

## Chatib Sulaiman: Patriotic Fighter from Nagari Sumpur, West Sumatra

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**Abstract:** This paper belongs to historical research or biographical research of a figure. In contrast to biographical research that has been done by other historians and researchers which generally emphasized on the history and role of a figure, this paper looks at the existence of a figure, named Chatib Sulaiman, from the geospatial setting of his birthplace, Sumpur, located on the lakeside of Lake Singkarak, West Sumatra. Chatib Sulaiman is quite different from other local figures in Minangkabau. This study aims at analyzing the process of character building of Chatib Sulaiman that is influenced by the spatial conditions of his birthplace in relation to the dynamics of his life and struggles. The results indicate that the existence of Chatib Sulaiman cannot be separated from the geospatial of Nagari Sumpur, his birthplace, which then has a very significant influence on the building of his character as a fighter. The existence of Nagari Sumpur with an egalitarian and democratic style has built the character of Chatib Sulaiman as an independent and open-minded person. Through the western education he has received, Chatib Sulaiman became a smart and skilled young man. He was at the forefront of opposing the practice of colonialism in West Sumatra. In his struggle, Chatib Sulaiman once led the Regional People's Defense Council, served as the secretary of the National Defense Front, and was the most prominent young man in West Sumatra when the physical revolution took place, especially during the PDRI (Emergency Government of the Republic of Indonesia) period.

**Abstrak:** Tulisan ini termasuk penelitian sejarah atau penelitian biografis seorang tokoh. Berbeda dengan penelitian biografi yang telah dilakukan oleh para sejarawan dan peneliti lain yang pada umumnya menekankan pada sejarah dan peran seorang tokoh, tulisan ini melihat keberadaan seorang tokoh bernama Chatib Sulaiman, dari setting geospasial tempat kelahirannya, Sumpur, terletak di tepi danau Danau Singkarak, Sumatera Barat. Chatib Sulaiman cukup berbeda dengan tokoh-tokoh lokal lainnya di Minangkabau. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses pembentukan karakter Chatib Sulaiman yang dipengaruhi oleh kondisi spasial tempat kelahirannya dalam kaitannya dengan dinamika kehidupan dan perjuangannya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keberadaan Chatib Sulaiman tidak lepas dari geospasial Nagari Sumpur, tempat kelahirannya, yang kemudian berpengaruh sangat signifikan terhadap pembentukan karakternya sebagai seorang pejuang. Keberadaan Nagari Sumpur dengan gaya egaliter dan demokratis telah membangun karakter Chatib Sulaiman sebagai pribadi yang mandiri dan berpikiran terbuka. Melalui pendidikan barat yang diterimanya, Chatib Sulaiman menjadi pemuda yang cerdas dan terampil. Ia berada di garda terdepan menentang praktik kolonialisme di Sumatera Barat. Dalam perjuangannya, Chatib Sulaiman pernah memimpin Dewan Pertahanan Rakyat Daerah, menjabat sebagai sekretaris Front Pertahanan Negara, dan merupakan pemuda paling terkemuka di Sumatera Barat ketika terjadi revolusi fisik, terutama pada masa PDRI (Pemerintahan Darurat Republik Indonesia).



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## INTRODUCTION

In the history of the struggle for independence, West Sumatra is called the “barn” of Indonesian thinkers and freedom fighters. There are a number of well-known figures from West Sumatra including Mohammad Hatta, Haji Agus Salim, Tan Malaka, Sutan Syahrir, Muhammad Yamin, Mohammad Natsir, Abdul Moeis, Rasuna Said, Buya Hamka, and Rohana Kudus. It is not an exaggeration to say that West Sumatra is the “Home for the Founding Fathers of the Nation” because West Sumatra has produced many figures who played a role in establishing the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, both at the local and national levels. In addition, according to Kahin, West Sumatra was once the last stronghold in determining the fate of the republic when the Emergency Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PDRI) was proclaimed in this area on December 19, 1948 (Kahin, 2008, p. 349). The existence of PDRI in West Sumatra has proven that local power cannot be ignored at all.

The existence of PDRI for less than a year has left many historical records for the people of West Sumatra. One of the most heartbreaking events was the incident in Situjuh Batur on January 15, 1949. This incident was a series of twists and turns of the PDRI struggle that required the figures at that time to fight until the last drop of blood to defend the existence of the Republic of Indonesia. The siege and shooting carried out by the Dutch troops in the early hours of the morning prayer time had claimed dozens of lives. They were well-known West Sumatran figures, one of whom was Chatib Sulaiman, a young activist and a former leader of the West Sumatra Giyugun. Besides, he was also the chairperson of the meeting when the incident occurred (Zed, 1997a, p. 67).

Chatib Sulaiman certainly cannot be compared to other fighters from Minangkabau, such as Mohammad Hatta, Sutan Syahrir, Mohammad Natsir, Muhammad Yamin, and Buya Hamka. The name Chatib Sulaiman is indeed not as popular as the names of the figures mentioned above. Different dimensions of space and time of the struggles of each figure has an impact on their respective characters. Due to their efforts and struggles within their lifetime, they were introduced as national figures that have been legitimized through the title of National Heroes.

