



# The Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol Manuscript as an Authentic Historical Source of the Padri War (1803-1837)

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b></p> <p>Imam Bondjol; Padri War; Minangkabau History; Tambo.</p>	<p>After the Padri War (1803-1837), Tuanku Imam Bondjol was exiled by the Dutch colonial government to Minahasa and Manado. During his exile in Manado, his son, Naali Sutan Caniago, who accompanied Tuanku Imam Bondjol during his exile, wrote a manuscript about his father's struggle. This manuscript is called the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bondjol Manuscript, which is a single manuscript (<i>codex unicus</i>). In general, this manuscript contains a summary of the history of the Padri War in West Sumatra in the 19th century. It contains Tuanku Imam Bondjol's memoirs, his thoughts, and notes on the Padri war. In this study, the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bondjol manuscript is examined using philological and historical methods. This manuscript has been transliterated and translated by Safnir Abu Naim. However, this study will trace the philological stages carried out on the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bondjol manuscript to demonstrate its originality and authenticity. The problem examined in this study is how the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bondjol manuscript stands as a historical source of the Padri War. To that end, a textual study of the translation of the manuscript was conducted using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method modeled by Teun A. Van Dijk. This study also uses the Historical Method with the ultimate goal of compiling a historiography of the struggle of Tuanku Imam Bondjol and the Padri War. From the results of the study, it is concluded that the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bondjol manuscript is an authentic source of the Padri War, a first-hand historical source originating from indigenous records. Before the discovery of this manuscript, sources for the Padri War were generally only from colonial archives.</p>
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the study of Indonesian history has once again been enlivened by intense debate regarding the figure of Tuanku Imam Bonjol (TIB) and the relevance of his heroic status. This debate has arisen alongside growing academic and public interest in the historical reconstruction of the Padri War and the reinterpretation of its figures. Some argue that TIB does not deserve to be considered a hero due to his

association with violence during the Padri War conflict. This critical view generally stems from historiographical analysis that views the Padri War not simply as an internal religious conflict but also as part of a series of violence often associated with the discourse of militant Islam in Southeast Asia. Jeffrey Hadler, for example, shows how several historians link the traces of Islamic violence in the region to the Padri War and the figure of TIB, and how this history was then utilized in the political construction of power in both the modern Indonesian state and the Dutch colonial era (Hadler, 2008).

This academic discourse then developed into a broader public debate, even giving rise to a formal lawsuit in the form of a petition urging the Indonesian government to revoke Tuanku Imam Bonjol's title of National Hero. The plaintiffs argued that TIB was considered to have committed treason against the Minangkabau Islamic Kingdom of Pagaruyung, was involved in the murder of the royal family, and led an attack on Batak territory that was claimed to have resulted in a large number of casualties. This narrative shaped the perception that TIB was not a symbol of the struggle for independence, but rather a figure rife with violent practices. This discourse demonstrates the tug-of-war between historical memory, identity construction, and the struggle over the meaning of heroism in the context of modern Indonesia (Muslim, 2019).

This situation has prompted the need to conduct more in-depth, critical studies based on reliable historical sources. The curiosity to re-understand the historical reality of Tuanku Imam Bonjol and the dynamics of the Padri War has led to scholarly attention being drawn to authentic primary sources. One such important source is the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bondjol Manuscript (TTIB). This manuscript is currently stored as an important archival collection at the West Sumatra Provincial Library Service, while its digital copy can be accessed through the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia on the Khastara platform with catalog number 1577278. This makes the TTIB an important historical document that not only serves as a record of events, but also as a representation of the Minangkabau people's collective memory of the figure of TIB and the Padri War (Tjandrasasmita, 2006).

The TTIB manuscript holds significant historical and cultural value, having been written by Naali Sutan Caniago, the son of Tuanku Imam Bonjol, during his father's exile in Manado. It was then passed down through generations until it was officially handed over to the West Sumatra Provincial Government on April 27, 1983. After being lost for approximately 24 years, it was rediscovered in September 2014. Since then, the TTIB has been a valuable collection under special care. Recognition of the manuscript's significance was further strengthened when UNESCO designated it as part of the Memory of the World (MoW) for Asia and the Pacific on May 8, 2024, demonstrating its importance not only to Indonesian history but also to the world's documentary heritage (Amril & Ramananda, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the need arose to assess the position of the TTIB as a scientifically credible historical source. Therefore, this study seeks to conduct a comprehensive study encompassing philological, historical, and discourse analysis approaches. From a philological perspective, this study aims to ensure the originality and authenticity of the manuscript through work stages such as manuscript inventory, material description, determination of edition methods, transliteration and translation processes, and additional studies necessary to assess the textual condition and narrative integrity of the manuscript. Philological studies are important because the TTIB is a traditional manuscript that has undergone a long journey of transmission, preservation, and social reproduction. To understand the text's meaning more deeply, this study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (Dijk, 2000). This approach was chosen because the TTIB is not merely a descriptive historical record, but rather a discourse product containing the ideology, social perspective, and worldview of the author. By using discourse analysis, this study views the TTIB as a text that reflects power relations, identity construction, socio-religious interests, and representations of conflict that occurred in the context of the Padri War in the early 19th century. Thus, the text is not only read as a historical fact, but also as a construction of meaning.

