

# Randai as Cultural Identity Formation in Minangkabau



Hendri Jihadul Barkah

**Abstract:** *The present study is initiated on the phenomenon that people in minang lose such cultural identity. Indeed, the portion of local cultures gradually begins to shift and they are switched into a single culture which is commonly known as "National Culture". On the one hand, the creation of a national cultural identity originates only from a "small part" of regional culture. This has led to cultural stunting in Indonesia. The approach used within the study is cultural study. The cultural study is one of the methods used to understand humans. This study explains conflicts of interest that happened between groups and tribes where they are bond through an understanding of cultural differences. Local culture as a basis values in the life of its people is a factor that must be respected by the government. Society must have the freedom to create their regional identity as a view and guide of their living. Local cultures should not be used as a display and preserved as if they were mere ancient items. On the other hand, local culture must have its own space to be owned by the community.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Identity, Minangkabau, Randai.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the *OrdeBaru* era, there was a uniform culture that was termed a "single principle" in the interests of "United Indonesia". For 32 years, the Indonesians have not had the freedom to show their identity and regionalism. As a result, people in the area lose their cultural identity. Slowly, the portion of *local cultures* gradually begins to shift and they are switched into a single culture which is commonly known as "National Culture". On the one hand, the creation of a national cultural identity originates only from a "small part" of regional culture. This has led to cultural stunting in Indonesia. Society of regions has displaced the role of local cultures that they were the basis for living values. Having converted its functions into cultural monuments or displays makes local cultures no longer free to develop amid their supporting communities. For example, the miniature of traditional houses and cultural objects displayed in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (TMII). Hence, such cultural objects are exposed like beautiful porcelain in a house; museum. These objects are no longer alive or at least no longer exist in the joints of the life of people who belong to them.

This condition causes elimination to some local cultures

that are not following the concept of national culture. [1] the cultural diversity belonging to the local community as a community value system during the Soeharto era was only used as a miniature project on the display at Taman Mini Indonesia Indah". TMII is used only as such a displaying medium for local culture items from Sabang to Merauke, while practically, the functions and uses of local culture themselves are such attributes to the life of its local people. As a consequence, the national culture created by the *OrdeBaru* becomes meaningless to people in other places where it was not its growing place at the beginning. The same thing also happens in the field of art; especially in performing arts. During the *OrdeBaru* era, artists were only given deceitful freedom to make a creation. It is no longer a secret that among the corruption that has become a habit, performances that attempt to criticize this misbehavior are always silenced. [2] as a result, criticism is done in a veiled way.

The resignation of Soeharto which was driven by the student movement reached its peak in May 1998 began with the Trisakti and Semanggi incidents which resulted in changes in social, political, and cultural systems. People began to have the freedom of making a move and expression in the era of reform. Since then, awareness of people about Indonesia consists of various ethnicities with cultural diversity has grown. Hence, all existing differences must be accommodated so that each local people live by their cultural identity. These various people with cultural diversity could not possibly be united with the pseudo-"Indonesian" identity created by the *OrdeBaru*. The identity concept about "Indonesia is singular; *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*," with the slogan "although we are different we are still one" can no longer be maintained. The idea of a single identity based on the peaks of regional culture is no longer able to maintain its unity. In creating "a single" one, there must be something "put away". Yet, to make things be "the one" there must be some things "thrown away". As a result, the politics of creating an identity is used to get rid of what is deemed irrelevant to the "Indonesians" identity. However, in reality, the singularity created by eliminating some of the local geniuses could not survive, because it did not accommodate the culture of the local community. In addition, the concept of "Indonesia is the One" that aims to suppress inter-ethnic differences can no longer be the glue of living in a state. On the other hand, conflicts of interest between local cultures arise. Almost every province in Indonesia conflicts due to conflicting interests. One of the most relevant examples is the war between the Dayak and Madurese tribes in Sampit, Central Kalimantan several years ago.

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One of the reasons lies behind this conflict was because the two tribes did not understand each other's traditions and customs. This lack of understanding emerged negative impact on mutual disrespect between those people.

To avoid such a phenomenon, it is necessary to develop a "new cultural paradigm" regarding the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. The diversity and differences of each local culture in Indonesia which was not accommodated during the *Orde Baru* era need to be re-highlighted. This effort aims at creating awareness about the existence of differences. When realizing the existence of differences, people may appreciate these in their living. By having an understanding of other and own cultures, people in various regions realize that they are not the same. Besides, such understanding automatically may rise an appreciation for the "meaning of difference".

Based on the above description, it can be interpreted that to create a Minangkabau cultural identity regarding the philosophy of West Sumatra people with its "contemporary" concept, it is clear that in-depth study and research is needed to understand the basic concepts of Minangkabau culture. The topic may stand about *What is Minangkabau? Why is it called Minangkabau? and What is the condition of the Minangkabaunese today?* These are the basic questions that need to be answered by the willing of the whole community.