The large spatial scale of the struggles they carried out makes them well-known nationally. Unlike the struggles of the aforementioned figures, Chatib Sulaiman’s struggle is concentrated in the regions of West Sumatra, thus legitimizing him as a

local hero. Nevertheless, the death of Chatib Sulaiman during the PDRI event (a national-scale event) certainly does not rule out the possibility of appointing Chatib Sulaiman as a national hero for the struggle he has done. Chatib Sulaiman is the representative of West Sumatran local activists and fighters who has consistently dedicated himself to the nation until the end of his life. Although his struggle was still at the local level, his movements could not be ignored, and even became the determinant of the local struggle when the existence of the central government had dimmed and was taken over by the Dutch troops. Regardless of the size of the struggle, Chatib Sulaiman’s role cannot be ignored because he has participated in efforts to maintain the existence of the Republic of Indonesia through his movement to spearhead the youth of West Sumatra to fight against the arrival of the Dutch troops.

Chatib Sulaiman’s militancy certainly did not appear by itself. Such a character is built through a long process and is influenced by a number of factors, such as family environment, school environment, and community in which he grew up. The most important factor leading to his character building is the geospatial place where he was born, namely Nagari Sumpur. This *nagari* (Minangkabau traditional village), located in the lakeside of Lake Singkarak, has relatively built the character of Chatib Sulaiman as a figure of a persistent and open-minded young fighter. This openness has made him acceptable to many people, both from the civilian and military circles, especially during the Japanese occupation and physical revolution. At that time he became a prominent youth in West Sumatra for his service as the leader of the West Sumatra Giyugun, the leader of the Regional People’s Defense Council, and the secretary of the West Sumatra National Defense Front (Kahin, 2008, p. 45; Zed, 2005, p. 78).

The existence of Chatib Sulaiman as an open-minded person cannot be separated from the local cultural space. Culturally, the people of Nagari Sumpur adhere to Bodi Chaniago harmony which is, in Minangkabau culture, known as a harmony with noble character by upholding the principles of democracy and being egalitarian (Afrizal, 2014, p. 33; Graves, 2007, p. 45; Zuhud, 2016). This cultural space has relatively built his character and personality as an open-minded person, putting forward ideas and actions rather than just being a follower. This character can be seen from his participation in many youth organizations in West Sumatra. During the movement era, Chatib Sulaiman was present as a person who offered bright ideas, and he was trust-

ed by Mohammad Hatta to regenerate the cadres of New Indonesian National Education (PNI) and become its leader in Padang Panjang. In political activities, he is also known as a reliable thinker. Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah says "Chatib Sulaiman is an honest person. His soul is full of love for the homeland, socialist knowledge, belief in Islam, and Minangkabau values. He is obedient to his belief, loyal to his friends and hard-hearted. Moreover, he is rich in theory and skilled in drawing up programs and plans, so he needs other people simply to execute such designed programs and plans. People say that many of Mr. Rasjid's programs (former Governor of West Sumatra) were born from the mind of Chatib Sulaiman. He does not care about the benefits of the programs born from his ideas as long they are implemented" (Kahin, 2008, p. 246).

The harmonious dynamics of Nagari Sumpur due to the presence of mass transportation, i.e. trains, has driven the local people to mobilize outside their region. They moved to major cities in West Sumatra, one of which was Padang, the capital of West Sumatra. The willingness to look for a decent and established livelihood was the main motive for the local people to migrate, and so was the motivation of Chatib Sulaiman's family. Together with his parents, Haji Sulaiman and Siti Rahmah, Chatib Sulaiman migrated to Padang. In that city, Chatib Sulaiman's parents supported their family by trading in Pasar Gadang (one of the markets in Padang). For Minangkabau people, migrating and trading have become an inherent character in the search for identity and self-esteem. The urge to migrate is motivated by various motives, one of which is economic factor (Naim, 2013, p. 13).

The motive of migration for better family economic situation has built Chatib Sulaiman's personality as a man who is consistent and hardworking, which can be seen from his perseverance in choosing a way of life, Chatib Sulaiman consistently carries out his role as a thinker-activist who contributes his thoughts and mobilizes resistance to burdensome colonial practices. Such dialectic has presented the figure of Chatib Sulaiman as a unique person who is different from other figures. Consequently, at this point, this research is important to be conducted.

This study highlights the involvement of Chatib Sulaiman as a local figure in West Sumatra, who has an important role in the national events of PDRI. He was at the forefront of Indonesia's struggle for independence in West Sumatra. The existence of Chatib Sulaiman, who is easily accepted

by many people, is certainly a unique and interesting person in this study. Thus, this research explores the family background, culture, and social environment in which Chatib Sulaiman grows and develops as a multi-talented person. This paper, provides a different picture from biographical writing in general. This will be described in the findings and discussion section of this paper. The matrilineal cultural background in the Sumpu village, which adheres to the Bodi Chaniago system, contributes to the character of Chatib Sulaiman, so that Chatib Sulaiman is a legendary figure in the midst of the people of West Sumatra until now. This is evidenced by the main road in the city of Padang named Jalan Chatib Sulaiman.