Meanwhile, to test the historical value of the TTIB, this study uses the Historical Research Method, which includes heuristics, internal and external criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Through these stages, the TTIB is tested as a historical source: whether it can provide a reliable picture of past realities or is merely an apologetic narrative. This approach allows for a more objective historical reconstruction while still considering the social, political, and cultural context of the period in which the manuscript was composed. Several previous studies have used the TTIB as a reference, for example, Jeffrey Hadler's study, which highlights how the history of the TIB is utilized in the construction of modern Indonesian politics, or Christine Dobbin's study, which views the TTIB as a selective text that displays the transformation of the Padri movement from a religious movement to a political-economic actor. However, most previous studies have focused more

on historiographical analysis or socio-political interpretation, while comprehensive studies that combine philology, history, and discourse analysis are still very limited. Therefore, this study offers a more integrative approach.

In a theoretical context, this research makes an important contribution because it does not only stop at editing texts or reconstructing historical events, but also presents a new analytical model that views traditional historical manuscripts as linguistic texts, historical documents, and ideological discourses simultaneously. By integrating van Dijk's Philology, History, and Critical Discourse Analysis Methods, this research contributes to the development of traditional historiography theory, the epistemology of historical sources, and the enrichment of discourse study methodology in the context of Islamic history in the Indonesian archipelago. The most important contribution of this research is the proposed Layered Historical Text Analysis Model that includes three stages: philology to ensure the authenticity of the text, a study of the historical context to understand the surrounding socio-political realities, and discourse analysis to uncover the ideological dimensions contained in the text. This model is not only relevant to TTIB, but can also be applied to various other traditional historiographical manuscripts such as babad, hikayat, and local sirah. Thus, this research is expected to not only enrich understanding of the figure of Tuanku Imam Bonjol and the Padri War, but also provide a significant methodological contribution to the development of the study of Islamic historical manuscripts and strengthen critical awareness in rereading the nation's historical memory.

## 2. METHOD

In this study, the chosen methodological approach combines three major frameworks, namely philological research, critical discourse analysis, and historical research with the aim of comprehensively understanding the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bondjol Manuscript (TTIB) from a textual perspective, historical context, and ideological dimensions. The Philological Research Method is seen as the primary foundation in this study because it provides a framework for examining the manuscript scientifically and systematically. Philology, as stated by several experts, is a discipline that focuses on the study of texts and written manuscripts from the aspects of language, culture, and social context. For example, according to the definition given by Siti Baroroh Baried, philology is a broad knowledge of literature that includes linguistic, literary, and cultural studies, so this method does not only move at the linguistic level but also on the cultural values contained in the text. In another context, Oman Fathurahman explicitly describes philology as a scientific investigation of written texts (manuscripts) that traces their sources, authenticity, characteristics, and history of their birth and distribution, thus forming the foundation of scientific practice to ensure that the manuscripts studied are truly authentic and historically representative (Fathurahman, 2016). This approach is in line with the philological study of religious manuscript texts which shows how researchers conduct observation, description, transliteration, translation, and content analysis to produce valid and meaningful text edits for contemporary cultural and historical studies (Erlina, 2015).

This research integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which is the foundation of the two methodological processes for TTIB texts. The CDA approach developed by Teun A. van Dijk is one of the most influential models in the study of this discipline, where discourse is understood as a social practice that combines the dimensions of text, social cognition, and social structure holistically. In Van Dijk's perspective, discourse does not stand alone but is always bound to the social context and the power structures that surround it, so it needs to be read not only in terms of text structure but also from the ideological meaning it reproduces and how its socio-cultural effects work in influencing the perceptions of readers and their social communities (Purwanti et al., 2025). This model has been widely used in contemporary empirical studies, for example, critical discourse analysis in modern media that applies Van Dijk's Framework on macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure to reveal the dominant ideology in the text including a case study of modern hashtags in online media published in journals with DOI, demonstrating the relevance and applicability of this model in reading texts with sensitivity to power and social relations (Purwanti et al., 2025). The application of CDA in this study allows historical manuscripts to be seen as products of discourse that are not neutral, but rather as ideological fields where certain values, stereotypes, and social views are represented and maintained through the choice of language, narrative structure, and rhetorical strategies contained therein.

As a complement to these two approaches, the Historical Research Method is used to place the narrative and content of the TTIB within the temporal and chronological framework of real events that occurred during the Padri War. The historical method, as outlined by Louis Gottschalk, involves the stages of source collection (heuristics), source verification both internally and externally, interpretation of relationships between facts, and

writing a historiography that is systematic, logical, and accountable to past evidence. This approach is important so that the resulting findings are not only descriptive narrative but also analytically constructed based on sources whose credibility has been tested, so that the historical reconstruction of the TTIB can consider the complexity of the socio-political context during the Padri War period. Thus, this research methodologically has an integrative framework that connects philological aspects (authenticity of the text), discourse aspects (ideological construction), and historical aspects (relevance and validity of facts), resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the manuscript as a historical source document that is rich in meaning and scientifically significant (Gottschalk, 2008).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### His Highness Imam Bonjol (1772 – 1864)

Tuanku Imam Bonjol is one of the most important figures in Minangkabau history and in the Indonesian nation's resistance against Dutch colonial rule. He is remembered not only as a war leader, but also as a cleric, educator, and social leader born from the internal dynamics of Minangkabau society in the late 18th to early 19th centuries. His life story clearly shows how religion, custom, and political power influenced each other and converged in a historical vortex that gave birth to major changes, later remembered as the Padri War. Through his life journey, it is clear that this major event was not solely born of a power conflict, but also from a deep moral, religious, and social struggle within the Minangkabau community at that time (Caniago, 1979).