The West Sumatra region, which is located in the western part of Central Sumatra, is inhabited by the Minangkabaunese. The term Minangkabau contains cultural and geographical meanings that are not contained in the meaning of the word West Sumatra. After Minangkabau became a part of the territory of the Republic of Indonesia, the term Minangkabau was identified with the geographical meaning of the administrative area of West Sumatra province. [3] Minangkabaunese is known as West Sumatra people since they join Indonesia territory under the name of West Sumatra province. Thus, it can be interpreted that Minangkabau existed before the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia existed and it is clear that the Minangkabaunese already had a social and cultural life order before the Republic of Indonesia existed.

Nature is everything for Minangkabaunese. [4] Nature is not only a place of birth and death, a place of life and development but also has a philosophical meaning known as the motto: *Alam Takambang Jadi Guru (learning from nature)*. At one glance, minangkabaunese are people who always learn from nature. Through the process of learning in nature, the Minangkabau community's philosophy of life is created which is known as "*Adat basandi syarak (Islam), Syarak basandi Kitabullah (Al-Qur'an); Custom stands on religion (Islam) and religion stands on Holy Book (Al-Qur'an)*". Such philosophical foundation has been revived and used as the source of the creation of all cultural practices in Minangkabau; including art.

Along with the description above, it can finally be understood that every resident in the archipelago has the opportunity to self-actualize and show their existence to their local area. Furthermore, the awareness to raise local culture's symbols as regional cultural identities begins to emerge, including in West Sumatra. The local government and other stakeholders in West Sumatra try to explore local symbols in the world of art, especially folk performing arts. [5]

Basically, in the context of local autonomy today, the involvement of local governments in the world of people's performances is generally driven by two main engines: raising identity (identity) and the economy (tourism). In further discussion, this paper will focus on raising identity (identity) through the traditional art of minangkabaunese namely *Randai*.

Moreover, to actualize this intention, efforts were made to formulate a cultural identity project as local identity. [6] in the book of *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* reveals that the creation of identity is composed of what we think of ourselves now based on past and present situations, as well as the idea of what we will become, as well as the future trajectory of what we want to be. The term of identity in the characteristics of a social unit is an answer to the question of *who I am* or *who we are*. The answer to that question can only be found by making a comparison between me and you and/or between us and them. Identity is the universal and eternal essence of the self which is created according to one's wants and needs.

As a traditional Minangkabau theater, *Randai* is used to communicate the values of "Minangkabau" wanted to be raised by minangkabaunese. [7] art is the most effective tool of communication to convey goals. Therefore, *Randai* is seen as a vehicle (medium) in communicating Minangkabau's cultural identity. At first, *Randai* was in the form of dance before it is being known as traditional Minangkabau theater. The steps of the *silek* movement (*pencak silat*); a martial dance of minangkabaunese, are played around and in a circle with an unspecified number of participants. In this dance, the story has not been played because at that time the performance was only in the form of rhymes sung danced by young people in traditional events. This dance is performed on the ground in the middle of a yard, rice field, field, or in a traditional market, not in the middle of a house or indoors. *Randai* does not use dialogue yet. The story is expressed in a rhyme while dancing in a circle and at the end of the rhyme the dancers cheer up with a specific shout voice.

In addition, *Randai* as a dance with martial arts movements accompanied by *dendang* is categorized as the first and second embryo of *Randai*, while the third embryo is revealing another element of namely *kaba* (traditional story). The inclusion of *kaba* in *Randai* clarifies the message conveyed to local people or people who watch it. The amalgamation of these three art elements was influenced by the presence of the Malay tonil. The rapid growth of Malay tonile groups in Minangkabau influenced *Randai* artists at the time. Then, they include the elements of the actors who play the dialogue in the initial performance of *Randai*. [8] *Kaba*, which is usually just sung, begins to be visualized by the actors while they keep using the gesture of the Minangkabau (*pencak silat*) movements.

In line with the explanation above, it is known that the process of *Randai*'s growth is initiated by an alliance of several Minangkabaunese art forms.

The forms are as follow: a) a dance originates from the movement of *pencaksilat*; b) *dendang*; c) *kaba*; and d) the influence of the classic Minangkabau tool which visualizes *kaba* in the form of acting and dialogue. The four forms then become essential elements of *Randai* as a traditional Minangkabau theater. Further, of course, the audience comes from around the playing arena.

