored in the historicity of buildings. Apart from historical value, the Rao Rao Mosque building also contains ethnography of the community which is stored in the form of value in symbols and ornaments. The relationship between Islam and local culture is quite intense, which is not only visible in the physical form, but also in the form of values and philosophy (Rahmat, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Rao Rao Mosque, Tanah Datar, West Sumatra is an ancient building that shows the close relationship between Minangkabau culture and Islam at the beginning of the 20th century. The roof of the mosque and its roof ornaments adopt the form of a *rumah gadang* roof. Apart from the physical form, the influence of Minangkabau culture is also stored in the form of values in this part. Acculturation between Minangkabau culture and Islam is not just an idea. The Rao Rao Mosque is physical evidence that the ideas of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah* really live in society.

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