Based on the above background, this study aims to reveal the family, social and cultural backgrounds that shape the personality of Chatib Sulaiman, and to reveal the struggles of Chatib Sulaiman as a critical and multi-talented West Sumatran activist in the period of movement and independence.

#### **METHOD**

This study used the historical method with a character or biographical study approach. A biography is a life history of a character or a figure written by someone else, whether the character is still alive or already dead (Caine, 2009, p. 4). An ideal biographical study should contain 4 (four) main points: (i) showing the character's personality; (ii) showing the social forces that support him/her; (iii) describing the history of his/her era; and (iv) describing the success and development of his/her era (Kuntowijoyo, 2003, p. 178; McAdams, 1988). This study focuses on the biography of Chatib Sulaiman as a patriotic fighter from West Sumatra who is full of life dynamics and its relation to the geo-spatial factors of Nagari Sumpur which largely influence and build his character.

This research was conducted through 4 (four) stages, including heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Gottschalk, 1975, p. 26; Sjamsuddin, 2016, p. 15). Heuristics was carried out through data collection, both primary and secondary data, from various sources that were directly or indirectly related to Chatib Sulaiman. The data were obtained from the collection of archives of Chatib Sulaiman family, conference papers related to Chatib Sulaiman such as the book review and the launching of Chatib Sulaiman Foundation, the book collection in several libraries in Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP) including the library of History Department, the library of Faculty of Social

Sciences, Central Library, the library of Center for Socio-Cultural and Economic Studies, the book collection in Minangkabau Cultural Information and Documentation Center in Padang Panjang, and the book collection in West Sumatra Regional Library. In addition, the data were also collected through interviews with Chatib Sulaiman family and other figures who had once been with Chatib Sulaiman. After the data had been collected, the source criticism was carried out by testing the authenticity and validity of the data obtained. The data were then interpreted based on the historical scientific perspectives. The final stage of the historical method was historiography, i.e. writing the results of the research in the form of a scientific paper.

### CHATIB SULAIMAN: FROM GEO-SPATIAL NAGARI SUMPUR TO RANTAU (MIGRATION DESTINATION)

Chatib Sulaiman was born in 1906 in Nagari Sumpur, Batipuh, an area located on the lakeside of Lake Singkarak (today known as Tanah Datar District). At that time, Batipuh was a sub-district. Nagari Sumpur is a quiet and peaceful village whose people live by farming, trading, and fishing. They do a farm work on the lakeside of Lake Singkarak, and sometimes they catch *bilih* fish (typical small fish in this lake) in Lake Singkarak. While waiting for the harvest, some of them choose to trade. Nevertheless, not a few of them choose to earn their living only from trading.

The topography of Nagari Sumpur is an area surrounded by hills and steep valleys. On the sidelines of the valley are many Rumah Gadang houses (Minangkabau Traditional Houses) which are hundreds of years old. These houses are evidence of the existence of the ancestors of the Sumpur people. However, currently there are only about 70 houses left and have been used by the government as Cultural Conservation, one of which belongs to the Chatib Sulaiman family. In contrast to neighboring villages such as Nagari Bungo Tanjung, Nagari Malalo, Nagari Gunuang Rajo, there are almost no Rumah Gadang like those found in Nagari Sumpur. In addition to the hill and valley landscape, this village also has a river whose water flows quite fast into Lake Singkarak. The river is called Batang Sumpu River.

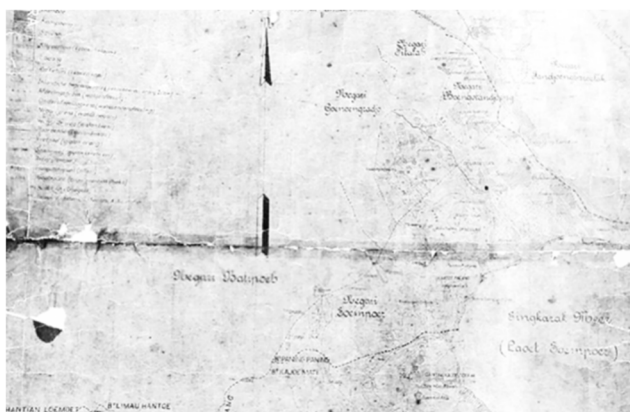
The Sumpur community was known as a community with “*merantau*” (migration) culture. This migration culture started earlier in Sumpur community than in the communities in any nagari in Minangkabau. As a West Sumatran figure and cleric, H. Masoed Abidin, argues that the Koto



Figure 1. Chatib Sulaiman  
(source: Family Archive)

Gadang community, known as the Minangkabau elite community during the colonial period, mostly come from Nagari Sumpur. (Graves, 2007, p. 36; Herman, 2020, p. 12; Niel, 2009, p. 52). At the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, there was a massive exodus of the Sumpur people out of their *nagari*. This decision was made because there had already been available transportation facilities in Batipuh Sub-district that can be accessed by the Sumpur community to go to economic centers in urban areas. This mobilization occurred because it was supported by transportation facilities in the form of trains, especially with the presence of Sumpu Railway Station in this country. The existence of the train in this area has encouraged the Sumpur people to make an exodus to Pasar Gadang, one of the economic centers in the West Sumatra region during the colonial period (Colombijn, 2006, p. 157).