In reviving the Minangkabau cultural identity through *Randai*, the government takes the following steps: firstly inserting *Randai* into local content extracurricular activities in schools. Secondly presenting *Randai* regularly on various media such as television, tourism web, youtube, and other social media. Further, the basic reason for taking television, the tourism web, youtube, and social media as media to popularize *Randai* is because these media can be accessed, watched by the people of West Sumatra wherever they are. In short, these media are considered appropriate to be used to spread out *Randai* to society, while including *Randai* in extracurricular activities with local content in schools is aimed at re-introducing *Randai* among the youth generation of West Sumatra.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

Author (s) can send paper to the given email address of the journal. There are two email addresses. It is compulsory to send paper to both email addresses. The method of this research is cultural studies. The cultural study is one of the methods used to understand humans. [9] The cultural approach is a method of scientific study and/or research that uses a cultural perspective in capturing cultural realities, both for those that are visible (factual) and those related to abstract cultural phenomena. [10] the cultural study is the study of humans in various aspects; aspects of human biologist and culture, aspects of cultural history, humans as part of the world; as individuals, groups, and cultural studies.

## III. DISCUSSION

### A. *Randai*s local content of extracurricular activities at schools

Listening to Gramsci's explanation that hegemony politics in creating identity works through *force* and *consent*, these strategies are also applied by *stakeholders* in Minangkabau. It has a significant impact on the introduction and development of *Randai* among Minangkabau adolescents while including *Randai* in extracurricular activities with local content in junior and senior high schools. Students have the opportunity to learn and know *Randai*. [11] By doing this, students become close to Minangkabau culture and begin to make it a part of social life.

*Randai* is set within as one of local content in extracurricular activities and roled in junior and senior high school students in Padang Panjang. The students practice *Randai* while they are accompanied by an art teacher and guided by local *Randai* artists almost every afternoon. This activity began to appear in early 2000. It seems that this has become a separate area for *Randai* artists, especially for ISI Padangpanjang students who generally study *Randai* in their lectures. Due to this, teenagers dressed in school uniforms are seen practicing *Randai*, using *sarong* instead of *galembong*pants (roomy pants, typical *Randai* clothing) in almost every room and corner of the campus. This is such an awesome sight in eyes of observers of the traditional arts of

Minangkabau.

The above view provides information related to the training method applied by the students which refer to the essential elements in *Randai*, namely: (1) elements of the story that depart from *kaba*; (2) elements of singing or singing; (3) elements of dance movements (*galombang* wave and *galembong* patting or roomy trousers) originating from Minangkabau *pencak-silat*; and (4) *drama* elements in the form of acting and dialogue. Each student was divided into small groups and trained in *galombang* and *galembong* patting movements. Then, they were introduced to the elements of *dendang* and *drama* in the form of acting and dialogue after they were able to practice the *galombang* and *galembong* pats. Next, they are introduced to musical instruments and are trained to play them within a *Randai* activity.

Furthermore, students are directed specifically to master one of the elements of skills contained in *Randai* based on their abilities at the advanced level. Students who can dance are directed to become *galembong* motion players. Besides, those who have musicality and the ability to play music are directed to become musicians. Finally, those who have acting and dialogue skills are be directed to play characters in *Randai*.

At one glance, by observing the learning methods provided by the teacher and the *Randai* artists, it is clear that they still need more guidance to master *Randai*. To reach the desired target of mastering *Randai* in schools, the West Sumatra Province Government through the National Education Office and other stakeholders must formulate and work optimally so they can provide effective learning methods. If the stakeholders do not think about it more seriously, this program is worried not to succeed in reviving the Minangkabau identity. As a negative impact, this program will only be an activity to play *Randai* without contributing any implications for the cultivation of Minangkabau cultural values.

*Randai*'s training for developing art teacher's capability is needed so that *Randai*s played effectively in its real practice in West Sumatra. Guidance must be directed at the essential understanding of *Randai* as forming a Minangkabau cultural identity. Guidance should not only be focused on the forms of *Randai* performances, but also directed at providing an understanding that art (*Randai*) is a product of Minangkabau culture which develops by the changing times. This is aimed at assisting such teachers to be able to transform and reveal *Randai* in creative and effective ways.

Learning *Randai* appropriately needs to be considered so that *Randai* is not trapped in the uniformity of form when it is taught to students. reading the writings on revitalizing *the reyog Ponorogo show* written by Lono Lastoro Simatupang in a paper presented at the seminar on Water as a Source of Cultural Arts Orientation in Kediri, East Java, *ReyogPonorogo* revitalization is standardized under the name of "Massal 93" Format. This standardization of *reyog* forms has an impact on uniformity which makes it static and undeveloped.