According to the information contained in the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol manuscript and other traditional sources, it is stated that this figure, originally named Muhammad Syahab, was born around 1772. He did not come from a noble family or a descendant of the traditional Minangkabau elite, but rather from a humble background. His father, Khatib Rajamuddin, was known as a pious and respected religious teacher, while his mother was named Hamatun. This religious family environment shaped the foundation of his personality, thoughts, and outlook on life from childhood. Precisely because he did not come from the traditional elite, he grew up close to the lives of ordinary people, understanding firsthand the social, economic, and moral problems of his community. This would later become important social capital for him, as he gained legitimacy as a leader not from his lineage, but from his intellectual capacity, exemplary morals, and personal integrity (Martamin, 1984).

From a young age, he was accustomed to religious education, initially provided by his father. After his father's death when he was still very young, this religious education was continued by relatives and local religious teachers. In his youth, he was known as Peto Syarif, and from then on, his intelligence and perseverance in acquiring knowledge were evident. One of his most important teachers was Tuanku Nan Tuo in Koto Tuo, Candung, who provided a strong foundation in Islamic knowledge while instilling values of morality and social reform. From this, his view developed that religion is not only a matter of individual worship, but also concerns the development of society. His intellectual journey did not stop in Minangkabau, as he also studied in Aceh, which at that time was an important center of Islamic scholarship in Sumatra. In addition to deepening his religious knowledge, he also learned life skills common to young Minangkabau people, such as agriculture, natural resource management, and self-defense skills. This combination of religious knowledge, social experience, and practical skills shaped him into a respected religious scholar and community leader who understood the realities of people's lives (Nain, 2008).

By the late 18th century, Minangkabau society was experiencing moral and social decline, as documented by historians. Many practices were deemed contrary to Islamic teachings, such as gambling, drinking alcohol, and other deviant social behavior. At the same time, customary authority rested in the hands of the penghulu (headmen) who dominated the village government structure, while the role of ulama (Islamic scholars) in social decision-making was increasingly marginalized. This situation aroused concerns among reformist ulama, including Tuanku Imam Bonjol. Together with other Padri figures and a number of pilgrims recently returned from Mecca, an Islamic reform movement known as the Padri Movement emerged, aimed at purifying religious practices and improving social life. The initial conflict was primarily internal between the Padri and the Adat communities, as the Padri perceived a deviation from the fundamental principle of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah*. This tension gradually escalated into armed conflict (Dobbin, 1983).

In subsequent developments, Tuanku Imam Bonjol emerged as a key leader of this movement, particularly after the establishment of Fort Bonjol, which became a defensive base and symbol of resistance. He was able to organize the community, strategize, and combine religious legitimacy with military leadership. The initially internal conflict transformed into a struggle against colonialism when some traditional leaders sought Dutch

assistance. From then on, the Padri War evolved into an anti-colonial war involving foreign military forces. Tuanku Imam Bonjol's leadership was dynamic, as throughout his journey he underwent a process of reflection on the relationship between custom and sharia, even at certain stages demonstrating a reconciliatory attitude to defuse internal conflict and maintain societal integrity. After a lengthy siege, Fort Bonjol fell in 1837, and he was captured and exiled to various regions until his death in 1864. Although his life ended in exile, his steadfastness, simplicity, and commitment to fighting for his beliefs earned him a reputation as a hero who was not only physically brave but also morally and intellectually mature (Azra, 2004). Thus, Tuanku Imam Bonjol is a complex figure who reflects the struggle between Islam, tradition, and colonialism, and represents the dynamics of Minangkabau and Indonesian history as a whole.

### Padri War (1803 – 1837)

The Padri War was one of the most complex conflicts in Indonesian history in the first half of the 19th century. The war, which lasted from approximately 1803 to 1837, cannot be understood simply as a religious war, a clash of customs, or simply as a resistance to colonialism. Rather, it demonstrated how Islamic religious renewal, the Minangkabau traditional social structure, and the Dutch colonial political expansion strategies converged in the same historical arena. Thus, the Padri War serves as a clear example of how a conflict that initially arose from the internal dynamics of a local community eventually evolved into a broader struggle due to the intersection of colonial interests and changes in the Islamic world at the time (Zakaria, 2024). Historically, this war demonstrates that religious, social, and political issues do not exist in isolation but influence each other, forming a complex, unified process.

Minangkabau society before the outbreak of war had a distinctive social system with a matrilineal customary structure and the leadership of traditional leaders who held political and social authority in the nagari (village). Ideally, the relationship between custom and Islam was formulated in the principle of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* (God's Book). However, in practice, harmony between these two elements was not always harmonious. Toward the end of the 18th century, a number of social customs such as gambling, cockfighting, drinking palm wine, and other social activities were viewed by some ulama as deviations that contradicted Islamic values. On the other hand, traditional leaders often tolerated these practices, arguing for maintaining social stability, economic interests, and the balance of local power. Tensions arose between reformist ulama groups and traditional elites. This situation escalated when several Minangkabau figures returned from Mecca carrying a spirit of Islamic reform and a strong push to enforce sharia more firmly in social life (Navis, 1984).