Pasar Gadang during the colonial government was a center for import-export trade on the west coast of Sumatra (Asnan, 2007, p. 78). In Pasar Gadang, the community of people from Sumpur established a *surau* (small mosque) called *Surau Sumpu*. The *Surau* functions not only as a place for ritual worship, but as a gathering place for the



**Figure 2.** Map of Nagari Sumpur  
(source: Village Custom Density Archive)

Sumpur people to carry out various activities related to economic, social, cultural, and political activities (Dobbine, 2012, p. 44; Graves, 2007, p. 54). *Surau Sumpu* had two floors. The lower part was used as a place for ritual worship, while the upper part was used to accommodate the Sumpur people who came from their hometowns as well as to hold deliberations related to social, trade and political activities. Most of Chatib Sulaiman's life was spent in this *Surau*. In addition to learning the Koran, he also learned trading strategies. The young Chatib Sulaiman also taught the art and how to play the violin to his peers in this *Surau*.

The existence of rail transportation in Batipuh Sub-district could not be separated from the efforts of the Dutch East Indies Government to facilitate its mobility to reach the hinterland in West Sumatra easily. This was also intended to strengthen the Dutch control over the Minangkabau region which had been conquered after the Padri War (Graves, 2007, p. 23; Lionar, Mulyana, & Yulifar, 2020, p. 3). Until the early 20th century, the Dutch East Indies government had succeeded in conquering the Minangkabau region. Moreover, through its ethical politics, schools with western education styles were established in several cities such as in Padang, Bukittinggi, and Padang Panjang (Erman, 2015, p. 6). Chatib Sulaiman became part of the dialectics and dynamics concept because he received a western education in Padang at that time.

The existence of Chatib Sulaiman in Padang City was motivated by his parents who migrated. Haji Sulaiman and Siti Rahmah have migrated locally to Pasar Gadang in Padang City since Chatib Sulaiman was born. They were a fairly well-known family in the Sumpur community in terms of religion, social and economy. The predicate of Hajj symbolizes the prestigious social status for a family at that time in Minangkabau. Haji Sulaiman was a



**Figure 3.** *Surau Sumpu*  
(source: researcher documentation)

successful merchant in Padang. He was a supplier of agricultural products which were sold at Pasar Gadang (Israr, 2019, p. 55). Being a merchant's son made the character of Chatib Sulaiman and his eight siblings grow up to be hardworking children. They grew up in a market environment that required them to work hard. They sometimes had to help their parents when their family's economy was unstable. The eight siblings of Chatib Sulaiman were M Nuh, Hasan, Usman, Dalimah, Hindun, Abbas Sulaiman, and M Yatim (Israr, 2019, p. 17).

The life and character of Chatib Sulaiman cannot be separated from the geo-spatial condition of Nagari Sumpur. Although he did not grow up in his hometown, the nuances of traditional education in *surau* in Nagari Sumpur flowed in his fighting blood (Fatimah, 2019, p. 6). Nagari Sumpur is a *nagari* that has some uniqueness when compared to other *nagari* in Batipuh Sub-district. Geographically, Sumpur has a river called Batang Sumpu River, located on the lakeside of Lake Singkarak and on the edge of Bukit Barisan Hills (Fatimah, 2019, p. 7). From the historical and cultural perspectives, Sumpur community refers to Bodi Chaniago Harmony whose main character is manifested in the proverb "*duduak samo randah, tagak samo tinggi*" which means "everyone has the same dignity". This proverb implies that the social system of the Sumpur community is built by upholding democratic principles that prioritize deliberation and consensus (Afrizal, 2014, p. 13; Graves, 2007, p. 25). Such customary conditions have more or less affected the character of each individual, including the



Figure 4. Former Train Station in Nagari Sumpur (source: researcher documentation)

family of Chatib Sulaiman.

The mobility of the Sumpur people through *merantau* (migrating) has started since the 19th century. Since the construction of railway line in 1896, the Sumpur community has become increasingly open. The intensity of the movement of people who migrated was getting higher, especially at the beginning of the 20th century. Their destination was spread to various regions, one of which was Padang, precisely in Pasar Gadang (Afrizal, 2014, p. 13). In Pasar Gadang, they built a worship facility in the form of a *surau* which they named *Surau Sumpu*. This *surau* is still standing firmly as evidence of the existence of the Sumpur people in the city of Padang. The existence of *surau* for the Minangkabau community is basically not only as a place of worship, but it is also functioned as a place to learn religious knowledge for children, as well as other social activities (Zuhud, 2016, p. 10). *Surau Sumpu* is used as a stopover for migrants from Sumpur, a place for economic transactions, and a place for political activities. Chatib Sulaiman's childhood had a lot of contact with *Sumpu Surau*, where he and his friends interacted with each other. In addition, this *surau* was a place where Chatib Sulaiman began to develop his talent for playing the violin (Fatimah, 2019, p. 7).

