

PENGHULU, THE CHIEF OF CLAN

The Minangkabau community is grouped into clans where members of each clan are not allowed to marry each other. Every clan has its own name, such as "Jambak," "Sikumbang," "Koto," "Caniago," "Guci" and many more. A young man from the "Jambak" clan is forbidden to marry a girl from the same "Jambak" clan.

Normally a clan consists of a number of houses, where as each house is lead by a "Tungganai," called the "mamak rumah." "Mamak rumah" is a male member of his mother's lineage.

Tungganai represents the Penghulu in his house to solve any problems in the family household, such as marriage, handling the property of the clan or any other social activities related to the family life.

It is true that the oldest woman owns the properties of the clan according to the Minangkabau traditions. But in fact these properties are under the control of the "Tungganai" and "Penghulu."⁸

The old and wise woman in the family is called the "Bundo Kandung," beloved mother in the house, who possesses great responsibility to mould the character and personality of the members of the family. She is usually the wisest and the best dedicated woman who educates her children and relatives in her family.

The young girl in the family is called "Si Kambang Manis" whose responsibilities are to take care of the house and make it clean and tidy. She also has great responsibility to serve the family with the food, such

⁸ Toeah, Dr. H. op. Cit.

as the coffee for the father and brother early in the morning, breakfast, lunch at noon and dinner in the evenings.

The boy in the family has the responsibility to waacth everything about the house, to build houses together or work together with the other boys from other clans in the vilagge. The young boy and all the men in a family have great responsibilities to plough the land/rice field, to harvest the paddy when it is ripe in harvest time.

The requirements for a penghulu as the chief of a clan to establish/set up his leadership are as follows :

- a. He may not carry any heavy object/thing on his head or on his shoulder.
- b. He is not supposed to run
- c. He is not supposed to climb up a tree
- d. He needs to be wise
- e. He is not allowed to get angry
- f. He may not shout
- g. He should not fight
- h. He has to be upright, and always tell the truth
- i. He shall happily solve all the problems of the family.

As has been mentioned before, there are two kinds of Penghulu in Minangkabau. Those from "Adat Budi Camiago" have the same right in the meeting and in the traditional house they sit at the same level during the meeting. But penghulus from "Adat Koto Piliang" do not have the same rights according to the traditional laws. There are some categories among their Penghulus.

In the Adat Koto Piliang, there are four Chiefs from four clans that have the top right which is called "Penghulu Pucuk" (top ranking). Below that is the "Penghulu yang Barindu" from a part of a clan, then "Payung" which is lower than Penghulu Yang Barindu and the lowest is "Tuo Kampung" who only supervises several homes.

The first four Penghulus were the descendants of the ancestors who built the country/village for the first time. The increasing numbers of the population needed some more leaders that the Penghulu is added, but the new penghulu does not have the same right and obligations as the former. The clan's property which is called "Pusako Tinggi" is under authority of the first four Penghulu.

A Penghulu as the chief of a clan has special types of costumes, consisting of :

- a. "Saluak," the headdress²⁰ made of special cotton, shaped in such a way to be used instead of a cap.
- b. "Baju Balapak" is a type of dress, included in the traditional costumes.
- c. "Sarawa Gadang" is a kind of long pants which is used by a penghulu only.
- d. "Sisamping" is a special dress worn around his belt outside of the trousers by the penghulu.
- e. "Keris Pusako" is a kind of dagger which is used as a weapon but never used to fight by the penghulu. It is only as a symbol of authority of the Penghulu.
- f. "Tongkat" is a stick used by the Penghulu just to indicate that he who uses the stick is a chief of a clan.

²⁰ Toeah, Dt. H. Ibid. p. 26.

A penghulu should be very wise, responsible and just. He should act as a leader in his group, as a judge among his family members and he tackles any problem arising among the members of his clan. The penghulu is a dicision maker in the extended family life.

Whenever a penghulu passes away, he has to be succeeded by his candidate, one who has blood relationship with the dead penghulu, under the condition that the candidate obtains consent and approval from all the members of his clan. Before the election of the candidate, the remains of the Penghulu should wait for the burial in the graveyard. It also happens that it needs one or two days or more until the remains can be buried, or buried in the house, because the candidate has not yet been elected.

The candidate should obtain consent from the members of the clan first, then from all the penghulus from the related clans shall be invited to obtain their agreement and the last stage the admittance of the nagari. In ruling the nagari/village there are four exceutive members that must work together.

The Penghulu, as chief of a clan, the "Malin", the religious scholars, "Manti" and "dubalang," the defenders of the nagari. The four executive members of the country is named as the "urang nan ampek jinih" (the four categories). "Ninik Mamak" is the oldest man in the family, who has the responsibility over his clan's property under the guidance of the Penghulu. He is the representative of the clan in the village in every social activity.



Penghulu
The chief of a clan
of Minangkabau