From this dynamic emerged a group known as the Kaum Padri, a group of reformist clerics who championed the purification of Islamic teachings and the improvement of societal morals. Initially, this movement emphasized the development of religious values and social reform. However, as time went on, some of their actions adopted a harsh, even coercive, approach, sparking resistance from indigenous groups. For the Kaum Padri, efforts to uphold pure Islamic teachings were seen as a religious obligation that must be upheld. Conversely, for the Kaum Adat, the Padri movement was seen as a serious threat to traditional authority, social structure, and Minangkabau cultural identity. In its initial phase, this conflict was essentially internal and confined to the Minangkabau social sphere, without the direct intervention of foreign colonial powers (Nain, 2016).

However, the Padri War entered a new phase when some traditional leaders sought assistance from the Dutch colonial government to counter pressure from the Padri movement. For the Dutch, this internal conflict presented a strategic opportunity to expand their dominance into the previously inaccessible interior of West Sumatra, which had been relatively independent from colonial control. Beginning in 1821, the Dutch began to actively engage by sending troops, establishing forts, and expanding military operations in the Minangkabau region. From then on, the nature of the war shifted from an internal conflict to a colonial war. The Padri, previously facing off against the Indigenous People, now faced a colonial military force with superior weaponry, logistics, and organization. Ironically, the Dutch presence actually fostered a new awareness among the Padri and Indigenous People. The greater external threat led both groups to recognize the importance of unity to protect territorial sovereignty and Minangkabau identity (Herlina, 2011).

In the next phase, resistance against the Dutch was led by several key figures in the Padri Movement, among whom Tuanku Imam Bonjol emerged as the most prominent. He led the formation of defense bases and the construction of strategic forts, most notably Fort Bonjol, which later became a symbol of the Minangkabau people's resistance against colonialism. The Padri's war strategy relied on local knowledge of

the terrain, strong community support, and religious legitimacy, which bolstered their fighting spirit. Although the resistance lasted a long time and resulted in significant losses for the colonialists, the superiority of Dutch military technology and logistical strength gradually weakened the Padri's defenses (Sulasman, 2014).

After a long siege and grueling battles, Fort Bonjol finally fell to the Dutch in 1837. Tuanku Imam Bonjol was captured through deceptive diplomatic tactics and then exiled to various regions, starting from Cianjur, Ambon, and finally to Manado, where he spent the rest of his life until his death in 1864. The defeat of the Padri militarily marked the end of the war, while ensuring Dutch domination over West Sumatra (Caniago, 1979). However, the end of the war did not mean the end of its social and religious impacts.

The Padri War left a huge mark on the social, political, and religious structure of Minangkabau society. From a political perspective, this war strengthened Dutch colonial power in the Minangkabau region and reduced the sovereignty of the nagari. From a social and religious perspective, this war gave birth to a process of reconciliation between adat and Islam. The principles of adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah were reformulated in a more balanced way, so that the relationship between the two became more structured and systematic. In the long run, the bitter experience of the Padri War helped shape the style of Minangkabau Islam to be more moderate and institutional, emphasizing education, da'wah, and social development, no longer through a violent approach. Historically, the Padri War reflected how complex the interaction between religious values, adat structures, and colonial interests was (Dobbin, 1983). Therefore, this event must be understood as a layered historical process, not just a black and white conflict. Understanding the Padri War comprehensively is not only important for reading Minangkabau history, but also for understanding the relationship between Islam, adat, and colonialism in the broader history of Indonesia.

### Manuscript Inventory

The inventory of the manuscript known as the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol (TIB) Manuscript is based on philological considerations that its contents represent a memoir or personal memory of Tuanku Imam Bonjol regarding his life experiences, particularly those related to the struggle and social dynamics during the Padri War. In philological studies, the original text is initially abstract because it exists only in the author's memory. It only becomes concrete when it is expressed in written form. Although the writing activity may have been carried out by others or through a process of copying, the essence of the text remains with its primary author. The term tambo itself in Minangkabau tradition has a meaning close to history, hikayat, babad, or a record of the history of an important figure and event. This manuscript is the original work of its first author, Naali Sutan Caniago, and to date, only one known copy exists in the world. In philological terms, such a manuscript is known as a codex unicus, a single manuscript that has no other copies. Because no evidence of recopying has been found so far, this manuscript holds great value both in terms of physical authenticity and the authenticity of its textual content (Djamaris, 2002). This uniqueness makes the TIB Manuscript a very important historical source for studies of Minangkabau, Islam, and the historiography of the Padri War.