The existence of Haji Sulaiman in Pasar Gadang has been around since the early 20th century. He was known as a successful merchant. The Balesting incident in 1908 and the Malaise storm in the 1930s had more or less affected the economy of the people in Sumatra's Westkus. Haji Sulaiman also experienced the impact of such unfavorable circumstances when his business suffered a setback. However, due to his persistence in running his business, he was able to defend his business from the crisis. From this effort, he built his family's economy successfully and he was able to send his children, including Chatib Sulaiman, to well-known schools in Padang (Fatimah, 2019, p. 8).

Chatib Sulaiman received his elementary education at a well-known school in the city of Pa-

dang, namely Gouvernement Benteng, when he was 6 (six) years old. Like other Minangkabau children at that time, in addition to receiving education in formal schools, they also received education in *surau*, religious-related education. Through *surau*, Minangkabau children are prepared to become knowledgeable and have a deep understanding of their customs and traditions (Graves, 2007, p. 65; Maimunah, 2015, p. 23). In addition, *surau* is also a place where the children can develop their skills such as learning self-defense. During his life, Chatib Sulaiman also experienced living in *surau*. In *Sumpu Surau*, he learned a lot about customs and religion.

After completing his education at Gouvernement Benteng in 1917, Chatib Sulaiman continued his education at HIS (Hollandsch-Inlandsche School) Adabiah Padang and graduated in 1919. In the same year, Chatib Sulaiman continued his education at MULO (Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs) at the age of 13. He was accepted to enroll in MULO because he held an HIS Adabiah certificate and got a recommendation from a figure named Inyiah Abdullah Basa Bandaro who was a wealthy merchant in Padang Mudik Market. Inyiah Abdullah Basa Bandaro was the figure who brought Sarekat Islam organization to West Sumatra. He was a big fan of Tan Malaka and managed the distributor of Tan Malaka's writings to the Java areas. His closeness to the world of movement influenced the process of Chatib Sulaiman's character building to be an activist (Kahin, 2008, p. 167; Sufyan, 2018, p. 83).

During his education at MULO, Chatib Sulaiman interacted with many young people. He was known as a quite critical person and a person who pursued his hobby of playing the violin. However, his education at MULO did not run smoothly, and he was finally unable to finish his education there. There are two versions of the reasons why



Figure 5. Rumah Gadang in Nagari Sumpur (source: researcher documentation)

Chatib Sulaiman did not finish his school at MU-LO. The first version says that Chatib Sulaiman dropped out of school because of his love of art. His hobby of playing the violin made him neglect his school. The second version says that Chatib Sulaiman was expelled from school for not wearing a school uniform (Israr, 2019, p. 51).

After dropping out of school, Chatib Sulaiman entered the world of art and studied violin music with M. Nur, a well-known violinist in Padang at that time. Although not inheriting artistic blood, he quickly became skillful at playing the violin and took him to work at a cinema in Padang City to accompany silent films (Fatimah, 2019, p. 3; Israr, 2019, p. 56; Sufyan, 2018, p. 78). On November 25, 1932, he married a girl from Sumpur named Zubaidah. His marriage with Zubaidah was the second marriage in his life because previously he had married a girl from Sumpur, named Upiak Musa, but they got divorced.

#### FROM PADANG TO PADANG PANJANG

After spending years living in Padang City, Chatib Sulaiman decided to move to Padang Panjang, the city that became the epicenter of the national movement around 1930 (Sufyan, 2017, p. 40). This decision was made due to pressures and requests from the Padang Panjang youth, especially from the Diniyyah School Student Association (PMDs). On the advice of Inyik Abdullah Basa Bandaro, Chatib Sulaiman could become their leader. Chatib Sulaiman was seen as an intelligent young man due to the western education he received from Gouvernment Benteng, HIS and MULO. In addition, Chatib Sulaiman had the ability to translate books written in English. The ability of Chatib Sulaiman was very much needed by the youth at that time because of the increasingly massive youth movement between 1928 and 1930. The spirit of *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Pledge) had arrived in Padang Panjang (Kahin, 2008, p. 131).

Around 1929, Chatib Sulaiman and his friends in Padang Panjang founded the Indonesian Muslim Scouts (KIM). The establishment of this scouting could not be separated from the spirit of nationalism driven by Chatib Sulaiman through his role as a teacher in Sumatra Tawalib. The teacher's role in cultivating the national spirit was very large at that time, particularly in building the students' character to have national awareness. In Java, this spirit was driven by Ki Hajar Dewantara by establishing Taman Siswa, while in Sumatra it was driven by Muhammad Sjafei by establishing Indonesisch Nederlandsche School (INS) in Kayu Tanam

(Radcliffe, 1971, p. 41; Zed, 2012, p. 79). Chatib Sulaiman's decision to establish scouting was to facilitate a forum for mobilizing activities that could stimulate students to think freely through extracurricular activities. Through this way he expected that the youth's minds could be enlightened.