Considering the previous paragraph, creating a learning strategy of *Randai* purposing at forming a cultural identity must be carried out through a mature design within phases. The stage of making *Randai* as an identity for later learning material in schools must first go through the seminar phase related to *Randai* as a Minangkabau cultural identity. This seminar aims at determining the goals to be achieved and formulate a suitable paradigm for use in *Randai* as a tool formation of Minangkabau identity. The next phase is a workshop and training for art teachers to formulate an appropriate Learning Unit and create Teaching Materials that can accommodate the intentions of the community and government in creating a Minangkabau cultural identity. The final phase is to hold a kind of festival to find out how far the development and benefits of *Randai* have in shaping Minangkabau identity.

### B. *Randai* as on various media

Apart from being included within the curriculum at junior and senior high schools in West Sumatra, *Randai* has also appeared on various media such as television, tourism web, youtube, and social media. *Randai* was shown starting in early 2000 which was not long after the TVRI station was established. Along with the development of *Randai* technology. It is also shown in various media besides television such as YouTube channels, tourism websites, and other social media. The creation of a Minangkabau cultural identity through *Randai* with various media is certainly an opportunity. This condition raises several challenges to the artists.

As information and entertaining media; television, tourism web, youtube channel, and social media—have the characteristics of delivering messages with moving images. These media must show well-packaged images to attract viewers' interest. These media as information and entertaining tools have very wide possibilities to be accessed by all people. The introduction of *Randai* as a cultural identity in Minangkabau may be greatly helped itself.

Unfortunately, Especially in West Sumatera, these media are still new and do not have much-skilled personnel, intensive equipment for production, and adequate funding. Yet, the admins of those media will of course be overwhelmed to compete with national ones that have already been present in West Sumatra. On the other hand, public interest in watching local television stations and YouTube channels; belong to Wst Sumatera—is very little comparing to the interest in watching national television and YouTube channels which are managed by reliable personnel. This fact makes it difficult for television stations and YouTubers to compete with private television stations in West Sumatra.

With these constraints, such media have become less effective as a medium for conveying messages of Minangkabau cultural identity. Hence, *Randai* is only watched by a limited circle. This fact is exacerbated by the inability of the *Randai* artists to package it into an attractive spectacle so that viewers can enjoy it. *Randai* is displayed as is, just like when *Randai* was still a live performance. Changes in the media should require a change in the form of the smart display. The change of *Randai* media "from live shows to television" without going through careful process

eliminates many features of *Randai* due to the very distinct character of the media.

Many examples of *Randai* show that there is no more attention to changes like *Randai* itself on television stations, tourism web youtube channels, and social media in West Sumatra. *Randai* was only recorded outdoor using three cameras without proper lighting and audio setting so that the image is not clear and the audio is barely audible. As a consequence, the story structure and performance spectacle cannot be enjoyed and understood. This of course resulted in boredom for the audiences. This causes difficulty to get the aesthetic values of the Minangkabau in *Randai* and to understand the performance. The inefficiency of *Randai* on such media is a challenge that must be considered by smart *stakeholders*.



**Fig. 1. *Randai* Minangkabau (Source: <https://spiritsumbar.com>)**

To make *Randai* can be enjoyed and be an interesting spectacle, it must be packaged more seriously both in terms of form and aesthetics by the demands and characters of television. *Randai* artists must be able to carry out an acceptable revitalization for the community and abroad. This example can be seen at *Randai* carried out by the University of Hawaii in 2005.



**Fig. 2. *Randai* carried out by the University of Hawaii (Source: The Genteel Sabai - WordPress.com)**

Such revitalization effort has brought results. *Randai* attracts the audience's attention while it is presented abroad by using foreign languages. Because of such revitalization, *Randai* becomes a popular art overseas.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In the light of the above description, it can be concluded that respecting local cultural diversity and providing opportunities for regions to show cultural identity are crucial factors that must be considered by the central government in reviving a certain local culture. Conflicts of interest happened between groups and tribes where they are bound through an understanding of cultural differences. Besides, local culture as a basis values in the life of its people is a factor that must be respected by the government. Society must have the freedom to create their regional identity as a view and guide of their living. Local cultures should not be used as a display and preserved as if they were mere ancient items. On the other hand, local culture must have its own space to be owned by the community. The reasons above are very important as the basis for the creation of a "Minangkabau" identity which is based on the philosophy, "*Adat basandi syarak (Islam), and Syarak basandi Kitabullah (Al-Qur'an); Custom stands on religion (Islam) and religion stands on Holy Book (Al-Qur'an)*". The re-emergence of Minangkabau cultural identity was carried out by including it in the local content of extracurricular activities at junior and senior high schools. Another effort was by broadcasting it on television stations, the tourism web, YouTube channels, and social media. These steps must be carried out in precise and targeted ways so that efforts to actualize *Randai* as a Minangkabau identity become effective and efficient. Finally, learning from previous mistakes, the creation of a local identity must be able to accommodate all the groups involved in it to be able to fully be owned to certain regions. Hopefully.

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