On April 27, 1983, this manuscript was officially handed over to the West Sumatra Provincial Government to ensure its existence and preservation. When it was first received, its physical condition was already damaged. Several sheets were detached from the binding and some pages had holes due to ink corrosion. After being under the supervision of the local government, the Archives and Library Service carried out a number of maintenance and restoration measures to save the manuscript's contents so that it could still be read and studied. Currently, the manuscript can be physically accessed at the library building of the West Sumatra Provincial Archives and Library Service. The manuscript is stored under the call number NKA 30. In addition to physical maintenance, the manuscript has also undergone a digitization process using good manuscript documentation standards, so that it can be accessed online through the official website of the West Sumatra Provincial Government and the National Library's Khastara platform with catalog number 1577278. This digitization aims to maintain sustainable access and prevent the risk of data loss due to damage to physical materials (Suryani, 2012).

The existence of this manuscript was first mentioned by Ph. S. van Ronkel in his article entitled *Inlandsche getuigenissen aangaande de Padri-oorlog* published in the journal *De Indische Gids* in 1915. Van Ronkel noted that he had copied a manuscript entitled *Tambo Anak Tuanku Imam*, a 318-page manuscript that was then kept by the Khatib Nagari Bonjol. However, to this day, the copy made by Van Ronkel is no longer known and is not listed in the catalog of Malay or Minangkabau manuscripts in the Netherlands. This information also strengthens the position of the TIB Manuscript as the only known manuscript to exist. There is an oral tradition that states that this manuscript was the result of copying the diary of Tuanku Imam Bonjol while in exile in Manado. These

notes were then collected and rewritten by Naali Sutan Caniago. However, until now no physical evidence has been found regarding the original collection of writings used as a reference. Therefore, it is most likely that this text was formed through a process of dictation (*imla'*), namely Tuanku Imam Bonjol recounting his life experiences orally, which were then written down by Naali Sutan Caniago (Soeratno et al., 1985). This practice is common in the Nusantara manuscript writing tradition, so that TIB can be understood as a text resulting from oral narrative production that was put into writing.

After being completed, the manuscript was kept by the heirs of Tuanku Imam Bonjol in Caniago Village, Pasaman Regency. It was only in 1983 that the manuscript was officially handed over by the heir, Ilyas Sutan Caniago, to the West Sumatra Provincial Government. The manuscript was declared lost for approximately 24 years, until it was rediscovered in September 2014. Since its rediscovery, the manuscript has been more closely guarded and permanently placed in the West Sumatra Provincial Library. In terms of physical description, the manuscript is currently stored on the third floor of the Archives and Library Service building. It is stored in a special glass cabinet with the addition of silica gel to maintain humidity, and the room is set at a temperature of around 20 degrees Celsius to maintain the paper's condition. The manuscript is written on European paper bearing the *Pro Patria Eiusque Libertate* stamp. The manuscript measures approximately 30 x 18.5 cm with a thickness of 360 pages. Each page contains approximately 17 lines of writing. The manuscript is bound using thick cardboard covered with linen, and all text is written in black ink. Although some of the writing has been damaged due to ink corrosion and many pages have been laminated, the current condition of the manuscript is relatively more stable after undergoing the restoration process (Nurcahya et al., 2025).

The language used in the manuscript is Malay with Jawi Arabic script. Broadly speaking, the manuscript contains a summary of the history of the Padri War and the social dynamics of West Sumatra in the 19th century. The text structure is divided into three main sections. The first section covers pages 1 to 190, which contains the direct memoirs of Tuanku Imam Bonjol. The second section covers pages 191 to 324, which contains notes or memoirs of Tuanku Imam Bonjol's son. Meanwhile, the third section on pages 325 to 332 contains the minutes of two important meetings that took place in the Minangkabau highlands in 1865 and 1875. Thus, the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol Manuscript is not only important as a historical document, but also has high academic value in the study of philology, historiography, Minangkabau culture, and Islamic studies in Indonesia. Its unique status as a *codex unicus*, the interesting process of text transmission, and the long journey of its preservation make this manuscript a very valuable intellectual heritage that deserves to be preserved (Nurcahya et al., 2024).



Front of the manuscript



Contents of the manuscript

The Tuanku Imam Bonjol manuscript is written using the Jawi Arabic script with the main language being Malay. In the Minangkabau literacy tradition, the community has long distinguished written language from spoken language. Malay is used in writing, especially by scholars and traditional figures, as an intellectual and administrative language. However, in reading practice, the text is generally understood and read in the Minangkabau language. Even so, in the Tuanku Imam Bonjol manuscript, there are still a number of words that directly use the Minang language, especially in parts that function as a confirmation of meaning or as a sentence connector, such as the words "dek" (by/because), "nan" (that), "alah" (already), and several other vocabulary that is typical of Minangkabau (Nurcahya et al., 2024)

Furthermore, this manuscript also displays the use of phatic words typical of the Minangkabau language, such as "hanya lai," which serve to emphasize the meaning of events or actions. An example of this use can be seen in the sentence describing the actions of Datuk Bandaro and Sutan Caniago when entering Marapak Village, emphasizing that the actions were actually carried out and not merely symbolic narratives. The presence of these Minangkabau language elements demonstrates the linguistic dynamics of the manuscript, namely a blend of Malay as a formal written language and Minangkabau as a local identity that is maintained in certain expressions. In terms of writing, this manuscript uses the Diwani script. This script originates from the traditions of the Ottoman Empire and began to develop after the conquest of Constantinople by Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih. Its name is associated with the word "Diwan," which refers to a government institution or office (Nurcahya, 2021). Thus, the choice of Diwani script demonstrates the influence of international Islamic culture on the Malay-Minangkabau manuscript writing tradition and provides both aesthetic and historical value to this manuscript.