A few years later, Chatib Sulaiman was trusted to be the leader of Hollandsch-Inlandsche School (HIS) Muhammadiyah in Padang Panjang. During his leadership, this school experienced rapid progress, both in terms of the curriculum and the discipline of implementing the school rules. In addition, Chatib Sulaiman also taught at other private schools in Padang Panjang, one of which was Madrasah Irsyadinas (MIN). Chatib Sulaiman's daily life in Padang Panjang, which was always tied to the world of education, made him a quite respected teacher figure (Fatimah, 2019, p. 14).

In terms of politics, Chatib Sulaiman had a broad mind. He admired the thoughts of famous political figures from Minangkabau such as Sutan Syahrir and Mohammad Hatta, even he participated in mobilizing the New PNI (Indonesian National Education) established by these two figures. After the dissolution of the PNI (Indonesian National Party) established by Soekarno by the Dutch East Indies Government on April 17, 1931, Syahrir and Hatta then founded the New PNI (Kusno, 2016, p. 35), Chatib Sulaiman welcomed the presence of this party in West Sumatra. On November 11, 1932, Chatib Sulaiman and Leo Salim, a youth activist from Payakumbuh, founded the New PNI Branch in West Sumatra, based in Padang Panjang. Chatib Sulaiman was appointed by Hatta as the leading commissioner as well as the general chairman of the organization. The New PNI in West Sumatra gained support mainly from religious nationalists, particularly from students and teachers, youth leaders, and members of Muhammadiyah in Padang Panjang. The party then grew and established branches in Padang City, Pariaman Regency, Maninjau Sub-District, and Bukittinggi City. The main strategy of this party was to emphasize cadre development through cadre education. This strategy was believed to give better results than just agitating and propaganda (Kahin, 1984, p. 14). As the leader of the party, Chatib Sulaiman placed great emphasis on the quality of the cadres rather than recruiting a large number of unqualified followers (Kahin, 2008, p. 66).

Noticing and observing Chatib Sulaiman's intensity in the political dynamics at that time, the Dutch East Indies government monitored his movements, especially since the issuance of the

rules regarding the prohibition of gathering (*vergader-verbod*) on August 1, 1933. This prohibition was imposed to stem the movement of social organizations and radical politics that opposed the Dutch East Indies government (Erman, 2015, p. 31). After the ban was enforced, several figures such as Soekarno who led Partindo were arrested and exiled to Flores in 1933, while Hatta and Syahrir were arrested and exiled to Digul in 1934. In 1936, Hatta was then exiled to Banda Neira and transferred to Sukabumi in 1942 (Ricklefs, 2016, p. 367). The arrest of these figures had an influence on the struggle of the movement in many areas, including in various areas outside Java. This period was also marked by the weakening of power due to the vacancy of figures as leaders of the struggle, so this period was also known as the period of survival (Tirtoprodjo, 1996, p. 56). In West Sumatra, however, the youth movement driven by Chatib Sulaiman continued to exist through a latent way with a man-to-man movement strategy. This strategy was applied in order to save members of the organization from being arrested by the Dutch East Indies Police (Israr, 2019, p. 39).

#### **MOVING TO BUKITTINGGI**

After spending years following the movement in Padang Panjang, Chatib Sulaiman then decided to move to Bukittinggi (Fort de Kock). This decision was motivated by his passion for writing. Besides being known as a trading center, Bukittinggi is also known as a modern education center because there are several schools established by the Dutch East Indies government such as Kweekschool or Raja School (teacher school) which was founded around 1873. Some alumni of this school include Tan Malaka and Abdul Haris Nasution (Elvira, 2020, p. 12). In addition, in Bukittinggi there is also a school for prospective government employees or known as Middlebare Opleiding School Vor Inlandsche Ambtenaren (MOSVIA) which was established around 1920. This school later became the forerunner of establishment of IPDN (Institute of Home Affairs Governance) in Bukittinggi.

The existence of educated people in Bukittinggi had driven the birth of intellectual dynamics in this city. This was evidenced by the proliferation of book publishing houses and journalists in Bukittinggi. The existence of publishing houses and journalists was related to the increasing needs for books and information (Fadila, 2018, p. 13). One of the media of journalism in Bukittinggi was Sinar Magazine which contained news and articles about trade and education. Chatib Sulaiman was

actively involved as a writer in this magazine. His writings were mostly related to economics and education.

In Bukittinggi, Chatib Sulaiman met with Anwar St. Saidi, MR. Nasrun, Marzuki Yatim, and Mr. Muhammad Yamin. They established a trade union organization called Boemi Poetra, which was a kind of company for traders. Due to their good cooperation, Boemi Poetra then expanded to various regions in Sumatra and even abroad. Some of its branches were located in Medan, Penang, and Singapore (Israr, 2019, p. 55). Moreover, in the context of empowering the people's economy, Chatib Sulaiman also pioneered the establishment of several cooperatives including the Fisherman's Cooperative in Talu, Lime Burning in Padang Panjang, and Tobacco Plantation in Payakumbuh.

The end of the Dutch East Indies Government on March 11, 1942 caused reactions from many political figures. Chatib Sulaiman together with Leon Salim, A. Murat Saat, Muhammad Husni Rajo Bujang, Dt. Mandah Kayo, and Chaidir Gazali gathered the youth of Padang Panjang. They planned to hold a demonstration against the Dutch East Indies government. The action was triggered by the Dutch East Indies government's plan to destroy all strategic facilities and infrastructure before the entrance of Japan to Indonesia. Chatib Sulaiman and the youth of Padang Panjang rejected the government's attitude and asked to hand over the government to the people of West Sumatra (Zed, 2005, p. 113). As a result of the protest, Chatib Sulaiman and his friends were arrested and exiled to Kota Cane, South Aceh (Kahin, 2008, p. 212). At that time, the government demanded the death penalty for Chatib Sulaiman and his friends. However, a fortune came suddenly when the Dutch headquarters in Kota Cane was sporadically attacked by Japanese soldiers just before the execution. Due to the Japanese attack, Chatib Sulaiman and his friends were free from the death penalty. On March 28, 1942, Dutch troops in Sumatra surrendered to the Japanese. Sukarno, who was held captive in Bengkulu, was dispatched to West Sumatra to be able to sail to Australia via Teluk Bayur Harbor (Naredi, Andi, Rifkyansyah, Rizki, & Prayogi, 2020, p. 16). The departure was cancelled due to the Japanese troops' rapid attack. Soekarno finally arrived in Padang and met the Japanese troops who replaced the Dutch rule in Bukittinggi. At Soekarno's request, the Japanese army released Chatib Sulaiman and his friends.

During the Japanese Occupation period, Chatib Sulaiman and Leon Salim established the



Youth Organization of Nippon Raya (PNR). The establishment of this organization was approved by the Japanese government because it was considered an organization that supported the Japanese army. However, some time later the Japanese became suspicious of this organization, and Chatib Sulaiman and his friends were arrested. After being interrogated for some time by the Japanese army, Chatib Sulaiman skillfully dismissed the allegation until he was finally released.

After his release, Chatib Sulaiman joined an organization established by Japanese, namely Syu Sangi Kai. The organization was chaired by Mohammad Syafe'i, while Chatib Sulaiman was appointed as his deputy. Through this strategy, Chatib Sulaiman was able to exert control over Japanese policies, one of which was suggesting Japanese to establish a Gyugun, a military volunteer composed of people who were recruited professionally. The members of Gyugun were educated local people (Zed, 2005, p. 67). Chatib Sulaiman was appointed as the daily administrator and concurrently the chairman of the West Sumatra Gyugun together with Mahmud Junus and Ahmad Datuk Simaradjo. Their strategic step was recruiting youth from West Sumatra to join as the members of Gyugun (Fatimah, 2011, p. 18). Efforts made by Chatib Sulaiman were traveling from one region to another for direct recruitment. In front of many village youths, Chatib Sulaiman invited them to join Gyugun in order that they would gain military knowledge which would later be useful in defending their villages.

After the proclamation of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, which was followed by the entry of the allied troops, the Indonesian people had to face a physical revolution. Various incidents of resistance occurred in many places, some of which were quite heroic including the 10 November action in Surabaya, Ambarawa incident, Bandung Lautan Api, and Medan Area incident (Kahin, 2013, p. 248). In West Sumatra, resistance to the arrival of allies occurred in Padang City. The resistance was carried out by the people of Padang City at Teluk Bayur Harbor. However, this action did not make the allied troops retreat, but they kept entering the city and controlled it. Various resistances were carried out in many places, and one of quite heroic resistances was the incident at Simpang Haru. The series of resistance in Padang also led to the death of Bagindo Aziz Chan, Mayor of Padang, on July 19, 1947 (Fatimah, 2011, p. 90; Mansoer, Imran, Safwan, Idris, & Buchari, 1970, p. 45). Responding to the increasingly aggressive actions of the Dutch

troops, Chatib Sulaiman together with other West Sumatran figures devised a strategy to defend the existence of the Republic of Indonesia. He participated in establishing Indonesian Youth Information Center (BPPI), People's Security Agency (BKR), Indonesian National Committee (KNI), People's Security Army (TKR), and various other forces.

In the whole formation of the unity, Chatib Sulaiman was always present as the main actor. This is possible because Chatib Sulaiman, in many memories of his friends, is a smart drafter. As he is good at making strategies, it is not surprising that he always appears at the forefront. The peak of Chatib Sulaiman's career as an activist reached the national level when the meeting held by West Sumatra Provincial KNI decided that he was a member of the Central Indonesian National Committee (KNIP). On January 21, 1947, Chatib Sulaiman attended the KNIP session in Malang.

#### **SITUJUH BATUR INCIDENT, THE FIGHTER DIED**

The killing of Bagindo Aziz Chan on July 19, 1947 was a trigger for the Dutch to launch their military aggression, and the Dutch had betrayed the contents of the Linggarjati Agreement (Fatimah, 2007, p. 57). On July 29, Mohammad Hatta visited West Sumatra to meet West Sumatran figures. The result of the meeting was the agreement to establish the National Defense Front (FPN) as a civil defense force to face the increasingly aggressive Dutch attack. FPN was chaired by Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Hamka), Chatib Sulaiman was appointed as the secretary, while Rohana Kuddus was appointed as the head of woman affairs.