Characteristically, Minangkabau manuscripts generally do not contain just one text, but rather consist of several texts within a single manuscript. Similarly, the Tuanku Imam Bonjol Manuscript contains more than one text, even though they are contained within a single manuscript. Typically, the texts within a Minangkabau manuscript have diverse themes. However, in this manuscript, although consisting of several texts, they are all interconnected and mutually reinforcing, particularly regarding the experience of colonialism in Minangkabau before, during, and after the Padri War. A key figure inseparable from this manuscript is Naali Sutan Caniago. He was the son of Tuanku Imam Bonjol and the author of this manuscript. His presence was not only as a writer, but also as a direct witness to various important events of the Padri War. He accompanied his father through various phases of his life, including his arrest, exile, and death in Manado. Therefore, the testimony in this manuscript has strong historical value. Through this manuscript, Tuanku Imam Bonjol's memoirs, along with information about colonialism and the Padri War, can be passed down to the present generation (Soeratio et al., 1985). The naming of this manuscript as the Tuanku Imam Bonjol Manuscript is based on the fact that the main part of the text contains his memoirs, while the second and third texts serve to strengthen the picture of the colonial situation in Minangkabau at that time.

### Comparison of Manuscript and Text

The textual comparison stage was not conducted in this study because the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol Manuscript is classified as a single manuscript. Textual comparison is only necessary if the research involves more than one copy or version of the manuscript, thus allowing for analysis of differences in readings between manuscripts. However, in the case of a single manuscript like this, this step is not relevant. In the process of editing a single manuscript, two main methods are known: the standard method and the diplomatic method. The standard method is usually used when the manuscript's content is considered a general text, not a sacred text or a document of high historical value. In this method, the editor is allowed to make a number of interventions to facilitate reader understanding. These actions include transliterating the text according to proper rules, correcting spelling errors, compiling corrective notes, providing additional comments and explanations, dividing the text into specific sections, and providing a list of difficult vocabulary (Suryani, 2012). The main goal of the standard method is to make the text easier to read, understand, and use by both readers and researchers.

In contrast, the diplomatic method is applied to manuscripts deemed to be of great importance, whether from a religious, historical, religious, or linguistic perspective. In this method, the text is treated with great care and presented as closely as possible to its original form. All elements of the text, including spelling, punctuation, and text divisions, are maintained as they appear in the manuscript. Ideally, this method is realized through photographic or facsimile reproduction. To assist readers, a transliteration is generally provided that follows the original text unchanged. Furthermore, any errors are indicated using a specific referencing system, followed by

notes on possible corrections and related scholarly commentary. The primary objective of the diplomatic method is to maintain the authenticity and purity of the text to maintain its authentic value. Based on these considerations, the editing of the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol Manuscript was carried out using the diplomatic method. The main consideration is that this manuscript is not just an ordinary historical text, but a highly important and authentic local source, and is even the only manuscript directly related to the figures and major historical events of the Padri War (Nurchahya, 2023).

### Transliteration and Translation

The translation and text preparation process had been carried out previously by Sjafrir Aboe Nain Dt. Kando Marajo. One example of a translated paragraph describes the atmosphere leading up to the war, when after Friday prayers a messenger from Pariaman, bearing the title Ampang Limo Putih, arrived to inform Tuanku Imam that the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was preparing to fight Bonjol. Upon hearing this news, Tuanku Imam immediately alerted his followers and inquired about gunpowder supplies. The response indicated limited weaponry, which caused anxiety among the leaders, and ultimately prompted deliberation as a strategic response to the colonial threat. Broadly speaking, the contents of the Tambo Manuscript of Tuanku Imam Bonjol can be summarized in several key sections (Sa'adah et al., 2024).

First, this manuscript depicts the early conditions of the Minangkabau people, who lived independently and in an orderly manner, building their nation through collective labor. The Minangkabau people cleared fields, built villages, erected mosques, and practiced social and religious life based on custom and Islam. This stage depicts Minangkabau as a dignified, sovereign, and religious region before the intervention of colonial powers.

Second, the script recounts the arrival of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which brought military force to conquer the Minangkabau. Their presence led to the destruction of villages, the burning of settlements, and repressive actions against the people. The VOC is portrayed as an external force that arrived not because of any wrongdoing on the part of the Minangkabau people, but rather out of ambition for territorial control and wealth.

Third, the manuscript explains the Company's shift in strategy, which then offered peace. They sent envoys and promised security. Minangkabau leaders, including Tuanku Imam Bonjol, considered peace to avoid suffering for the people. At this stage, it is clear that Tuanku Imam was not a figure who glorified war, but a leader who considered the safety of the people.

Fourth, when it became clear that the Company's promises were not being fulfilled, the Minangkabau people rose up again and resisted. The breach of commitment, arbitrary actions, and insults to religious values fueled the people's desire to unite and attack Company posts. This resistance was portrayed as a moral stance born of a sense of justice and self-respect.