The membership of FPN consisted of leaders of parties and community organizations. Its main task was to coordinate with Regional Defense Councils (DPD) such as the Nagari and Village Supervisory Agency (BPND), Elite Mobile Troops (PMT), and other forces. However, the presence of FPN did not match the expectations because the tight competition and the influence of parties made FPN a battlefield, thus weakening the strength of the organization. In such circumstances, Chatib Sulaiman and his friends immediately took action by establishing a new forum as a force. Following up on this action, the DPD of Sumatra realized the results of the West Sumatra KNI plenary session by establishing a security agency named Regional People's Defense Council (MPRD), and Chatib Sulaiman was appointed as the chairman of this organization (Sufyan, 2018, p. 89).

The peak of Chatib Sulaiman's struggle in order to defend Indonesia's independence was during the Second Dutch Military Aggression in 1948. When Yogyakarta (the capital city of Indonesia at that time) was controlled by the Dutch, the Emergency Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PDRI) was established and was proclaimed by Mr. Syafruddin Prawiranegara in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra (Nopriyasman, 2014, p. 3). The presence of PDRI gave a signal to the Dutch that the State of Indonesia still existed even though the President and Vice President had been prisoned. As an emergency government, PDRI carried out the government by mobility, moving from one place to another that was difficult for the Dutch to reach.

As a forum for the struggle of the Indonesian people, especially in West Sumatra, PDRI restored the hope and full confidence of the Indonesian people in the government which began to diminish when President Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta were arrested by the Dutch. The mobility system implemented by the PDRI made it difficult for the Dutch to detect it, so the Dutch operation to disable the PDRI did not run smoothly. The spirit of never giving up and fighting has always been voiced by the leaders of PDRI. As the chairman of the Regional People's Defense Headquarters (MPRD), Chatib Sulaiman was in a leading position in maintaining the existence of PDRI. He participated in guerrilla warfare in many places and chaired meetings in developing the PDRI's struggle strategy.

The meetings held by the management of PDRI were always overseen by the Dutch troops, and this caused havoc to the leaders of PDRI, including Chatib Sulaiman. A very sad event occurred on January 14, 1949. This incident began when the leaders of PDRI were about to hold a large meeting to deal with the Dutch military operation which had expanded to Koto Tinggi. The meeting was originally planned to be held on January 15, 1949, but was moved to January 14, 1949 in a place far from the city center, namely Situjuh Batur, an inland village located 11 kilometers from Payakumbuh City. Si Tujuh Batur was considered a strategic place to hold the meeting because of its long distance from the city. Besides, it was located on the slopes of Mount Sago that made it difficult for the Dutch to reach (Israr, 2019, p. 36; Zed, 1997, p. 89).

The meeting was chaired directly by Chatib Sulaiman because the Military Governor of West Sumatra, Mr. St. Rasjid, was unable to attend. In addition to Chatib Sulaiman, the figures who also attended the meeting were Arisun St. Alamsyah (Military Regent of Lima Puluh Kota), Lt. Col.

Dahlan Ibrahim (Commander of the Bull Division/Staff of the Military Governor of West Sumatra), Lt. Col. Munir Latif (Battalion Commander in Painan), Major A. Thalib (Deputy Chief of Staff for the Governor of West Sumatra), Major Makinuddin Hs (Military Leader Assistant in Lima Puluh Kota), and other West Sumatran military leaders (Kahin, 2008, p. 221).

The meeting in Situjuh Batur resulted in a decision that the Payakumbuh City should be retaken from the hands of the Dutch in order to show the outside world that Indonesia still existed. In addition, the results of the meeting also suggested the improvement of weapons and logistics for each personnel to face guerrilla warfare. The results of the meeting became a strategic step that was considered necessary, in addition to waiting for diplomatic steps that were being carried out in the international arena. The meeting was concluded in the early hours of the morning. Some of the participants of the meeting went back to their respective places, while some others decided to spend the night in Situjuh Batur Valley. One of those who decided to spend the night in Situjuh Batur Valley was Chatib Sulaiman.

The meeting in Situjuh Batur was discovered by the Dutch. By the morning, the Dutch troops had arrived and surrounded this area. The figures who had fallen asleep as a result of fatigue suddenly had to deal with the attack from the fully armed Dutch troops. Machine guns and carbines of the Dutch troops hit the residents' housing, including the house where Chatib Sulaiman and other figures took a nap. In just a moment, Situjuh Batur Valley was paralyzed by the Dutch. Although there was resistance from the figures, it was meaningless because of the shortage in numbers and weapons (Abdullah, 2016, p. 24). Chatib Sulaiman was one of the victims of the Dutch ferocious attack. He died after trying to save himself from a bullet attack.

## CONCLUSION

Chatib Sulaiman is one of the phenomenal local fighters in West Sumatra. The name Chatib Sulaiman is still embedded in the collective memory of the people in West Sumatra as a person who was skilled and intelligent in fighting against colonial practices. Such character is certainly not inherent because environmental factors, e.g. family, education, and geo-spatial where he grew up, greatly influence the personality of Chatib Sulaiman. Nagari Sumpur as his birthplace has more or less influenced his character as a fighter, He is known as an open-minded and independent person.

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