Fifth, the manuscript emphasizes the Company's betrayal of the peace agreement. They continued to oppress, confiscate people's property, and arrest people without clear justification. These violations demonstrated the Company's untrustworthiness and provided the basis for the Minangkabau people's moral legitimacy to continue their struggle.

Sixth, the conflict entered a more severe phase when the Dutch East India Company (VOC) not only attacked forts and villages but also destroyed the fields and forests that were the people's livelihoods. This action aimed to weaken the people economically and psychologically, thus illustrating the cruelty of colonialism, which was not only military in nature but also undermined the social order and well-being of the people.

Seventh, the manuscript contains Tuanku Imam Bonjol's message to his son, Naali Sutan Caniago. This section contains religious, moral, and ethical messages about life. He emphasizes the importance of honesty, steadfast faith, respect for tradition, and the obligation to uphold morals. This section also showcases Tuanku Imam's personal side as a father and religious scholar, not just a military leader.

Eighth, the final section recounts how the Dutch East India Company (VOC) ultimately deceived Tuanku Imam through the deception of peace diplomacy. Under the pretext of negotiations, he was captured and taken from Minangkabau land. This event marked the tragic climax of his struggle. However, morally, the text emphasizes that despite his physical defeat, Tuanku Imam triumphed morally because he never abandoned the principles of truth and honor.

Thus, the entire contents of the manuscript depict a complex historical journey: starting from the peaceful conditions of the Minang people, the arrival of colonialism, the dynamics of resistance, to the

betrayal and arrest of Tuanku Imam Bonjol, while also emphasizing moral and spiritual steadfastness as a legacy of the struggle (Pratama et al., 2023).

### Critical Discourse Analysis of Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol

This study applies a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach using a model developed by Teun A. van Dijk as the primary method in reading and interpreting the contents of Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol. This approach is based on the understanding that the TTIB text is not merely a narrative account of the Padri War events but is also a product of ideological discourse that represents worldviews, group interests, and the construction of power relations that existed in Minangkabau society in the early 19th century (Utami et al., 2021). In other words, this manuscript is understood as a text that not only tells history but also shapes society's understanding of who is right and who is wrong, and how religion, custom, and power are positioned in the conflict.

From Van Dijk's perspective, discourse is always viewed as part of social practice that cannot be separated from the structure of social cognition and the structure of the society in which the text was born. Therefore, Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol cannot be treated merely as a neutral documentation of past events, but must be read as an instrument that helped produce, reproduce, and legitimize certain meanings related to Islam, Minangkabau customs, the Padri War conflict, and relations with colonial power. This is where Van Dijk's approach is relevant, as it offers an analytical framework that allows researchers to explore how the text works as a tool of ideological legitimacy (Sahmeni & Afifah, 2019).

Van Dijk's model was chosen because it offers methodological advantages that are closely aligned with the character of the manuscript being studied. First, this approach allows for a comprehensive and structured analysis of the text, from the macrostructure related to major themes, to the microstructure encompassing language choices and linguistic details. Second, this approach positions social cognition as a crucial bridge between text and context, allowing researchers to understand how the TTIB manuscript not only records the experiences of the Padri but also contributes to shaping their collective perspective. Third, this model is effective in dismantling the discourse of legitimacy, particularly regarding the justification of violence, the authority of religion, and the formation of a sharp dichotomy between "us" and "them." Thus, Van Dijk's CDA is considered most appropriate for uncovering how the TTIB framed the Padri War as a struggle considered sacred, moral, and legitimate from the author's perspective. The research unit of analysis focuses on the narrative and argumentative sections of the manuscript that depict the image of Tuanku Imam Bonjol and the Padri, the evaluation of Minangkabau customs, the justification of conflict and violence, and the relationship between Islam, customs, and colonialism. This manuscript is not positioned as a factual historical source in the positivist sense, but as a traditional historiographical text fraught with meaning-making, moral judgments, and ideological interests. Therefore, the truth being studied is not merely empirical truth, but rather discursive truth, namely how historical reality is framed and interpreted through language (Setiaji & Fajriani, 2022).

The analysis was conducted through Van Dijk's three main dimensions: text structure, social cognition, and social context. At the text structure level, the analysis was conducted on the macrostructure to identify major themes such as religious purification, the legitimacy of jihad, or the rejection of certain customs. At the superstructure level, the narrative is structured, the characters are positioned, and the conflict plot is structured to appear logical and morally legitimate. Meanwhile, at the microlevel, linguistic elements such as the choice of religious diction, the use of sacred metaphors, sentence structure, and normative modalities that function to establish legitimacy of action while normalizing conflict are analyzed. Furthermore, the social cognition analysis was directed at understanding the collective mental models, ideological assumptions, and thought frameworks of the Padri Kaum that underlie the writing of the text. At this stage, the TTIB is viewed as a reflection of a particular group's belief system, which is then presented as if it were a universal truth (Br Tarigan et al., 2023). Thus, the text is seen as a product of the social thought structures that exist within the author's community.

The next stage is the analysis of ideology and power relations. Using Van Dijk's ideological square concept, this study reveals how the text emphasizes the goodness of one's own group, emphasizes the badness of the opposing party, suppresses internal conflict, and ignores the possibility of alternative legitimations beyond the Padri narrative. Therefore, TTIB is understood not merely as a work of historical literature, but as a symbolic device that plays a role in shaping collective memory, group identity, and moral perceptions of the Padri War. To remain within the discipline of history, this Critical Discourse Analysis does

not stand alone, but is combined with a contextual historical approach. CDA is used to read the meaning and ideology of the text, while the historical approach helps place it within the socio-political reality of 19th-century Minangkabau. With this combination, the research remains historically scientific while remaining critical of the ideologies at work in the manuscript.

### Historical Analysis and Validity of Manuscripts as Historical Sources

In the heuristic stage, this study identified the Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol manuscript as a primary historical source in the form of a traditional narrative, written by Naali Sutan Caniago, the direct son of Tuanku Imam Bonjol. As part of the Minangkabau tambo tradition, this manuscript combines historical facts with collective memory, moral advocacy, and normative assessment. Its origins are based on family experiences, community oral traditions, and post-conflict collective memory. In collecting sources, this manuscript was juxtaposed with Dutch colonial archives, modern historical works, and other local manuscripts, so that it does not stand alone but becomes part of the overall corpus of sources on the Padri War (Mulyanto, 2023).

In the external critique stage, the authenticity of the manuscript is assessed based on the author's identity, the writing style, and the context in which it was written. The author's genealogical proximity to the main character lends weight to the testimony, but also opens up room for subjectivity. Linguistically and paleographically, the manuscript is consistent with the 19th-century Malay-Minangkabau literary tradition, thus being deemed authentic. As a narrative written after the event, the manuscript is a retrospective account, capturing memories and assessments of the aftermath of defeat. Internal critique then assesses the manuscript's content for credibility. The text clearly sides with Tuanku Imam Bonjol and the Padri, portraying the Dutch as oppressors. The narrative emphasizes colonial violence, while minimizing internal conflicts among the Minangkabau people. The language used is highly normative, imbued with religious and moral judgments. Thus, the manuscript's content is not factually neutral, but it is highly credible as a reflection of how the Padri group understood and justified its struggle (Bilal, 2024).

The interpretation stage aims to give historical meaning to the manuscript. The TTIB can be understood as a text defending against colonial stigma, as a narrative of moral legitimacy of the characters, and as a means of shaping the collective memory of the community. The Padri War in this manuscript is positioned as a defensive war, not an expansive one; violence is understood as a response to oppression; and the Tuanku Imam is depicted as a wise religious leader, not thirsty for war, and still considers the safety of the people. When compared with colonial sources, there are sharp differences in moral assessments despite some agreement on certain chronological data. From this, it can be concluded that the manuscript not only recounts events but also teaches how to remember and evaluate those events. At the historiographic stage, the TTIB is positioned as part of the traditional Minangkabau historiography tradition, which is narrative, moralistic, and character-centric. This manuscript serves as a counterpoint to the hegemonic colonial historiography and the more analytical modern narrative (Ilyas et al., 2025). This manuscript's contribution is crucial because it presents a local voice, challenges the colonial stigma against the Padri, and presents the often-overlooked moral-social dimension of the conflict.

Within the framework of this research, the manuscript is not treated as a neutral reflection of facts, but rather as a historical text that actively shapes meaning and ideology. Using a philological approach, historical awareness, and critical discourse analysis, this research positions the TTIB as a valid, meaningful, and highly ideological source of local history. It is precisely through this ideological content that the manuscript's historical value becomes significant, as it demonstrates how the Minangkabau people interpret past experiences, construct identity, and maintain the dignity and legitimacy of their struggle.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol manuscript is a text rich in historical content and holds high scientific significance for study through various scientific approaches. From a philological perspective, this manuscript holds a very important position because it is classified as a *codex unicus*, namely the only known manuscript in the world, making it very valuable both academically and historically. This uniqueness makes the TTIB not only a historical document, but also a cultural artifact that records the collective memory of the Minangkabau people regarding the Padri War. The application of Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis model to the TTIB text provides in-depth and meaningful analysis results. This approach allows for a systematic reading of the text's structure, from the main themes that frame the entire narrative to the details of the

language choices used. Furthermore, Van Dijk's concept of social cognition helps bridge the text with its socio-historical context, making it clear how the TTIB reflects and contributes to shaping the collective perspective of the Padri people. Furthermore, this model is also effective in uncovering the mechanisms of discourse legitimacy, particularly those related to the justification of violence, religious authority, and the polarization between our group and theirs. Through this framework, it is clear that the TTIB functions as a discursive instrument that positions the Padri War as a struggle with moral and religious values. In this study, Van Dijk's CDA is not used in isolation but rather combined with a contextual historical approach. Discourse analysis is utilized to read the ideology and meaning of the text, while the historical approach helps position it within the social, political, and religious realities of 19th-century Minangkabau. Thus, this study remains within the corridors of historical methodology while providing space for critical interpretation of traditional sources. Historiographically, the TTIB has made a significant contribution to the writing of Indonesian history. This manuscript presents a local perspective that has often been marginalized, challenges colonial stereotypes that label the Padri as fanatics, and presents the moral and social dimensions of the conflict. Through the stages of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historical writing, the TTIB can be scientifically justified as a valid, meaningful, and ideological source of local history. It is precisely in this non-neutrality that its most important historical value lies.

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